



## Nazarbayev attends Eurasian Economic Union Summit in Sochi, meets with Putin



L-R: Tigran Sargsyan, Nikol Pashinyan, Alexander Lukashenko, Vladimir Putin, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Sooronbai Jeenbekov in Sochi on May 14.

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev attended the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council's meeting in Sochi on May 14 and, while meeting Vladimir Putin, congratulated him on his recent election and praised Kazakh-Russian relations.

"On the 18th of March this year, a historic event took place. You have won the confidence of the Russian people with a tremendous triumph. In these difficult conditions, such trust is very much worthwhile," the President of Kazakhstan noted.

"Kazakhstan is the closest country with which Russia has the most exemplary relations and intensive economic ties. Our turnover is about \$16 billion [annually]. The creation of joint ventures is on the increase."

Nazarbayev added that close cooperation between the countries helps resolve issues as they emerge.

"Kazakhstan is always close by. We will always work together and overcome this difficult time, moving forward. Today, there is normal work in all directions. We have developed close relations between governments and ministries. The arising problems should be solved

calmly, without creating any hype. We are allies, and the media of the two countries should work in the same way," Nazarbayev said.

Putin praised the state of relations and said Kazakhstan is a strategic ally and close economic partner.

"Relations between our countries are developing successfully and consistently. Last year, in the economy, we had a good result, 30 percent growth in turnover. Russia remains one of the leading trade and economic partners of Kazakhstan. I would also like to note the growth of Russia's direct investment in the Kazakh economy," Putin said.

The Supreme Eurasian Economic Council's meeting also brought together the presidents of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, the Kyrgyz Republic Sooronbai Jeenbekov, the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Tigran Sargsyan. Igor Dodon, president of Moldova, which is not a Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member, also attended.

The parties discussed strengthening economic cooperation within the economic union's borders.

The Kazakh President specifically focused on further economic in-

tegration of EAEU member states, saying integration contributes to the economic growth of EAEU member states.

"This was promoted by positive dynamics in strategic sectors: in agriculture and industry. A significant 'spurt' occurred both in external and in mutual trade. Over the past year, external and mutual trade within the framework of the EAEU increased by 24.4 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively. The positive dynamics are also being preserved this year," said Nazarbayev.

He said the economic association is gaining international clout and that an increasing number of foreign countries want to develop trade and economic relations with the union.

He also noted the results of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in a narrow format, during which statutory treaty amendments, EAEU international activities and economic union development were discussed.

Nazarbayev proposed forming an intergovernmental committee to analyse the results of the union's decisions and promote the EAEU.

"It is also necessary to work out the possibility of implementing large infrastructure 'megaprojects'.

It is important to increase the role of the Eurasian Development Bank and the Eurasian Stabilisation and Development Fund in the activities of our association. They should actively participate in the implementation of major projects," said Nazarbayev.

In addition, he suggested using the three international centres created on the EXPO 2017 site in the work of the EAEU.

"I invite the financial institutions of the EAEU member states to use the opportunities of the Astana International Financial Centre. In addition, the events of the EAEU's financial block, including the subsidiary and consultative-advisory bodies' meetings, should be held on the territory of the expo. At the same time, within the framework of the digital agenda, I propose to organise the work of the Office for Digital Project Management and Initiatives within the framework of the EAEU on the basis of the future International Technopark of IT Startups," the Kazakh President said.

In conclusion, Nazarbayev said he is confident the agreements reached during the council's meeting will increase economic cooperation among all union member states.

## World thought leaders to gather for new AEF

Staff Report

ASTANA – The former President of France, the former UN Secretary-General and other international thought leaders will gather in Astana May 17-19 for the 11th Astana Economic Forum (AEF). The name of the forum is being changed this year to the Global Challenges Summit (GCS) 2018, says a press release by AEF organisers.

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Chairman of the International Olympic Committee's Ethics Commission Hans Timmer, Chief Economist for the Europe and Central Asian region of the World Bank and former French President Francois Hollande are among those who will participate. Other participants will include leaders in business, science and art who will look at current global risks and opportunities.

The technological revolution of recent years has created world-changing megatrends affecting countries, businesses and the world's population. Economic growth and resource resilience, digitisation and urbanisation, longevity and financial revolution, global security and cultural shift will be among the summit's topics.

The summit will include more than 200 speakers from 27 countries

to debate the world's most important challenges and discuss solutions to create a more sustainable planet.

Participants will also include Michio Kaku, physicist, co-founder of the string field theory and populariser of science, Jim O'Neill, former Goldman Sachs chief economist known for coining the BRIC acronym, Parag Khanna, international relations expert and visionary strategist of urban development, Mikheil Janelidze, Georgia's Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Toomas Ilves, Estonia's former president, Krzysztof Zanussi, film director and winner of the Golden Lion, the highest prize of the Venice Film Festival and others.

Kazakhstan's senior officials and heads of state-owned companies and development agencies will participate in the discussion on the country's strategies for adapting to the rapidly changing world and its role in developing Central Asia.

GCS 2018 follows Astana's EXPO 2017 with its subject of Future Energy, which provided the backdrop for Kazakhstan to announce its large-scale Third Modernisation aimed at pushing the country into the top 30 of the world's strongest economies by means of breakthroughs in innovative development, institutional reforms and extensive international integration.

## Minister: space technology development among key themes of KADEX 2018

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – From May 23 to 26, Astana will host KADEX 2018, its international biennial exhibition of weapons systems and military equipment. Kazakh Minister of Defence and Aerospace Industry Beibut Atamkulov discussed in detail the format and content of the coming exhibition, the 5th KADEX, in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

"This is the first exhibition to be held under the aegis of our ministry. Today, 43 official delegations, including from Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Jordan, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Israel, Italy and Mongolia have confirmed their participation in the exhibition. Also, about 100 executives of foreign companies expressed a desire to visit KADEX 2018," Atamkulov noted.

In total, more than 300 companies from 30 countries will showcase arms and military equipment, military and dual-use products, space technology and developments in information security.

"Visitors to KADEX 2018 will be able to get acquainted with the latest achievements and promising scientific developments of military-industrial and space enterprises. One hundred and twenty-four units of ground equipment and 18 types of aviation equipment and unmanned aerial vehicles will be exhibited at the open demonstration site," he said.

The exhibition site at the military section of Astana International Airport will consist of 10 pavilions. Three separate pavilions for domestic manufacturers Kazakhstan Engineering, Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering and Kaztechologies will be complemented by individual pavilions showcasing technology from Turkey, China and Russia. For the first time at KADEX, a unique pavilion dedi-

cated to the space industry will be erected.

"A distinctive innovation of the exhibition will be the international forum, Days of Space in Kazakhstan, the Cyber and Digital Security Conference and the scientific and practical conference Advanced Def Tech. They will be the central dialogue platforms of the exhibition," Atamkulov explained. At these events, experts from around the world will exchange views on defence and security, the development of the global space industry and cybersecurity threats of present and the future.

The major theme of the exhibition will remain the latest developments of Kazakhstan's military-industrial complex.

"Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering, one of the flagships of the country's defence industry, will present the next-generation armoured wheeled vehicles Barys 6x6 and Barys 8x8, as well as Arlan 4x4 and Alan 4x4," said the minister.

"The Kazakhstan Aselsan Engineering (KAE) optical products plant will present surveillance devices, optical sights, night vision devices and radio stations..."

Kazakhstan Engineering will demonstrate the GT-T crawler transporter-tractor, which is a high-speed, cross-country amphibious vehicle with front driving wheels.

This vehicle is environmentally friendly, has a simple design and excellent maintainability, and is designed to work in difficult climatic conditions on soils with low bearing capacity," Atamkulov said. Kazakh manufacturer Tynys will present ammunition for security forces, as well as truck cranes and special equipment. The enterprise will also exhibit body armour, armoured vehicles, tactical belts, bulletproof helmets and riot shields.

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## APK discusses Nazarbayev's social initiatives

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev took part April 28 in the 26th session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), reported Akorda.kz. The main topic was the President's recent Five Social Initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Kazakh citizens.

The session gathered 413 of 466 APK members from all the regions of the country. Chairpersons of ethno-cultural associations, members of the Kazakh Parliament and government and heads of central and local executive bodies, political parties, religious associations, non-governmental organisations, scholars, movie actors and heads of the Kazakh media also attended.

Opening the session, Nazarbayev stressed the assembly's role as the main guarantor of peace and stability in the country.

"Today, the assembly has to fulfil a number of tasks on Kazakhstan's modernisation path. In March of this year, as part of the social modernisation, I proposed the Five Initiatives. Their successful implementation will strengthen our citizens' faith in the future, the state, the society and each other," he said.

The President noted the social unity policy is an important step



towards creating a consolidated nation, announcing 2.6 trillion tenge (\$7.9 billion) will be allocated to implement the Five Social Initiatives.

"We have launched five new projects despite the external circumstances, not because we have too much money and resources. We are determined to give new impetus to improving the lives of the people of Kazakhstan," he said.

The head of state also stressed the initiatives are aimed at solving five of the most important social issues in modern Kazakhstan and the funds for implementing them are direct investments in the future of Kazakh society.

"The 21st century shows that global challenges and threats – social, ecological, technogenic – do not vanish. Now is a different time, when everyone needs to take responsibility for the future," he said.

Nazarbayev emphasised the nation's unity is the main condition for creating a renovated nation and congratulated all citizens on the Day of Unity of the People of Kazakhstan, celebrated May 1.

The session included reports by government officials on the progress of social programmes and inspiring speeches by successful Kazakh citizens. It also adopted the Appeal to the people of Kazakhstan, in which the assembly called

on the Kazakh people to create a new model of a social state and national well-being.

Lituanica chair and APK member Vitaly Tvarionas Iono and philanthropist Islambek Salzhanov were appointed as new assembly deputies. The Palace of Peace and Harmony, where the event was held, was declared the APK Central House of Friendship.

The session ended with a festive concert, where vocal group IL Canto and Astana's youth chamber choir presented "Otan Ana," a new song by Nazarbayev. Famous singer Dimash Kudaibergen and his younger sister Raushan also performed.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Nazarbayev congratulates nation on May 1 holiday

Staff Report

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated the nation May 1 on the Kazakh People's Day of Unity.

"This truly national celebration is a vivid symbol of our patriotism, love and devotion to our native land. Due to unity and harmony, we have achieved great success in building an independent state, having earned high prestige and recognition in the world," he said.

Nazarbayev added awareness of the importance of unity and harmony is the main factor in the country's congruent and sustainable development.

"Only in unity, friendship and mutual respect is the true wealth and well-being of our great common home, the Republic of Kazakhstan. These core values govern the world outlook of our



society and serve as a clear guide to its further consolidation and unity," he added.

As part of the festivities, the

head of state attended a concert on the square in front of Kazakh Eli monument, where ethno-cultural centres of the Assembly of the

People of Kazakhstan presented traditional songs and dances. He noted the nation's impressive achievements were possible due to

the unity and friendship of its multi-ethnic society.

"As a result of unity, we took the responsibility of improving the lives of our people and entering into the 30 most developed countries of the world. Thanks to the unity of our people, I announced the Five Social Presidential Initiatives aimed at creating favourable living conditions for every citizen," he said.

Nazarbayev once again congratulated all those who gathered at the square and wished a bright future for the younger generation and happiness and prosperity for every Kazakh family.

"We see different cultures, languages and traditions in our country. We are united, we love and respect each other, we abide by a single constitution and laws. To respect each other and have friendship is a great happiness. Let's cherish this unity, let's protect our happiness," he said.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

CNPC Aktobemunaigaz concluded contracts worth more than 3 billion tenge (US\$9 million) with Kazakh companies to increase the share of local content in their activities in 2017, according to Kazinform. A committee promoting the use of local goods and services among large companies operating in the region has been active for three years. "The committee's activities give visible results. We developed a database of about 270 local commodity manufacturers that produce about 3,000 items. They participate in procurement procedures, but there are also some issues in interaction with customers," said regional chamber of entrepreneurs director Nurlybek Mukanov.

About 200 athletes took part in a sports flash mob initiated by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Street Workout Federation May 8 in Astana, reported the press service of the Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) Federation. The event was held as part of the sixth MMA Championship and Battle of Nomads 10, dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Kazakh capital. "This campaign is of great importance for the promotion of sports, physical activity, and a healthy lifestyle among young people," said President of the MMA Federation Anatoly Kim.

The Aktope region intends to increase wheat acreage by introducing unused land into effective turnover, according to the regional press service. This year, at least 754,000 hectares of area will be planted, approximately 15 percent more than in the previous year. The region will introduce at least 8,000 hectares of irrigated land as a result of agreements with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to reduce imports and increase the export of products. "The growth rate reached more than 104 percent as of the first quarter of 2018. The manufacturing output totalled about 30 billion tenge [US\$91.4 million]. We need to keep this positive tendency. We need to increase livestock production, labour productivity and introduce smart technologies," said Aktope Akim (Governor) Berdybek Saparbayev.

This year, 585 yards, 157 streets and 30 kilometres of pavement will be renovated using exclusively local content in Almaty as part of the city's street reconstruction project, the Almaty mayor's press service reported May 5. The Almaty Entrepreneurship, Industrial and Innovative Development Office plans to hold meetings with all the city's districts to promote cooperation between local producers and contractors. "This cooperation is important. The enterprises will have guaranteed orders and contractors will receive quality products accompanied by follow-up service. All the companies are participants of the Entrepreneurship Support Map. They carried out modernisation, improved quality, increased production and reduced the cost of production. They pay taxes and create jobs," said Industrial Enterprise Monitoring Department head Rustem Voroshilov.

More than 460 million tenge (US\$1.4 million) has been allocated for a three-year cultural preservation and development project in the Zhambyl region, reported the regional press service. The project is intended to help protect historical sights, improve the material and technical base of cultural institutions and develop tourism at sacred sites. "Eight sites are included on the architectural monuments of the region's hologram at the local museum. There are only 200 cultural centres. Last year, we constructed a centre worth 52.7 million tenge [US\$160,685] in the Akkainar village of Merken District. In total, 547 cultural and archival organisations operate in the region," said Culture, Archives and Documentation Department head Duisenali Bykibayev.

## NGOs, gov't officials discuss the country's torture prevention efforts

By Aigerim Seisebayeva

ASTANA – The results of last year's preventive visits to detention facilities were presented at the Kazakh Foreign Ministry April 26 as part of the second, two-day National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) forum, "Prevention of torture through joint efforts of national human rights institutions and the NPM."

The NPM's fourth consolidated report contains an analysis of human rights observance in the facilities of the nation's National Security Committee and Internal Affairs, Defence, Healthcare and Education and Science ministries.

The forum was attended by more than 100 NPM participants from the country's 16 regions, government officials, human rights activists from Central Asia and Europe, international experts and representatives of non-governmental organisations. They not only discussed Kazakhstan's torture prevention efforts, but also shared their countries' experiences.

The event, hosted by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was organised by the country's Human Rights Commissioner's Office with the support of the European Union, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) programme office, Penal Reform International and the United Nations High Commissioner's Office for Human Rights, Development Programme (UNDP) and International Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Speaking at the forum, Kazakh Human Rights Commissioner Askar Shakirov said NPM participants conducted more than 500 preventive visits to mandated institutions in 2017 which resulted in substantive and relevant recommendations to institutional administrations and local and central governmental bodies on ways to improve their work in preventing torture and cruel treatment and punishment.

The report states the number of NPM special visits (in addition to preventive visits) increased from 15 to 24 cases compared to 2016.

Most visits were made based on complaints about penitentiary institutions. All information about detected facts of torture or cruel treatment were transferred to the Prosecutor General's Office. The document also notes the need to introduce a special form of public report to investigate such cases.

It added most of the recommendations in the previous year's report were implemented by the governmental bodies in charge of the mandated closed institutions. Their activities indicate a readiness to implement the recommendations presented in the report, according to the ombudsman. He added the NPM activity is one of the most convincing examples of constructive interaction between governmental bodies and the civil sector, including executing international standards in human rights.

Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko noted Kazakhstan was one of the first countries to accede to the UN Convention against Torture and has made considerable progress in its prevention.

"Kazakhstan's progress in this

sphere is reflected in the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, where our country climbed from 74th position in 2012 to 64th in 2018," he said.

Deputy Prosecutor General Marat Akhmetzhanov noted the Kazakh prison population has been decreasing in recent years due to consistent efforts aimed at humanising the prosecution system and has decreased by 1,000 in the first quarter of 2018 alone.

"Gradual humanisation of legislation is taking place. A new law on modernising the criminal process was adopted this January. It includes measures to increase the competitiveness of parties of the judicial process and strengthen judicial control, as all sanctions were transferred to the court and the rights of lawyers were expanded. They are now equal to the rights of the prosecutors. The time of detention of suspects was also reduced from 72 to 48 hours and to 24 hours for minors. These measures resulted in a reduction of the prison population by 1,000 people in the first quarter of this year alone," he said.

## Nur Otan Party announces new projects to execute national programmes

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's ruling Nur Otan political party has developed more than 20 projects to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), improve the educational system and execute the Digital Kazakhstan and Rukhani Janghyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) national programmes. The key priority, however, is to update the party and increase public trust.

"Nur Otan must be a paragon of modernisation values and a key driving force in our country. We need to create a highly effective political organisation that will maintain a leading position in the long term. All the projects are designed to pursue this goal," said first deputy chairperson of the party Maulen Ashimbayev.

The initiatives were developed in response to President Nursultan Nazarbayev's instructions to renovate the country's largest party.

"For the first time, Nur Otan will apply international project management experience in its activities and will reorganise the work of its central apparatus and regional branches. It is important not to consider each project separately, but to perceive them as one activity meant to address strategic tasks of the party and the state. We will not only need to

launch all the projects, but also demonstrate tangible outcomes in a short period of time," Ashimbayev added.

Considerable emphasis has been placed on projects within Digital Kazakhstan, such as launching 1,000 IT classes and 20 IT centres across the country with the support of NGOs and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs (NCE). Such projects will significantly contribute to digitisation, he noted.

More than 150,000 school students per year will have an opportunity to learn programming skills and robotics and approximately 35,000 highly qualified IT specialists will be trained at the centres.

The party also plans to create a unified online geo-information service centre, allowing businesspeople across Kazakhstan to learn about renting land lots.

Nur Otan will also seek to control food provisions and modernise sports equipment in educational institutions. Another project involves transforming libraries into modern knowledge centres and making books available in electronic format. The party will also attract volunteers to teach English language to children in rural areas.

Executing the projects will entail the cooperation of governmental organisations and local executive bodies, NCE, business entities and NGOs.

## Kazakh President visits new mosque in futuristic style



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited Astana's new mosque, The Flower of Allah, akorda.kz press service reported.

The President learned about the construction of the mosque and alternative sources of energy used to provide the building with electricity and heat.

The construction of the mosque on the right bank of the Yessil River started in 2016. The alternative sources used for the energy supply of the new mosque produce three times more electricity than the required volume. The new mosque

was erected at the expense of charity fundraising.

"When the structural part was ready, some changes were introduced. We reduced heat consumption 61 percent and changed windows. Multifunctional glass reflects cold and heat. We take 30 percent of the electricity from the city, but we produce it ourselves. We reduced ventilation and cooling by 87 and 80 percent, respectively. The building uses energy saving lightning. Thus, we produce three times more energy than we consume," General Director of Stroyinvest-SK construction company Alexander Kravchenko said, according to 24.kz.

The project of the new mosque differs from the others exist-

ing in Kazakhstan. The building of the mosque is designed in the postmodernism style, using traditional ornaments and decorative elements. The main building has a sophisticated, hemispherical shape, consisting of triangular inclined planes, culminating in a dome with a diameter of 26 metres. Externally, the design of the mosque resembles a flower and at the same time diamond face. The height of the minaret, located on the north side of the main building reaches 43.5 metres, and it is made in the form of "kalama" ("sacred feather"). The new mosque is designed for 750 visitors. The area of the mosque is 2,248 square metres. The building occupies 1.44 hectares.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh and Turkish companies sought to expand partnerships and build on existing projects during the recent investment week in Istanbul organised by the Kazakh Embassy in Turkey and the Kazakh Invest National Company. The Kazakh delegation, headed by Vice Minister for Investment and Development Arystan Kabikenov, met the top management of leading Turkish companies and industries, including Yildirim Holding and Calik Holding. Calik Holding representatives reaffirmed the company's readiness to take up projects in Kazakhstan, including the construction of a 50-megawatt solar power plant, and consider further expansion of investments in renewable energy. With its activities cutting across 11 sectors and an annual turnover of \$2.2 billion, Yildirim Holding has an agreement with KazGeo to establish a joint enterprise for geological exploration, with the first scheduled for this summer in the Zhambyl region.

Chair of Kazakhstan's Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) Nurlan Nigmatulin welcomed European Parliament member and Kazakhstan-EU Parliamentary Cooperation Committee Co-Chair Iveta Grigule in the Kazakh capital May 10. Nigmatulin noted the expansion of partnership with the EU as one of the strategic priorities of Kazakh foreign policy and expressed firm belief that opportunities for new joint projects will be created with the adoption of the updated EU Strategy for Central Asia. The MEP emphasised Kazakhstan's role as a key partner in the region and praised the country's initiatives to seek stabilisation in the Syrian conflict and in Afghanistan. The meeting preceded the 15th session of the committee, which focused on Kazakh-EU foreign and security policies, economic and social reforms, investment, energy security and regional cooperation.

Kazakh Ambassador to France and Permanent Representative to the UNESCO Zhan Galiyev met with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay in Paris. During the meeting, Azoulay stressed the organisation's essential goal of promoting intercultural dialogue and its appreciation of Kazakhstan's commitment to the organisation's projects and the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). She noted that work is underway to include Kazakhstan's nominations in the UNESCO World Heritage list, Intangible Cultural Heritage list, World Network of Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks, and the Memory of the World documentary heritage. The nominations, Azoulay noted, should be used to promote sustainable tourism in the country.

Kazakh soprano and Astana Opera leading soloist Aizada Kaponova won the Città di Pesaro international competition (CIMP), which took place April 26-30 in Pesaro, eastern Italy. Kaponova is a multiple winner of international competitions. "Participation in an international contest means gaining new experience and building confidence in your abilities as well as meeting colleagues from different countries. I am very happy I represented my country at such a significant competition in Italy, the birthplace of opera," said Kaponova. More than 3,000 participants have taken part in the contest over the 15 years since it began.

Astana will host the 2018 ITU (International Triathlon Union) Triathlon World Cup May 19-20. The event will gather 130 professional athletes from 36 countries and more than 200 amateur athletes. The participants will complete a triathlon consisting of a 1.5-kilometre swim, 40-kilometre bike ride and 10-kilometre run. The event is part of the celebrations of the capital's 20th anniversary. Organised in a Commonwealth of Independent States country for the first time, the international triathlon championship is expected to raise Kazakhstan's image within the international sports community and boost the development of triathlon in the country.

## Kazakhstan-EU Parliamentary Cooperation Committee adopts joint declaration, confirms commitment to enhance ties

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh and European parliamentary officials reconfirmed mutual commitment to strengthening ties as they adopted a joint declaration following the May 10 15th annual session of the Kazakhstan-European Union (EU) Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC).

The members of both parliaments, according to the Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) discussed Kazakh and EU foreign and security policies as well as commended Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, its efforts to help restore peace in Afghanistan and Kazakhstan's assistance in efforts to achieve peace in Syria.

The document stated "Both sides confirmed a strong commitment to further deepening close and mutually beneficial cooperation based on common values and mutual interests", while also covering se-

curity, economic and social issues, energy security, water resource management and regional cooperation, among other topics.

The declaration also welcomed the abolition by Kazakhstan of visa requirements for the EU citizens and called on EU member states to grant a mandate to the European Commission to begin negotiations to facilitate the visa regime for Kazakh citizens visiting the EU.

The sides emphasised the new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between Kazakhstan and the EU "has created a solid foundation for further progressive development of bilateral cooperation."

The EPCA's implementation, according to the declaration, "will significantly increase the volume of trade and investments, generate new opportunities for economic growth and job creation."

The delegation of European Parliament led by Latvia's MEP Iveta Grigule also met with the Speaker

of the Mazhilis, Nurlan Nigmatulin, who said expanding relations with the EU is a Kazakh foreign policy priority and that the newly updated EU Strategy for Central Asia will offer opportunities for additional cooperation.

Grigule noted the EU views Kazakhstan as its most important partner in the region. Stressing the importance of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's policy of resolving conflicts exclusively through negotiations, she called Kazakhstan a good example, highlighting its role in the settlement of the Syrian crisis and the stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan.

The following day, the EP delegation met with Kazakhstan's Prosecutor General Kairat Kozhamzharov, who briefed them on reforms in the criminal and criminal procedural legislation in Kazakhstan, as it works to bring legislation in line with European best practices. The meeting also included a presentation of the Cen-

tre for Law Enforcement Services, the press service of the Prosecutor General's Office reports.

Of particular interest were Kazakhstan's experience in humanising criminal policy, which helped the country improve its position in the World Prison Report from third to 73rd in terms of prison population rate and measures to modernise procedural legislation.

According to the press service, the delegation praised Kazakhstan's efforts to reduce the harshness of the law and enhance the re-socialisation of convicts.

"The Prosecutor General's Office is undoubtedly the foundation stone of the rule of law. It has all the responsibility for observing and protecting the rights of citizens," Grigule reportedly said.

In addition, the delegates got acquainted with the information on the criminal actions of the persons hiding from Kazakhstan's justice in Europe, including Mukhtar Ablyazov and his accomplices, the Khr-

punov family, the Ryskaliyev brothers, Yerkanat Taizhanov and others.

"During the discussions, both sides criticised Ablyazov's criminal actions and attempts to destabilise the situation in the country," the press service said referring to Kazakhstan.

Kozhamzharov thanked the EP members for their support for the EPCA.

"The experience we gained in cooperation shows the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's legal system and our readiness to act as a reliable partner in Eurasia. We confirmed that the most serious crimes that concern the entire international community should not be left unpunished," he said.

The meeting also discussed the protection of citizens' constitutional rights, guarantees for the protection of privacy and property and the freedom of speech.

The next meeting of the Kazakhstan-EU PCC is to take place in Brussels in 2019.

## "Religious Leaders for A Safe World": Kazakh minister, ambassador, others speak at U.N.

By George Baumgarten, United Nations Correspondent

NEW YORK – Kazakh Vice Minister of Religious Affairs and Civil Society Berik Aryn was a principal speaker at a recent meeting on religious leadership at the United Nations in New York. He was joined by Kazakh UN Ambassador Kairat Umarov, who chaired the meeting. The special meeting had been called and jointly-sponsored by the U.N.'s Alliance of Civilisations and by the mission of Kazakhstan, in hopes of leaders of all faiths exerting influence to make this a safer and more peaceful world.

Speaking first, Qatar's Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser welcomed the delegates. An experienced diplomat with a distinguished career, Al-Nasser has served as both his country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and as President of the 66th Session of the U.N. General Assembly (2011-12). In 2013, he was appointed High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations.

Al-Nasser noted that he was present at a UNESCO-sponsored conference, at which the International Decade of the Rapprochement of Culture was first launched at Kazakhstan's initiative. This decade is still currently in progress and will last from 2013 to 2022.

He also cited the emphasis on

the "conciliatory role of religious leaders in promoting peace." Al-Nasser had himself participated in some of the earliest conferences on this subject. And last July, he brought together religious leaders for a panel on The Role of Religious Leaders in Peace Building in the Middle East. All this helped lead to the alliance's ultimate objective, "to provide a platform allowing religious leaders from different faiths to work together toward a safer world."

Al-Nasser stressed that rather than be a source of hatred, "Religion can be the source of non-violent transformation, protection of human rights, integrity in government, and reconciliation and stability in divided societies." And religious leaders within those societies "offer the opportunity to reflect on forgiveness and reconciliation."

As cosponsor of the special meeting, Kazakhstan sent its vice minister for religious affairs and civil society. A noted career diplomat who has represented Kazakhstan in the North African countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, Aryn has a background in languages and law. He spoke to the meeting on what he saw as "radical changes" in global affairs. The interdependence of "global, national, religious and secular components" is of increasing importance.

Aryn noted that under the guise of "searching for God," terrorist acts have been committed, which underline the moral values of society. Kazakhstan is still committed to the fundamental concept of unity in diversity. It has also led the way, in holding congresses to promote religious, ethnic and cultural understanding. Such confer-

ences have become a hallmark of contemporary Kazakhstan, and the state supports the noble values inherent in all religions.

Rabbi Arthur Schneier is a Modern Orthodox Jewish rabbi very much involved with international affairs and with the United Nations. Born in Hungary and a survivor of the Holocaust, he serves as Senior Rabbi of Park East Synagogue in New York City, and was the founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, which promotes interreligious understanding. He was introduced in glowing terms by Nihal Saad of the Alliance of Civilisations, who chaired the meeting of religious leaders, and noted his long involvement with the U.N. and its work. He thanked Kazakhstan as sponsors and noted that he had visited the country at the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. And

he lauded Kazakhstan as the host of the upcoming sixth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

As a leader long-experienced in religious dialogue, Rabbi Schneier noted that such leaders need partners – from the political, business and financial communities. But he decried the use of the word "tolerance." Religious minorities do not wish to be merely "tolerated" by those of the majority. Religious groups always work together in times of disaster or calamity, but disadvantaged minorities are still persecuted in many lands and communities. He noted the sponsorship by his foundation of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the Protection of Religious Sites, passed in 2001.

Rabbi Schneier spoke of the attacks still made on places of religious worship. Therefore, humanity must stay alert to the dangers of such actions. He paraphrased the quotation from the German writer Heinrich Heine, inscribed on Washington's United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: "When books are burned... it is only a matter of time until people will be burned." Heinrich Heine died in 1856, over three-quarters of a century before the rise of Nazi Germany. And in the new, fast-growing digital world, Rabbi Schneier said, we must confront those who are "masters" of the internet.



Photo credit: Inform.kz

## Minister: space technology development among key themes of KADEX 2018

Continued from Page A1

"These are just a few examples. There are projects in the field of armoured weapons and equipment, air defence and firearms. Our enterprises are implementing a lot of projects in the defence industry today, which indicates that the defence industry of Kazakhstan is entering a new level of its development," he commented.

"Our strategy is not limited to producing military and special-purpose products and developing cooperation with domestic defence enterprises. We also aim to increase the competitiveness of our domestic military-industrial complex products on the world arms market," the minister said.

Atamkulov added that another task for the current year is the launch of remote sensing satellites for scientific and technological purposes. The system consists of



Beibut Atamkulov

two spacecraft and their terrestrial complexes. At present, the satellites are assembled and undergoing their final tests. Their launch is planned for the end of this year with the help of the Falcon-9 launch vehicle.

This year, Kazakhstan's space agency, Kazcosmos, celebrates its 25th anniversary. The minister noted that since its launch, the fundamentals of a new branch, a

science-intensive high-tech space industry that had never existed in Kazakhstan, had been created from the ground up. Over the years, the safety and restoration of the capacities of the world-famous Baikonur cosmodrome was ensured and the available space infrastructure of the country was systematised. Enterprises were established in all strategic areas of development of space activities. Tremendous work was done to train scientific and engineering staff that serve as the backbone of the space industry.

A partnership has been established with the world's leading space powers, including Russia, France, Germany, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

"As you may know, we will commission the Baiterek space rocket complex, which will allow Kazakhstan to preserve the prospects of the Baikonur cosmodrome and enter the world market

of commercial launches," said the minister.

Another ambitious project of the ministry is the launch of the Spacecraft Assembly and Testing Complex in Astana. A complete production cycle, from design to assembly and testing of satellites weighing from 100 kilogrammes to 6 tonnes, as well as manufacturing of components for satellites, will be performed at the enterprise. The plant will allow the domestic space industry to enter a new stage of development.

During the exhibition, demonstration performances by the armed forces of Kazakhstan and a demonstration of the military equipment of the Kazakh army will be held. On the same day, a space imaging of the territory of the exhibition by Kazakh remote sensing satellites will be carried out, and the picture made available to the general public through open sources.

In addition to official events, the business programme and the exhibition itself, it is planned to sign 50 memoranda, contracts and agreements in the field of military-technical cooperation with organisations and companies from near and far abroad.

"Literally we will combine theory and practice within the framework of one promising event. This will contribute to the development of partnerships in the field of military-technical cooperation, cybersecurity and joint exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes," noted Atamkulov.

KADEX 2018 is a platform for a constructive dialogue between business representatives, developers and manufacturers of military products, and specialists from ministries and agencies of different countries, regardless of interstate relations and foreign policy views, the minister said.

"We hope that KADEX 2018 becomes a large-scale event for the enterprises of the national defence industry, space sector and cybersecurity and provides a major boost for their breakthrough on the international arena," Atamkulov stressed.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Kazakh-Uzbek trade grows 50% in Q1 2018, could reach \$3 billion by yearend, Mamin says

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh-Uzbek trade grew 50 percent in the first quarter of 2018 compared to the same period last year and the countries are working to grow trade to \$3 billion by the end of the year, said Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin during a May 4 working visit to Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Mamin also told Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in a meeting that the two countries are working to increase trade to \$5 billion by 2020.

“We have all the necessary opportunities and potential to do this. We need to make use of all the possible reserves, and the Intergovernmental Commission is currently working to tackle this issue,” he said in an interview with the O‘zbekiston 24 television channel, noting Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are observing a boom in bilateral relations in virtually all the sectors of the economy.

Uzbekistan is Kazakhstan’s largest trading partner in the region and the partner with whom Kazakhstan has experienced the highest rate of trade growth, Mamin said in the television interview.

Trade and economic cooperation, especially on a regional level, were one of the main topics Mirziyoyev and Mamin discussed. The Uzbek leader noted the role of the March 15 Heads of Central Asian States Consultative Meeting in Astana in developing regional cooperation.

Mirziyoyev and Mamin also dis-



Askar Mamin (L) and Uzbekistan's First Deputy Prime Minister Achilbay Ramatov (R).

cussed plans for the first Regional Economic Forum of Central Asian States in 2018 in Tashkent. The decision to hold the forum, initiated by Mirziyoyev, was adopted at the last consultative meeting.

“We are confident that holding this forum and then the meetings

of the working group at the level of deputy prime ministers to prepare for the next meeting at the level of heads of Central Asian states will lay a solid foundation and create opportunities to develop regional economic interaction,” Mamin said in his interview for O‘zbekiston 24.

During Mamin’s visit, an agreement was also reached to hold the first Kazakh-Uzbek Interregional Forum in Astana and the first meeting of the Business Council and the joint business forum in Shymkent.

“The interregional forum will provide an opportunity to enhance horizontal cooperation at the level of our regions. There is a big number of projects at that level that can be implemented jointly, and they are currently being elaborated,” Mamin commented in his interview.

The sides also discussed boosting investment cooperation, implementing joint investment projects to gain access to third country markets and taking additional steps to facilitate cooperation in construction, engineering, transport, logistics, tourism, space and the military sectors.

The trip also included a working meeting of the co-chairs of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission on bilateral cooperation Mamin and Uzbekistan’s First Deputy Prime Minister Achilbay Ramatov.

The meeting highlighted the systemic character of trade, economic and investment cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Joint trading houses operate in the core sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and engineering.

The countries have experienced recent bilateral trade growth and are working to implement large-scale infrastructure projects. The sides also agreed to hold regular

working group meetings to increase trade.

Mamin said Uzbekistan’s easing of certain excise taxes has increased trade and urged the Uzbek side to ease excise taxes on other Kazakh products with export potential.

The sides agreed the two countries will ensure a supply of Uzbek natural gas to Kazakhstan’s southern regions in autumn and winter and will help transit Kazakh natural gas through Uzbekistan.

The Kazakh official also proposed establishing the Central Asia International Centre for Cross-Border Cooperation (ICBC) on the Kazakh-Uzbek border. The centre would require infrastructure on both sides of the border.

The two first deputy prime ministers also decided to create a joint working group to address the mutual recognition of visas for tourists from third countries crossing the Kazakh-Uzbek border to visit tourist sites along the Great Silk Route and to jointly promote tourism opportunities in both countries.

Cultural and humanitarian cooperation are important components in Kazakh-Uzbek relations. This year has been declared the Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan, while next year will be the Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan.

“About 200 events were planned within the Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan; some of them have already been held and are gaining great positive response in Kazakhstan,” said Mamin in the interview for the Uzbek TV channel.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The International Centre for Green Technologies will be presented at the Astana Economic Forum (AEF), kazakh-tv.kz report. The centre, which is one of the EXPO 2017 heritage projects, will be introduced May 17 at the Green Economy: A New Model of Sustainable Growth panel session. The forum participants will discuss the centre’s activity, as well as the main areas of environmental and innovative cooperation among Asian and European countries and the growth of the green movement in the region. Politicians, scientists and Nobel laureates are among the forum speakers. Leading green technology centres from South Korea, Japan and Denmark will also be represented. The centre management is expected to sign cooperation memorandums with the leaders of the Global Green Growth Institute, the International Renewable Energy Agency and the Climate Technology Centre at the panel session.

In January-March, 113.4 billion tenge (US\$347.5 million) was sent from Kazakhstan abroad through the money transfer systems, which is 36.4 percent more than in the same period last year, ranking.kz reports. The volume of money received from abroad grew only 5.9 percent to 59.6 billion tenge (US\$182.6 million). Most transactions were delivered to Russia: almost 50 billion tenge (US\$153.2 million), which is 30.1 percent more than in January-March 2017. At the same time, the share from Russia decreased from 46.2 to 44.1 percent. Next comes Turkey, where the volume of transfers doubled to 12.9 billion tenge (US\$39.5 million). The country’s share increased from 7.8 to 11.4 percent. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan follow Turkey with 12.4 billion tenge (US\$38 million) and 12.3 billion tenge (US\$37.6 million), respectively.

The share of the working population is declining year by year in the country, dknews.kz reports. At the end of the first quarter, the population of Kazakhstan was 18.2 million people, 1.3 percent more than a year earlier. At the beginning of the year, the number of children and adolescents under the age of 15 reached 5.3 million, 29.4 percent of the total number of Kazakh citizens. The number of pensioners – men over 63 and women over 58 years – was 2.1 million people, representing 11.3 percent of the total population of Kazakhstan.

Representatives of 65 countries discussed cargo transportation along the Silk Road, development of transport hubs and Kazakh ports, prospects of the Trans-Caspian corridor at the international port conference in Baku, 24.kz reports. In recent years, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have invested greatly in the development of their port infrastructure. Due to this, cargoes from East to West in large volumes can now be transported in a shorter and more efficient way. The international conference, which brought together representatives of major harbours, has become a platform for demonstrating opportunities offered by the Caspian ports. The port infrastructure in the Caspian Sea is closely connected with the trans-Caspian route, which runs from China through the territory of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey on to Europe.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan plan to strengthen their trade and economy relations. The countries are increasing cooperation in agriculture, petrochemistry, pharmacy and machine industry. Astana will host the first Kazakh-Uzbek interregional forum and Tashkent will host the regional economic congress of Central Asia countries. The events were announced at a joint meeting of the intergovernmental commission on bilateral cooperation held in Tashkent. Kazakh representatives initiated a discussion on establishing the Central Asia International Centre for Cross-Border Cooperation at the Zhibek Zholy checkpoint in the South Kazakhstan region with a capacity of up to 25,000 people daily. Meanwhile, the trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan increased 50 percent in the first quarter of 2018. Uzbekistan plans to increase the import of Kazakh oil to five million tonnes.

## We need more livestock, says agriculture vice minister

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan needs to increase its livestock population, according to First Vice Minister of Agriculture Arman Yevniyev. The ministry expects the new cattle farming development programme will raise the population from seven million to 15 million heads.

He noted cattle farming is a “most optimal element” for agricultural production due to its relatively low cost and high quality, and the 10-year programme seeks to capitalise on these advantages.

Possessing vast grasslands and ranking fifth in the world with more than 180 million hectares of pastures, livestock has been a key component of Kazakh agriculture as well as a source of income and employment for the rural population which accounts for roughly half of the nation’s total population.

The new development programme addresses acute issues in the field, said Yevniyev.

“We see a big potential for livestock development. The country has all the resources to develop the sector,” he added. “The infrastructure is there, but we need to increase the livestock.”

The programme is meant to create a “new class of farmers” by growing the number of farms from 20,000 to 100,000 and raising rural employment from 100,000 to 500,000. With poverty in rural areas (4.9 percent) almost four times higher than in urban areas (1.3 percent), additional employment opportunities are of paramount importance.

Export revenues are forecast to reach \$2.4 billion, he added.

Large meat industry companies, including Australian Cedar Group, Chinese Rifa Holding, Citic Group and Inalca Eurasia, will be investing in the programme. Developing

cattle farming comes with certain challenges, however, including the search for money and land.

“The first challenge for farmers that are thinking about starting their business is where to get money. There is no money [easily available]. The programme addresses this issue,” said Yevniyev.

KazAgro, the leading Kazakh leasing company with a more than 70-percent share, will provide 15-year loans to farmers at a subsidised 4-percent interest rate. The funds can be used to purchase stock for further breeding and agriculture machinery and equipment or construct livestock housing.

Approximately 50 billion tenge (US\$152.2 million) will be allocated to support farmers this year, said KazAgro Board Chair Nurybek Malelov.

“There was no such thing before. The second question is where to get land. The programme has an answer to this question as well. Comprehensive work is being done. All the recent changes provide a mechanism to confiscate pastures and give them to those who need this,” he noted.

Pastures will be given without competition.

“We were reviewing the regions and some farms were found to be possessing hundreds or more than a million hectares and it is clear there is no livestock. This will be equal to irrational use of lands and will be subject to confiscation,” said Yevniyev.

More specialists are needed, he added, as “lack of competency and knowledge” is hampering development.

“With the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, we run the Bastau Business (Start Business) programme funded by the national budget, where anyone willing to take up the business can learn how to work with livestock and other specifics,” he added.

## Samruk Kazyna Fund adopts new development strategy

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev approved April 19 the updated Development Strategy of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund for 2018-2028 and the fund’s transformation programme.

“The work of the fund should be aimed at improving the life of the Kazakh people and strengthening the country’s economy. The new strategy and transformation programme will not only improve the fund’s activities, but also positively influence the further development of the national economy. The government and the fund should cooperate to implement these initiatives,” Nazarbayev told the gathering of fund officials.

The President noted the strategic importance of Samruk Kazyna in strengthening and developing the national economy.

“Samruk Kazyna plays an important role in the economy of the

country. The first long-term development strategy of the fund was adopted in 2012. It aimed to tackle the global financial crisis. The situation has changed in recent years. We could build a more stable economy despite the external factors. A lot of work has been done,” Nazarbayev said.

### Nazarbayev drew attention to the privatisation of the fund’s assets noting the high interest of foreign investors.

The head of state stressed the need to update previously adopted programmes in accordance with the country’s modernisation.

“We launched the third modernisation of the economy. We are integrating digital technologies in

all sectors. We adopted the country’s development strategy up to 2025. Now it’s time to adopt the new development strategy of Samruk Kazyna. We need to update the fund’s transformation programme. The initiative should reflect in the company’s activities,” he said.

Human capital development and effective use of the human resources are of great importance in the updated strategy for 2018-2028 and transformation programme.

“The fund continues to operate according to the multilevel management system. This complicates decision-making, requires additional financing for the administrative and management personnel. It is necessary to reduce management levels,” he said.

Nazarbayev drew attention to the privatisation of the fund’s assets noting the high interest of foreign investors.

The digitisation process is also relevant and necessary in terms of the fourth industrial revolution, he noted.

## Nation’s exports exceeded \$48.3 billion in 2017

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s foreign trade turnover increased by 25 percent to \$69.5 billion last year. The country’s exports increased by 30 percent and reached \$48.3 billion; imports grew by 15.5 percent to \$29.3 billion, Minister for Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Zhenis Kassymbek reported at a May 2 government meeting.

Over four years from 2013 to 2017, the share of manufacturing exports in Kazakhstan’s total exports increased from 23 to 32 percent.

“This year we are observing a positive export trend. According to relevant data, in the first two months of this year, exports exceeded \$8.8 billion, which is 27.4 percent – \$1.9 billion – higher than

in the same period last year,” Kassymbek said.

In the meantime, the country provides financial and service support to boost export volumes.

“In 2010-2017, exporters were provided with financial and insurance support worth more than 112.6 billion tenge (US\$340.6 million). The government also ensured export trade financing worth 14.7 billion tenge (US\$44.4 million) and pre-export financing at 5 billion tenge (US\$15.1 million). More than 40 exporters receive financial support every year. As part of the service support for exporters in 2010 to 2017, 1,800 manufacturers were able to conclude export contracts for more than \$2 billion, including \$197 million in 2017. Expenses were compensated to 204 exporters for 1.6 billion tenge

(US\$4.84 million). Every year more than 400 exporters receive service support in the country,” the minister said.

To increase the share of non-primary sector exports, the government is working with the ministries, the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, Kazakh Invest, the Kazakh Export insurance company and local executive agencies to modernise existing enterprises and introduce new export-oriented industries. The market shows a steady trend since 2015 with the introduction of seven-eight new products to foreign markets.

“In 2017, eight new products were brought to foreign markets: Niva and Peugeot cars, solar panels, gas boilers, cartridges, rails, POS-terminals and dry mare’s milk,” Kassymbek pointed out.

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The common stock price of Kazakhstan Electric Grid Operating Company (KEGOC) has reached a three-year maximum of 1,487.4 tenge (US\$4.50), according to kapital.kz. As a result of the annual shareholders' meeting, the decision was made to spend 70 percent of last year's net profit on dividends and the dividend per share was 40.13 tenge (US\$0.12). Halyk Finance investment bank analysts recommend keeping KEGOC shares. The company's net profit was 32.9 billion tenge (US\$99.6 million) and is forecast to grow 6 percent annually by 2028 due to increasing energy consumption and rising electricity tariffs. Conversely, KEGOC's expenditures are expected to decline as major investment projects will be completed by 2019.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), the national railway company, sold its 26-percent stake minus one share in Transtelecom, one of the nation's largest communications service providers, for 9.45 billion tenge (US\$28.6 million). The buyer now owns 75 percent of the company, according to abctv.kz. Transtelecom, worth 24.5 billion tenge (US\$74.3 million), had a net profit last year of 5.33 billion tenge (US\$1.6 million). The company has applied for a tender announced by the Ministry of Information and Communication to provide broadband Internet access to more than 400 settlements and 1,200 government organisations in rural areas.

EFKO, a major Russian oilseed producer, is planning to enter the Kazakh market, seizing 10 percent of the domestic market in the third quarter of the year. In Russia, the company produces oil under the Sloboda brand, but will use the Sultan name in Kazakhstan. Company representatives claim there are no rivals in Kazakhstan, as EFKO will be producing premium grade oil, whereas local producers make first grade oil, noted abctv.kz. The company, however, plans to use domestic input products. EFKO also plans to produce ketchup and mayonnaise, although competition in those markets is high.

The Kazakh business entity registration procedure has been simplified with the introduction of "one application" principle. Previously, future businesspeople were required to register a legal entity, then open a bank account, register with the tax office as a VAT (value-added tax) taxpayer and visit an insurance agency. Founders will now need an electronic digital signature to register. Within two working days, not including the day of application, individuals will simultaneously receive a certificate of business entity registration, bank account number and signed contract with an insurance company. Bank accounts are only available at four banks and insurance contracts at three companies, however, nine banks and four more insurance companies will be joining at a later date.

KMG International, the European subsidiary of KazMunayGas, had a net profit last year of \$80 million, according to the company's press service. The figure is six times the net profit of 2016 and considerably higher than the negative \$208 million reported in 2012. The company achieved record high indicators in its 40-year history and 10 years after integrating with KazMunayGas. The high figures were attained due to successfully completing its modernisation programme and increased production capacity at Petromidia refinery, the largest in Romania. The company plans to diversify its business and expand to the Black Sea region and Central and Eastern Europe.

Lamoda.kz, a Russian Internet shop, has added a Made in KZ section to its website, presenting Kazakh national brands to its customers, reported abctv.kz. Launched in 2016, the online store includes 18 national brands such as Adili, Altezza, Mimiorki, Mirasti and ShakerBay. The goal is to attract customer attention to Kazakh fashion labels by offering clothes, shoes and accessories, with children clothes currently the most popular products. Lamoda.kz plans to continue supporting local brands, cooperate with new producers and start selling Kazakh cosmetics.

## Kazakhstan doubles automotive production in Q1 of 2018



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh car assembly plants produced 90 percent more vehicles in the first three months of 2018 than in the same period last year, with the companies' contribution to the national GDP reaching 39.5 billion tenge (US\$120 million) in January-March.

"The contribution of industry enterprises to the GDP of the state in January-March of this year reached 39.5 billion tenge, which is an increase of 90.3 percent in comparison with the indicator in the last year and far exceeds similar figures of the pharmaceutical and light industry," said KazAvtoProm (Kazakhstan Automobile Industry Enterprises' Union) Chairperson Oleg Alferov.

He noted the companies' investments during the period reached 110.3 million tenge (US\$334,000).

"January-March became the fifth quarter of continuous recovery growth of Kazakhstan's auto industry. Against the backdrop of the moderate figures of last year, the volume of output doubled, reaching the level of 2015," he added.

The sales growth of locally-produced vehicles outstripped the speed of general market recovery. The share of Kazakh-manufactured cars in March was 49.5 percent, almost half of the market's volume.

"Kazakhstan automotive plants have such strong positions for the first time in the history of the industry!" said Alferov.

The top five brands of locally-produced vehicles are Lada (Russia), Hyundai (South Korea), KIA (South Korea), Ravon (Uzbekistan) and JAC (China).

Lada 4x4 (US\$9,400-\$11,500), the off-roader with a 40-year history, was again the most popular model in Kazakhstan, followed by

Lada Granta (US\$7,900-\$10,600). The latter is one of the most reasonably priced cars on the market. Hyundai came in third with its own bestseller – Tucson (US\$22,700-\$32,700). Lada occupies fourth place with Vesta (US\$11,500-\$14,500), with fifth place held by Largus (US\$13,000-\$14,200). Vesta is the company's most up-to-date model, using Renault's technologies. Largus is the only reasonably-priced seven-seater.

Rounding out the top 10 are Ravon Nexia (US\$8,500-\$10,000) in sixth place. Kia is seventh with its Sportage (US\$23,600-\$30,900), a competitor of Hyundai's Tucson. Hyundai Elantra (US\$17,000-\$22,000), in eighth place, is the only C-class car in the rating. Lada is attracting attention with its new XRAY compact SUV (US\$11,800-\$15,800), followed in tenth place by JAC's compact SUV S3 (US\$12,100-\$15,500).

## Astana Bank imposes new restrictions, seeks way out

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Bank introduced new restrictions May 4, including conducting cashless transactions, which will be in use until June 1. Despite the changes, S&P Global Ratings has downgraded the bank's long-term and short-term credit ratings from CCC/C to D/D.

The bank stopped withdrawing money May 2 from deposits, giving loans, sending international transfers and changing currency. Beginning 7 p.m. local time, May 4, those who own payment debit cards cannot conduct non-cash payments up to 100,000 tenge (US\$300) per month, according to the bank's website.

According to S&P, Astana Bank had 60 billion tenge (US\$181.6 million) in liquidity on April 1. The bank was able to meet the 30 billion tenge (US\$90.8 million)

requirement for closing deposits, which is approximately 10 percent of all customers.

S&P analysts consider restrictions on withdrawing funds, which the bank imposed earlier, indicate its liquid assets are not sufficient to fulfil all of its obligations in full and on time. The agency will raise the bank's rating from the D level once it is again able to timely and completely fulfil its financial obligations.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev criticised Astana Bank April 19. Three days later, the financial institution imposed its first restrictions, forbidding clients from making monetary transfers greater than 200,000 tenge (US\$600) and withdrawing more than 1 million tenge (US\$3,030) per week from their accounts.

Customers have expressed distrust in the bank and complained because they can't spend their own

money even for food, according to posts in VKontakte, a Russian social media site.

Despite the ratings downgrade, Astana Bank is continuing to work towards stabilising the situation. Management has emphasised the volume of its assets can ensure repaying obligations and is continuing to negotiate with National Bank on opportunities and conditions to grant an emergency liquidity loan. If the loan is received, the bank will be able to promptly execute all client payments and transfers and ensure the continuity of its activities, according to its press release.

The management is also actively negotiating with its strategic investors. It is conducting a detailed analysis of the current situation and talking with a number of second-tier banks and state development funds to refinance its loan portfolio, according to its website.

## Digital Railway strategy to increase speed, convenience, savings

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – Kazakh national rail company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) President Kanat Alpysbayev reported on the implementation of the country's Digital Railways strategy during the May 2 government meeting on export, consumer and transport digitisation policies.

Transport makes up 8 percent of Kazakhstan's gross domestic product and has been increasing by at least 4.5 percent each year. Kazakhstan's population of 18 million owns 5.3 million automobiles, suggesting 29 out of 100 people in the country possess a vehicle, compared to 14 out of 100 in the rest of the Commonwealth of Independent States and 48 out of 100 in Europe. In 2017, 2.5 million traffic violations were registered in Kazakhstan.

The 2018-2022 Digital Railway strategy sketches the implementation of 21 projects, two of which are being implemented under the Digital Kazakhstan state programme. The Digital Railway project aims to reduce traffic violations up to 85 percent, increase the average speed of travel around the city, improve passenger transport safety and reduce the environmental footprint of KTZ's transport options.

An eight-component process has been laid out to meet these goals. The first component is the further application of modern information systems in KTZ's critical operating segments – cargo transportation, passenger transportation, railway infrastructure and transport logistics.

Other components involve controlling cost optimisation, launching digital road diagnostics and implementing Traffic Management and Digital Services Centres at 17

railway stations. Internet ticketing options and another 17,000 ticket terminals are to be available in the near future, and waiting list and train rating programmes have already been launched. E-ticket sales currently make up 64 percent of all sales; by 2020, it is hoped that they will make 90 percent.

"It is planned to realise a 24/7 system of centralised management of customer appeals for prompt feedback to customers through timely response to complaints and suggestions," added Alpysbayev.

Likewise, a single electronic exchange platform is being created for multimodal transport, particularly transit container movements with the account of more than 1,700 customers-participants. Automated processes are underway at Khorgos-Eastern Gate on the border with China that can potentially reduce traffic checkpoint time from 10 minutes to 30 seconds,

## Kazakhstan develops smart oil transportation programme

By Raushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has developed SmartTran, a unique digital technology to transport oil through main pipelines. Inventors TransOil technical policy department director Berik Sayakhov and Satbayev University Modeling in Power Engineering research and production laboratory head Uzak Zhappasbayev described the programme in an interview with kapital.kz.

"Solving energy efficiency problems is one of the most significant tasks for the oil and gas sector in Kazakhstan, in particular, pipeline transport," they told the news outlet.

SmartTran automates energy saving modes for oil transportation planning and management systems, improves workers' productivity and ensures the pipelines' competitiveness. The programme processes real-time data received from dispatch control to operate as well as manage transportation technology in the main pipelines. It also dramatically increases pipeline operation and efficient reliability.

The research was completed in several stages. After a database was created and modelled, the system was optimised and then integrated with SCADA (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition) and ASCEM (Automated System for Commercial Electricity Metering). The technology included digitising the entire transportation system production procedure. The five-year process, from 2012-2017, was completed with a 128 million tenge (US\$388,224) investment.

SmartTran has been incorporated into the KazTransOil (KTO) oil mix control system. It determines the pumping modes' energy saving, economic and technological efficiency during transportation along the company's pipeline routes.

The programme also uses real-time operational data (process equipment operation modes, oil pumping volumes and parameters, etc.) from SCADA. In turn, it determines the optimum operating conditions for pumping units and heating furnaces for energy-saving transportation through the KTO pipeline routes. Incorporating SmartTran at the company's facilities is a complex and lengthy process requiring an entire production system performance assessment.

"In addition to KazTransOil, the consumers of the technology can be the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, the Kazakhstan-China Oil Pipeline, the North-Western Pipeline Company Munai Tas, Karachaganak Petroleum Operating B.V. and Turgai Petroleum. In general, this technology, with

some modifications, can be used for pumping oil mixtures in oil companies' pipelines in the field," said the inventors.

Unlike control systems used in Canada, Russia, the U.S. and other countries, the technology transports high-viscosity, high-hardening (paraffin) oil mixtures in areas with several oil pumping stations and heating points while ensuring the safety of the main pipeline.

The distinctive feature is the way the programme can simulate and optimise hot pumping, as more than 15 million tonnes of Kazakh oil mixtures are transported in this way. Oil mixtures are hardened in heating furnaces and the energy efficiency is determined by the furnace and pumping units' optimum condition, taking into account primary pipeline thermal regime safety conditions.

"For instance, hot pumping modelling and optimisation at the main Uzen-Atyrau-Samara pipeline sections will lead to significant energy savings in the pump units and heating furnace," said the developers.

According to the laws of hydraulics, the specific electricity consumption utilised to pump oil proportionally increases oil turnover to 1.75. The figure indicates the need to reduce oil transportation costs by determining the energy saving modes of the equipment (pumping units, heating furnace, etc.). SmartTran can simulate and optimise the pumping volume, technological equipment operation and oil and oil mixtures transportation via the KTO pipelines.

"The pipeline transportation energy saving is largely related to energy costs for oil transportation and heating. Almost 70 percent of the consumed electricity is expended for the pumping units' operation and in the case of oil transportation through the hot oil pipeline, costs are increased by 85 percent due to the oil heating furnace operation," said the developers.

In an environment where oil prices are unstable and oil production is increasing, finding a decent way to face energy challenges has become essential. SmartTran will lead to an increase in labour productivity, progress in technological modes to transport oil and petroleum mixtures and efficiently plan and manage KTO's main oil pipelines.

"In 2018, all oil pipeline routes of the KazTransOil's main pipelines will be optimised for pumping oil and oil mixtures in energy-saving modes. Based on their results, we can talk about the specific economic effect from the introduction of technology at the company's facilities," said Sayakhov and Zhappasbayev.

and diminish registration costs from \$2,395 to \$239.50 per every registration, which in turn cuts the risk of corruption offences.

Information systems are also being introduced in freight rail transport to increase the efficiency of the organisation of transportation processes, ensure the timely delivery and safety of goods and simplify procedures for crossing the borders of other railway administrations.

"The company completed a service for the online tracking of goods, including a system of electronic lock devices that ensures the safety of cargo and a prompt response to any unauthorised attempt to access cargo. An automated system of contractual and commercial work was presented during the report. An e-freight paperless workflow system for air cargo is going to be implemented this year, and the project costs are estimated to be around 5.4 billion tenge (US\$16.2

million). "We have implemented 100 percent paperless transportation of goods, as well as integration with the Astana-1 information system," said Alpysbayev.

According to preliminary estimates, the total economic effect from the implementation of the strategy will be 110 billion tenge (US\$331.3 million) by 2025.

The overall long-term effects of the programme are hoped to be a 20 percent reduction in travel time, availability of information up to 70 percent, an 8 to 10 percent reduction in traffic accidents and a drop of harmful emissions by 24 percent. The positive economic impact of all of this is expected to be 380 billion tenge (US\$1.14 billion).

"Successful implementation of Digital Kazakhstan projects will ensure the advancement of the country's logistics environment," Alpysbayev emphasised.

# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## AEF now global in scale, relevance

None who attends the 11th Astana Economic Forum taking place this month will be complaining that its agenda does not get to the heart of global challenges or those invited to speak will lack insights on how we might overcome them. The revamped format provides opportunities for debate on an extraordinary range of important topics while those contributing to discussions will bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the forum.

The ambition of the organisers underlines how the AEF has grown over the last decade into an established part of the international calendar. Its appeal and focus now reaches far beyond Kazakhstan or even Central Asia and is undeniably global in its perspective. Thousands of participants from as many as 80 countries are expected to attend.

What is also true is that the AEF has evolved as the need for fresh ideas has become more urgent. When the first forum was held in June 2008, of course, the full catastrophic shock of the global financial crisis was still a couple of months away. As the crisis spread rapidly from small-town America to every continent, it brought home – for many people for the first time – how our economies were now linked. The crisis demanded a global response to repair the damage and tackle the faults in the system now exposed.

Over the last 10 years, the AEF, as international organisations, such as the UN have recognised, has helped shape this response. Measures and mechanisms now adopted to prevent the crisis being repeated and to remedy flaws in the system can be traced back to recommendations out of the forum. From the beginning, its discussions have been focused on the practical rather than the purely theoretical.

Even a decade later, the world has failed to shrug off the legacy of the crisis. Real wages in many countries have failed to recover while debt levels remain high. Inequality both between and within countries has worsened. Indeed, how we can reduce this gap at a time when global growth is slowing – and whether priority should be given to increasing GDP or reducing inequality – is one of the challenges which this year's AEF will debate.

There will be discussions, too, on harnessing natural resources and the role of sustainable energy as well as how we can better arrive at – and deliver – solutions to global problems. Whether, for instance, it is tackling climate change or strengthening international trade, our world can appear to be moving away from the common action which is necessary.

But it is a measure of how the forum has evolved that it will also examine a whole host of other economic and social issues which will have a profound effect on our lives in the future. So, among the 11 global challenges to be discussed, for example, is how we tackle the impact of increasing longevity on our economies and societies. There will also be discussions on cryptocurrencies as well as what we must do to ensure we get the benefits that the digital world and big data can bring while preventing them from being misused or abused.

There will be sessions, too, focused on how our megacities must change to meet the needs of the growing number of people who want to live in them. And the role of AI – Artificial Intelligence – in our workplaces and economies, the opportunities this will bring and the risks that we guard against will also be examined. There will be a fascinating discussion on what humans can offer which even the most intelligent machines cannot.

Issues of such importance and complexity need insightful speakers if the discussions are to be fruitful. There will be no disappointment in Astana at the list of those attending and contributing.

Among those scheduled to share their expertise are the former UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon and former French President Francois Hollande. The delegates will also hear from economists such as the World Bank's Hans Timmerand, Jim O'Neill, who famously devised the BRICS concept, as well as world-leading scientists such as physicist Michio Kaku.

It promises to be a lively and rewarding couple of days. Even more importantly, we must all hope that the outcome of the discussions will help us find the answers to the big challenges we face just as past forums have done.

## Romania, Kazakhstan interested in multiple partnerships, Romanian MP says

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – What do Kazakhstan and Romania have in common? Which areas are best for cooperation for the two states? Tamara-Dorina Ciofu, member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament, answered some questions for The Astana Times on the current state and prospects of Kazakh-Romanian relations following her recent visit to Kazakhstan.

**Please tell us your thoughts about Kazakh-Romanian relations: what has been achieved, what plans are there for the future and what still needs to be done?**

Having stayed in Kazakhstan for a few days, I found that Romania has a very good image and perception here and there is a real interest in developing multiple partnerships. I would like to reiterate Romania's support for the development of relations between our countries because we consider Kazakhstan the most important state in the region. Kazakhstan has become a respected member of the international community, a model for Central Asia. The history of relations between Romania and Kazakhstan, which started in 1992, is not only relevant from a political, diplomatic or economic point of view, but also from the perspective of human interaction, links between our people and our interest in better knowing each other's culture and traditions and understanding our contemporary societies.

We believe education and people-to-people contacts are key elements that can ensure mutual understanding and bring support for values that our countries share, building bridges in areas that are sometimes affected by geographical distance. We reaffirm Romania's interest to develop overall bilateral relations with Kazakhstan. In this respect, we noticed the increasing interest shown by our institutions and experts to cooperate in various fields like education, science, medicine and culture. In this regard, I would like to mention the establishment of the first lectureship of Romanian language, culture and civilisation in Central Asia in Karagandy on Jan. 24, 2014.

Contracts and agreements have also been signed between well-known Romanian universities and important education centres and universities in Kazakhstan, such as the twinning agreements signed between the University of Bucharest and the Eurasian National University (ENU) in Astana; between the Yessenov Caspian State University of Technology and Engineering and the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti on exchanging doctoral students; between the Babeş-Bolyai University and the Buketov Karagandy State University (including exchanges of teachers and students, creation of language lectures and a culture based on reciprocity), the Abylai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages and the Kazakh British Technical University, both in Almaty.

We are preparing to organise, in October 2018, the 14th session of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission, which will be hosted this year by Kazakhstan. This year, for the first time, beyond the usual format of this event, we will also organise a business forum. The Romanian delegation will also visit Almaty, where economic meetings will be held to identify new partnership opportunities.

A major priority is the development of bilateral relations. In this sense, we believe that together we will need to do more for knowing and promoting the common cultural values and I appreciate, in this context, the role of parliaments and the importance of developing parliamentary diplomacy. And here, I would like to mention the efforts made in the cultural sphere by the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Romania.

At the same time, as we discussed with Ambassador Cezar Armeanu of Romania in Kazakhstan, we consider that Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov's visit to Bucharest, as well as Deputy Minister Roman Vassilenko's visit, will constitute the major elements of the positive resizing of our relations on multiple plans. Beyond the clear political implications, high-level visits have



Tamara-Dorina Ciofu

merits on a technical level because they encourage our institutions to meet more often to find practical ways to implement the political decisions.

**A new EU strategy for Central Asia is being elaborated now. What do you think its main purpose, messages and essential provisions should be?**

The new EU Strategy for Central Asia will define the main priorities for further cooperation, and will be adopted by mid-2019, when Romania will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

We believe that three major directions would be of interest in the forthcoming strategy: education, rule of law and environmental protection, plus programmes on the promotion and development of new technologies.

Also, cooperation may be strengthened in energy efficiency, education, human rights, strengthening civil society and increasing its role, the rule of law and gender equality, environmental protection, rational use of water resources and climate change, digitisation, developing the region's transit and transport potential, modernisation and development of logistics and transport, and also the development of the 'digital economy.'

I appreciate that the significant potential for cooperation, the growth of the region's market and the geographical location of Central Asia as 'the main gateway between Europe and Asia' are among the reasons that explain the region's importance to the EU.

The strategy needs to be more flexible in terms of how to implement its objectives, while it is more focused and result-oriented, taking into account the growing needs of young people and providing economic opportunities in a region without a diversified economy.

**As you know, Kazakhstan is striving to become a link between Europe and Asia through its Nury Zhol national programme and participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative. What do you think are the prospects of this endeavour and what is Romania's role here?**

Romania welcomes this initiative and considers it a continuation of the Silk Road idea in the 21st century. The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the important regional initiatives to develop transport. The region must become a global market and develop global trade, but above all, it must achieve global connectivity. Cross-border trade and regional connectivity are also important. Those will facilitate economic exchanges between Europe, Central Asia and China. Romania is interested in all areas involved in this initiative, and welcomes Kazakhstan's role and involvement in its development.

The Belt and Road Initiative will streamline the introduction of Romanian products in these markets and as a result, we are committed to contributing to the development of the project. China's initiative to connect Europe and Asia is an important contribution to boosting cooperation and, as a matter of fact, we are already involved in infrastructure and investment programmes in the new road proposed by China.

I believe the global economy needs this project to increase cooperation and joint development, which will bring added value to Asia and Europe.

**As an expert in human rights and national minorities, what is your assessment of Kazakhstan's achievements in**

**the sphere of protecting human rights and establishing a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state?**

Kazakhstan is a secular, sovereign and independent state based on the rule of law. I know that due to the way human rights are guaranteed and respected here, including for ethnic and religious minorities, it has become a member of prestigious international organisations. I know that Kazakhstan is a member of the UN [since 1992], the [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe] OSCE since 1992 and also held the 2010 chairmanship-in-office in that organisation, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Turkic Council and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, to name a few. At the same time, the Kazakh state has cooperation relations in various forms and stages institutionalised with NATO [since 1992] and the EU [since 1993]. It was the first Central Asian state to conclude in 2015 an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU. All these achievements indicate the recognition of the fact that Kazakhstan is a national guarantor of fundamental rights, including those of minorities. During my stay, I visited churches belonging to a various range of denominations and I could remark upon the harmony relations between citizens.

**You attended a briefing by Kazakh government officials concerning the advancements in Kazakhstan's torture prevention mechanism. Could you tell us about the results of this event and your impressions?**

I appreciate the efforts of the Kazakh party in solving issues related to equal opportunities, respect for human rights in all the valences of this issue, including domestic violence. We need to support judicial reform in Kazakhstan.

We support Kazakhstan's legal reforms, providing experience and know-how, in particular through financial and technical cooperation and specific projects funded under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Kazakhstan is the recipient of EU funding for humanitarian and civilian aid and disaster risk reduction measures as well as improving school safety and health system training.

I know 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 combat torture. The criminal legislation has been brought in line with the norms of international law; new criminal procedural and penal enforcement codes have been adopted.

The rights and obligations are both for the state and its citizens. The key is to respect the law and then everything will go well.

**There is a rather sizeable Romanian diaspora living in Kazakhstan, and a Kazakh diaspora living in Romania. How do you think they could enhance bilateral cooperation between our countries?**

We believe the role of the diaspora is particularly important in strengthening bilateral relations, in ensuring better understanding among peoples. We particularly appreciate the permanent support that Kazakhstan gives to the Romanian community in your country, which is quite numerous, over 20,000 people. Whether living in Karagandy, Almaty or Pavlodar, they enjoy the constant care of central and local authorities. Similarly, in Romania, we have a small Kazakh community that enjoys rights and protection from the Romanian state and the authorities, and the Kazakh Embassy could confirm these aspects, because they are closely involved in these issues.

We will also try to support the organisation of events in the two countries designed to help preserve and promote their cultural identity without neglecting an important element: everything must be done with respect for and promotion of the national specificity of the countries of residence.

I would like to point out in this context that the way Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev knows how to maintain balance and good understanding among more than 100 different ethnic groups can be a good example for anyone.

## Astana Process remains key to diplomatic solution in Syria

Despite the best efforts of the international community, many long-running issues in the Middle East remain unresolved. Just recently, the uncertainty over the future of the Iranian nuclear deal, as well as the decision to relocate the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, have added to the region's complex challenges.

Elsewhere, the long-running conflict in Syria has sparked dangerous confrontations between Israel and Iran, while the people of Syria continue to suffer. For eight years now, the crisis has caused immense pain and destruction. Countless lives have been lost and families displaced.

In the face of this enduring conflict, it might be easy to lose faith in the merits of seeking a diplomatic solution. This would be a grave error. Although the conflict may have started with violence, it cannot be ended by it. A diplomatic solution must be found. Negotiating a peace settlement based on a common purpose remains the only way to resolve the Syrian crisis. As a nation determined to help end violent conflicts around the world, Kazakhstan is committed to this solution.

It is for this reason that Astana hosted a ninth round of peace talks this week on 14-15 May, attended by the guarantor states of Russia, Turkey and Iran, representatives of the Government of Syria and of the Syrian armed opposition. Steffan de Mistura, special envoy of UN Secretary General for Syria, and representatives from Jordan participated as observers.

The Astana Process negotiations have helped to establish mechanisms to monitor Syrian ceasefires and were instrumental in the establishment of de-escalation zones. Both actions helped reduce violence against civilians in the country throughout 2017. Furthermore, the establishment of four de-escalation zones enabled civilians to receive much needed humanitarian assistance.

It is impossible to deny that the situation in Syria remains critical, with violent clashes a daily occurrence. Several agreements that were reached during the previous rounds of talks, including the establishment of de-escalation zones, have not been fully implemented in practice. The humanitarian situation remains desperate and more help from the international community is urgently needed. Most worrying of all is the apparent use of chemical weapons, a completely abhorrent act.

Despite these setbacks and complex challenges, there can be no military solution to this crisis. Only sustained diplomatic efforts and negotiations can offer some light at the end of this dark tunnel.

For this reason, the Astana Process must continue. This week, the participants discussed the ongoing implementation of de-escalation zones, the release of captives and hostages, and the formation of a constitutional committee. The government of Kazakhstan has frequently stated that it is important that the guarantor states use their authority and influence to encourage the government and armed opposition groups of Syria to take concrete steps to implement and strengthen confidence-building measures. The issues that were discussed this week are precisely aimed at such action. These are crucial steps on to road to peace and stability in Syria.

Nobody is under any illusion that this round of talks will be enough to create a breakthrough in the deadlock. But the outcome of the Astana Process, which seeks to complement the UN-led intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, can offer tangible relief to the millions of the country's citizens who are desperate for any alleviation to their suffering.

For this reason, it is right that Kazakhstan continues to offer its assistance as a neutral and objective mediator in this conflict and remain committed to helping all sides find a lasting, credible solution.

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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Wake up! France has changed

By Philippe Martinet

Since President Emmanuel Macron was elected in May 2017, France's economy is transforming at a lightning pace. Elected on an ambitious programme, the President has set about to modernise the French economic landscape.

Since May 2017, France has changed. Our country is determined to weigh in on the crucial decisions that the international community will have to make. We want to have a say in the battle against climate change. We want to preserve the multilateral trade system which is so beneficial to growth and employment throughout the continents. We want to be strong enough to make an effective contribution to world peace and stability. We want to be one of the countries which will build a new Europe, a stronger Eu-



rope, carrying the universal values which form an integral part of our heritage.

Therefore, reforms in France are conducted in full sync with this new European vision. Our reform agenda aims at the very objectives the European Union has set itself for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Four priorities are put forward:

\* Reform labour laws, reduce

taxes to facilitate investment and simplify the legal framework applicable to companies: as such, labour regimes will be negotiated on a sectorial basis to ease and adapt the offer to the demand;

\* Combine structural reforms and ambitious investment policies in several sectors: education, innovation and research, apprenticeship and vocational training, agriculture, transport and ecological transition;

\* Reform the social and fiscal system: abolition of the housing tax, introduction of a fairer health system with no additional payments for the citizen, promotion of real life gender equality, pension reform and inclusive local development, urban policy renewal and development of overseas territories;

\* Transform the state and restore the balance of our public finances before 2022: focus on investment

instead of operating expenses, optimise the use of state resources and cut non-productive taxes that deter additional investment.

France has changed, indeed. France is the country in Europe where new firms are set up at the fastest annual rate. In 2016, the country has attracted more than 25.6 billion euro in foreign direct investment, reaching the top-15 worldwide. In the wake of Brexit, numerous companies are taking up residence in France for its business-friendly environment and "douceur de vivre". Recently, Bank of America announced the opening of a thousand strong financial trading unit in Paris. Samsung will set up its third largest R&D Centre, focused on artificial intelligence, in Saclay technology hub.

Samsung did not choose our country randomly. In fact, France is riding the wave of the new digital revolution. The country has been at the breakthrough of blockchain technology, being the first to allow such technology to

exchange financial instruments in a safer, faster and cheaper way. In fact, knowledge and innovation are at the heart of our development: French digital firms are the most successful in Europe, regularly topping the podium of international rankings. Moreover, France has the best fiscal regime for R&D among OECD member states. France has changed, and it shows: 16,250 patents have been filed in 2017.

Today, Kazakhstan is at the threshold of a new industrial revolution, nourished by comprehensive state programmes such as the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy and Digital Kazakhstan.

In one regard, France has NOT changed: France is a partner for diversification in the Kazakh economy with strong stakes in space, transport, energy, manufacturing and agribusiness. In the past few years, French companies have raised their interests in renewable energies, waste management, smart urban development, including "safe city".

Our countries enjoy a longstanding relationship that will celebrate its 10 years of strategic partnership next month. We wish to build upon these ties to develop further our cooperation in every possible direction: cultural, scientific, academic and economic, in defence and security as well as in innovation and technology. That is why we launched with Kazakhstan this year the Abai-Verne scholarship, an annual allocation of 100 grants (90 for second-year graduate students and 10 for doctoral students) to study in France. That is why our aerospace and defence companies will take an active part in Astana's KADEX. That is also why we will focus the Embassy's activities this autumn on France's contribution to the digitalisation of Kazakhstan.

France has changed. Together we can change and build a sustainable *боллауың!*

The author is Ambassador of France to Kazakhstan.

## Social Initiatives will strengthen middle class

By Alberto Turkstra

On March 5, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined five new major social initiatives to improve the socio-economic standing and progress of Kazakh citizens. These initiatives are a key pillar of Kazakhstan's ambitious modernisation programme and will aid the nation in the pursuit of the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy. With its strong focus on infrastructure, logistics, private sector and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, housing, social services and the enhancement of human capital, this strategy, in combination with the Nurlu Zhol strategy, hopes to help establish Kazakhstan as one of the world's 30 most developed economies by 2050.

The first initiative consists of increasing the supply of affordable housing.

This initiative builds upon the Affordable Housing 2020 programme approved in 2014. Kazakhstan has been urbanising rapidly and its population has been increasing at a fast rate, too (at 1.4 percent, quite high compared to other developed countries) and additional measures need to be taken for real estate construction to keep up with these two trends. While the number of transactions for purchase and sale of housing in 2017 increased by 25 percent compared to the previous year (according to the statistics committee of the National Economy Ministry), approximately 14 percent of the population (2.5 million people) still own no residential property (according to Regional Financial Centre of Almaty (RFCA) ratings).



Affordable housing will further promote social inclusion and cohesion, sustainable urban development and other positive spill-over effects in society. Careful attention will also need to be paid to the provision of social housing for those worse-off in society, as well as to the rural-urban divide by ensuring that the provision of infrastructure, housing and public services in the rural areas does not fall behind vis-à-vis the main urban centres of Almaty and Astana.

The next initiative promotes the expansion of loans for businesspeople and the development of an entrepreneurial environment conducive to the flourishing of SMEs.

This initiative should be understood within the context of the big privatisation push and structural reforms being undertaken in Kazakhstan in order to inject greater dynamism in the economy and promote diversification. As such, the development of the private sector is given high priority in the transition from a centralised to a market economy, in which less efficient state-owned enterprises (SOEs) constitute a gradually lower share of the economy in favour of SMEs, the engines of growth, innovation, competitiveness and

job creation in the Kazakh economy. SME development can also lead to a reduced reliance on extractive industries, decreasing the exposure of the Kazakh economy to volatile commodity prices.

In recent years, programmes and instruments at the national and local level have gradually incorporated various forms of support (financial and otherwise) for SMEs, along with the creation of an enabling environment for their development and expansion (high-tech parks, business incubators, etc).

However, the SME sector in Kazakhstan is still in its infancy. Kazakhstan has over 750,000 registered SMEs employing 2.5 million people (roughly 28 percent of total employment), accounting for 20-25 percent of the GDP. Kazakhstan wishes to see this share increase to 50 percent by 2050, as Nazarbayev indicated during his recent state-of-the-nation address. For this vision to be realised, SMEs should also be given facilities to participate in the supply and distribution chains of larger firms.

Access to investment financing will need to become more widely accessible, especially to women, youth and people with disabilities. Kazakhstan can already take great pride in the fact that women own and/or manage almost half of all SMEs, thanks in part to its participation in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) Women in Business Programme for Kazakhstan launched in 2015.

The next initiative involves increasing the accessibility to, and quality of, higher education.

Education can be a powerful in-

strument to reduce social inequalities, providing equitable access to affordable higher education for students from rural areas, with disabilities and from lower socio-economic statuses.

Kazakhstan has made persistent efforts for its universities to offer skills relevant to the 21st Century labour market and the emerging industries in the country. As the economy diversifies towards higher value-added activities and sectors, it is developing knowledge-intensive services including ICT and finance.

Kazakhstan has also made efforts to internationalise its higher education. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Bolashak Scholarship Programme, which has allowed many talented young Kazakhs to study abroad. Furthermore, since 2010, Kazakhstan has become a full member of the Bologna Process (it was the first Central Asian country to join), making Kazakh degrees compatible with European Union (EU) jobs. Since then, Kazakhstan has adapted and adjusted its education system to converge with the principles of the Bologna Declaration and Kazakh universities have increasingly offered post-graduate degrees in conjunction with leading foreign universities.

A renewed focus on engineering and technical studies is vital to ensure Kazakhstan harnesses the abilities of its young people and shapes the country's place in the fourth industrial revolution. As the Kazakh economy becomes increasingly digitalised, it is important that the education sector adapts accordingly, imparting

the relevant skills to the nation's youth. In addition, investment in high-tech industries is helping Kazakhstan transition away from its traditional dependency on commodity exports, helping it establish a more knowledge and innovation-intensive economy. In conjunction, these changes are hoped to move the Kazakh economy up the global value chain, making it increasingly competitive.

To be aligned with current trends, Almaty Management University has introduced a new course on business analytics and global data (Big Data). In addition, space and nuclear science and technology research have been at the forefront of Kazakhstan's modernisation programme. The recent creation of the Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry is no exception, with the consolidation of expertise strengthening high-tech industries as well as boosting R&D processes.

The last initiative entails the construction of a new gas pipeline to Astana, which should be understood in the context of the vulnerability of Kazakhstan to the effects of climate change. Kazakhstan has been developing the concept of green economy since 2013, setting specific climate change mitigation and adaptation targets including increasing its share of renewables in electricity generation and reducing greenhouse emissions by 25 percent by 2030 compared with 1990 levels as per its intended nationally-determined contributions submitted in 2015.

The construction of the pipeline is expected to have a positive socio-economic and environmental

impact, as it will replace a considerable amount of coal consumption, the most pollutant of fossil fuels, saving 36,100 tonnes of pollutant emissions per year in Astana alone.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that in February, an online platform for monitoring, reporting and verifying emission sources and greenhouse gases was officially launched by the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in cooperation with the World Bank.

In conclusion, Nazarbayev's recently announced social initiatives will pave the way for Kazakhstan to continue rising in the ranks of the human development index after notable rises in recent years (During the period 2010-2015, Kazakhstan jumped seven spots). For this, the economy will need to diversify further, a robust private sector should be further developed and the productivity of various economic sectors increased with the availability of new technologies. The country is also equipping its youth with the skills and know-how necessary to flourish in the impending fourth industrial revolution of high-tech and big data.

These measures will furthermore strengthen the resilience of the middle class, which has grown to approximately 20 percent of the population according to World Bank statistics, with a vigorous middle class being a key driver of consumer spending, growth and stability. Lastly, new social initiatives reaffirm the fact that Kazakhstan has a people-oriented agenda in place, with the well-being and prosperity of its citizens at the centre of the national strategy.

The author is Programme Coordinator Brussels-based European Institute for Asian Studies.

## Anti-corruption strategies show signs of progress

By Roushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's anti-corruption strategies are showing early signs of progress, a top official at the country's Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Fighting Corruption said.

Salauat Muksimov, the agency's anti-corruption policy department director spoke about executing anti-corruption strategies and public participation in combatting corruption in a recent exclusive interview for this story.

"In 2017, compared to the year 2015, citizens' confidence in the state anti-corruption policy increased by 17.9 percent (from 55.5 percent to 73.4 percent). The number of registered corruption offences decreased by 18 percent during 2016 and 2017 as well. Sociologists noted a noticeable reduction in the corruption level, an increase in the trust level of this policy and eventually the proportion of people who are ready to contribute to counteracting corruption has increased," he said.

According to recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports, Kazakhstan has made a significant leap in countering corrup-



Salauat Muksimov

tion. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, released in February, indicated the nation has entered the zone of less corrupt countries, gaining 31 points.

"Our upsurge in the OECD reports is related to the adoption of the anti-corruption strategy. Previously various government programmes were undertaken to combat corruption, but the strategy adopted in 2014 changed the nature of attitude to corruption as a phenomenon. We moved to the middle category. I expect that next year we will witness good results in this regard. I believe quite tangible results will appear before 2020," the official said.

The adopted law provided the department with additional capacities, such as conducting cor-

ruption risk analysis at state bodies by checking their management activities and analysing regulatory acts. For the first time, Kazakhstan is employing methods used in OECD countries by completing corruption risk analysis and eliminating causes and conditions.

In addition, an e-government forum was created for citizens' convenience and to ensure transparency in state activities. Every citizen can now participate in adopting regulatory and legal acts with her/his proposals to the state and ministerial budgets being transparent, as each state body regularly posts its data. Muksimov noted the success of countering corruption is not only related to the measures indicated in the law, but also to their practical execution.

"We created many localities that were not previously available. These include entrepreneurs and non-governmental actors. Today, thanks to such a platform, everyone feels capable of contributing to changing the situation. Business received a clear signal that these administrative and corruption barriers can be eliminated and this understanding grows into confidence. This is a big sign," he said.

The business sector previously

did not engage in combatting anti-corruption and to date, the department has conducted two forums. Last year's road map which outlines the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between the Agency and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, examined 16 areas it felt caused questions, such as customs and taxation, and presented recommendations to state bodies.

Muksimov added the department intensified its work with foreign investors through a forum for foreign ambassadors, businesspeople and others dedicated to countering corruption and creating a favourable investment climate. The department also completed a second public initiatives congress with its reports and latest trends.

"Till this day, the non-governmental sector had never attended [the congress] to discuss corruption problems. Today, we are talking about this openly together," he said.

The department designed a public control map that functions on social networks as well as created call centres in all regions and formed a unique monitoring group to implement anti-corruption measures on the regional

level. In addition, instilling the rejection of corruption in the people's mentality has been ensured through the efforts of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan's (APK), ethno-cultural organisations, and religious figures.

Muksimov's functions include minimising the level of corruption by preventing it, eliminating its contributing causes and conditions, shaping general corruption rejection in society and involving civil society so as not to confine oneself to state bodies efforts alone.

The agency is also tackling corruption on the national and international level.

"Regarding international anti-corruption measures, Kazakhstan follows the Istanbul Action Plan, alongside the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) proposal, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Interstate Council and the United Nations conventions," he said.

National actions refer to those systemic measures prescribed by law, including an analysis of corruption risks, forming an anti-corruption culture and anti-corruption monitoring. The most pressing task is minimizing the internal corruption that citizens

encounter in their everyday interactions with state and regional bodies.

In this regard, the department has launched three projects. A special office was formed to implement the Astana Adaldyq Alany (Astana's Integrity Platform) project, launched in conjunction with the city akimat (city administration).

"Astana, and its local executive body, in particular, implements this programme and meets with residents, and contacts with the states and citizens indeed take place. It is convenient for us to see its relationship with the central apparatus and state bodies. Within the programme framework and using the pilot programme, the same mechanisms will be scaled up and implemented in all other regions in Kazakhstan," said Muksimov.

Sanly Urapk (Conscious Generation), established in Almaty, seeks to minimise corruption in the education system. The project has developed an optimal solution for curbing corruption at the secondary and higher education level, as well as disseminating the academic honesty principle. University academic integrity and cohesion ratings will be issued annually based on project estimates.

The full version of this article is available online.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## OIC ministerial addresses Rohingya people exodus, appoints Kazakh to high post

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – May 4-5 45th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Dhaka, Bangladesh addressed issues facing the international Islamic community, including the humanitarian crisis resulting from the mass exodus of the Rohingya people from Myanmar, Bangladesh's neighbour.

"While visiting Rohingya refugee camps, we had a chance to obtain a first-hand perspective of just how significant this disaster is. A collective response from the entire Muslim world is urgently needed to protect the destiny and future of Rohingya," said Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov during the session, adding Kazakhstan is committed to protecting the Rohingya people and provided \$500,000 in humanitarian aid in April to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

The second day of the OIC ministerial, titled "Islamic Values for Sustainable Peace, Solidarity and Development," adopted the Dhaka Declaration and the Islamic Rapprochement initiative, reports the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's press service.

The initiative was proposed by Kazakh President Nursultan Naz-



arbayev and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2016 to promote tolerance between Muslim countries and encourage dialogue.

During the session, Kazakh diplomat Askar Musinov was also elected OIC Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology, gaining 12 out of 18 votes of the OIC Asia group. It is the highest post within the OIC to which a Kazakh has been elected.

Musinov had served as Kazakh ambassador to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and has until recently worked as director of the Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution Unit of the

OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

"This appointment became possible due to the high authority of the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in the Muslim world and his active work on developing the Islamic world. The election of a Kazakh diplomat for this important post is of particular importance in light of the implementation of the results of the first OIC Summit on Science and Technology held in Astana in September 2017," said Abdrakhmanov.

Kamrul Ahsan, a secretary at the Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry, was Musinov's opponent for

the position. Abdrakhmanov also briefed the gathering on Kazakh initiatives and proposals for challenges facing the Muslim world.

He said the Astana Process talks on Syria in support of the UN-led Geneva talks helped reduce violence, maintain ceasefire and contributed to a more peaceful life in four de-escalation zones. He also thanked the OIC member states for attending the first OIC Summit on Science and Technology in Astana. The summit was proposed by Nazarbayev and took place in the final days of EXPO 2017.

The Kazakh minister also briefed the gathering on the launch of the Secretariat of the Islamic Organi-

sation for Food Security (IOFS) in Astana, which was facilitated by the entry into force of the IOFS Statute. He noted that Kazakhstan has ratified the agreement on the headquarters of the IOFS between the Kazakh government and the IOFS.

The new organisation's work to address food shortages requires interstate interaction, which should be facilitated by Kazakhstan's Islamic Infrastructure Initiative (Triple I), said Abdrakhmanov.

The organisation's goal is to ensure the maximum integration of OIC transport and logistics systems by linking three Islamic Development Bank development

programmes. Doing so will also support the implementation of Kazakhstan's Nuryly Zhol programme and China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The OIC, which used to be named the Organisation of the Islamic Conference until 2011, was established in 1969. The organisation received its present name after the decision of the 38th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Astana. Kazakhstan became a full OIC member in 1995. At present, 56 countries are members of the OIC with five countries and five international organisations holding observer status.

## Astana, London consider IT partnership

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh and United Kingdom officials recently discussed the possibility of signing a strategic partnership agreement to utilise the British model of developing IT projects in Kazakhstan's national digitisation programme.

The agreement would be between Kazakhstan's Ministry of Information and Communications and the UK's Government Digital Service and would involve governmental and IT business agencies from both countries. The discussions took place during Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Askar Zhumagaliyev's April 24-27 visit to Great Britain and Ireland to discuss digital cooperation, cybersecurity and smart cities, the Kazakh Embassy in the UK reports.

Zhumagaliyev met with heads of digitisation of British governmental agencies, including the National Cyber Security Centre and the Government Digital Service. Meetings were also held with the London Mayor's office, the top management of TechNation, IntelliSense.io and other British and Irish companies.

The meeting with National Technology Adviser and UK Government's Chief Coordinator For Digitisation and New Technologies Liam Maxwell discussed Kazakh-British cooperation in digitisation, introducing digital technologies into the economy and improving the e-government system.

In addition, Zhumagaliyev presented Maxwell with the main priorities and the progress of Kazakhstan's strategic digitisation programmes and discussed plans to develop the Astana Hub IT Park.

Zhumagaliyev also highlighted Kazakhstan's interest in the UK's experience in introducing and using digital technologies in the public services sector. The Digital Service's conditions created for British businesses on the principles of open data has made London one of the largest IT hubs in the world, second only to California's Silicon Valley. Maxwell briefed his counterpart on the key elements of the UK digital transformation strategy and confirmed the readiness of the British side to assist Kazakhstan.

The deputy prime minister's meeting with London's first Chief Digital Officer Theo Blackwell focused on digitisation cooperation between the two capitals, creating and developing

a smart city system and the use of advanced innovation technologies. Blackwell expressed his willingness to continue cooperation to introduce the smart city system in Astana.

The meeting with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) focused on cooperation in information security, while at the meeting with the Open Data Institute, the sides agreed to cooperate in joint research and development of methods for categorising data.

In global rankings, the UK ranks first in terms of government data openness, providing information support for small and medium-sized businesses, as well as improving the quality of public services for UK citizens. That is why the Kazakh side initiated the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Kazakhstan's Zerde National Infocommunication Holding and the UK's Open Data Institute to conduct joint research and seminars to enter the open data space.

Zhumagaliyev also visited the Cambridge Innovation Centre, where he invited Cambridge companies to take part in developing the Astana Hub and discussed opportunities for cooperation in introducing the Industry 4.0 platform in Kazakhstan. The topic was discussed in more detail with the management of TechNation, with which the Astana Hub plans to sign a memorandum of cooperation aimed at supporting start-up projects from preparation to initial public offering (IPO).

Zhumagaliyev also met with the CEO and Founder of IntelliSense.io Sam Bose and agreed to continue cooperation between IntelliSense.io and the Almaty Tech Garden technology park, as well as to expand cooperation in mining industry digitisation and the development of the Astana Hub.

The Kazakh delegation also visited Dublin April 27, where it held meetings with Ireland's tech companies. Irish businesses expressed keen interest in the Astana Hub project. Meetings with Enterprise Ireland and International Development Ireland discussed tools for supporting and developing the digitisation market in Ireland, as well as forming an ecosystem for IT start-ups. The management of the Trinity Irish Innovation Centre has confirmed its readiness to teach technical entrepreneurship to Kazakh students, as well as to take part in the creation of an IT university based around the Astana Hub.

## E-visas to be issued beginning in July

By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will start issuing electronic visas July 1 as part of the Digital Kazakhstan programme. Visitors will be able to apply online through an electronic portal.

"We have identified several countries and this year plan to implement pilot projects for them. This will require the modernisation of Berkut, the unified system of monitoring foreigners and local residents coming to and leaving Kazakhstan administered by the National Security Committee. The national budget committee has approved all the related expenses. Therefore, we will start issuing e-visas this year," said First Deputy Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi.

The process will be based on existing systems in Estonia and the United Arab Emirates.

With the launch of the electronic visas foreign citizens will no longer need to visit Kazakh embassies or consulates, said Interior Affairs Deputy Minister Yerlan Turgumbayev. The e-visa system is the first in Central Asia.

Foreign citizens will be required to apply for visas from Kazakhstan's migration office by providing the required personal information, including purpose of visit, financial position and length of stay.

"We will check the information with the database and if there are no restrictions, we will issue a visa. This will ease the registration process, especially for the countries where there are no consular services available. Thus, we will

also not need to increase our consular staff. E-visas also contribute to the provision of comfortable conditions for businesspeople and tourists," he added.

days and visa procedures have been simplified for residents of 53 additional nations.

Visitors from Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Russia are exempt

With the launch of the electronic visas foreign citizens will no longer need to visit Kazakh embassies or consulates, said Interior Affairs Deputy Minister Yerlan Turgumbayev. The e-visa system is the first in Central Asia.

At present, citizens of 61 countries, including all Organisation for Cooperation and Development (OECD) members, do not need a visa to stay in Kazakhstan for 30

from registration with the local migration police during the first 30 days after entry and terms for a similar procedure are under discussion for Tajikistan.

## Kazakhstan, Tajikistan discuss cooperation, sign commercial agreements in Dushanbe

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin discussed bilateral cooperation with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon April 27 in Dushanbe.

Mamin said agreements reached between Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Rahmon in Astana in March brought bilateral ties to a new level.

"The heads of state set the task to the governments of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to increase trade turnover to \$2 billion," Mamin said, expressing Kazakhstan's readiness to help achieve that goal.

Rahmon praised the results of the March 15 Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in Astana and stressed the importance of the platform to regional cooperation.

Tajikistan is Kazakhstan's second major trading partner in the Central Asian region and accounts for more than 20 percent of the economy's total trade volume within the region.

Mamin also discussed in Dushanbe bilateral cooperation on the Protocol of the Consultative Meeting in Astana with Tajik Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda and



Askar Mamin (L) and Emomali Rahmon (R).

First Deputy Prime Minister Said Davlatlali.

The Kazakh official noted the progress in cooperation between the two countries in various sectors of the economy and spoke about expanding deliveries to Tajikistan of 57 types of goods in engineering, metallurgy, railway, food, construction and pharmaceuticals.

Mamin proposed to intensify the activities of the working group on increasing trade turnover, develop a roadmap in this area and approve it at the next meeting of the Inter-governmental Commission.

Interregional relations, direct contacts between Kazakh and Tajik businesses and the unlocking of export potential were also discussed.

Commercial documents were signed for the delivery of 300 Hyundai County buses assembled in Kazakhstan, 500 freight cars, four shunting and main locomotives and 5,200 tonnes of R-65 rails, as well as 30,000 tonnes of valves produced by Arcelor Mittal Temirtau for the construction of the Rogun Dam.

# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

**PEOPLE**

**Psychologist creates cartoons to help children with speech, language difficulties**

**B2**

**CULTURE**

**Kazakh director's film to be featured at Cannes independent film festival**

**B3**

**SPORTS**

**Golovkin defends World Champion titles**

**B7**

## Immortal Regiment parade honours war heroes' memory



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Immortal Regiment of Astana Peace March, the Victory Day procession commemorating the memory of Soviet soldiers, took place May 9, according to the city akimat (administration) press service.

The annual event preserves the personal memories for descendants of Great Patriotic War participants, as well as promotes patriotism among the younger generation. “More than 1,500 descendants of veterans organised the Path to Victory march for the first time in 2015 by holding portraits of their

grandfathers and great-grandparents. The main objective of that project was to preserve the memory of war veterans in every family. The Immortal Regiment campaign was held for the first time in 2016. Then, the number of event participants in Astana exceeded 7,000. Last year, 20,000 people took part in the march. This year, the event gathered approximately 35,000 participants,” according to the report.

The gathering began at 12:30 p.m. from Kazakh Yeli monument, with the route stretching to Otan Korgaushylar (Fatherland Defenders) monument along the Tauelsizdik Avenue.

The idea of the march originated in Tomsk in 2011. A year later, history faculty and student Aida Baimakova and former Astana and Akmola regional trade union chairperson Anna Shevchuk consulted the campaign organiser and in 2014 created the Immortal Regiment council in the capital. The procession has subsequently emerged into an international march uniting more than 80 countries.

Following the annual flower laying ceremony at Otan Korgaushylar, the celebration continued with a tent camp in Studencheskiy Park. Eleven army bivouacs were installed to treat veterans to festive

dishes and famous Kazakh artists performed wartime songs in the park and city square.

At present, 2,067 Great Patriotic War veterans and participants live in Kazakhstan, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population.

Approximately 1.4 million people from Kazakhstan were drafted into the Red Army to fight the Nazis in 1941-45, every fourth adult in the republic at that time. A total of 12 infantry and four cavalry divisions, four infantry brigades and about 50 stand-alone regiments were created in Kazakhstan. Approximately 600,000 soldiers from Kazakhstan died in the war.

## Yeleussinov wins first professional fight

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Daniyar Yeleussinov, Kazakhstan’s 2016 Olympic gold medalist, won his first professional fight, knocking out American boxer Noah Kidd (3-0-1, 2 KO) in a bout in New York.

The fight reached its climax in the third round, when Yeleussinov knocked his opponent down. After a short break Kidd decided to continue the fight, only to receive a second powerful blow. Referee Eddie Claudio stopped the fight at the 2:52 minute mark.

As a result, the Rio champ gained his first win in the professional ring by technical knockout. “I congratulate Daniyar on his victory. I wish him every success in professional boxing! Every next fight will be more difficult than the previous one. Daniyar was boxing in his own style. He has a variety of combinations and great experience. The Americans mentioned ‘timing’ when talking

about Yeleussinov’s first knock-down, as he defended and made immediate counterattacks. He needs to work hard to achieve more victories and really turn into a pro,” said Rio Olympics winner Serik Sapiev.

Kazakh national boxing team head coach Myrzagalai Aitzhanov also weighed in on the fight.

“Well, we didn’t expect another result. Daniyar proved himself in amateur boxing as one of the strongest boxers in the world. He won all the amateur tournaments, gained experience and he is talented. Once again, he showed the strength of the Kazakh boxing school. This is the task of the national team – to bring the boxers to a high level. Now, everything is in his hands,” he said.

Yeleussinov will have his next fight in June in Britain, manager Eddie Hearn said in an interview with BoxingScene.com. Yeleussinov will fight either June 6 or on the June 16 undercard of British boxer Josh Kelly.

## Akmola region focuses on spiritual tourism

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Eight routes to sacred sites were approved as part of the Ruhani Zhanryu (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme in the Akmola region, according to Kazinform. The project aims to develop a tourist cluster and increase the number of visitors up to three million per year.

Approximately 80 select routes implemented by local tour operators are included in the state register for the region. Ten operators also promote tours to historic and sacred sites in the Birzhan Sal, Burabai, Kokshetau, Korgalzhyn, Yereimentau and Zerenda areas.

“The Abylai Khan’s Headquarters architectural and historical complex is a project implemented as part of the inner and pilgrimage tourism sub-programme to attract tourists to the complex located near the Kokshetau Mountains. The database of all architectural and historical sites located on the territory of the region is not systematised, but this project creates a single architectural and historical complex titled Khan’s Headquarters with the historical monuments added after scientific research,” said Akmola region tourism department head Daniyar Idiyatov.

The project includes Abylai Khan Square, Uali Khan’s burial site located near the Khankol area and a granite cave in the Kok-

shetau Mountains related to Kenessary, the last Kazakh khan. A monument erected in honour of Abylai Khan stands in the centre of Kokshetau.

“Our main target markets are Russia and China. There’s also an interest from visitors from India and Iran. A quarter of all inbound tourists are from Russia. As for the domestic market, the Ruhani Zhanryu initiative is of special importance. Large-scale work is underway to develop domestic tourism as part of this programme. Since the beginning of the year, we have developed a series of tourist maps, guidebooks and banners for outdoor advertising,” he said.

Kazakhstan Is My Homeland, the second national expedition highlighting the region’s tourist and recreational potential, was organised last year. More than 22,000 people gathered at the Flamingo regional festival in the Korgalzhyn district.

Visitaqmola.kz was launched this year to promote the Akmola brand. Interactive stands offering tourist information services were also installed.

Ethno-cultural tours including a visit to the maral (noble deer) breeding farms and national cuisine presentation are being developed in Burabai. The area will also be launching a unique museum where visitors can become acquainted with the local history and culture using 3D glasses.

## Orthodox Church of Kazakhstan calls for interethnic, interfaith harmony, moral education

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – To preserve Kazakhstan’s way, the unique model of interethnic and interdenominational harmony the country enjoys, it is crucial to strengthen traditions of friendship and brotherly love preached by traditional religions, Gennadius, bishop of Kaskelen and manager of affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan told The Astana Times.

As of the first quarter of 2018, there were 327 religious associations of the Russian Orthodox Church in the country. They include the Metropolitan District of the Russian Orthodox Church, nine dioceses, 295 parishes, 295 places of worship, 91 Orthodox missionaries and the Almaty Orthodox Spiritual Seminary.

“Religious affiliation does not play a decisive role in the society. It is a positive factor in the development of the religious situation. There’s no interest in religious beliefs when it comes to getting an education, providing medical assistance, hiring and other services. Religion should not become an obstacle to professional and creative abilities or social activities. This is an essential achievement of our society, which must be preserved in every possible way,” he said.

Kazakhstan’s state policy also supports interethnic and interconfessional dialogue.

“Kazakhstan under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, following the tradition of the Slavic-Turkic civilisation, has become a bridge linking Asia and the West. The principles of interfaith and international consent are pursued not only in domestic but



Gennadius, Bishop of Kaskelen, Manager of Affairs of Russian Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan.

also in foreign policy. The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Astana is a good example of this policy,” he said. The sixth iteration of the triennial congress is to be convened in October 2018 in Astana.

The Russian Orthodox Church opposes destructive phenomena in religion, he added.

“The church invariably defends evangelical love and peace in any historical or socio-political setting. It denies any form of violence and destruction under any conditions. The Bible says ‘If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar,’” said the bishop.

The socio-political position of the church remains unchanged.

“We support all state and public institutions in striving for harmony and prosperity. This goes in accordance with deep inner motives stemming from the very nature of Orthodox Christianity,” he said.

The church is especially concerned about young people who are vulnerable to anti-human ideology often sugar-coated with religious slogans.

“Today, humankind faces global

challenges from destructive religious teachings propagating hatred, sowing suffering, destruction and fear. The whole society, including representatives of traditional religions, must make efforts to prevent the radicalisation of young people. Youngsters need support and understanding. One must learn to be attentive to others, especially teenagers and women,” he noted.

Gennadius says corruption and social injustice must be eradicated as part of efforts to inoculate young people from hateful but insidious messages. Young people are sensitive to social problems, always thirsting for truth and ready to resist lies. Unfortunately, experienced and malicious propagandists can turn this energy and passion toward destruction.

“Under such circumstances, the initiatives put forward by President Nazarbayev are of immense importance. Their implementation ought to destroy radical forces aimed at destabilising society. The words of the national leader that ‘mutual respect and trust create the unity of our people’ should be in the heart of every man and woman of Kazakhstan,” he said.

The country’s path toward economic and social development is being guided by a large-scale industrialisation programme and the Digital Kazakhstan and third wave of modernisation initiatives. Under such conditions, spiritual and moral education must not be forgotten, the bishop believes.

“We are in a completely new cultural situation due to new technologies. The boundaries between civilisations are blurred; interpenetration of religious and cultural traditions is taking place. If earlier, living together, as a rule, assumed

the same worldview and interests, today it does not happen that way. Teenagers and even children are immersed in the virtual reality world and find friends and like-minded people there, and not in real life. Family members live together but due to new information technologies they are essentially in different worlds. They do not even talk to each other,” he said.

The bishop quoted poet John Donne: “Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone/All just supply, and all relation/Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot/For every man alone thinks he hath got/To be a phoenix...”

These words are “truly relevant now,” he said. “We need common projects, businesses and common holidays to preserve and strengthen the unity of the people of Kazakhstan. The Orthodox Church testifies its values based on the teachings of Christ the Saviour and calls for interethnic, interreligious harmony and peace. This conviction follows from the deep nature of Christianity – an unconditional love for one’s neighbour. It is deeply rooted in the Russian civilisation and culture,” he said.

Christians and Muslims together have confronted godless ideologies, suffered together, shed blood and defended the ideals of freedom and the truth of God in the difficult years of the last century, Gennadius noted.

“We believe that the numerous host of martyrs and confessors of the land of Kazakhstan are now facing the throne of God and praying for the preservation of our peace and harmony. I wish well-being, peace and unity to the entire multi-ethnic people of Kazakhstan,” he said.

**THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO**

**NATIONAL MUSEUM**

April 19 – July 23 Yerkin Mergenov’s art exhibition

**CAPITAL CIRCUS**

April 29 – May 27 at 4 p.m. Antares circus show

**ASTANA OPERA**

May 25 at 7 p.m. Le Corsaire, ballet

May 27, at 6 p.m. Classic music concert

May 30, at 7 p.m. La Traviata, opera

## PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Psychologist creates cartoons to help children with speech, language difficulties



Symbat Abdrakhmanova

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Young Kazakh psychologist from the Kyzylorda region Symbat Abdrakhmanova is helping young children with speech and language difficulties and their parents overcome those challenges.

Abdrakhmanova is among the 102 winners of the nation's 100 New Faces project to recognise people with exemplary experience and merits contributing to the nation's development.

"I noticed how my children watch cartoons at home and complete all tasks [required by educational cartoons] with great pleasure. Then I came up with the idea to create my own cartoons with a goal to help children with disabilities."

Abdrakhmanova works in the regional education centre. As a psychologist, Abdrakhmanova is

also engaged in work to identify suicidal sentiments among teenagers. She developed a psychological test for that purpose.

She works with speech therapists helping children tackle their problems with speech. To date, she released two cartoons – "Dybystardy Mashyqtandyru" (Training the Sounds in Kazakh) and "Konildi Tuster" (Fun Colours), where a little girl named Sara takes little viewers on her journey exploring the world and giving them different tasks.

"I noticed how my children watch cartoons at home and complete all tasks [required by educational cartoons] with great pleasure. Then I came up with the idea to create my own cartoons with a goal to help children with disabilities," said the psychologist.

Many children in Kazakhstan encounter different speech difficulties, according to her. "I wanted to help them," she added.

A mother of three, Abdrakhmanova is a self-taught animator gaining her knowledge from the internet. She runs the project on her own, writing the script, editing and publishing it online.

The biggest challenge, she noted, was doing a voice over, and her colleagues and friends helped her with that.

The key requirement was for the voice to be clear, understandable for children and pleasant to the ear, she added.

## Filia Association of Greek communities celebrates 25 years



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Filia Association of Greek Communities, uniting 17 groups throughout Kazakhstan, is marking its 25th anniversary. Founded in 1993 after the merger of communities in Almaty, Shymkent and Zhambyl, the organisation has been working to foster intercultural ties and preserve Greek culture and traditions.

The Greek diaspora, totalling seven million worldwide, is one of the world's oldest and still thriving movements. According to the 2009 census, more than 9,000 Greeks live in Kazakhstan.

"Based on the 1989 census, the Greek population in Kazakhstan was around 47,000 people; but, unfortunately, according to the 1999 census the number was down to 12,703, which is explained by the opening of borders and return of a significant number of Greeks to their country of origin," said Filia Association head Pavel Feodoridi in an interview with The Astana Times.

The Filia Association is part of

the World Council of Hellenes Abroad and one of its coordinating councils encompassing former Soviet Union countries.

"The association seeks to develop and organise events meant to revive the Greek culture and develop the native language of Greeks living in Kazakhstan. For those who are interested, the association assists in the learning of the Greek language, national traditions, history, geography and culture of Greece, Cyprus and Greeks residing in Kazakhstan and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States," he said.

Similar to other ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan, the majority of Greeks were moved to the Kazakh steppes in the 1940s as a result of mass Soviet deportations. Their exile was completed in three phases.

"The decrees were adopted between 1942 and 1950 that envisioned the deportation of the Greek population to the East with a goal to reduce ethnic tension in the northern Caucasus and Crimea," he said. "There were three stages in the history of deportation of

Greeks to Kazakhstan: first in 1942 – Greeks from the Krasnodar region, second in 1944 – Greeks of Crimea and third in 1949 – Greeks from Georgia."

Greeks had been through harsh conditions.

"People took what they needed with them, while the rest of their property was subject to confiscation. Greeks holding Greek passports were deported first. Thousands of Greeks died as a result of repressions and deportations," he noted.

Locals helped the Greek community withstand the difficult time.

"In the process of settling in the new territory, Greeks took advantage of their professional skills. For example, Greeks living in Panfilovo village (then a state farm in the Almaty region) grew the best tobacco, while other Greeks were employed at mines in Kentau (in the South Kazakhstan region)," said Feodoridi.

Kazakhstan became a "second home" for many Greeks, a number of whom eventually contributed to Kazakh development.

"Many of them (Greeks) are

well-known in Kazakhstan and their merits were recognised by national awards. Among them are well-known chemist and member of the Russian Academy of Technological Sciences Georgii Ksandopulo, popular singer and People's Artist of Kazakhstan Laki Kesoglu, Honoured Builder of Kazakhstan Akim Atmachidi and leading geologist and oil exploration specialist Ivan Dalyan," said Feodoridi.

Hundreds of Greeks in Kazakhstan keep ties with their homeland. They visit the country as part of the Greek government programme meant to familiarise those living outside the nation with their historical home and ancestors.

"Seven million Greeks live outside Greece, while the population of Greece is ten million. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a special department – the General Secretariat for Hellenic Affairs. The Filia Association works with the department in organising vacations of retired persons and children in Greece, training of Greek language teachers and study of youth in Greek universities," he added.

## Seven-year-old Kazakh boy becomes world chess champion in relevant category

Staff Report

ASTANA – Seven-year-old Dinmukhamed Tulendinov from Kazakhstan came out on top in the under-seven category at the recent FIDE World School Chess Championship in Durres, Albania. The competition welcomed 387 participants from 40 countries competing in 12 categories from U7 to U17.

Tulendinov is a student at the

Zhansaya Abdumalik Chess Academy, one of the leading chess schools in Kazakhstan established in 2014 by Zhansaya Abdumalik, an 18-year-old Kazakh chess prodigy and five-time junior world champion holding International Master and Woman Grandmaster titles.

Georgian chess player with a vast experience and international grandmaster Alexander Kashashvili trains Tulendinov.

"Based on the overall results

of eight stages, Dinmukhamed surpassed his opponents by 1.5 points and topped the ranking. During the entire competition, Dinmukhamed challenged his opponents, which gave him the right to be named best in his age category," read the chess academy press statement.

Tulendinov first became interested in chess when he was five years old, said his father Bakyt Tulendinov during a recent press conference in Almaty wrapping

up the world championship results.

Within two and a half months of his studies at a chess school, Tulendinov won the Almaty chess championship and later became a silver medal winner of the national chess championship.

His win is a "historic event" for Kazakhstan, according to the chess academy press service, as he becomes the first boy in Kazakhstan claiming championship in this age category.

# IF NOT YOU, WHO? IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

## #BECAUSEHUMANITY

AFTER A NUCLEAR BLAST, SOME SAY ALL THAT'S LEFT OF WHO OR WHAT WAS THERE BEFORE IS DUST AND SHADOWS. TODAY, OUR PLANET AND ITS PEOPLE LIVE WITH THE DARK SHADOW OF THE NUCLEAR THREAT. IT FOLLOWS US WHEREVER WE GO. THE ATOM PROJECT AIMS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THIS PROBLEM—AND THE SOLUTION.



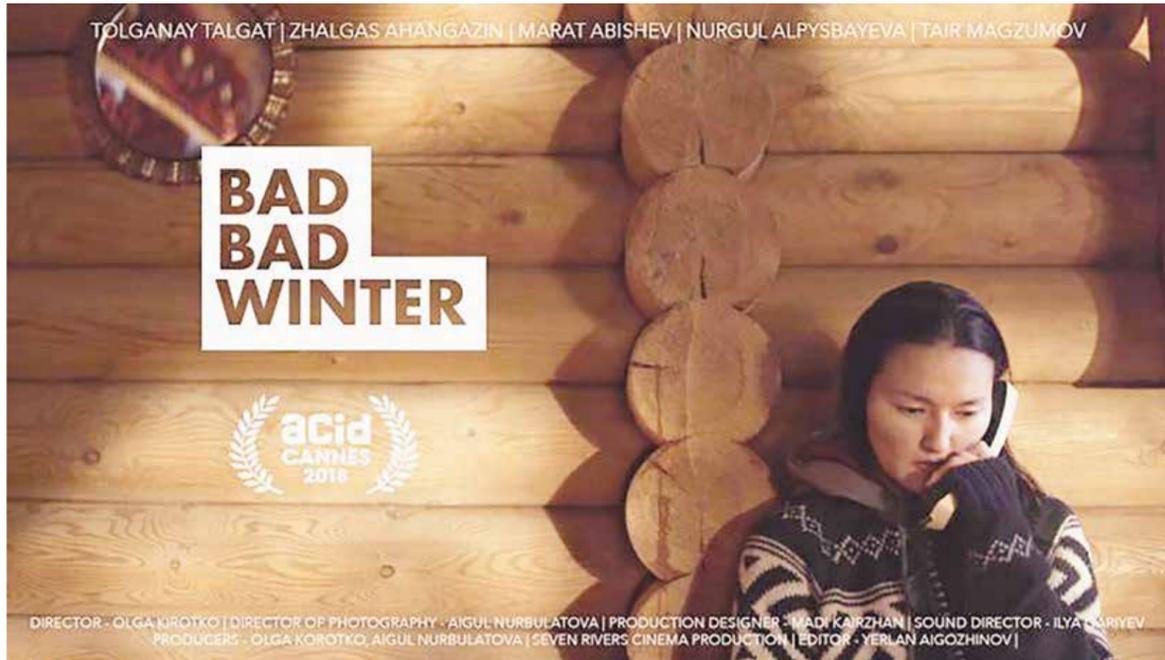
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# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Kazakh director's film to be featured at Cannes independent film festival



By Roushan Shamsharkhan

ASTANA – “Bad Bad Winter” by Kazakh director Olga Korotko will be featured at the annual Cannes Film Festival Association for Independent Cinema and its Distribution (ACID) programme. “We just sent a CD with our movie to the Cannes film festival. There is the common belief that you definitely need a producer who can recommend your film to get into Cannes, but we did not know anybody, so we just sent the disc,” Korotko explained. ACID Cannes is a platform founded in 1993 by the Independent Cinematographers Association. As a rule of thumb, programme participants are non-released films without distributors. This year, nine films from Belgium, Kazakhstan, the U.S. and France will be

featured, and three projects from Portugal will be presented in the ACID Trip section. “Bad Bad Winter” will be shown four times during the second week of the festival.

“Bad Bad Winter” is a psychological thriller. The plot revolves around Dinara, an Astana businessman’s daughter.

The film has five main characters and was shot in the neighbourhoods of Almaty. The crew was small: just the operator, linear producer Aigul Nurbulatova and artistic director Madi Kairzhan, who was trying cinematography for the first time.

“From the very beginning, we acknowledged that we had little to no budget. That is why we filmed in one location with only five actors,” Korotko told news agency manshuq.com.

“Bad Bad Winter” is a psychological thriller. The plot revolves around Dinara, an Astana businessman’s daughter. She comes to the city of her childhood to sell her grandmother’s house. Former classmates come to visit her, but their friendly meeting turns into something else: they tell her that they accidentally committed murder and now they need money. According to the film’s writers, the story resembles a confrontation between the rich and the poor over survival itself. Filming took place in early 2017.

“As soon as I received the letter, members of the selection committee immediately began calling me, congratulating me and saying that

our film was their favourite at the selection and everyone liked it very much. Indeed, our emotions just went off the scale, and we could not fall asleep that night,” recalled Korotko.

Participation in ACID Cannes will give “Bad Bad Winter” a chance at finding a distributor and gives the filmmakers the opportunity to find producers for upcoming projects. The programme focuses on the promotion of films: after the film festival, organisers conduct a re-run. Nine selected works will be shown in various cities of France and meetings with the press and audiences will be arranged. Chosen films will be promoted throughout the year, which undoubtedly opens new opportunities.

“Publishers have already started contacting me. And, of course, we really want the film to be featured in Kazakhstan,” the director said.

## Filmmakers from Central Asia to participate in 48 Hour Film Race



By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – More than 1,500 applications have been submitted for the 48 Hour Film Race 2018 organised by the U.S. embassy in Kazakhstan. Participants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are also eligible to compete in this year’s event.

Teams are given 48 hours to conceive the idea, write the script, film and edit a four-minute film. To ensure all have a fair chance of winning, they are given the specific assignment to include certain objects and a particular phrase. This year’s participants must incorporate a hat, apple, needle with thread and the line “Do you speak English?”

“I heard about the competition last year and actually registered, but I could not take part on those specific dates, even though I had a team and idea. So, I decided that I will certainly participate next year,” said director Assan Toleu.

Forty-eight films will be selected for the final night and prizes awarded to the eight best pictures in different categories. The production team behind the best picture will receive five latest generation smartphones. Organisers will also screen all the submitted films in movie theatres in May.

“Our film raises a very important social issue of money and power; it is a drama. I hope that viewers will empathise with our characters and will get a positive experience from watching it,” added Toleu.

The main goal of the competition is to inspire people to create unique artistic content to share with the rest of the world.

Similar competitions have been held globally since 2001, spurring creative competition among filmmakers. The Kazakh version is being held for the third time and its geography has expanded this year to include all five Central Asian countries. The winners will be announced soon.

## Astana exhibit celebrates Smurfs’ 60th anniversary, magical story of ‘little blue men’



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – An exhibition dedicated to the Smurfs’ 60th anniversary was held at the capital’s School Children’s Palace April 26-28 as part of the Francophonie Spring Festival. The event was organised by the Belgian Embassy with the support of the Alliance Française offices in the city and Almaty.

Belgium was proud to arrange the festivities, said Ambassador Alexis de Crombrugge de Picquendaele in his remarks at an April 25 reception to launch the

exhibit. Located on the border between two great European cultures, Germanic and Romanic, Belgium shares cultural diversity with Kazakhstan, he noted.

“It is therefore not surprising that cartoons were so successful in our country. Beyond Hergé, our most famous author with his hero Tintin, the Smurfs of Peyo, alias Pierre Culliford, became by accident the world famous little blue men. The Smurfs are well known for their jokes. These reflect a form of innocence which is familiar to those who kept a child’s soul. Their adventures are also marked by values which have a

universal resonance. It is not surprising that these little men found an echo in so many countries, be it through albums of comic strips, which my generation read, or through animated cartoons which were viewed by younger generations,” he said.

There’s no secret to the Smurfs popularity, as the characters are close to people and promote ideas of humanism, noted Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko in his turn. Family ties and friendship are essential to them.

“Today we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Smurfs, a truly



global phenomenon born in Belgium in 1958. At least three generations of children fell in love with these little blue creatures in white clothing thanks to distinguished Belgian artist Pierre Culliford. They are still capturing the hearts of millions of children in Belgium, Kazakhstan and all around the world. More than 300 million Smurf figurines have sold worldwide,” he said.

The first Smurf short story appeared in “Spirou” in 1959. Their inaugural film, “The Smurfs and the Magic Flute,” was produced in 1975.

The cartoon series began airing

on NBC in 1981, with Hanna-Barbera Productions producing 272 episodes in eight consecutive seasons. The Saturday morning show reached 42 percent of the U.S. audience and had a higher rating than “Dallas,” the nation’s popular primetime soap opera.

More than 3,000 goods and services currently feature Smurf characters.

Art gallery historian Marina Dosamanova noted the cartoon timeline could teach children to learn about and appreciate their culture.

“We are glad to host such a wonderful exhibition. The mas-

ter classes and other events will also be held here in the next three days,” she said at the launch of the exhibition. The volunteers will teach children how to draw and talk about the history of comic books. Our gallery is open for cooperation as we create a special atmosphere for people to talk about arts and promote our artists, too.”

Sixty-four events were scheduled in March and April as part of the Francophonie festival to celebrate the cultural revival and creative spirit of the French language and cultural diversity of French-speaking countries.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Medical equipment database to improve healthcare facilities planning and procurement

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A national medical equipment database will be created as part of the Densaulyk (Health) development programme, reported Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov at the April 24 government meeting.

The database will increase transparency in planning and procuring medical equipment. Marginal costs will be calculated based on the documents submitted by the customer (Exworks price) with a 25-percent marginal premium, and healthcare organisations are

The pilot project with the participation of domestic and foreign monitoring system developers was launched by two healthcare organisations in the capital and Almaty.

expected to plan procurement procedures guided by the indicators.

The online monitoring system will also serve as a tool to increase medical equipment efficiency.



The pilot project with the participation of domestic and foreign monitoring system developers was launched by two healthcare organisations in the capital and Almaty. The system will be introduced in all state organisations by the end of the year.

Birtanov noted the average percent of medical supplies and equipment adhering to minimum standards is 65.2 percent and the depreciation rate of medical equipment in public healthcare organisations is more than 35 percent. Updating medical devices costs 96 billion tenge (US\$294 million) per year.

More than 128 billion tenge (US\$393 million) in medical equipment was purchased in 2016-2018, an increase due to

tenge (US\$153,600) is needed to purchase equipment and construct healthcare facilities. Last year, savings totalled 3.5 billion tenge (US\$11 million) due to the expert assessment.

“The equipment for the healthcare organisations will be further provided as part of the private-public partnership and leasing mechanisms after the analysis and taking into account the positive growth dynamics of the concluded contracts,” he added.

Sixteen medical supply agreements worth 5.4 billion tenge (US\$16 million) were signed in the Atyrau, Karaganda, Pavlodar and West Kazakhstan regions in 2017-2018. PPP projects totalling 18 billion tenge (US\$55 million) are in operation for the current year.

Birtanov noted 241 leasing projects worth 4.9 billion tenge (US\$15 million) were implemented in 2016-2018. The mechanism improves equipment acquisition and service maintenance.

The expense payment reimbursement is the main component of the current leasing system. The state budget was previously the main financial source.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev signalled the need to monitor equipment planning to reduce the risk of equipment downtime and inefficient use.

private-public partnership (PPP) and leasing agreements. Approximately 42.8 billion tenge (US\$131 million) in 2017 and 40.2 billion tenge (US\$124 million) in 2018 were allocated to local executive bodies for technical equipment.

“The ministry studied the equipment purchased in 2012-2016 to assess the technical equipment in healthcare institutions last May and June according to the instructions of the head of state. The subject of the analysis was equipment worth more than 5 million tenge (US\$15,360). As a result, violators were identified and appropriate measures were taken,” said Birtanov.

The mandatory expert review is conducted if more than 50 million

## Some electricity users to be charged more in 2018

Staff Report

ASTANA – Some electricity users in Kazakhstan might be shocked to learn that domestic electric power prices have recently increased.

As of March, Kazakh citizens using electric stoves pay 1,216 tenge, 1,566 tenge and 1,903 tenge for 100 kilowatts per hour for consumption levels one, two and three respectively. Tariffs are differentiated into three levels according to the quantity consumed

and geographical location. There are also discounts provided for the pensioners, people with disabilities and World War II veterans, according to a report from energyprom.kz.

The price for the first consumption level has gone up 6.2 percent since January and 15.4 percent over the year. In comparison, prices for second and third levels, however, have not grown considerably. The prices have increased 4.8 percent and 1.9 percent since March 2017.

Electricity prices for peo-

ple not using electric stoves have increased 10.1, 3.9 and 1.3 percent and prices are 1,237 tenge (US\$3.74), 1,563 tenge (US\$4.73) and 1,904 tenge (US\$5.76) for levels one, two and three.

In the first two months of 2018, electricity production increased in monetary terms 13.3 percent growing to 223 billion tenge (US\$675 million) and in real terms 11.1 percent to 19.8 billion kilowatts per hour.

The highest quantity of electricity, 8,515 billion kilowatts

per hour, was produced in the Pavlodar region, which grew up almost 23 percent over the year. The increase can be explained by exports and growing domestic demand.

Overall, electricity production is following an upward trend, increasing from 94.5 billion kilowatts per hour in 2016 to 103.1 billion kilowatts per hour in 2017, whereas imports remained the same at 1.3 billion over the period. Electricity exports more than doubled from 2.3 billion to 5.7 billion kilowatts per hour.

## Mazhilis approves amendments to intellectual property rights legislation

Staff Report

ASTANA – Registration of intellectual property rights will soon be simplified as the Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) approved April 24 amendments on intellectual property legislation in the second reading during a plenary meeting.

“Amendments to the draft law are made to create a basis for ar-

ranging social relations related to intellectual property rights and further improve existing legislation,” said Mazhilis Committee on Legislation and Judicial-Legal Reform member Gulnar Bizhanova.

The draft law was developed in response to President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s instruction to conduct systemic efforts and transit to OECD standards in terms of intellectual property protection.

Amendments were also dis-

cussed with Eurasia Patent Organisation, Eurasian Economic Commission, World Intellectual Property Organisation, foreign experts, government bodies and NGOs during a roundtable.

The gathering agreed terms, such as “trademark use,” “owner” and “rights holder,” need to be defined precisely to prevent ambiguity.

It was also suggested to clearly identify the definitions of “coun-

terfeit goods” to make a clear distinction from original product. According to Bizhanova, misinterpretation often causes problems for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and sometimes even leads to bankruptcy. It was also put in writing that only counterfeit products are subject to confiscation.

In case of trademark rights violations, compensation will be introduced as an alternative to payment for incurred losses.

## 1,300 Expo Town apartments to go on sale in June



By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Baiterek Development, a subsidiary of Baiterek Holding, will release 1,300 Expo Town apartments for sale June 1, reported tengrnews.kz. The buildings were rented by Astana EXPO 2017 and returned to the company after the international exhibition.

“Forty-two apartment buildings were built in 2016. They housed international delegations participating in EXPO 2017. Property construction was financed by the national fund and investments from project companies. Therefore, assets from the real estate sales will be returned to the national fund,” said Baiterek Development Deputy Chairperson Askarbek Ussebayev.

The apartments and parking spots will be offered to the general public and can be secured with personal finances. Purchases may also be mortgaged through second-tier

banks and Kazakh House Construction Savings Bank housing loans.

To insure transparency, applications will be submitted online through Digital Baiterek, said Ussebayev. The platform is in testing mode and will be launched in the near future.

The apartments, rated at second comfort level, are in move-in condition. They range from studios to three-bedrooms, 41 square metres-124 square metres. The projected cost will be announced following the consultant company’s independent review.

Expo Town has 1,374 apartments with a total area of more than 110,000 square metres. As stipulated by the contract, 74 units measuring 8,500 square metres were transferred to the two construction companies involved in building the village.

The transferred property has been listed on the market with prices ranging from 38-55 million tenge (US\$115,000-167,000) depending on size, according to real estate websites.

## Mangistau’s solar power plant launched

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The first solar power plant with a 2-megawatt (3,500-kilowatt hour) annual capacity opened May 1 in Mangistau, reported the regional press service. The new facility, with more than 8,000 locally-produced solar panels, will provide electricity to approximately 300 buildings.

Situated on 36.05 hectares in Batyr village of the Munaishi district, the 1.2 billion tenge (US\$3.6 million) plant was financed as part of the Business Roadmap 2020 development programme.

“Last year, we hosted EXPO 2017 with the Future Energy theme initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Its main mission was to draw public attention to solutions ensuring use of sustainable energy sources and today, we open a new solar power plant on the Day of Unity of the People of Kazakhstan. This is one of the largest facilities as part of the green energy sector development. The station with a capacity of 2 megawatts is equipped with environmentally friendly, modern

equipment and will operate in an eco-mode. The major characteristic of the project is that 90 percent of the devices are produced in Kazakhstan,” said Mangistau region Akim (Governor) Eraly Tugzhanov at the opening ceremony.

Construction of a desalination plant was launched the same day in Kuryk village in the Karakiyan district. The facility, with a 50,000-cubic metre per day capacity, will be built as part of the private public partnership (PPP) programme. The 39-billion tenge (US\$117 million) project, which has an expected completion date of 2020, will supply water to the Aktau, Munaishi, Zhanaozen and Zhetybai areas.

“President Nazarbayev said that the national wealth is the property of society at the 26th session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. The national wealth in turn provides a better life for citizens. This happens through the growth of the economy and reserves. As a result, we are building the infrastructure and developing the social sphere. We are launching several large projects on this holiday. The launch of the construction is one of them,” Tugzhanov added.

## Mazhilis meeting discusses Aral Sea protection

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Aral Sea problem and measures to mitigate the consequences of the drying sea were recently discussed at a meeting on the protection of water resources of trans-boundary rivers in the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) in Astana. The Central Asian countries intend to persuade Kyrgyzstan to unfreeze its participation in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), established in 1993.

“There is one problem: Kyrgyzstan has frozen its participation

in the IFAS. Now, all participating countries are trying to work and persuade Kyrgyzstan to resume its participation. It is clear that the suspension was followed by the unconstructive position of neighbouring countries, the leadership of which has changed,” Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Galymzhan Koishybayev noted.

He noted that the IFAS Executive Committee had not met in more than nine years.

“The latest meeting was organised Jan. 30, which became the only one in the last nine years. The meeting agenda concerned

the transition of the chairmanship to Turkmenistan. The meeting became possible because of the changes in Uzbekistan’s leadership. We got opportunity to discuss the Aral problem,” he added.

A summit of the IFAS with the participation of the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is scheduled for the end of August, he added.

“This means that the presidents will meet for the first time in many years. The IFAS is our only integration platform in Central Asia, which has institutionalisation,” said Koishybayev.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

# Astana's Confucius Institute promotes cultural ties, launches courses for children

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Astana's Confucius Institute will present Capitals of the Silk Road, a photo exhibition July 2-3 in cooperation with the international organisation Expo & Women. The event is part of the Global Silk Road Forum and Silk Road Mayors' Forum.

Institute head Saule Koshanova spoke about the exhibit, the organisation's activities and new approaches to learning Chinese in an interview with The Astana Times.

"The application is open until June 15. The exhibition's theme is a city through the lens of the photographer," she said.

The Confucius Institute office was established at Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University in 2006 and Koshanova has been at the forefront since its inception. She was recently appointed by the Beijing EXPO 2019 committee to lead the Expo & Women presidium.

"We are proud of the academic advancements achieved by our students. They take part in Chinese language and Sinology competitions and enter the top Chinese universities. Many of them are pursuing careers in foreign services, government departments and Kazakh-Chinese companies," she said.

The institute conducts scientific research, develops educational programmes, organises exhibits, Olympiads, lectures by foreign and local scientists-sinologists and winter and summer internships and provides consultations and seminars. It is also the first school in



The Open Road art event.

Kazakhstan with a Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) license.

"The advanced professional training is of great importance. The teachers study international experiences and participate in international conferences," she said.

As a scholar, Koshanova promotes the country's academic achievements. She was invited to deliver a series of lectures on modern Kazakhstan and Kazakh-Chinese relations at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Public Diplomacy Institute and became the only foreign researcher on its board of directors.

"We organised a number of events dedicated to EXPO 2017 and the 10th anniversary of the

institute. The Kazakhstan-China: Trust, Partnership, Stability conference held Dec. 22 became a major event. Kazakh-Chinese experts discussed the issues related to education, culture, energy and draft strategies for the economic belt of the Silk Road. The participants stressed that the institute has become a bridge of friendship between the academic structures of the two countries," she noted.

The institute is part of a global network of cultural and educational centres headquartered in Beijing and cooperates with Chinese universities and research organisations.

"The Xian Foreign Studies University is our main partner in the implementation of scholarship

programmes and language internships. Eurasian National University signed memorandums of cooperation with China's leading universities at the initiative and with the assistance of the institute. We reached an agreement on a number of research projects with Peking University. We have a two-diploma education programme with Shanghai University," said Koshanova.

More than 3,500 students of various ages have participated in the language learning courses, with more than 150 receiving grants from the institute's head office to continue their studies.

"Our team includes highly qualified teachers from the Xian For-

eign Studies University – three of them are candidates of science and five are graduate students. We offer modules on the history and culture of China, calligraphy and wushu. We also have choreographic courses, speaking, students and film clubs," she said.

The centre offers more than 6,500 books, teaching aids, video and audio books.

"The Embassy of China to Kazakhstan greatly supports us in event organisation. We also work as a co-organiser of cultural and educational events initiated by the embassy," she added.

The Open Road art event, held this year with the support of the Chinese Embassy and Expo &

Women, was dedicated to the Spring Festival in China, Nauryz celebrations and Beijing EXPO 2019.

"It was aimed at preserving cultural diversity and promoting future energy. Artists from Armenia, Iran and Moldova also took part in the exhibition titled Traditions and the Present of the Great Silk Road," she said.

Koshanova is especially proud of launching the Learn and Play, a unique programme for children aged 8-12.

"We were able to receive only 15 children. In autumn, we plan to open several groups of five-seven children each. Children have the opportunity to start learning wushu. After a one-hour programme in Chinese, the second part of the lesson is the smart sports. We decided that it is important to pay special attention to physical education," she said.

Kazakh Wushu Kung Fu Federation head coach Vadim Traize conducts the wushu classes, which parents can attend.

"We receive positive feedback from the participants and we notice the sincere interest of the children. Feedback is important for us and we are open to dialogue. We plan to start Chinese business and weekend Chinese courses soon. A training seminar for teachers with the participation of philologists and linguists from China is scheduled in May-June. At the end of the course, the international conference will be held to highlight the latest developments in Chinese language teaching. Our team will present the Chinese online module," said Koshanova.

## Inclusive design centre opens in Astana



Staff Report

ASTANA – Wheelchair user, blogger and Elaman Social Fund for Social Innovation Projects chairperson Almaz Yerzhan knows the challenges of getting around the capital. His project, an inclusive design centre to help wheelchair users find jobs and adapt socially, recently opened in the city.

The fund received support from the capital administration to create a barrier-free environment for those with disabilities.

"The administration rented out an office for a very low price. Later, we found backers who helped us with the required equipment for wheelchair users. Why did we call it the centre of inclusive design? Our purpose is to change the city, make it more comfortable for disabled people," he said.

The centre will develop seven areas. The education programme will organise seminars and lectures about an accessible environment for wheelchair users. The founders plan to launch an information and social website (www.inva.kz) and provide a consultation office offering free psychological and

employment assistance to individuals with disabilities.

"We are waiting for motivated people who are eager to change their lives. You can earn money and do your business even sitting in a wheelchair or lying in a bed, thanks to the Internet," he added.

**The centre will develop seven areas. The education programme will organise seminars and lectures about an accessible environment for wheelchair users.**

The centre will include a creative rehabilitation club and call centre for psychological support. The project will also suggest social entrepreneurship internships and explain the rights of people with disabilities.

Beeline, a telecommunications company, will be providing laptops and free high-speed Internet for the

centre through its Unlimited Possibilities project.

"Innovations help to improve the lives of people with disabilities. We are very pleased to help people with strong life positions as well as be part of a progressive project to change the life of the city," said CEO of Beeline Company in Kazakhstan Alexander Komarov.

The centre will provide great benefits to people with disabilities, noted Vice Minister of Labour and Social Welfare Svetlana Zhakupova.

"There should be access to the realisation of all rights without any discrimination, including constitutional rights, electoral rights, education and rights that lead to social benefits. I think the centre will generate new ideas," she said.

The city's employment and social protection office reported 774 out of 1,106 facilities were not accessible to people with disabilities. To date, 506 have been improved, said representative Ilya Sukub.

The penalty for non-compliance with the standards varies from 50-400 monthly calculation index: this year's index is 2,405 tenge (\$7.20). In 2016, the city budget received 1.2 million tenge (\$3,600); in 2017, less than 900,000 tenge (\$2,700) for the violations.

## Bolashak Programme has awarded 12,831 scholarships in 25 years

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan government has awarded 12,831 Bolashak International scholarships to students in the last 25 years, according to the Centre for International Programmes press service.

Established by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on Nov. 5, 1993, 785 scholarships were awarded from 1994-2004 and 12,046 from 2005-2017. In excess of 10,000 specialists have been trained and more than 200 leading universities in 35 countries became Bolashak strategic partners. At present, 1,209 scholarship holders are studying abroad; 14 are in bachelor programmes, 1,021 are master's degree students, 118 are engaged in doctoral studies, two are undergoing post-graduate courses and 54 are interns. Of the

total, 46.2 percent are studying in United Kingdom universities, 38.5 percent in the U.S. and Canada,

**More than 40 percent of graduates work in economics, 20 percent in education and science and 7 percent in medicine and public health.**

5.2 percent in continental Europe, 4.9 percent in Asia and Oceania and 5 percent in Russia.

"Today, holders of the Bolashak Scholarship are trained in the most advanced universities and scientific centres of the world according to the international academic ratings of Times Higher Education, QS World University Ranking and

Academic Ranking of World Universities," noted the release.

Individuals choose specialties in priority economic and social sectors based on a list compiled annually which takes into account requests and needs of central and local government agencies, national companies, holdings and others. More than 40 percent of graduates work in economics, 20 percent in education and science and 7 percent in medicine and public health.

"Bolashak graduates have produced hundreds of scientific developments and more than 100 major social projects in education, health, culture and engineering. Specialists have conducted over 26,000 heart surgeries and introduced at least 1,700 international standards and treatment algorithms. The use of foreign experience creates a real effect on the quantitative and qualitative indicators of certain sectors of the economy," it added.

## Medical spending up 22 percent among population

Staff Report

ASTANA – A recent report revealed people in Kazakhstan increased their spending on treatment 22 percent, reported finprom.kz.

Approximately 14 percent of the total volume of medical services were covered by patients themselves who paid 42.8 billion tenge (US\$131.4 million) in total. Their spending hiked 22.4 percent within a year, indicating the biggest increase.

Demand for medical services has been steadily growing, according to the report. The volume

of medical services provided between 2012 and 2016 rose 45.7 percent from 319.9 billion tenge (US\$982.7 million) in 2012 up to 1 trillion tenge (US\$3 billion) in 2016.

Most medical services remain funded by the state, which allocated 237.1 billion tenge (US\$728.3 million) in the fourth quarter of 2017, accounting for 78.9 percent of the total volume of medical services.

In the last three months of last year alone, the volume of medical services grew 4.1 percent by 11.8 billion tenge (US\$36.25 million), reaching 300.7 billion tenge (US\$923.7 million).

The East Kazakhstan region was found to have the highest demand for medical services last year with a 14.6 percent increase totalling 19.9 billion tenge (US\$61.1 million) in contrast to 17.4 billion tenge (US\$53.45 million) in the previous year.

The Almaty region and Astana also top the ranking in terms of the volume of medical services, with 12.6 percent and 10.3 percent growth, respectively.

The Zhambyl and Pavlodar regions demonstrate the opposite pattern with declining volumes of health services provided in the regions.

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## ‘Music is to cooking like coffee is to a Monday morning’ for Astana Marriott sous chef

### Staff Report

Twenty-nine-year-old Andrey Volkov moved from Moscow to become the sous chef at the Astana Marriott Hotel alongside Executive Chef Heri Sudarmanto.

The Astana Times recently interviewed Volkov about his journey as a chef and culinary experiences in Astana.

### Did you plan to dedicate your entire life to cooking?

To be honest – no, I did not. My mother is a confectioner, she cooks very well and that was enough for me. But at the same time, I can assert with confidence, that from the very childhood I was very sensitive to food and cooking. One of the possible reasons of this is that my grandfather was a Georgian. And as a real Georgian, he was proud of Georgian national cuisine and he honoured it very much. I remember how he approached dishes with special trepidation and taught me that all ingredients and proportions should be strictly observed and controlled. On every family holiday, we always had a sumptuous feast with a huge assortment of Georgian dishes. From that time, my favorite dish is Satsivi.

### When did you realise you had an attraction to cooking?

I think I realised it quite late,



Andrey Volkov

when I worked at a hotel in Moscow. I gradually found time for self-realisation, time to cook something by myself. I got inspired and enthusiastic by the process and took inexpressible pleasure from the process of cooking my own fine cuisine. That time I felt a vocation to cooking and realised that I should further develop in this direction.

### How do you start your day in the kitchen?

I think that breakfast is the hallmark of success for every hotel. It is very important that our guests start their day with positive emotions. That is why I start my day overseeing the quality of the buffet breakfast line in order to make sure that everything is prepared ac-

ording to the highest standards of the Marriott Hotel. Then I do an inventory of the kitchen. I carefully keep under control the cleanliness and tidiness of the kitchen. This is the first thing that catches my eye, so that my kitchen must always be clean. I am very dedicated to my work and I consider the kitchen as my territory, as it is my full responsibility.

### How often is the restaurant menu updated at the Marriott Hotel?

Usually, we update the menu every season, we compose the menu that corresponds to a specific time of year and we also conduct an analysis of the current menu. Updating the menu is a complicated process, which includes several stages.

We involve the whole team in this process, we provide every team member with an opportunity to express themselves and share their ideas. Our Executive Chef Heri Sudarmanto and I compose the main menu. After making a decision on the menu, we conduct final tasting with the general manager of the Hotel. If the tasting was successful, we establish pricing.

### What is the key to creating a successful dish?

Working at HoReCa business for more than 11 years, I realised that the key to successful and tasty dish is not the recipe, but the cooking process! If you get real pleasure during the cooking, then the dish will 100 percent be delightful and tasty! Further, if you add skills and learned behaviour, obtained from experienced master-chefs of high cuisine, the result will be a real culinary masterpiece!

### It is widely known that cooks are creative personalities. Does the working in a business hotel with high and strict standards somehow limit your creative desires?

There is no limit in any way, there is still a wide field for creativity and self-expression and area for self-development in a classical cuisine. For example, I very much like cooking at our Vista restaurant and bar where haute cuisine dishes are presented. In addition, Executive

Chef provides an opportunity to develop my creativity and express it. I try to cook non-standard dishes, combining different cuisines, textures and tastes. Such experiments create not only good taste, but also a pleasant tactile effect.

### Have you ever faced difficulties creating dishes here in Astana due to a lack of ingredients or the complexity of delivery?

Lack of ingredients is a problem that exists not only in Astana, but also in many other countries and regions. But in Astana, there are special companies that operate in delivering such hard-to-reach products, for example fresh oysters. For our Sunday brunch, we order oysters which are delivered super-fresh despite the fact that there is no sea nearby, and they are very tasty!

### Could you please tell us a little about the traditional Sunday brunches at the Marriott Hotel?

Sunday is a wonderful occasion to switch from daily routine and spend time with friends and family, in an atmosphere of comfort, live music, gastronomic pleasure and, of course, service at the highest level. Brunches, first of all, require organisation and concentration from the whole team of cooks. This is a highly important event for our hotel, so we are making every effort to compose the menu and come up with new dishes.

Brunches at Marriott hotels are famous for their assortment of seafood, such as royal prawns, fresh oysters, mini squid and mussels. These are the most popular and important products at any brunch, and, as a superior world-class hotel, we strive to offer our guests the best of such wide assortment.

### Do you have your own recipe book? Yes, for sure I have my own recipe book, and in the near future I will definitely share it.

### How do you feel about criticism?

Criticism, if it is adequate, is an opportunity for improvement. I highly appreciate feedback from the guests, so I pay attention to the recipe that come back. If the plate has returned full or half-empty, then I will definitely ask for feedback, in order to understand what the guest did not like and how we may improve our services.

### Do you have a music playlist you like to listen to while cooking?

Music for cuisine is like a coffee for an early Monday morning. Before I started my professional career as a cook, I played in a drumming band. We even achieved some success in our genre. Now I do not play anymore, but I return to music all the time. There are compositions of different genres in my playlist, the choice depends on what I am preparing, so I listen to certain music anytime. If I need to concentrate in rush situations, then I listen to American punk rock, while I get into the cooking – then something sensual and deep is the perfect choice.

## QazGeo to launch expeditions to Aral Sea, sacred Kazakh places

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan National Geographic Society, or QazGeo, embarked on this year's two big expeditions. The organisation launched an expedition to the Aral Sea May 10 and will head to the East Kazakhstan, Karaganda and Pavlodar regions May 17 to study sacred places. QazGeo Project Manager Nurzhan Algashov spoke about the expeditions' goals and the organisation's future plans in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

Established in 2013, QazGeo seeks to foster conditions and popularise the study of geography and interdisciplinary sciences, including history, ethnography and environment. The scope of its activities cuts across five areas – biodiversity, climate, environment, geography and tourism.

“The first expedition to the Aral Sea will last 20 days starting May 10 and finishing May 30. A group of 20 people will take part covering 7,000 kilometres,” said Algashov.

The organisation has twice travelled to the Aral Sea, once one of the world's largest lakes. Unlike previous trips, this year the group will approach the sea both from the northern part of Kazakhstan and southern portion of Uzbekistan.

“We have some data about the northern Aral, but we have no information about the southern Aral,” he noted.

“We tend to see it (Aral Sea) as an environmental disaster, but certain measures are being taken, including the Kok-Aral Dam, which by and large saved the northern Aral (the part situated in Kazakhstan),” he added.

Central Asia's two biggest rivers – the Amu Darya and Syr Darya – feed the Aral Sea, yet the large Soviet campaign launched in the 1970s diverted most of the sea water to supply the region's growing cotton production. The action caused the sea to dry to a tenth of its original area of 68,000 square kilometres.

The 13-kilometre long Kok-Aral Dam, an \$85 million project initiated by Kazakhstan and mostly funded by the World Bank, managed to prevent water from going

into the sands, giving some hope for the sea's revival.

“Now, water stays in the northern Aral. The water level is increasing and hence salinity is declining,” said Algashov.

“Research and science constitute an important component of the expedition. Nazarbayev University (NU) researchers and hydrogeologists will study the water, taking samples from approximately 10 locations in the northern and southern Aral to study phytoplankton diversity and development, salinity, acidity and other parameters,” he added.

With the collected data, researchers will be able to build a broader picture of the current state of the sea's ecosystem.

Tourism development is of equal importance, as it contributes to maintaining the region, once a major Soviet fishing centre that eventually saw the collapse of the industry as the sea dried up.

“There is a disaster and measures are being taken, but we need to support the region and its community. In fact, the more tourists there, the bigger the contribution we make to the region,” he said, highlighting the potential for transborder tourism.

The third essential component, Algashov noted, is raising awareness and drawing attention.

“Many have heard about the problem of the Aral Sea, but not all of them know certain aspects; that, for example, life goes on there. Therefore, photographers and journalists are going with us to capture that,” he said.

The Aral Sea issue pertains not only to Kazakhstan and Uzbeki-

stan, but to the entire Central Asian region of 62 million people.

“The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is marking its 25 anniversary this year. The governments of five Central Asian countries support the organisation. Even though the Aral Sea is located in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the problem, in fact, is common,” he said.

The expedition group left from the capital May 10, travelling to Shymkent through Merke in the Zhambyl region.

“We will cross the border heading to Tashkent on the third day, then to Samarkand, Bukhara, Urgench, then Muynak, once a port city similar to our Aral,” said Algashov.

The participants will then begin their off-road trek. Due to few check points on the Kazakh-Uzbek border, they will return to Kazakhstan through Beineu village in the Mangystau region, which will make the overall route longer.

“There are no closer check points. This is one of the salient issues for the development of transborder tourism. The closest check point is Beineu. The distance between the Aral Sea and Beineu, not directly, but along the roads, is around 600-700 km. We are entering Uzbekistan through Tashkent for the same reason, because it is the nearest check point as well,” he noted.

The second expedition, focusing on the study of six sacred places in the East Kazakhstan, Karaganda and Pavlodar regions, will run through May 26.

The group will start at Akkol Tomb, approximately 90 kilometres north of Ekibastuz, then head

to Akkol Mosque, the more than century-old house of worship made entirely of wood, approximately 30 kilometres from Semei; Ablai-kit Buddhist Temple; Konyr Aulie Cave; Kunanbai Mosque dedicated to the father of famous Kazakh poet Abai and Kyzylkent Buddhist Temple.

“Researchers studying Buddhism identified the special requirements of how Buddhist temples are built. Based on that, they confirmed that the objects (Ablai-kit and Kyzylkent temples) belong to the Buddhist culture,” said Algashov.

“Social scientists from Nazarbayev University will take part in the second expedition. This project is not a one-year project. Last year, we visited Mangystau and Ustyurt and studied sacred places. This year, it continues in three regions. Next year, we will visit other sacred sites,” he added.

“Many sacred sites span across Kazakhstan. In Mangystau region alone there are 362 such sites,” he noted.

The goal is to interview locals living in the regions, as they may possess unique information about the objects often passed from generation to generation.

“These people may also have interesting documents they may share. With their consent, the information will be digitised and then be available to the research community,” he said.

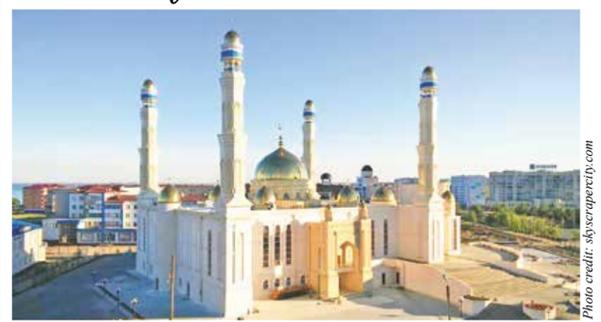
The expedition outcomes will be included in the Sacred Places map developed by NU researchers.

QazGeo runs several other projects, including the next Travel Fest on June 30 in Shymkent and the annual Khan Koryk Youth Festival in Aktobe in June, as well as other projects with its partners. The organisation is also working with international organisations, including the World Wildlife Foundation, and is open to building contacts with other potential partners.

A large-scale event will be organised in the capital in August dedicated to its 20th anniversary.

“It will be not only a travel fest, because the fest is only a small part. There will be several days and several events, including conferences uniting all regions. This will be an interesting event,” said Algashov.

## Kokshetau: a beautiful ‘Blue Mountain’



Nauan Khazret mosque.

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Kokshetau is considered one of Kazakhstan's most charming cities, located among beautiful lakes and mountains covered with dense coniferous forests.

Kokshetau is translated from Kazakh as “Blue Mountain” and the name is apt. The Blue Mountain (Kokshe Tau) is the highest peak in the Kokshe Mountains, reaching 947 metres. Many songs, poems and legends about the beauty of the area have been passed from one generation to another. Locals have given the place a variety of names: the Area of Blue Lakes, Kazakh Pearl and the Area of Blue Mountains.

The city was established on the bank of Kopa Lake in 1824 as a fortress. In 1868, it became a regional centre and today has a population of 160,000. During the late 1930s, many residents of other Soviet Union republics were forcibly settled in the region because of the political repressions against ethnic Polish and German communities. On March 16, 1944, the city was named the Kokshetau region's administrative centre.

The picturesque image of the city that we see today on postcards was shaped in the 1970s-1980s. During that time, Kokshetau saw rapid development, new residential districts and industrial factories. The city became a major hub of railway and aviation routes.

Today, the city has a delightful appearance with clean streets, roads, quiet parks and squares promoting its cosy image. Kokshetau is an urban area of youth and students with 10 higher educational institutions, 12 colleges, six lyceums and 20 schools. The city has numerous museums, theatres and a cinema.

Abylai Khan statue adorns the main square of the city. Abylai Khan was regarded as a wise politician and diplomat, who was recognised by both the Chinese and Russian empires. For centuries, the city and outlying areas were major political and intellectual centres of northern Kazakhstan.

Kokshetau has a beautiful mosque constructed in the beginning of the 20th century and a Russian Orthodox Church temple of Archangel Michael. In 2004, a Roman Catholic Church was built in Gothic style using red bricks. A new mosque for 1,200 people named after Nauan Khazret opened in 2015 and construction of a new Orthodox Church is underway.

Kokshetau and its surroundings are famous for their nature and wonderful landscapes. Burabai National Park is one of Kokshetau's major sights. Borovoe Lake is the most significant among its lakes and distinguished by its size. Located 70 kilometres from the city, the lake is extremely popular among local and foreign tourists.

Kokshetau National Park, established in 1996, is situated 60 kilometres to the southwest of the city. The Zerenda, Shalkar and Imantau lakes can be found there with numerous pedestrian and equestrian routes.

The areas have excellent accommodations with hotels, sanatoria and rest houses constructed on the coasts. The soft mountain climate, clean air and curative dirt make rest here not only pleasant but also useful for one's health.

Natural attractions and the city of Kokshetau have established their own unique image and strive to become a centre for international ecotourism. It is truly one of the most charming cities in Kazakhstan.



The expedition group heading to the Aral Sea in 2016.

Photo credit: Zhanar Alimzhan

Photo credit: skyscraperity.com

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

## Astana basketball hero says investment in youth leagues needed to lift Kazakhstan's game



Photo credit: phostana.kz

By Amir Khaidar

ASTANA – Nicknamed “Jackson” in his youth for wearing a sweatband like the famous NBA player, today Rustam Yergali is an icon of Kazakhstan's basketball. In the midst of a career spent on the court, the 31-year-old gave advice and predictions for the future of Kazakh basketball.

“My career began in Kostanai; I saw NBA games on television and started playing basketball with other kids on the street,” Yergali recalls.

During his first week of basketball training, he was expelled from the team for being late to practice. “I was very upset that day, but I didn't give up. I looked for other opportunities and went to the local sports school,” he said.

After six months of training, Ye-

rgali and other promising talents were invited to practice in Astana at the Munaitpasov sport boarding school for gifted children. After spending a decade with the Astana Tigers and winning six consecutive national championships, in 2011 he was invited to play for the newly formed Astana basketball club, under the Astana sport club franchise.

“Since the inception of the VTB League, the popularity of basketball has increased in Kazakhstan, but I can't say that the overall level of basketball increased,” admits Yergali. If there is an interest in basketball in the country's regions, far from city centres, though, it is still possible to find good players and create teams – the most important issue remains funding. According to Yergali, investing in children and youth could help improve the level

of basketball in the country in the long term.

Towards the end of 2017, BC Astana opened a basketball academy and foreign specialists were invited to coach young players. The same year, the national basketball federation partnered with the NBA to create an NBA junior league and raise the basketball profile in the country.

Currently, Yergali and his teammates play in the National League of Kazakhstan, the highest tier of domestic basketball, and in the VTB United League, an international basketball league.

“I put the national championship first and the management also sets similar goal: we are the main team in Kazakhstan and our first priority is to win the Kazakh championship – then we think about the VTB League,” noted Yergali.

BC Astana is a five-time champion of the national league and is the strongest team in Kazakh basketball both financially and technically. BC Astana hasn't enjoyed the same success in the VTB League, however. The team features frequently in the playoffs but has never advanced past the first round, despite a strong presence of experienced foreign players in the team.

“Foreign players are definitely essential to the improvement of local players, but not in the current amount. If you have a team of half foreign and half local players, there are limited chances for the local athletes to play. Foreign players are needed, maybe two per team; that way we make sure that local players learn and progress,” he suggested, adding that BC Astana has always welcomed foreign players and that they contribute greatly to the club.

Yergali is also the captain of the Kazakhstan national team and is motivated by that role. He supports his younger teammates with advice and is the key figure in the interaction between the team and the management of national basketball. Kazakhstan's national team is due to play against Iraq and Iran in the summer for a chance to advance to the second qualifying round of the 2019 World Basketball Championship in China.

“If the national team makes it to the World Championship, this would be the first time, and I am sure it would give a big impulse to the development of basketball in the country. It would be hard, but we only play to win,” he added.

In the meantime, Yergali advised, young Kazakh players should hone their professional skills in international leagues and championships, to develop their competitive edge and gain match experience. As they grow, so will Kazakh basketball.

## Futsal team to compete in world finals in Brazil

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The national final of the international futsal championship called Neymar Jr's Five

was recently held in Astana and Almaty. The winning team, Atlant, will represent Kazakhstan at the World Finals in Brazil in July.

One-hundred-eighty-four teams took part in the competition,

gathering more than 1,200 young players. The three strongest teams from Almaty, Astana and Aktobe competed in the final. Team Atlant of Almaty took a 5-0 win over Aktobe's Aliya and secured a berth at

the World Finals in Brazil, where they will compete with representatives of more than 60 countries.

“We can note a very high level of preparation and motivation of the players at the Neymar Jr's Five tournament, although this is primarily street football and most teams are non-professional. Nevertheless, the level of the game was quite high, and most of the games were dynamic and spectacular. The strongest teams played in the final, and now we will watch the Almaty players competing in Brazil. I wish the remaining participants and those who couldn't join the championship this year to train better, develop their skills and show a more spectacular and skilled game,” commented one of the organisers of the tournament Alisher Anvarov.

According to the organisers, Kazakhstan joined this international futsal competition in the 5x5 format for the first time. National qualifying matches were held in three cities such as Almaty, Astana and Aktobe. Both amateurs and professionals aged 16 to 25 participated.

Neymar Jr's Five is a unique international futsal competition, the dynamic format of which was created by the captain of the Brazilian national team and the leader of the French club PSG. Over 160 000 players from more than 60 countries compete in 10-minute matches. Every time one team scores a goal, the opponent loses a player. This goes on until the last player is kicked out of the game or the 10-minute period ends. Each team has five main players and two reserve players.



## National team wins 14 medals at Asian Rhythmic Gymnastics Championship

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh athletes won 14 medals at the recent Asian Rhythmic Gymnastics Championship in Kuala Lumpur. Athletes from 18 coun-

tries took part in the competition.

Alina Adilkanova won three gold medals (all-around, ball, ribbon), one silver (hoop) and one bronze (club).

Kazakh national team members Regina Sultanova, Dayana

Zhapupova, Anel Talgatbek, Jessica Budnik, Zhanerke Dauletkulova took second place in group events.

In the juniors' competitions, Kazakh athletes Aruana Sadubayeva, Balkyz Elshibek, Dilnoza Mansur, Yasmin Aliyeva and Deriya Tokdemir placed second after the Chi-

nese team, followed by Japanese athletes. Earlier, Kazakh gymnasts won first place in the team championship among juniors, and third in the group event. Roza Abitova qualified for the Youth Olympic Games to take place October 6-18 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

## Golovkin defends World Champion titles



Photo credit: vk.com/golovkin

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – On May 5, one of the world's best boxers – and local hero – WBA super middleweight champion and WBC, IBF and IBO world middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin achieved another brilliant professional boxing win at the StubHub Centre in Carson, California, over American boxer Vanes Martirosyan.

Golovkin was initially going to have a rematch against Saul Alvarez in early May, but the fight was cancelled when the Mexican boxer failed a drug test in February and was disqualified for six months. After that, Martirosyan was chosen as his next opponent.

Many analysts warned that Martirosyan would not be a strong competitor against the current world champion: the American boxer of Armenian origin hadn't boxed for two years, and he'd also had to move to a heavier weight category to fight Golovkin.

Golovkin, unsurprisingly, controlled the bout until the end. Both fighters were careful in the first round, but in the second, Golovkin got down to business. The Kazakh backed his opponent onto the ropes with a series of blows, then knocked him out. The referee stopped the bout early and gave

a win by technical knockout to Golovkin. The Kazakh champion has now defended his titles 20 times.

“I'm back and I feel great. First of all, I want to thank my friends from Kazakhstan and fans all around the world who watch my fights. Honestly, I thought it would be serious business. Vanes gave me some good punches in the first round. I didn't expect the fight to end so quickly in the second round. Vanes is an excellent fighter. Unlike my other opponents, he didn't run around the ring; [he] took risks and tried to show he was ready to fight from the first round. He is worthy of respect for being not afraid of fighting and showing offensive boxing,” Golovkin said after his victory. President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev congratulated the champion on the victory in a telegram.

“Once again you proved your great boxing skills and defended your champion titles in a spectacular fight. All the people of Kazakhstan are proud of you and praise your great achievements in sports. Thanks to talent and hard work, natural modesty and charm, you have won over millions of fans around the world. I wish you to retain all these qualities and be a role model for young people,” Nazarbayev said.

## Almaty Marathon continues run as Central Asia's largest sporting event

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – More than 14,000 people from 38 countries gathered April 22 in Almaty to take part in the Almaty Marathon, the largest sporting event in Central Asia. Over the past seven years, the event has grown from 2,500 participants in 2012, when it was first organised.

The participants could choose between distances of 42 kilometres, 21 kilometres and 10 kilometres as well as a separate start for children and a 10-kilometre distance for a Scandinavian walk.

Experienced runner Michael Krasilov was first to cross the finish line of the 42 kilometres marathon in 2:32:00. He recently placed six in the Hannover marathon, finishing in 2:24:24.

Almaty Marathon Director Salтанат Kazybayeva said marathon route changed several times this year. Unlike previous years, when participants ran from the Park of the First President to the Central Stadium, this year the route became a circle with the start and finish in the same place – the New Square.

The organisers also introduced online tracking, enabling the participants to monitor their results.

Runners also had the opportunity to replenish their energy stores with mid-run snacks and water available throughout the distances.

Twenty-four-year-old Nargiz Kemelbekova ran the 10-kilometre distance and was surprised by the popularity of the event.

“I am glad I took part in the 7th Almaty Marathon. Though I registered for the marathon (on the first day) Jan. 1, my number was 4,442, which means almost 4,500 people had registered before me in half a day. The scale already surprised me then,” Kemelbekova told The Astana Times.

“In general, we were lucky the weather was good, and the route was relatively easy, though it was getting so hot closer to a finish line which made it difficult to run,” she added.

Kemelbekova and others praised the event's organisers.

“This is such a tremendous effort to gather 14,000 people in one place, direct them to their zones, control cloakroom and food storages. I am surprised at people criticising and complaining about poor organisation,” said Kemelbekova, referring to some rumblings in the social media about traffic jams on the day of the marathon and other related issues.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018

# Astana enters top three May Day CIS travel destinations

## Staff Report

ASTANA – Minsk, Baku and Astana were the most popular Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) travel destinations for the May Day holidays, according to Russian booking service Tvil.ru.

The cities were followed by Yerevan (Armenia), Almaty, Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Chisinau (Moldova), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) in the rating based on an April 29-May 2 analysis of holiday home and booking requests.

The Kazakh capital was a popular excursion and cultural centre for Russian tourists. Today.kz also noted the city is attractive to Russian tourists throughout the spring, referring to an analysis by turstat.kz. A similar survey by turstat.kz found the capital is one of the most preferred destinations



in February and March within the former Soviet area. The results suggest the city is becoming a tourist attraction and gaining an international spotlight.

Visitors booked an average of 2.5 nights in the early days of May, spending more than 3,000 rubles (US\$48) a day, according to service statistics. Tourists who preferred to stay in Almaty remained for five days and spent an average of \$80 per day, noted turstat.kz.

By comparison, guests in Baku typically stayed 2.5 days and spent approximately \$41.70 per day. Minsk is 23 percent less expensive than Baku and 33 percent cheaper than Astana and those staying for a similar duration usually spend almost \$32. Tourists typically remain two days in Yerevan and three in Tashkent, spending approximately \$32.11 per day in both cities.

Russian tourists choose the capitals of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan as luxurious rest centres,

while selecting the Moldovan and Uzbek capitals for their inexpensive tours. The Kazakh city attracted tourists with excursions and shopping malls. Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre, shaped like a giant tent, and the blue-and-white marble National Museum were among the most frequently visited sites.

The city's retro-futuristic architecture and modern bus network make visiting and exploring much more comfortable, notes the lonelyplanet.com tourist guidebook. The online journal adds "Astana's skyline grows more fantastic by the year as landmark buildings, many of them by leading international architects, sprout along the wide boulevards in a variety of Asian, Western, Soviet and wacky futuristic styles. Several spectacular structures are open to visitors and it's hard not to be impressed by the very concept of this Singapore of the steppe."

# TEDxAstana slated for June 10



TEDxAstana Women team on October 29 in 2016.

## By Meruyert Abugaliyeva

ASTANA – Second wind, the physiological phenomenon when an out-of-breath marathoner suddenly finds the strength to push harder, will be the topic of the June 10 TEDxAstana.

"Second wind is a gift and second chance allowing an athlete to complete the marathon with even higher performance indicators and finish running, swimming or riding a bicycle. Every person should remember this phenomenon while running his or her own marathon of changes. We chose this topic as a metaphor pointing to the current situation in Astana and Kazakhstan," said TEDxAstana co-cura-

tor Aliya Sandybayeva, according to tengrinews.kz.

Started in 1984, TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) conferences feature speeches on topics ranging from science and art to politics and business. Scheduled annually since 1990, the mission is to share "ideas worth spreading."

TEDxAstana, with "x" denoting an independently organised event, will conform to the traditional conference format. This year, local speakers will impart their ideas and stories about opportunities, diversity and the beauty of change in science, technology, the arts, social initiatives and education. They will address the ability to preserve hope, find new purpose and goals, discuss logical conclusions and

transformations and share their invaluable experience and new opportunities.

"The goal of TEDx is to identify and spread the ideas worth spreading. Together, we as a community are creating the latest encyclopedia of knowledge and ideas and gathering people who aspire to bring change to the world. These people, their ideas, their values and actions help us look at the progress phenomena from a new perspective," said TEDx regional ambassador Larrisa Pak.

The first TEDx event in Kazakhstan and Central Asia was in Almaty in 2010 and has occurred in the capital since 2015. In addition to the conference, this year will include a Next Reality workshop and open lecture by Georgian artist Vato Tsereteli.

Registration is available through June 3 at [tedxastana.com](http://tedxastana.com).

# University job fair becomes annual tradition

## By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

Deloitte, GRATA International, KPMG and McKinsey & Company, Kazakhtelecom, Kazmunaygas,

According to experts, the job fair format is considered one of the most

effective ways to interact between job seekers and those offering employ-

ment. KAZGUU plans to hold yearly job fairs and other major social events.

ASTANA – KAZGUU University and Hilton Astana, in collaboration with the city akimat (administration), sponsored Job Fair 2018, which for the first time welcomed graduates and undergraduates from all of the capital's universities. Representatives of state, national and international companies had an opportunity to meet and interview newly-minted graduates and current students.

Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshov supported the joint initiative, part of the social responsibility policy aimed at providing employment for the capital's young people. He noted the job fair was well organised and emphasised the need for such events on an annual basis to bring together the city's employers and university graduates.

KAZGUU Rector Talgat Narikbayev and Hilton Astana general manager Stephan Reiter thanked the company representatives for their active support and called on them to strengthen their cooperation.

The official opening was followed by the Best Employer 2018 award ceremony. The programme also included master classes such as Employment Lifehacks by Method Coding School co-founder Dagar Davlatov and Self-Made Career, where winners received a certificate for completing a professional internship in a partner company.

More than 600 university graduates and undergraduates, in excess of 100 leading national and international companies/employers and delegates from various economic sectors took part in the event.

Representatives of state bodies and private companies conducted on-site interviews with graduates. Participants included the Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs and Justice ministries, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the Supreme Court and companies such as Air Astana, Astana International Financial Centre, Baiterek Development, Damu Foundation for Entrepreneurship Development,



Uniquely positioned in the heart of Eurasia, Astana glitters and grows on the banks of the Yessil River as life flows on all around. Where just 20 short years ago only the wind blew across the great steppe, now buildings, homes, and businesses create the impressive skyline of Kazakhstan's capital city. Home to more than one million people, practicing many religions and claiming diverse ethnicities, Astana has become an international beacon of peace, progress and stability.

This is no accident. Astana actively works to promote peace and harmony not only in Kazakhstan, but in the world. The city has created the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and hosts such events as The World Islamic Economic Forum, the summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, First OIC Summit on Science and Technologies, and Astana EXPO 2017, to name a few. As one global crisis after another challenges world leaders and citizens, Astana stands as more than a symbol of ethnic and religious harmony; it offers concrete solutions, thoughtful mediation and a neutral place for developing collaborative solutions.

ASTANA 20  
CAPITAL OF THE GREAT STEPPE