



## CIS heads of government council in Astana: Kazakhstan calls for expanding trade relations



By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – The heads of government of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) discussed 15 agenda items during a scheduled council meeting in the Kazakh capital on Nov. 2.

CIS is composed of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. One of the areas of focus was enhancing economic and trade cooperation.

“For more than a quarter of a century, the CIS has served as a full-fledged organisation that allowed preserving historical ties between our peoples and helped strengthen the sovereignty of each country. Today, cooperation within the commonwealth has become even more significant. Mutual trade within the CIS continues to grow. Last year, turnover amounted to \$164 billion, an increase of 25 percent. A similar

trend continues this year,” said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in receiving the high-level officials.

He stressed the importance of strengthening the commonwealth by promoting its modernisation and efficiency and adapting to new realities.

“To expand economic cooperation within the commonwealth, we need to update the economic development strategy and accelerate the adopted projects of the agreement on free trade in CIS countries,” he said.

Nazarbayev also reminded his colleagues about the achievements on proposals made at the heads of state council meeting in Dushanbe, including removing trade obstacles; improved transportation, logistics and tourism coordination; joint space projects; developing digital economy and adopting innovative solutions.

“The integration of technology parks and the implementation of joint innovation projects will

provide a major synergetic effect for the creation of high-tech production in the commonwealth. Western countries are actively using the Internet in 5G format that allows functioning of artificial intelligence. We should deal with its development. Each of us will not be able to do this separately,” he said.

“The implementation of these initiatives is not only about economic development, but will be an important factor in our relations,” he added.

The formal part of the council was conducted in narrow and extended formats. As the formats allow proposals for further interaction, the Kazakh side once again raised issues of enhancing trade, implementing joint space projects, stepping up work on transitioning economies to digitisation and implementing CIS joint initiatives in the green sphere.

CIS Executive Secretary Sergey Lebedev promised all initiatives “will be carefully analysed

by the Executive Committee” so everything can be prepared for execution “at the levels of statutory and sectoral bodies of the commonwealth.” The delegations expressed confidence that the decisions and their performance will contribute to cooperation within CIS.

Last year, Kazakhstan’s trade with CIS countries grew by almost 25 percent, reaching \$22 billion. In the first half of 2018, the figure increased by 10.6 percent to \$13.6 billion (compared to \$12.3 billion in the same period of 2017). From January-July, exports from Kazakhstan to CIS countries grew by 16.9 percent (\$5.3 billion).

Issues tabled at the prime ministers’ meeting included energy, agriculture and social security cooperation; the space industry; tax administration; communication and innovation; protection of intellectual property rights and cultural interaction.

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## Kazakhstan jumps 8 points in WB Doing Business ranking

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakhstan jumped from 36th last year to 28th place in the 2019 World Bank Doing Business Report released Oct. 31.

Kazakhstan improved in three areas of the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) score, including enforcing contracts, starting businesses and trading across borders.

Kazakhstan ranked 4th overall in enforcing contracts, improving its place to two points compared to last year. The contract process was simplified by the expansion of court automation. The introduction

of an electronic case management system made possible the generation of performance measurement reports. Court decisions rendered in commercial cases on all levels also began to be published publicly.

In starting new businesses, Kazakhstan improved from 41th to 36th place. Kazakhstan simplified the process to start a new business by cutting post-registration procedures, such as tax registration, social security registration and licensing. In turn, this reduced the time spent on opening a business from nine to five days.

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## Astana Club platform to host fourth meeting, focus on Eurasia

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Astana Club international forum will host a Nov. 12-13 annual meeting of 50 leading experts, politicians and diplomats from 33 countries. The fourth meeting will be dedicated to the prospects of building Eurasian strategic architecture in a multi-polar-context and strengthening medium-sized powers’ capacity to shape a new geopolitical reality.

Astana Club is one of the largest international platforms where the global expert and political community gather. According to Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) Director Yerzhan Saltybayev, the club is unique to Central Asia, given that other platforms are more narrow or wider in scope.

“The International Discussion Club Valdai is engaged in the pro-

motion of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. The Boao Forum in China is focused on Beijing’s agenda. The World Economic Forum covers [everything] from financial markets to the problems of the Earth’s ozone layer. Astana Economic Forum (AEF) is focused on issues of economic development. Herewith, except for the AEF, Central Asia and Kazakhstan are the objects for discussion on other platforms. Astana Club’s format makes Kazakhstan a shaper of the international agenda discussion,” said the director.

This year, the meeting’s theme is “Toward a Greater Eurasia: how to build a common future.” The discussion will centre on prospects for building Eurasian strategic architecture in a multi-polar context, which strengthens medium-sized powers’ ability to shape a new geopolitical reality.

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## Kazakh anti-nuclear activist receives 2018 Nuclear-Free Future Award

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov received the Nuclear-Free Future Award at the Oct. 24 awarding ceremony in Salzburg, Austria.

Since 1998, the Nuclear-Free Future Award honours those who contribute to building a world without nuclear weapons, nuclear energy and uranium ammunition. This year marks its 20th anniversary.

The recognition of Kuyukov reflects the country’s important role in the international anti-nuclear movement, said Kazakh Ambassador to Austria Kairat Sarybay who attended the event. The ATOM Project, initiated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2012, garners global public support for the comprehensive nuclear test ban and nuclear disarmament.

Kuyukov was born without arms in a small village near the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in eastern Kazakhstan. Through his moving



speeches and paintings, which he creates holding the brush with his feet and mouth, he seeks to ensure that such nuclear testing atrocities are never repeated.

“Karipbek demonstrated incredible courage in forging a meaningful life as a painter and anti-nuclear activist despite the physical difficulties he personally encounters and the trauma of growing up in a community where so many chil-

dren are born deformed and with horrific health problems, many losing their lives at an early age,” said jury member and Parliamentarian for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament global coordinator Alyn Ware.

Along with Kuyukov, Jeffrey Lee of Australia and Linda Walker of the United States each received \$10,000 prize money to support their activism in the categories

of Education, Resistance and Solutions, respectively. Didier and Paulette Anger of France and Peter Weish of Austria were recognised for driving their countries’ anti-nuclear movements in the respective categories of Lifetime Achievement and Special Recognition.

Kuyukov intends to spend the prize money on preserving his home village of Yegindibulak, just 100 km from the nuclear test site, which he fears is becoming a ghost town.

“Yegindibulak was among the first to feel the consequences of the testing during the 40 years [the site was active],” he said.

In receiving the award, he joins the ranks of Kazakh photojournalist and the Phoenix Organisation and Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement leader Yuri Kuydin, who was recognised in 2000 for raising awareness of nuclear testing in Semipalatinsk beyond the Soviet Union through his photography.

The following day, the laureates made presentations on their activism at the International Anti-Nuclear Symposium.

## Kazakh peacekeepers join Indian battalion in Lebanon, as Guterres welcomes news

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s first ever UN peacekeeping contingent that is part of an Indian battalion in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) arrived in Lebanon Oct. 31. The contingent will patrol areas, organise observer posts and supervise ceasefires.

“We are proud to send Kazakhstan’s first contingent to serve for UN peacekeeping. One hundred and twenty Kazakh peacekeepers have deployed today in Lebanon starting their mission for UNIFIL with Indbatt. It is our next step and contribution to strengthening international security,” the Kazakh Mission to the UN announced via Twitter.

“Contributing to UN peace-

keeping is a concrete demonstration of global solidarity and responsibility. I send the Kazakh contingent and all Blue Helmets my best wishes,” Secretary-General of the UN Antonio Guterres responded to the tweet welcoming the country’s service members.

The Kazakh Ministry of Defence released a statement saying the UN mission will help strengthen international security and demonstrates Kazakhstan’s position as a responsible member of the international community.

Kazakh service members joined the Indian battalion after the necessary memorandum was ratified by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev a few days earlier.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## National employment programme seeks to employ more than 500,000 by year's end

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's employment and mass entrepreneurship programme seeks to recruit 571,000 citizens through state support mechanisms by the end of 2018, said Kazakh Minister of Labour and Social Protection Madina Abylkassymova.

The programme primarily seeks to improve the qualifications of the labour force, develop mass entrepreneurship and involve the self-employed and unemployed population in the labour sector. The budget allotted 112.9 billion tenge (US\$306.2 million) for the programme this year.

"Of that, 82.5 billion tenge (US\$223.75 million) was used within ten months. As of October, the programme reached 563,000 citizens, 99 percent of this year's

plan. Of those, 458,000 were employed, including 327,000 on a full-time basis, or 71 percent," she said.

Mass technical and professional education is part of the effort envisioned in the programme. Through October, nearly 40,000 citizens have attended short-term professional education courses, which exceeded the ministry's plan by 7 percent. The ministry also plans to extend the list of in-demand professions and skills currently connected with the courses.

Requirements for educational facilities will also be tightened, she noted. Among the measures will be improving the material and technical base, qualified staffs, dual education and employing at least 60 percent of graduates.

Courses will also be taught for workers training to meet the demands of Industry 4.0, with the condition of the employer co-f-

ancing at least half of the educational cost.

Developing mass entrepreneurship is set as the second direction of the programme and microcredits are key to facilitating business development, primarily in rural areas. The ministry reported 42 billion tenge (US\$113.9 million) was granted in microcredits, including 31 billion (US\$84 million) in rural areas and 11 billion tenge (US\$29.8 million) in cities.

At present, 70 percent of the plan is complete, as Kazakh citizens received 9,801 microloans, including 8,778 in rural areas and 1,023 in cities. Of those, 6,717 were earmarked to support start-ups, 2,464 to develop businesses and 620 to form new agriculture cooperatives.

Seven second-tier banks and two micro financial organisations are currently providing micro-

loans, according to Kazakh Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov.

"As of October, participants of the programme that received microloans in 2017 produced products worth 7.6 billion tenge (US\$20.6 million), created nearly 1,000 jobs and paid 299 million tenge (US\$810,900) in taxes. We expect significant growth in the indicators after the evaluation of tax reports in the end of the year; that is, after full use of budget resources in the economy," he said.

Abylkassymova added 128,000 people were employed at subsidised jobs and nearly 336,000 through an electronic labour exchange.

To facilitate the mobility of labour resources, 1,488 families were relocated from southern regions characterised by an excess work force.

"Providing accommodation is an important factor in relocating [people] to the regions with a lack of labour. As instructed by the head of state, we developed mechanisms to build and purchase housing for these people involving employers. Such an approach will first be applied in the North Kazakhstan region and then applied in other regions," she said.

The budget plans to allocate 15 billion tenge (US\$40.6 million) for this action for the next three years, providing housing to more than 3,000 relocated families in the North Kazakhstan region.

Coordination among state bodies needs to be improved, the minister said, to monitor job creation as part of the national programmes, investment projects and in small and medium-sized businesses.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The French company Urbasolar SAS has attracted funding for the construction of a solar power plant in the Turkestan region, reports Kazakhstan's Atameken Business Channel. The project, worth more than 7 billion tenge (US\$18.9 million), will increase the share of renewable energy in the country, which according to plans should reach 3 percent by 2020. The plant will be built in two phases over a nine-month period and will incorporate more than 54,000 270 W solar PV panels. "The plant will be located on an area of 30 hectares. The Kaz Green Tek Solar project company began construction and installation works. Commissioning and supply of electricity are scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2019. The facility will create 50 jobs," reads the release.

The Kazteletadio company has launched digital broadcasting in Almaty as part of a state programme, according to Kazinform. The release of radio frequencies is also planned. "Digital broadcasting is a priority for our country. We plan a phased transition to digital television, which will increase the number of television and radio programmes and provides the small electricity consumption. We will develop the advertising market with the help of digital industries. Thirty TV channels in the regional centres and up to 15 TV channels in villages will be available. Subscribers will not pay an additional fee," said head of the Regional Television and Radio Directorate Kaiser Razdykov.

Shymkent will launch a smart parking project worth 22 million tenge (US\$59,500) in late November, reports the Otyrar TV channel. The project will be self-sustainable in the future and the funds raised will be directed toward road infrastructure improvement and development. Approximately 300,000 Shymkent residents have cars and the haphazard regard for parking regulations causes traffic congestion. "Smart cameras will control the parking situation and recognise offenders. They will also help find cars in case of theft. An hour of parking costs 100 tenge (US\$0.27). We are prepared for city residents to meet this innovative approach with misunderstanding. But the situation will change when traffic congestion reduces," said a representative of the city administration.

France's Alstom company has launched the production of on-board transformers for electric locomotives at the EKZ plant in Astana, according to an Oct. 31 company press release. The production capacity is expected to be 300 transformers per year with 100 employees working at full capacity. The plant is one of the main drivers of economy and a hub for the production and export of locomotives to the region. "The launch of the new production demonstrates our solid and long-term partnership with Kazakhstan. We are proud to contribute to Kazakhstan's machinery-building industry through localisation of technology and production, creation of new working places and training for local personnel," said Alstom Managing Director for Western and Central Asia Bernard Peille. Alstom is the only manufacturer of electric locomotives and point machines in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The Kyzylorda region has begun building a lead-zinc mining and processing plant in the Zhanakorgan district, according to an Oct. 26 press release from the Tauken Samruk company. The plant, worth 235 billion tenge (US\$635 million), will produce zinc and lead concentrates. The area's proven reserves suggest the possibility of mining and enriching ore until 2051. Some 1,500 workplaces will be created. "Commissioning of the first stage of the plant with a capacity of 2 million tonnes is planned in October 2020. The second complex with a capacity of 4 million tonnes will start work in November 2021," said ShalkiyaZink General Director Askar Dzhaunov.

## Digitising transport and logistics will reduce costs, minister says

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek briefed government officials Oct. 23 on the progress of the Digital Kazakhstan programme. According to his report, digitising transport and logistics will optimise costs and repairs for roads and transport.

Digitising transport and logistics has several directions aimed at increasing road and air route transit capacity, creating comfortable conditions for passengers and lowering mortality on the roads. It also reduces costs for transport and logistics.

Special automated measuring tools were introduced to ensure weighing vehicles safely and lowering violations and the cost of maintaining roads by reducing overloads. The system is forecast to reduce costs by 50 billion tenge (US\$137.66 million).

Charging for road usage has started on the Almaty-Khorgos, Almaty-Kapshagai and Astana-Temirtau routes. The Almaty-Khorgos route, which leads to the Kazakhstan-China border, started Sept. 27; to date, turnover capacity has increased ten times reaching a minimum of 2,500 vehicles per day. As a result, budget income from taxes and other payments is expected to increase to 50 billion tenge (US\$137.66 million). The logistic centre on the border was built with investor's funds.

"Along with the Ministry of Finance, we concluded an agreement with a private investor, Eurotransit company, which built this logistics centre and equipped it through their own funds. It will be in their ownership until 2026. The [Kazakh] government will be buying out the place in partial payments until then," said Kassymbek during a press conference after the meeting.

In January, the ministry is planning to announce a tender to install a payment system in the Astana-Pavlodar, Shymkent-Aktobe-Markul and Shymkent-Taraz-Kainar sections. In 2020, the charging system will operate in 17 sections with a length of approximately 6,500 kilometres.

Radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags have been instituted on the Astana-Schuchinsk route to collect information and make payments easier using the Payway.kz app, Internet Banking and Kiwi System. Weather conditions, speed restrictions and other information is posted on digital boards along the route.

Google Maps, Yandex Maps and the KazWay app for Android and iOS systems were developed to digitise roadside service facilities and provide system information. Facility updates will also be included on the International Road Transport Union's (IRU) transpark map.

The roadway asset management system was developed last year and equipped with 16 vehicle laboratories. Each is furnished with a video camera, ultrasonic rut recorder, ultrasonic position sensor, gyroscope, on-board computer, GPS, laser scanner and georadar. The system is designed to reduce road repair costs, and data collection and information security certification are in process.

"We expect an economic effect [reduction of costs] of 110 billion tenge (US\$302.85 million) by 2025," said Kassymbek.

Special automated measuring tools were introduced to ensure weighing vehicles safely and lowering violations and the cost of maintaining roads by reducing overloads. The system is forecast to reduce costs by 50 billion tenge (US\$137.66 million). With the help of these tools, 723 violations were reported and 8 million tenge (US\$22,025) in fines collected in the first eight months of the year. There are plans to launch 12 systems by the end of the year, with a total of 46 by 2020.

"Automation of vehicle weighing procedures will eliminate the human factor during transport control," he added.

The interregional and international passenger traffic dispatching system is running and 416 routes and more than 2,000 buses will be operating by the end of next year. The main task of the system is to ensure compliance with the schedule and route and regularity, which directly affects the quality of services.

The E-freight system of paperless air cargo transportation workflow, which will reduce time and costs, is expected to be introduced in December.

"E-freight is an electronic system of air cargo data processing. Currently, approximately 20 documents need to be collected and it takes two days to process trans-shipment cargo. In order to increase air transit turnover, we entered the E-freight international system that is used by leading air and customs institutions," said Kassymbek.

## OpenU platform to give access to worldwide-recognised textbooks in Kazakh language

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Kazakh National Translation Bureau is working on translating internationally recognised textbooks in social sciences and humanities into the Kazakh language in accordance with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's state-of-the-nation address. Based on their work during two years, the bureau is developing the online platform Kazakh Open University (OpenU) to make the books available for Kazakhstan citizens.

The project, New Liberal Arts Education: 100 New Textbooks in the Kazakh Language, is one of the large-scale tasks set in the Rukhani Zhangyru (Modemisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme. The Kazakh National Translation Bureau is implementing the project since 2017.

To select textbooks, 800 lists from different Kazakh universities were reviewed. The bureau selected 18 textbooks to translate in 2017.

"At least three edition of the textbook should be published [so that we can choose it for translation]. The most recent edition should also be within the last three years. These requirements prove that the textbook is in use and its data is up-to-date. The selection process starts from universities [of Kazakhstan]. We send them a request and asked for the list of textbooks they consider needed for them. There were 800 lists of textbooks. There were textbooks as well as research studies. All of them were from the lists of leading universities' in humanities and social sciences," National Translation Bureau Executive Director Rauan Kenzhekhanuly said recently.

These textbooks are being translated into the Kazakh language, published and delivered to universities for free. New textbooks will be introduced into the higher education system for 2018-2019

school year. Electronic versions of some of the textbooks are available on the bureau's web page free-of-charge.

Currently, translation of 30 books is on-going. The leading educational institutions of Kazakhstan and more than 200 specialists were attracted to translate selected textbooks into Kazakh. The textbooks are repeatedly edited for literary and scientific content.

The project is expected to influence development of the Kazakh language and expansion of knowledge in it. Through this, the Kazakh-language scientific content and language vocabulary will be enriched. In turn, it will provide the Kazakh-speaking audience with worldwide-recognised books in humanities and social sciences improving education in the field.

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# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

New Delhi hosted the roundtable discussion, "Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran-India: Current Situation and Prospects," Oct. 31. The event focused on logistics opportunities along the eastern route of the 7,200-kilometre North-South transit corridor and drew representatives from India's Foreign Ministry, Commerce and Industry Association, and Trade and Industry Chamber Federation, as well as members of more than 30 leading transport and logistics companies. The participants noted the potential of the transport route to significantly cut delivery time and double or triple trade, which stands currently at about \$1 billion. As part of the event, Kazakh national logistics company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy and India's Tuberos Logistics company signed an agreement on rail transport and forwarding services.

The Kazakh film "Amre" won Best Global Hollywood Film award at the Hollywood Film Festival, held in Los Angeles, California, Oct. 23 to 28. "Amre" was filmed in Latvia and Kazakhstan in 2016. Directed by Jeff Vespa, it stars Sanzhar Madiyev, Yerkebulan Dairov, Abbie Cornish and Ben Aldridge. Premiered this year, the film tells the real story of Kazakh folk singer Amre Kashaubayev and his enchanting performance at the Paris expo in 1925. Six films were initially nominated for the festival from Kazakhstan, including three long features and two short films.

Kazakh mobile operator Tele2 was named Best Asian Project at the 14th Global Carrier Awards Oct. 24 in London, which gathered more than 400 industry leaders from across the international telecommunications community. The Kazakh operator, which accounts for 26.6 percent of the country's mobile segment, presented its integration project with Altel at the contest, surpassing China Telecom, Indian Airtel, Colt and Epsilon in the category. "We have been growing in all directions, significantly exceeding the results of past years. We still remain a technological leader in 4G standard service provision and cover 74 percent of the country's population with this technology, which is significantly higher than the similar indicator among other companies. At present, we service more than 7 million people," said Tele2 and Altel Board Chair Roman Volodin.

Kazakh military forces took part in the 26th Euronaval international four-day naval and maritime exhibition and conference in Paris. Nearly 400 exhibitors from 34 countries presented technologies and the latest innovations in watercraft and infrastructure, hydrography, oceanography, maritime security and safety, naval architecture, maritime engineering, special operations, and training and simulation. The Kazakh delegation, led by Commander-in-Chief of Kazakhstan's Naval and Maritime Forces Saken Bekzhanov, was among 124 French and international delegations visiting the event. The programme featured presentations in joint military operations, naval and maritime operations, cyber security and digitisation.

Kazakh companies signed contracts worth more than \$1.5 million during the recent Central Asian trade forum in Tashkent. The annual event, first convened in 2011 in Bishkek, is meant to foster regional trade and partnerships and stimulate dialogue between regional businesses. More than 1,000 delegates from 27 countries attended this year's forum, which focused on "New Horizons in Trade and Investments," a theme that corresponds with the region's growing linkages. Twenty-nine companies in engineering, cabling and wiring, metallurgy, agriculture, the food industry, construction and medicine represented Kazakhstan at the forum.

## Astana hosts global conference on primary healthcare



By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh government, World Health Organisation and UNICEF co-hosted an Oct. 25-26 Global Conference in Astana on primary healthcare (PHC).

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata, which was adopted at the International Conference of Primary Care in 1978 in what was then the capital of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. That conference gathered health experts and world leaders to commit to health for all. The Declaration of Alma-Ata formed the foundation for the last 40 years of global primary healthcare efforts.

Astana's Global Conference on PHC adopted a new declaration emphasising the critical role of primary healthcare around the world. The declaration refocuses efforts on primary health care to ensure everyone everywhere achieves the highest possible attainable standard of health. The Astana Declaration will inform the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on

United Healthcare (UHC) in 2019. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed conference participants via a video address.

"Worldwide contribution to a better healthcare has become an

important asset of the medical community. The Alma-Ata Declaration, a historical document, was included in textbooks of many universities outside of Kazakhstan. The document became a prime example of the effectiveness of international efforts. It outlined the basic principles of the development of primary healthcare, including public health education, maternal and child health, disease prevention, vaccination and drug provision. Since then, healthcare

throughout the world has developed in accordance with these key areas," he said, according to primeminister.kz.

Kazakh Prime Minister

Bakytzhan Sagintayev also ad-

**"During the last 10 years, we were focused on disease prevention. Each year, two million adults are undergoing screening. The programme of vaccination against 21 infectious diseases covers five million people annually."**

ressed the opening ceremony. "Since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, we achieved a total coverage of our citizens with medical services. We have created an extensive infrastructure of PHC facilities, which include 1,808 polyclinics, medical centres and dispensaries. The priority area of our national healthcare policy is primary healthcare," he noted.

"During the last 10 years, we were focused on disease prevention. Each year, two million adults

are undergoing screening. The programme of vaccination against 21 infectious diseases covers five million people annually," he said.

On the margins of the conference, Sagintayev discussed the protection of children's rights with UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

Sagintayev thanked UNICEF for supporting Kazakhstan's efforts to protect children's rights and the country's international and regional initiatives.

Sagintayev noted that Nazarbayev declared the next year the "Year of Youth of Kazakhstan." In this regard, the government has been tasked to support the efforts of international organisations, the non-governmental sector, research and academic circles and human rights organisations to protect children's rights with an emphasis on the rights of vulnerable groups.

The opening ceremony continued with meetings and sessions. In addition, the conference programme included discussion sessions and exhibitions. In general, the event was attended by 1,500

participants, including heads of state, ministers, non-governmental organisations, professional organisations, academics, young professionals and youth leaders, health practitioners and UN partners.

Sagintayev also met with Director General of the WHO Tedros Ghebreyesus. They discussed the development of common approaches to healthcare in the world, the improvement of the quality and accessibility of medical services and education, as well as the introduction of modern digital technologies to health infrastructure at the meeting.

According to www.who.int, PHC is about caring for people, rather than simply treating specific diseases or conditions. PHC is made up of three main areas: empowered people and communities; multisectoral policy and action; and primary care and essential public health functions as the core of integrated health services.

This includes a spectrum of services from prevention, including vaccinations and family planning, to management of chronic health conditions and palliative care.

## Astana Club platform to host fourth meeting

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The panel sessions' themes include future scenarios on a Greater Eurasia, prospects for development of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union and modern transformation processes in Central Asia.

"The current meeting will take place in a difficult time... The world entered the era of new protectionism, which is characterised by a more nationalistic agenda and internally-oriented policies of major states, increased military activity, cross-sanctions and mutual trade wars. These processes provoke new conflicts and aggravate the existing contradictions," said Saltybayev. "Kazakhstan seeks to contribute, providing its platform

and making efforts to obtain a consensus between interests of all Eurasian countries."

This year, 11 former presidents, four former ministers of foreign affairs, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the President of United Nations' 67th General Assembly, seven authors of world bestsellers in geopolitics and 21 experts in international relations, geopolitics and economics will participate in the event.

"We do not pursue quantity but focus on quality. We strive to create a dialogue, to hear the opinions of each state that is actively interested in strengthening international cooperation," emphasised the director.

Among participants are former President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai, former President of the European

Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, former Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaukat Aziz, former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nobel

**This year, 11 former presidents, four former ministers of foreign affairs, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the President of United Nations' 67th General Assembly, seven authors of world bestsellers in geopolitics and 21 experts in international relations, geopolitics and economics will participate in the event.**

Peace Prize Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, and former Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini.

The main outcome of the 2018

meeting will be the presentation of "The Global Risk Rating for Eurasia in 2019." The rating is based on a survey of more than 1,000 experts from 60 countries, and 30 experts

provided their substantive opinions on global risk assessment. The Astana Club was created in 2015. The organisers are the Found-

ation of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Elbasy and IWEP. The main themes of discussion are geopolitical, security, and economic issues in Eurasia.

The topic of the first Astana Club was the "Geo-economics of Eurasia." The second meeting in 2016 was on the opportunities and challenges of the upcoming transformations in the region. The third meeting was held under the motto "Big Eurasia – 2027: confrontation or partnership."

In 2017, for the first time, a panel session was organised for mass media and national experts, moderated by Stephen Sackur, the host of the Hard Talk programme on BBC. This year's discussions will also be open to media.

## CIS heads of government council in Astana...

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The delegations highlighted the importance of the CIS Concept of Cooperation in developing and producing high-tech energy equipment. They believe it allows for expanding and modernising production facilities and creating new high-performance jobs, as well as increasing research potential and, in general, strengthening development of the energy sector, engineering and industry.

Rosatom (the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation) executive Nikolay Spassky and Moscow Power Engineering Institute Provost Vladimir Zamolodchikov gave reports. Council participants also signed 13 multilateral documents in various fields.

Kazakh Prime Minister

Bakytzhan Sagintayev met with Azerbaijan Prime Minister Novruz Ismailoglu Mamedov and Arme-

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nian First Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. Sagintayev and Mamedov discussed economic and

trade cooperation in agriculture, energy, transport and logistics, the food and metallurgical industries

and pharmaceuticals, as well as jointly implementing investment projects.

Discussions about positive trends in trade and economic cooperation between the nations were explained by promoting exports and increasing trade following the heads of state meeting in 2017. The important role of the intergovernmental commission and implementing the roadmap to expand trade and economic cooperation for 2017–2020 was also noted.

As part of the countries' cultural relations agreements, Kazakh Days of Culture in Azerbaijan will be celebrated in November-December in Baku.

The trade turnover between the countries was \$168.1 million for the first months of the year (2.1 times increase compared with \$81.5 million in the same period last year). Exports to Azerbaijan increased 2.2 times to \$134.6

million; imports were \$33.5 million.

Within the last eight months, approximately 1.3 million tonnes of cargo were transhipped through Kazakh ports towards Azerbaijan, reported www.primeminister.kz.

Sagintayev and Mirzoyan spoke about energy, cultural and humanitarian cooperation; the chemical industry, civil aviation, engineering and implementing joint IT investment projects.

Kazakhstan is considering exporting metals, food, animal and vegetable-origin products and railway engineering goods to Armenia. Trade turnover between the countries almost doubled from January-August compared to the same period in 2017 (\$8.2 million in exports, \$4.2 million in imports).

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Global trade integration is key to Central Asian economic growth, says Moody's

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Central Asia's economic growth potential is limited by its low degree of integration into global trade, according to a recent Moody's Investors Service (Moody's) report.

According to Moody's, the economies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan should capitalise on their close proximity to the vast, high-growth markets of China and India with respective credit ratings of A1 stable and Baa2 stable.

Despite the strong growth exhibited by Central Asian economies, there exist clear limitations to their growth models. According to the agency, these economies will struggle in developing specialised industries and enjoying productivity gains from economies of scale without a closer integration into global non-commodity trade.

Moody's Investors Service is the Moody's Corporation's bond credit rating business and one of the Big Three credit rating agencies. The agency's conclusions are made in its recent report "Sovereigns – Central Asia: Low global trade integration, legacy economic models constrain growth in Central Asia."

Central Asia's long-term economic sustainability is hindered by its reliance on commodity exports, non-commodity trade with Commonwealth of Independent

States (CIS) markets and remittances.

"CIS-focused trade linkages in Central Asia stem largely from legacy supply chains, inherited from the Soviet Union, as well as recent efforts to promote regional integration within the Eurasian Economic Union. Central Asia's trade and remittance linkages with other CIS countries mean that the region's economies tend to have highly synchronized cycles with the broader CIS region," reports moodys.com.

The region's average annual real gross domestic product growth rate was 3.4 percentage points higher than the global average in 2008-2017. Its rate was also 5.4 percentage points above Russia's, an economy rated Ba1 positive by Moody's.

Despite the strong growth exhibited by Central Asian economies, there exist clear limitations to their growth models. According to the agency, these economies will struggle in developing specialised industries and enjoying productivity gains from economies of scale without a closer integration into global non-commodity trade.

Increased costs for trading beyond Central Asia result from a lack of physical infrastructure, restrictive border regulations and challenging geographic conditions. The region's global trade costs are comparable with those of landlocked countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Addressing hard and soft trade barriers is the recommended course of action. The report also finds that the region's global trade integration will depend on both reduced trade barriers and a vibrant private sector that can make the most of lower trade costs.

Moody's notes that each economy's ability to act on this advice varies. Kazakhstan, rated Baa3 stable, exhibits "ample financial resources, [a] central location in China's Belt and Road Initiative and a more conducive institutional environment" to do so. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, rated B2 stable and B3 stable respectively, face greater financial, institutional and geographic challenges.

Moody's subscribers may read the full report at [www.moody's.com](http://www.moody's.com).

## Foreign investments grow 15.4 percent in six months, exceed \$12 billion

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The volume of foreign directed investments injected in the Kazakh economy rose by 15.4 percent in six months, Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek reported Oct. 23. The figure is estimated at \$12.3 billion compared to \$10.5 billion during the same period in 2017.

Kazakhstan tops Central Asian countries in terms of attracted investments, accounting for more than 70 percent of all foreign direct investments into the region.

Kassymbek indicated mining (\$6.7 billion in investments), transport (\$393.3 million), finance and insurance (\$359.5 million), information and communications (\$124.2 million) and trade (\$5.47 million) are among fastest growing industries.

"In nine months, gross fixed capital formation grew by 21.6 percent and reached 7.5 trillion tenge (US\$20.5 billion)," he said. "Of those, 73.1 percent or 5.5 trillion tenge (US\$15 million), can be attributed to private investments."

Transnational companies are currently involved in 34 investment projects worth \$10.6 billion.

"Twelve projects worth \$1.4 billion are being implemented and, of those, eight projects with a total volume of investments reaching \$1 billion entered an active stage of implementation this year," he added.

German gas and engineering giant Linde Group, working in Kazakhstan since 2009, is planning to launch an integrated gas production system at ArcelorMittal's Temirtau site to produce industrial gases. The system, with \$83 million in investments, is scheduled to be operational in November 2019.

The company partnered in 2013 with ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel corporation, to build an air separation plant, the largest in Central Asia, at the Temirtau plant. With ArcelorMittal's plans to boost production resulting in a growing demand for industrial gases, Linde will build a second air separation unit that will connect to the first to form an integrated and fully-customised gas production system.



Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek.

Once opened, the system will be operated by Linde Gas Kazakhstan.

The Farm Frites potato processing plant in the Almaty region has attracted \$165 million in investments. The facility will focus on cultivating 11 elite potato varieties, with its annual capacity reaching 70,000 tonnes. Farm Frites and Kazakh Eurasia Gold are working together to set up the Farm Frites Eurasia company that will run and manage the plant.

Belgian Carmeuse Group, the world's leading producer of lime and lime products, will build a high-quality production plant in the Karaganda region with an annual capacity of 300,000 tonnes. Investment volume is estimated at \$70 million.

Turkish Yuildirim Holding is in the planning stages to construct a \$220 million soda ash production plant in the Zhambyl region. Company president Robert Yuksel Yildirim revealed the proposal during his meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in the capital in December, when the sides discussed the prospects of chemical industry investment projects. The holding expects to kick off construction in 2019 and commission the plant in 2021.

Twenty-two remaining projects worth \$9.2 billion are currently being developed, involving investors such as Chinese CITIC Group, Japanese aluminium producer Hanacans, Marubeni and Servier, a French pharmaceutical company.

The minister also reported on incentives the country is offering to potential investors.

"We made significant changes to our legislation and simplified the regulatory system, taxation, customs control and migration and visa regime. The number of countries whose citizens can visit Kazakhstan without a visa is 62, including all Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states. We also carried out the work to improve the judiciary system in line with the OECD recommendations," said Kassymbek. Kazakh citizens enjoy a visa free regime in 20 countries.

He added the nation has a three-level system to attract investments. External responsibility for accomplishing the task falls on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, investment counsellors at Kazakh embassies and Kazakh Invest representatives; the ministry and its committee for investments oversee the national level and local executive bodies with regional Kazakh Invest branches control the regional level.

Kassymbek also urged governors to gear up work in providing land for investment projects, building the engineering infrastructure, ensuring the gas supply and boosting capacity of special economic zones, introducing new financial mechanisms to support large groundbreaking projects and improving the quality of investment portals.

Addressing his colleagues, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdurkhanov stressed the importance of export-oriented industries as a "central element of economic policy" and economic diplomacy as a top priority of his ministry.

"Here, we need a close coordination of investment and export areas to produce a synergetic effect," he said.

Speaking of high-level visits to Belgium, China, Finland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United States, among recent trips, he noted Kazakhstan signed nearly 135 agreements worth \$30.6 billion.

"The ministry is constantly working to monitor the implementation of these agreements reached during the visits of the head of state abroad and visits of foreign leaders to Kazakhstan. Investment projects involving transnational corporations receive special attention," he said.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The investment income of Kazakhstan's Unified Accumulation Pension Fund (UAPF) for the first three quarters of 2018 reached 663.1 billion tenge (US\$1.79 billion). At the end of September, pension savings amounted to 8.9 trillion tenge (US\$24.06 billion), 17.9 percent more than a year ago. Savings in compulsory pension funds contributed 97.9 percent of all the revenue, while savings in professional mandatory pensions accounted for another 2.1 percent (182.7 billion tenge or US\$494.01 million) of the total amount. Voluntary pension savings remain the least popular contributing factor, accounting for only 0.02 percent of the total (1.8 billion tenge or US\$4.87 million).

The number of Kazakh banks has shrunk, leaving fewer players in the sector, though those remaining are the most reliable. The year started with 32 actively working banks, but by autumn only 28 second-tier banks remained in the market. At the same time, aggregate indicators of the banking sector remain positive. The volume of assets of second-tier banks increased by 1.7 percent over September and amounted to 24.5 trillion tenge (US\$66.25 billion). Annual growth was 0.4 percent. The total volume of assets of first-tier banks with a market share of over 5 percent increased by 2.1 percent over the month, to 18.3 trillion tenge (US\$49.48 billion).

The assets of Kazakh investment and management companies increased by 2.5 percent at the end of September and totalled 171.9 billion tenge (US\$464.81 million). The assets of companies are growing from year to year, but with increased volatility. Last September, assets increased by 43.8 percent, while in 2016 the increase was by 2.5 percent. Liabilities have grown along with assets, totalling 63.2 billion tenge (US\$170.34 million), a small increase compared to 2017's 63.1 billion tenge (US\$170.62 million). The balance capitalisation of investment portfolio managers in September increased by 3.9 percent and amounted to 108.7 billion tenge (US\$293.92).

Investments in healthcare and social services increased by 53.7 percent (amounting to 73.8 billion tenge) for the first nine months of 2018 compared to the same period last year, though they still only reach a 1 percent share of the total investment in fixed assets. The Almaty region, Almaty and Astana provided for 42.3 percent of all investments in the sector. The main sources of funding for fixed capital were local budgets, which allocated 28.3 billion tenge, and own funds of the business, 27.1 billion tenge, in nine months.

At the end of September, 2,340 active large enterprises registered, an increase of 3.9 percent compared to last year. The total number of registered enterprises grew by 4.6 percent. However, the number of active large businesses has not grown significantly in the last five years; their number has fluctuated between roughly 2,200 and 2,400. The share of active large businesses has remained high over the years (94.4 percent this year). The most popular sphere is healthcare and social services, with 538 enterprises; state administration, defence, and compulsory social security follow with a total of 262 businesses. The manufacturing industry completes the top three with 252 operating companies.

For the first three quarters of 2018, the volume of internet providers' services to access the worldwide network reached 180.5 billion tenge (US\$488.06 million), which is 6.7 percent more than in the same period a year earlier, according to finprom.kz. At the same time, the number of users dropped by 1.6 percent at the end of September to 2.45 million. Over a five-year period, the number of active internet users has increased by 654,600, however. The number of users with high-speed broadband access exceeded 1 million by the end of January 2018, then dropped to 341,100 by the end of February. The largest accumulation of users with high-speed access is in Astana, at 675,300 users. This figure a year earlier was only 192,500.

## Kazakhstan jumps 8 points in World Bank's Doing Business ranking

Continued from Page A1

In international trading, Kazakhstan improved from 123rd to 102nd place. The world's largest landlocked country introduced the ASTANA-1 IS electronic customs declaration system and reduced customs administrative fees, making trade across borders easier. The changes reduced the time and costs of border and documentary compliance for export.

Kazakhstan also held onto its first-place ranking in Protecting Minority Investors.

Kazakhstan trails only Azerbaijan (25th place) among countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, while it is ahead of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) members such as Russia (31), Belarus (37), Armenia (41) and Kyrgyzstan (70).

Kazakhstan is also ahead of OECD member states such as Spain (30), France (32), Poland (33), Portugal (34), the Czech Republic (35) and the Netherlands (36).

New Zealand, Singapore, and Denmark kept their positions as the most business-friendly countries showing the best results. The top ten countries also include Hong Kong SAR of China, the Republic of Korea, Georgia, Norway, the United States, the

United Kingdom, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

"This jump of eight places is an objective reflection of the persistent work of the Kazakh government that has been implementing a special programme to improve business climate in the country for some time now," Rakhim Oshakbayev, Director of the TAL-AP Centre for Applied Research, said in an interview for this story. He also noted the close interaction with the World Bank experts as well as advice provided to the Kazakh government by consult-

ants from Georgia, which itself is ranked at number six this year, as further reasons for the success.

"Kazakhstan has finally entered the top 30 countries according to the Doing Business Report which covers 190 countries," Olzhas Khudaibergenov, Senior Partner at CSI Group, said. "Overall, there's improvement across all criteria, yet indicators for ease of international trade and access to financing are still low. The solution of these two key problems will allow raising the ranking even further, but, more importantly, will help cre-

ate conditions for expediting the speed of economic growth."

The 2019 Doing Business Report is the 16th in a series of annual reports investigating the regulations that influence business activities of local firms in 190 countries. The report examines the regulations for doing business in 11 areas of a business life, of which 10 are presented in the report. Those are starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

The Doing Business Report relies on four main sources of information, which are the laws and regulations, Doing Business respondents, the governments of the studied countries and World Bank Group regional staff. The data is gathered through responses to questionnaires, conference calls, written correspondence and visits by the World Bank team.

"Since its launch in 2003, Doing Business has inspired more than 3,500 reforms in the 10 areas of business regulation measured by the report. This year, we observed a peak in reform activity worldwide – 128 economies undertook a record 314 reforms in 2017/18," Jim Yong Kim, Presi-

dent of the World Bank Group, said in the foreword to the report.

"Overall, Europe and Central Asia, in comparison to the very first data collection for Doing Business, improved on the ease of business score very well. Since 2005, the region improved on the indicator by 21.7 points, while around the world this score changed by 14 points on average," said Doing Business analyst Parvina Rakhimova during the presentation in Astana.

Director of the World Bank Regional Branch in Central Asia Liliya Burunchuk added that "trading across borders indicator improved in all Central Asian countries. Trading and export is one of the most important spheres of development in these countries' economies, both inside and outside the region."

The Doing Business report covered 131,791 respondents and initiated 1,116 business reforms. Over 16 years, the research team visited 169 economies out of 190. Low-income and lower middle-income economies carried out 172 reforms in 2017-2018, most of which were made in the indicator of starting a business.

The Doing Business team is planning to visit Kazakhstan in late November to verify the collected data.

The 11 areas of business regulation measured by Doing Business affect firms throughout their life cycle



# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

French firm Alstom will implement two projects in Almaty, Alstom board member Philippe Delair told a recent Kazakh-Europe business forum in Brussels. The first project is to modernise Kazakhstan's railway infrastructure, with investment to be directed toward improving the security and reliability of the railway's digital data transmission. It will begin with an update of the data transmission systems in Kazakhstan's five main railway stations. The second project will centre on Almaty's light rail system. Founded in 1928, Alstom operates in rail transport markets, particularly in the fields of passenger transportation, signalling and locomotives.

Kazakhstan's uranium mining firm Kazatomprom will list up to 25 percent of its shares on the London stock exchange as part of its initial public offering, Kazatomprom CEO Galymzhan Pirmatov told an Oct. 24 briefing. Kazatomprom, according to national law, is to offer 20 percent of its shares in Kazakhstan through the Astana International Exchange, but the actual amount of the offering will depend on demand. The company could be valued from \$3 billion to \$4 billion, and its shares will be sold by the Samruk Kazyna sovereign wealth fund as depositary receipts.

Automotive industry production in Kazakhstan increased by 70 percent, KazAvtoProm Chair Oleg Alforyov told a recent Central Communications Service meeting. In September alone, more than 3,000 vehicles were produced. The country has produced approximately 23,000 vehicles worth in excess of 140 billion tenge (US\$378.55 million) in 2018, 70.3 percent more than last year's volumes. These vehicles include cars, trucks, buses and trailers. Within this time period, the production of passenger cars increased by 82.6 percent, while the output of trucks decreased by 17.2 percent.

Kazakh residents spent 23.8 billion tenge (US\$64.35 million) on entertainment in 2018 so far, reports Energyprom.kz. This year's expenditure exceeds last year's by 20.7 percent. More than 80 percent of entertainment expenditure centred on concert and theatre activities, while circus activities accounted for only 2 percent. Approximately 9 billion tenge (US\$24.34 million) was spent on entertainment in Astana, which is 30.8 percent more than last year. In Almaty, more than 6 billion tenge (US\$16.22 million) was spent. Atyrau is in third place among the regions, with expenditure at 1.45 billion tenge (US\$3.92 million). The number of registered entertainment companies in Kazakhstan reached 6,400 in 2018, a 7.1 percent increase since last year.

Royal Dutch Shell and Kazakhstan will continue energy sector cooperation for the next 25 years, Shell Exploration and Production Director Andrew Brown told an October meeting of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev with European businesspersons in Brussels. According to Brown, the agreement on friendly dispute resolution on the objectivity index recently signed between Kazakhstan and stakeholders in the Karachaganak project, among them Shell, will facilitate more investment. He also noted that Shell's 2018 energy development scenario provides for the global economy's full decarbonisation, thus complying with EXPO 2017's Future Energy theme.

Japanese conglomerate Hitachi recently founded the sales company Eurasian Machinery in Kazakhstan as part of its expansion into Central Asia's construction machinery market, reports 24.kz. According to Eurasian Machinery CEO Mehmet Kemal Cetinelli, Hitachi currently supplies equipment to KAZ Minerals and Eurasian Resources Group. Now, specialised equipment from Japan will become more accessible to mining and construction companies in Central Asia. Hitachi Construction Machinery Chair Tatsuro Ishizuka noted that Kazakhstan was chosen as the host country for the promising prospects it offered for the multinational company's growth in the sales network and value chain business.

## Astana conference focuses on Kazakh, German agricultural partnership

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Astana welcomed German and Kazakh businesses, representatives of governments and specialists for the conference, Kazakhstan and Germany: Partners in Building Sustainable Agriculture, Oct. 26 in Astana. They discussed increasing competitiveness in agriculture, sustainable agriculture, point farming, digitisation, logistics and research.

"The huge work is being carried out in these areas in Kazakh agriculture," said Head of the Kazakh-German Agro-Political Dialogue Jorg Dinkelaker.

"Germany played an important role in creating value added chain in meat and dairy production. It optimised its production and made it profitable. A big role is attributed to research and science component reflected in various forms. We are ready to share our experience. Of course, we need to adapt it to local conditions and demands of the Ka-

zakh side," he said, emphasising an interest among Kazakh companies.

Germany has been among the biggest investors in the Kazakh economy, whose companies have invested nearly \$4.2 billion since 2005.

Deputy Chair of Kazakh Investment company Marat Birimzhan said the contribution is particularly important due to its focus on non-primary sectors of the economy, which is a current priority for Kazakhstan.

"In comparison to \$20 billion that we receive each year as foreign investments, this amount of \$4.2 billion is very important, because 90 percent of German investments are in non-primary sector, including engineering, agriculture. I would like to note that Germany is not only our reliable partner in building sustainable agriculture, but also partner in the country's development," said Birimzhan.

He stressed the importance of the agriculture sector that employs

nearly 20 percent of the population or every fifth citizen.

The country's agriculture sector attracted nearly \$1.3 billion investments in the past five years and Birimzhan noted the figure is projected to grow with more foreign investors entering the market.

"Kazakhstan has nearly 210 million hectares of agricultural land, second in the world, and 180 million hectares are pastures that open colossal opportunities for boosting the potential and agricultural production," he added.

"As a young country, very often we come across several stereotypes when negotiating with foreign investors. First is a small market. Yes, we are the ninth largest country the size of Western Europe, but many investors say that your market is just 18 million people, but I would like to note that thanks to our integration processes and multi-vector policy we have an access to a market of 500 million people," he said, highlighting landlockedness and the tendency to align Kazakhstan to other

countries of Central Asia among the stereotypes.

First Secretary of the German Embassy in Astana Jonathan Weinberg expressed his country's willingness to build on the existing partnerships in developing agriculture.

"We are working based on a good trade exchange that exceeded \$4 billion and we want to increase this figure. We believe Kazakh-German agriculture cooperation is a very good example," said Weinberg.

"Why do we organise such conference? We look at agriculture as bright and very important for our cooperation. Last year, we celebrated 25 years of diplomatic relations with intensive visits, as Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited Astana and also other high-level visits. This all reflected the depth of our ties that we built in quite short period of time," he said.

The agro-political dialogue, established with Kazakhstan since 2009 and the German agriculture centre reflect effective cooperation,

said Kazakh Vice Minister of Agriculture Berik Bisengaliyev.

He spoke about Kazakhstan's efforts to develop the sector.

"We are refining mechanisms and increasing volumes of state support. If previously, all support amounted to almost 300 billion tenge (US\$818.5 million) per year, now, as instructed by the President, additional 100 billion tenge (US\$272.85 million) are allotted every year and 200 billion tenge (US\$545.7 million) to support affordable lending in priority sectors of the agriculture. The support was increased twofold," he said.

State support, he noted, cannot encompass the entire sector and the ministry attracts financial institutions and second tier banks.

Investment subsidies mechanisms were also revised, he added.

"This boosted investment projects. Last year, KazAgro approved 40 investment projects worth 45 billion tenge (US\$122.78 billion), while in nine months 52 projects worth 61 billion tenge (US\$166.44 million) were financed," he said.

## Chevron pioneering technology in Kazakhstan solves industry's pipeline challenges

Staff Report

ASTANA – Pipeline corrosion is a major challenge faced by the global oil and gas industry, as a corroded pipeline presents a clear risk to the environment and for the companies responsible.

The main obstacle in preventing corrosion is that materials may wear down over time from oil or gas moving through the pipeline, and coating and inspecting metal pipelines are the primary corrosion prevention measures. Another approach is switching to alternative pipeline materials such as polyethylene.

While conventional polyethylene pipelines experience difficulties in adverse temperatures, Chevron's polyethylene pipe plant in Atyrau has pioneered the production of Polyethylene with Raised Temperature Resistance (PE-RT) since 2003.

To support Tengizchevroil's (TCO) Future Growth Project-Wellhead Pressure Management Project (FGP-WPMP), the Atyrau plant initiated a Europe-wide search for suppliers of a suitable raw material for a water injection system upgrade, necessary for meeting water injection requirements.

The plant was also tasked with the production of a 20 kilometre pipeline for water transportation. Given the water's toxicity and high temperature, the search was on for technology which could meet the plant's rigid requirements. After three years of rigorous assessment, the Dow Chemical Company's PE-RT Type II technology was selected for implementation. This marked one of the first applications of the innovative material to industrial pipes in the oil and gas industry.

PE-RT pipeline technology enabled the modernisation of TCO's water injection system, improving the transportation of the highly corrosive water produced at Tengiz oil field in the Atyrau region.

"There are many added benefits to using PE-RT. Its service life of 50 years is approximately 10 times that of traditional pipeline materials. It is also less costly than metal pipelines, which require cathodic protection, inhibitors and more regular inspection," said the plant's Commercial Manager Yevgeniy Legin.

"Our use of this technology at TCO and FGP-WPMP is yet another example of how we are using innovation to safely and effectively unlock opportunities," he added.



## AIX to launch post-trade infrastructure

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana International Exchange (AIX) is preparing to launch post-trade market services provided by Avenir Technology Limited. The technology, used worldwide, will ensure a safe and reliable post-trading infrastructure for the exchange.

"The Astana International Exchange will be an efficient, globally supported exchange platform for both Kazakhstan and the neighbouring countries. To ensure safe and reliable post-trading infrastructure we needed a professional provider of sophisticated technologies that could be tailored to meet our requirements. We are glad that in partnership with an experienced supplier of technologies for exchanges we are ready to start operations on AIX," said AIX CEO Tim Bennett.

Avenir Technology is a global supplier of post-trade solutions. The five-year deal between the company and the exchange covers not only central security depository (CSD), but registry instances of the Avenir suite. AIX just finished the roll-out of the production version of the applications and all ten AIX CSD participants are now connected to the Avenir platform, which also offers integrated SWIFT messaging capabilities.

Extensive testing has also been completed, including three full loop dress rehearsals involving all market participants, as well as third party user acceptance testing (UAT) conducted by Exactpro.

"Over the last four years, we have been working extensively in emerging markets across the globe to provide them with next generation financial market infrastructure solutions. We are delighted to have been awarded these contracts in Kazakh-

stan, adding to our existing portfolio of business," said Avenir co-founder and director Martyn Bain.

Founded in 2014, Avenir provides a range of financial market infrastructure solutions, operating with a growing number of clients located in both mature and emerging markets.

Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) was established on the initiative of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2015 after his approval of the centre's constitutional statute. It is establishing a leading international centre for financial services, attracting investments and creating an attractive environment for financial services investments.

AIX was formed this year as part and parcel of the centre's development. The exchange's shareholders are AIFC, Goldman Sachs, NASDAQ, Shanghai Stock Exchange and Silk Road Fund.

## Polish company invests in Turkestan greenhouse, more projects expected in west of country

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Poland's Polcotton will invest more than 13 million euros (US\$14 million) in an innovative greenhouse construction project in the Sairam district of the Turkestan region, according to the Kazakh Invest press service. The facility will create more than 150 jobs in the coming year.

"More than 300 jobs will be created during the second stage of project implementation. The construction of the greenhouse will last about a month and we plan to get the crops next September. Thanks to the support of Kazakh Invest and local authorities, we hope that the project will be successful," said Polcotton Managing Director Alois Schönbberger.

The enterprise will use a hydroponic vegetable system and finished products will be delivered to China and Russia.

"Polish investors are greatly interested in Kazakhstan, particularly in the rural sector. The project with Polcotton is a high-tech project. We expect more agro-industrial projects when other Polish companies visit Kazakhstan this year," said Kazakh Invest representative in Poland and Central Europe, Professor Arkadiusz Jakubczak.

Thirteen investment projects totalling \$615 million are expected to launch in the region. By the end of the year, three projects worth \$47.5 million will be implemented creating 500 jobs.

Kazakh Invest earlier announced the West Kazakhstan region attracted more than 32 billion tenge (US\$86.9 million) in investment projects at the regional council meeting in Ural'sk.

The projects are important for the region, said Akim (Governor) Altai Kulginov. The local administration will provide support including land, investment subsidies, customs duties and tax obligations. Investors will have ten-year benefits for exemption from land and property taxation and a 20-percent return on investment deposits.

Plans are underway in the Syrymski and Zelenovskii districts to build an open feedlot which can hold up to 3,000 cat-

tle. The project costs 1.2 billion tenge (US\$3.2 million).

Central Feedlot intends to launch a 5,000-hectare fodder base for the fattening complex in Yanaykino village of the Zelenovskii district. There are plans to expand the existing production capacity from 4,000 to 10,000 cattle in the first year.

World Green, in cooperation with a Dutch company, will build a 13-billion tenge (US\$35.3 million) greenhouse. The design capacity will accommodate 4,400 tonnes of cucumbers and 3,450 tonnes of tomatoes.

A four-star hotel with 108 rooms will be built in Aksai of the Burlinsky district under a franchise agreement with international hotel group Holiday Inn. Local company Serik invested more than 3.6 billion tenge (US\$9 million) in the project.

## Thirteen investment projects totalling \$615 million are expected to launch in the Turkestan region. By the end of the year, three projects worth \$47.5 million will be implemented creating 500 jobs.

The city also plans to reconstruct the 570-million tenge (US\$1.5 million) Uralsk Culture and Recreation Park featuring a 45-metre-high Ferris wheel.

Fixed capital investments in the West Kazakhstan region amount to 275 billion tenge (US\$746 million), a 4.5-percent increase in a nine-month period. Investments in the production sector are 177 billion tenge (US\$480.7 million); in the manufacturing industry, 12 billion tenge (US\$32.5 million). The total share of fixed asset investments is 60.4 percent. In terms of the share of foreign investments, the region ranks first in the country, due in greater part to the fact that it hosts the Karachaganak gas condensate field developed by an international consortium.

# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Latest World Bank Doing Business Index affirms Kazakhstan's measures to improve business environment

As we have pointed out before, having the courage to set big ambitions is vital whether you are an individual, business or country. Without such goals, there is a big danger that efforts will be unfocused and results disappointing.

But it is also absolutely critical that these ambitions are backed by the practical and effective steps necessary to achieve them. Otherwise, no matter how well-intentioned, they are destined to remain little more than false hopes with all the frustrations this failure brings.

That's why the latest World Bank's Doing Business Index – which shows Kazakhstan has jumped eight places to 28th in the global table – are so important. They confirm that the actions taken to meet the ambition of making the country a world-class place to invest and set up and grow a business are working.

The 2018 World Bank flagship index shows that Kazakhstan for the first time is in the top 30 of the 190 economies surveyed. It means a country, which a generation ago was part of the Soviet system, now stands above some of the leading economies such as France, Japan, Turkey and China in creating a business-friendly environment.

Nor can this year's performance be seen in isolation as it comes on the back of sustained progress which has seen Kazakhstan climb 25 places in the last five years. It is the prize for a determined effort, first outlined in President Nursultan Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan 2050 strategy six years ago, to identify and dismantle barriers to businesses, whether home-grown or from outside investment.

What has followed has been a concerted push to cut red tape, streamline regulation and, above all, improve legal protections. How successful this has been can be seen by the fact that Kazakhstan is now ranked 4th overall in the index for enforcing contracts. The new electronic case management system and the decision to improve transparency by publishing court decisions have both con-

tributed to this impressive performance. The report also singles out praise for the steps taken to protect minority shareholder rights.

The World Bank also points to reforms to help Kazakhstan capitalise on its geographical position as a bridge between east and west. The introduction of electronic customs declaration and reduction in fees underlines the commitment to cutting delays and costs. They are decisions which are good for our country and for the global trade and prosperity.

It is not just big established businesses which are benefiting from the steps being taken. The World Bank also commended Kazakhstan for reforms in all the right areas to help small- and medium-sized enterprises succeed. As evidence shows, these SMEs are the firms which drive employment and growth in every economy.

And while Kazakhstan has still a long way to go until it enters the top 10 for start-ups, this category too is heading in the right direction with a rise of five places to 36th. New simplified procedures for registration mean that it now takes just five days to set up a new business, less than half the regional average.

There is more to do, but the fact that the World Bank report found that Kazakhstan is one of a very few economies which has put in place reforms in every area it surveys for the index since it was first published in 2004 shows that there is no complacency. The creation of the Astana International Financial Centre and the work of Kazakh Invest national company are just two examples to accelerate progress. Their efforts will only increase Kazakhstan's attractiveness as will, in the long-run, its position as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

If Kazakhstan is to achieve its overall goal of joining the ranks of the top 30 economies, then it is critical that there is no let up in removing the barriers for investment and business. We must expect our competitors to raise their game in this global race and be ready to continue showing a lead.

## Kazakhstan's peacekeeping mission to Lebanon is yet another contribution to peace

By Kairat Abdrakhmanov

On Oct. 31, a Kazakh peacekeeping company of 120 people arrived to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for deployment as part of the forces of the joint Kazakh-Indian battalion called IndKazBat. This battalion is deployed in the Eastern sector of the area falling under responsibility of the East multinational land peacekeeping brigade, located along the border of Lebanon with Israel and Syria.

Thus, another foreign policy decision of President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been implemented and the commitment taken by Kazakhstan during the successful election campaign to the UN Security Council has been fulfilled.

I would like to note that this is a very important event in the history of our country, since for the first time the Kazakh military contingent is participating in a UN peacekeeping mission. On this occasion, the Secretary General of the Organisation, António Guterres, noted that the contribution to UN peacekeeping operations "is a concrete demonstration of global solidarity and responsibility" and sent his best wishes to the contingent of peacekeepers from Kazakhstan.



Before the Kazakh peacekeepers set foot on Lebanese soil, this was preceded by many years of hard work on the part of all branches of the government and many Kazakh institutions. This time, Kazakhstan used the experience of the Ministry of Defence, which sent our peacekeepers to Iraq in 2003-2008 as part of the stabilisation force in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution. Kazakh officers continue to successfully serve as observers, including in command positions, within the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

In recent years, the leadership of the country's defence ministry held a series of talks with relevant departments and services of the UN Secretariat for peace-making and peacebuilding. Training centres for Kazakh peacekeepers underwent a rigorous check and

demonstrated a high level of readiness and compliance with international standards.

Great amount of work has been done together with India as our strategic partner. Cooperation with India within the UN Interim Force in Lebanon is based on the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the ratification of the memorandum of understanding between the government of Kazakhstan and the government of India with regard to the joint deployment of Kazakh peacekeeping forces in the Indian UNIFIL squadron, signed by President Nazarbayev in late October.

I am confident that the involvement of Kazakh military personnel in UN peacekeeping operations is aimed at further enhancement of Kazakhstan's position as one of the active and reputable participants in strengthening peace and global security, as well as at further improvement of professionalism of Kazakhstan's military officers and invigoration of the country's defence capacity. In simple terms, our servicemen will receive invaluable experience by working "in the field" and interacting with foreign partners.

The author is Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.

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IF NOT NOW, WHEN?**

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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## No single state corporation can function successfully for long, says Singaporean Ambassador to Kazakhstan

By Karlygash Ezhenov

Singaporean Ambassador to Kazakhstan Zulkifli Bakharudin recently spoke with exclusive.kz, noting the secret of his country's success is the absence of a "sacred cow." The nation is always ready to change, even the legacy of the great Lee Kuan Yew.

*As the Singaporean Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, you know Central Asia very well. Your biography is closely connected with business. Is it typical for Singapore to focus on business in diplomacy?*

The foreign policy of Singapore is very interesting. We have created a special position of non-resident ambassador, who resides in Singapore. In addition to non-resident ambassadors, we have an institute of honorary consuls, which is also actively used by us.

Our government chooses candidates for such positions from among the Singaporean business community in such a way that they correspond to high professional and personal qualities, since this is a rather public job and it is quite low-paid. It is very important that the ambassador not only knows countries he or she cooperates with and maintains diplomatic relations, but also has a special affection for them. And this is the kind of affection I have for Kazakhstan.

Yes, geographically, we are very far from each other, but our relations are unique. They are based on the very warm relationship between our leaders, Nursultan Nazarbayev and the late Lee Kuan Yew. Thus, we can say that Singapore and Kazakhstan inherited this goodwill of the two leaders and my goal is to further promote it, unite our countries to continue the traditions started by our leaders.

*Integration processes have begun in Central Asia. Do you think Asian countries can help to make these integrations irreversible?*

First of all, we have a lot in



Zulkifli Bakharudin

common. Being small countries, we need to maintain strong economies, keep a balance with other countries and have our own strong, efficient army in order to have the right to hold our position in this big game in order for great powers to honour us.

Secondly, Kazakhstan should have its own position in the region and in the world. Both Kazakhstan and Singapore need to be very mobile. We must quickly adapt to new conditions.

Thirdly, as part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Singapore has an impact on its regional partners. We are trying to involve them in centrifugal processes; inter alia, we are strengthening relations between ASEAN and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). I think that Kazakhstan has great opportunities to work in this direction.

*It sounds like you are referring to the negotiations on creating a free trade zone between Singapore and the EAEU. What are the areas of common interest? The EAEU is now criticised in our country due to the fact that the major recipient of dividends from this organisation is Russia, which, as a consequence, has the greatest influence in it.*

I think you should not be distracted by temporary difficulties. The most crucial thing in the development of relations is the strong economic and diplomatic ties that create the foundation for stable relations.

Yes, we are actually different and far away from each other, but now it is essential to lay the foundation and build a sustainable infrastructure for future generations. Perhaps I will not be there to see my results, but my children will enjoy these fruits. Singapore had the same situation with other countries, such as China and India, not to mention Europe and the U.S. Thanks to political and economic relations, Europe and the United States are the largest trading partners of Singapore.

Kazakhstan is a very young state. It is characterised by features such as impatience and ambition. These are very good qualities for a young country, but you should not hurry too much. In order to build a house, you need a solid foundation. If we recall our relations with the West, the construction of the foundation took many years. Kazakhstan must also learn to wait its time.

*We are ready to wait any time, but after all, Singapore is also a very ambitious country. Singapore's impressive progress has been attained in just a few decades.*

At the time when Singapore gained independence, we were also a multi-ethnic state with numerous internal social contradictions, but we had a clear agenda – to survive and thrive. We did not have water and food, so every member of the Singaporean society understood that tomorrow we should become better than we are. We have invested a lot in education, in improving professional competencies, because they always have the most long-term effect. Poor families sent their children to study, even if they did not have enough money for food, and it bore fruit. Each member of the Singaporean society sought prosperity. The same trend existed in other ASEAN countries and this is the answer to the question of why our region is developing so rapidly.

Our late leader decided that Singapore should be transferred

from the Third World to the First World. He hoped to see it before his death and he did it. Therefore, the most important thing is the prosperity of a country. Many want to achieve something big, but not everyone is ready to sacrifice something for the sake of this goal. We used to receive a lot of criticism of our education system, which put pressure on our children. But we did not give up and did not change the system. Now, we have a highly educated population.

The second is the implementation of the transport capabilities of Singapore. Let me remind you that we have created the largest seaport in the world; we have the largest container shipping company and it is state-owned. We have Singapore Airlines, but they are owned by France. That is, we were ready to sacrifice our ambitions and give up our company so that it develops.

Singapore is known for its medical tourism. Our largest medical company was bought by Malaysia, but this did not affect our decision. Now, people come to the Malaysian hospital and are treated there. Many do not understand us, but this is our strategy.

*By the very fact of its existence, Singapore is important not only for Central Asia, but also for the whole world. This is a story of tremendous post-traumatic growth in the country of state capitalism. We have been advised to reduce the role of the state in the economy. How did you find the balance?*

We have attracted global transnational corporations to develop the economy of Singapore. We have invested in education and training. When we managed to implement this, we realised that the state should take a leading role in creating infrastructure, building an airport and oil refineries. The task was to find and appoint the best managers in these areas. If we did not find them in the region, we searched for them all over the world. As

soon as these state-owned companies reached the peak of their growth, we sold the major share of these companies to the private sector. No government-owned corporation can operate successfully for a long time without participation of the private sector. Therefore, we have put up for sale almost all of our state-owned companies. The role of the state is to sow seeds. The state will never be able to successfully do its business. Only 20 percent of companies in the energy sector are Singaporean; 80 percent came from outside. The role of the state should be limited to the creation of infrastructure.

*That is quite a non-typical governance model for a state. Will this strategy be somehow adjusted in the new conditions? It is always hard to succeed, but it is even harder to develop and grow. What new goals are set for the country now?*

If you remember, the history of Singapore is a series of continuous crises. Our recipe is that during each crisis, we built committees that included both government members and key members of the high society of Singapore. As our Prime Minister says, "There is no sacred cow in Singapore;" that is, we can change anything, even what our late leader said.

Currently, the Committee on the Future Economy operates in Singapore. Its task is to shape the development path for the next 20-30 years. If they say that we have to cut or sew something, we will do it. Singapore differs from other countries in that we are not burdened with our heritage. We do not look back. Every time we start with a clean slate. We always try to find the best people. We involve foreigners only because they are the best in their area. They work with us to develop a roadmap. You have to be flexible and adapt quickly. Changing the current policy will not guarantee that in the future you will achieve something. There is no other choice. We created and are still

creating Singapore as a financial centre. We decided to merge local banks. Currently, we have only three operating local banks. We invited foreign banks. Singapore has become better, so we should be ready to sacrifice. Singapore thrives thanks to this policy.

We always knew how to trade and make money. We still compete with Australia, Hong Kong and Tokyo. We are trying to be unique and attract investors. We show that we can manage risks in the financial sector better than others.

My advice for Kazakhstan is to use resources that we do not have, yet it is important to understand that creating a new mindset will take time. Perhaps this is the most difficult task. Kazakhstan should pursue this way – the way of developing communication with the external world.

*The West has made it clear to us that it is not up to Central Asia now, but as a good alternative, we have been offered China's Belt and Road project. What is the role of Singapore in this initiative? How do you assess it in general?*

Singapore wants to be part of this initiative, so we built a special free trade zone in China. We hope that this zone will become the main element of the road that unites Central Asia and China. Singapore cannot ignore initiatives in the region, so we become a part of them. We try to cooperate with all players in other regions, not just with China. Kazakhstan is becoming an active participant in this initiative, if only because it passes through Kazakhstan. However, you should not rely on this project alone. You have to do something on your own. You have to be strong to offer your initiatives. You should have a higher level of participation in other initiatives.

Finally, when a person does too much shopping, he/she ultimately cannot understand what he/she needs. It is very important to always understand what you really want and keep this focus.

## Kazakh-Russian economic cooperation is strong and developing, says Russian trade rep in Kazakhstan

By Mirgul Dzilkishinova

In this interview, Trade Representative of the Russian Federation in Kazakhstan Alexander Yakovlev discussed new opportunities the strengthening of trade and economic relations that the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) offered to the two countries.

*Looking at a new history of relations between Russia and Kazakhstan, what factors, in your opinion, played the most important positive role?*

The Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) that officially entered into force on Jan. 1, 2015 offers our countries additional, almost unprecedented benefits ensuring mutual access to large and geographically closely located markets, creates conditions for "barrier-free trade," reducing transport costs, and developing a single labour market. The growing interest of foreign countries in expanding economic relations proves the attractiveness of the Eurasian Economic Union as a reliable and predictable partner.

*What is the most important role of the EAEU?*

First of all, the Eurasian Economic Union allows for coordinated economic policy in key economic sectors. It gives an opportunity, which is extremely important now in the context of the crisis, to jointly advance common interests, promote joint projects, attract additional investment resources, create new industries, de-



Alexander Yakovlev

velop small and medium businesses, interregional trade and address employment and social issues.

We see the free mobility of capital and labour. Prospects are held out and a real opportunity is offered to develop new and quite large markets. The constantly improving legal and regulatory framework of the organisation ensures that the national interests and development context of each state are taken into account, and this process will continue considering the real needs to further deepen economic interaction.

For example, since the creation of the EAEU, Kazakhstan's GDP has never shown a negative trend. Thus, in 2015 it grew by 1.2 percent, in 2016 by 1.1 percent, in 2017 by 4 percent. This positive trend goes on in 2018, and, consequently, Kazakhstan's GDP growth is expected to range between 3.8 and 4 percent. Kazakhstan, being a member of the EAEU, shares with all other countries of the economic union all its achievements, including trade and investment growth. Thus, Kazakhstan's foreign trade turnover increased by 25 percent in 2017 and reached about

\$77.6 billion, including \$17.4 billion with the EAEU countries, a growth of 26 percent. Over eight months of 2018, the trade turnover of Kazakhstan with countries around the globe has increased by 21.6 percent.

*What is the dynamics of relations between Russia and Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet economic space?*

The trade turnover between Russia and Kazakhstan over eight months of 2018 has amounted to \$11.3 billion (an increase of 8.3 percent). Exports from Kazakhstan to Russia grew by 13.3 percent, and imports from Russia to Kazakhstan by 6.2 percent. Overall, our mutual trade pattern is well differentiated. The main role here is played by 20-25 large companies of both countries that have learned to adequately interact with each other and control the market. However, our small and medium enterprises have not yet said their last word in foreign trade. This once again points out to the fact that our relations have a potential for increasing and improving the results of cooperation. I would like to note that Russian-Kazakh companies can and should not only pass the \$25 billion mark within three years, but also reach far more significant figures. Statistics show that the trade turnover of the member countries of the union is growing steadily, and all the EAEU states have expanded their presence in foreign markets.

*Does the EAEU contribute to the mutual development of the*

*economies of the participating countries?*

For sure. The economic performance of the Eurasian Economic Union shows that the decision to establish it was timely and correct. It was beneficial to all participants. Let me give some more statistics. For example, the gross inflow of direct investment from the Russian Federation to the Republic of Kazakhstan from 2005 to the first half of 2018 was \$12.6 billion, its share in the total volume of Kazakhstan was 4.5 percent. The gross inflow of direct investment from Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation from 2005 to the first half of 2018 amounted to \$3.7 billion, its share in the total volume was 5.9 percent. In the first half of 2018, the gross inflow of direct investment from Russia to Kazakhstan amounted to \$821.0 million (184 percent increase compared to the corresponding period of 2017), from Kazakhstan to Russia – \$138.2 million (74.1 percent compared to the corresponding period of 2017).

At present, about 100 large Russian-Kazakh projects totalling about \$20 billion are operating and are being planned for implementation in Kazakhstan. At the same time, expanding the range of competitive high value-added products is important for Russia and Kazakhstan.

*How actively is the format of joint ventures used in Russia and Kazakhstan?*

The number of enterprises operating in Kazakhstan with the Russian participation is an important

indicator of the development of bilateral trade and economic relations. The creation and successful operation of joint ventures contribute to the modernisation and development of the economies of both countries. I would like to note that as of Oct. 1, 2018, more than 31,000 joint ventures with foreign participation were registered in Kazakhstan. Nine thousand-nine hundred of them are Russian-Kazakh. Their number keeps growing. The number of operating enterprises with Russian participation is more than 6,000.

*Based on your extensive experience as a sales representative, can you tell us which measures and decisions are most beneficial for mutual economic cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan?*

In order to ensure a balanced economy and reduce negative phenomena due to the influence of internal or external factors, we should bring together and closely coordinate the actions taken. The governments of our countries conduct systematic work in this direction.

Every year, an Interregional Cooperation Forum is held between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan with the participation of heads of state. The 14th Forum was held in Chelyabinsk on Nov. 9, 2017. It was dedicated to human capital development and was attended by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, regional leaders, representatives of state agencies, business circles, as well as experts and specialists in science

and education of the two countries. During the Forum, 10 documents were signed.

On Nov. 9, 2018, the 15th Interregional Cooperation Forum between Russia and Kazakhstan will be held in Petropavlovsk (Kazakhstan) with the participation of the heads of state on the theme "New approaches and trends in the tourism development in Russia and Kazakhstan" On its "margins" it is planned to sign a number of intergovernmental, interagency and interregional agreements, as well as other documents between the business communities.

An important mechanism that determines the main directions of trade, economic and investment cooperation is the intergovernmental commission, which addresses current issues of interaction in the field of industry, agricultural, industrial, fuel and energy sectors, transport, science and new technology, investment, banking and other areas. The 20th meeting of the commission, held on Oct. 26, 2018 in Kazan, gave a new impetus to our business partnership. During the activities of the Intergovernmental Commission on Cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan, 17 issues were considered.

In the future, our efforts will be focused on the implementation of the Russia-Kazakhstan Country Action Plan for 2018-2020 aimed at increasing trade turnover, export of Russian goods (mainly due to high value-added goods) to Kazakhstan, as well as facilitating the entry into the Russian market for Kazakh producers.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Accessible Spanish courses, direct flights and faster visa issuing will facilitate relations, says envoy

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Spanish Ambassador David Carriedo, who began his diplomatic mission to Kazakhstan on August 21, spoke with The Astana Times about the agenda for his three-year term to strengthen relations between the countries with an emphasis on education and the economy.

Educational cooperation entails specific attention to make quality Spanish language education accessible to Kazakh citizens. As the second most spoken language in the world, knowing Spanish is an asset that advances one's competitiveness in the globalised environment. Making the language more accessible for Kazakhs is of equal interest to both governments.

In order to meet the growing demand, Carriedo is working to open a branch of Cervantes Institute, the public institution created by Spain in 1991 to promote Spanish language and culture worldwide. He noted the importance of increasing the number of native



David Carriedo

Spanish speakers teaching in Kazakh universities.

"I am going to work on this. If not a full-fledged branch of the institute, then the so called Aula (classroom) Cervantes which is a smaller facility but where students can study, pass exams and gain their titles," he said.

Carriedo sees great potential in education and feels both countries should benefit from an increase in exchange programmes for research university students and teachers.

To strengthen bilateral economic relations, he is working to

launch direct flights to Spain and on speeding up visa issuing procedures.

"This will expand the cooperation in every sense," he said.

His strategy to speed up visa procedures include moving the embassy to a bigger office, thereby increasing its capacity for receiving visitors. In addition, Spanish visas might be issued, in certain cases, for longer terms and multiple entries, which should dramatically increase tourism between the countries.

"We always say that tourism is our oil, amounting to close to 15 percent of our gross domestic product. Almost 173 billion euros (US\$196.74 billion) per year; that is more than Kazakhstan's GDP, to put it in perspective," he added.

"Spain is not only about beach, sea and sun," he said.

One of Spain's main attractions is the wealth of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) sites, with 47 registered zones. The Kazakh government frequently refers to its eagerness to

learn from the best practices in the world and Spanish management of historical buildings and cultural sites is no exception.

Carriedo noted the countries' tourism departments will soon negotiate on future cooperation. The combination of direct flights and visas should increase not only the inflow of Kazakh tourists, but also trade and investment.

He is particularly concerned about Spain's big trade deficit with Kazakhstan. According to embassy statistics, bilateral trade is approximately 1.7 billion euros (US\$1.95 billion) annually, of which Kazakh exports to Spain amounted to 1.55 billion euros (US\$1.78 billion) in 2017 (including oil exports at 94 percent of the total).

Spain's exports to Kazakhstan were approximately 164 million euros (US\$186.53 million), the bulk of which was textiles and machinery goods.

He suggested the Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade will organise exhibitions to promote the country's goods.

"We are a very competitive country when it comes to exports of agro-food products, materials for construction and pharmaceutical products and, as I said before, machinery goods. So, we intend to increase our flows of exports into Kazakhstan in order to compensate a bit this huge trade deficit that we hold," he said.

Negotiations to increase the presence of Spanish businesses took place at the fifth business council and eighth intergovernmental commission on economic and industrial cooperation held Sept. 28 in the Kazakh capital.

"We share this message with our Kazakh counterparts, [advise] which projects can be of interest to our companies and are competitive and submit their proposals in the tenders. There are about eight or nine Spanish multinational companies that are participating in the most advanced infrastructure projects in the world. We want to be present here, too," said Carriedo.

Some Spanish companies are currently showing interest and

some, like the engineering company Idom, is already involved in the project for Almaty tramways, operation of which was suspended on Oct. 31, 2015. The project on upgrade, geared towards the system's sustainability had started in 2013 and will be launched soon.

"These [leading Spanish multinational] companies are ready to contribute to the modernisation of Kazakhstan's economy and participate in the infrastructure projects organised by the government, particularly PPP (private-public partnership) projects," he noted.

Interest in tightening bilateral relations is significant on both sides. Spanish companies such as MAXAM, Talgo and Inditex (Zara) are already successfully working in the Kazakh market.

"Kazakhstan can serve as a hub bridge between Europe and Asia. It is a good gateway to the Eurasian Economic Union. We definitely find opportunities in the area of production of agro-food products, textiles, chemicals and, certainly, infrastructure," he added.

## Astana hosts roundtable on non-proliferation strategy, denuclearisation of Korean Peninsula

By Almasbek Zhumadilov

ASTANA – International and nuclear security experts, Kazakh foreign affairs officials and foreign diplomats in Kazakhstan met in Astana Oct. 24 to discuss Kazakhstan's nuclear non-proliferation policy and the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

"Kazakhstan welcomes all the positive trends emerging around the solution of the Pyongyang nuclear programme and supports the policy of South Korea."

The event was organised by the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan (KAZISS) and the South Korean Embassy. Participants assessed Kazakhstan's role in global non-proliferation efforts and in helping resolve the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

"Kazakhstan has made a historic contribution to the global

process of nuclear disarmament. Peaceful foreign policy and effective anti-nuclear initiatives of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, aimed at drawing the attention of the international community to countering the nuclear threat, are helping to consolidate the world against nuclear proliferation and develop joint measures for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons," said KAZISS Director Zarema Shaukenova.

Director of the Diplomacy Institute of the Public Administration Academy under the President of Kazakhstan Dr. Marian Abisheva moderated a session on the Korean peninsula and Korea's policy towards peace. Joo-Hyeon Baik, who led the Korean diplomatic mission in Kazakhstan in 2012-2015, described in detail South Korea's efforts to resolve tensions on the peninsula and the stages and successes of the negotiation process.

Director of Asia and Africa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Aidarbek Tumatov outlined Kazakhstan's policy position on Korean issues.

"Kazakhstan welcomes all the positive trends emerging around the solution of the Pyongyang nuclear programme and supports the policy of South Korea and the current leadership of that country towards its northern neighbour," stated Tumatov.

He said that Kazakhstan, as a country seeking a nuclear weapons-free world, supports continued negotiations to achieve the nuclear disarmament of North Korea.

Swedish Ambassador to Kazakhstan Mats Foyer and British Ambassador to Kazakhstan Michael Gifford, both of whom have worked in North Korea, shared their assessment of the situation on the peninsula.

Remarks by KAZISS Deputy Director Sanat Kushkumbayev, Senior Research Fellow at the Eurasian Studies Institute Dauren Aben, Permanent Member of the International Group on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Studies, KAZISS Chief Research Fellow Murat Laumulim, KAZISS Senior Research Fellow Anastasiya Reshetnyak focused on Kazakhstan's contribution to global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and Kazakhstan's experience that could be used by the DPRK in the process of nuclear disarmament and accession to the non-proliferation regime.

Ambassador of the Korean Republic to Kazakhstan Kim Dae-sik and Chairman of the International Information Committee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Talgat Zhumagulov also noted Kazakhstan's global non-proliferation efforts.

## Kazakhstan ratifies border agreements with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a law Nov. 5 on the border agreement between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan that determined the points of juncture on the countries' border.

The agreement was signed in November 2017 in Samarkand by Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov and his counterparts from Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov and Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov.

"In accordance with the document, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan defined the Kazakh-Turkmen border line passing from the point of juncture to the first border point envisioned in the agreement between Kazakhstan and Turkmeni-

stan on delimitation and demarcation of Kazakh-Turkmen border as of July 5, 2001. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan determined the Kazakh-Uzbek border line passing from the point of juncture to the 125th border point stipulated in the Kazakh-Uzbek border agreement as of Nov. 16, 2001," said Abdrakhmanov presenting the bill to the members of the Kazakh Senate.

The agreement can be considered a "historical document for Central Asia," the Kazakh foreign minister said last year.

"In fact, this is a matter of responsible state building and security. I would like to note that all bilateral issues related to Kazakhstan and Kazakh-Uzbek border were fully settled in the beginning of the 2000s," he said.

The Senate said in a press release the document will "facilitate

the completion of an international legal formalisation of the state border of Kazakhstan, eliminate potential prerequisites for territorial issues at the point of juncture."

The same day, Nazarbayev also signed the law on the border agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The agreement sets out the starting point at the point of juncture of borders between Kazakhstan, China and Kyrgyzstan, while the end point is at the juncture of border of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The sides will review the demarcation of the border that stretches across 1,257 kilometres once each 10 years, and each country will control and manage its border signs.

The agreement is perpetual and cannot be denounced.

## Kazakh peacekeepers join Indian battalion in Lebanon, as Guterres welcomes news

Continued from Page A1

The memorandum provides for the joint deployment of the armed forces of the two states in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, as well as the establishment of policies, procedures and agreements between the parties to plan and implement deployment, command and control and support the Kazakh peacekeeping contingent as part of the Indian battalion. It also delineates policies for training, rotation, protection of communications and information systems, medical and financial support.

India, as the lead nation, is providing command, control and

battalion headquarters, three rifle companies, a mechanised infantry company, a headquarters company and a support company, for a total of 730 service members. Kazakhstan, as a supporting state, is providing a rifle company numbering 120 service members. The total number of the joint battalion is 850 people.

The Kazakh peacekeeping forces were deployed with their Kazakh-issued personal weapons. During their peacekeeping operation, the soldiers will receive a threefold financial allowance. The UN will also pay \$1,428 per month to Kazakhstan for each soldier.

The deployment is part of efforts to expand Kazakhstan's international peacekeeping involvement.

Training of the main forces of the Kazakh peacekeeping contingent is conducted at the UN Peacekeeping Training Centre in New Delhi.

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# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

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## World Press Photo exhibition tours Kazakhstan

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The 2018 World Press Photo exhibition, displaying the most important events of the past year through photojournalists' lenses, is touring four Kazakh cities Oct. 24-Jan. 2.

"The World Press Photo Foundation, founded in 1955, began with an international photo contest," said World Press Photo exhibitions manager and curator Jerzy Brinkhof. "It has grown to be one of the most important contests for photojournalists. A selection of the 2018 works are exhibited here [in Astana]."

The non-commercial exhibition is visited by approximately two million people in 45 countries. The exhibition in Kazakhstan will tour Astana Oct. 24-Nov. 6, Karaganda Nov. 10-23, Almaty Nov. 30-Dec. 13 and Shymkent Dec. 20-Jan. 2. Admission is free.

It is organised by the Dutch Embassy, Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan (SFK) and public fund Erkyndyk Kanaty.

"For the third time, the Embassy of the Netherlands organises the World Press Photo exhibition in Kazakhstan," said Dutch Ambassador Dirk Jan Kop at the Oct. 23 opening ceremony. "Freedom of expression begins with opening eyes."

"We are glad that Kazakh audiences may see the photos that have flown around the world and have become part of our collective memory," noted SFK executive director Anton Artemyev.

Approximately 73,000 photographs from 4,500 photographers from 125 countries were submitted



Photo credit: spmshnews.kz

in this year's international photojournalism competition, and 42 winners were recognised. Contest categories include contemporary issues, the environment, general news, long-term projects, nature, portraits, sports and spot news.

The main prize, the Photo of the Year award, is given to the image which both encapsulates photojournalism and represents an important issue at an outstanding level of visual perception and creativity. The 2018 award, belonging to Venezuelan photographer Ronaldo Schemidt, depicts the protester José Víctor Salazar Balza catching fire during the Venezuelan crisis in 2017.

"Schemidt documented a protest

against the Maduro government, given that Venezuela is going through a terrible economic crisis. What happened on this day is that there were clashes between security forces and protesters. This man got burning fuel on his body and, in the instant that this photo was taken, he fell over, was helped by bystanders and ultimately survived. A very striking detail and one of the reasons the jury thought it was such a strong photo is that you may notice [graffiti of] a gun on the wall. The gun is shooting the Spanish word 'paz' (peace). This photo symbolises something bigger – it's not just about a man, it's about Venezuela," explained Brinkhof.

Russian photographer Valery

Melnikov's masterclass. Photography as a tool for highlighting social problems of society as well as for aspects of human rights and freedom of expression, for professionals and amateurs will be conducted as part of the exhibition. His "Black Days of Ukraine" photograph won in the 2017 World Press Photo's Long-Term Projects category, depicting civilians escaping a burning house destroyed by an air attack.

The World Press Photo Foundation is an independent organisation, which aims to develop photojournalism and its standards, encourage knowledge-sharing and promote a free exchange of information.

## Urbanism activists preserve architectural heritage

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Archcode Almaty, a research project to conserve the former capital's architectural identity, seeks to preserve what "we will pass on to those who will live in the city after us," said co-founders Adil Azhiyev and Anel Moldakhmetova in an interview with The Astana Times.

Azhiyev is an architect and researcher specialising on the strategic city development. Moldakhmetova is a researcher, Light+Space urban project producer and co-founder of Cityzen Space, which specialises in strategic communications. Together, they seek to create an active professional community engaged in architectural heritage preservation, involving the city administration, developers and the wider public.

"An urban dialogue is, after all, a dialogue," they said. "It is a discussion among different

stakeholders of the city – citizens, businesses, the city administration, cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations. For example, it involves the practice of compulsory public hearings when important decisions on buildings, public spaces and natural resources are made, not 'for show' but for finding optimal solutions and taking into account the opinions of all interested parties."

To facilitate the dialogue, the duo has compiled an impressive digital catalogue of the city's 100 most significant buildings on www.archcode.kz/objects/map. Additional awareness-raising efforts include conducting open architectural walks and lectures with international urbanism experts. Most recently, they organised a series of master classes on archiving architectural landscapes Oct. 18, 21 and 25 at Tselinny Almaty's centre of contemporary culture.

Continued on Page B2

## Vulnerable groups to be supported in seeking state-guaranteed legal aid

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The effective provision of legal aid, guaranteed by the state and afforded by its budget, is vital to ensuring access to justice, said Kazakh International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law director Evgeniy Zhovtis at the Nov. 2 conference "Protecting the rights of vulnerable groups in Kazakhstan: in search of a new model of state-guaranteed legal aid."

"The criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this assistance centres on quality, accessibility, partnership, sustainability and client-orientation," he noted at the event, organised by the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia (EFCA) and financially supported by the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan (SFK).

Lawyers, human rights experts, Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) members and representatives of the ministries of justice and internal affairs, non-gov-

ernmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations (IOs) gathered to discuss state-guaranteed legal aid (SGLA) and the European Union delegation to Kazakhstan-sponsored project "Improving the legal aid system for vulnerable groups in Kazakhstan."

"Access to SGLA is an important condition for ensuring access to fair justice and the basis for building a legal state. Unfortunately, not all citizens can go to court and protect their rights in Kazakhstan, as highlighted by this project's research findings and many other human rights reports. It is important to understand that building an effective, consolidated and transparent model for the effective provision of legal aid, thanks to which each person may realise his or her constitutional rights, is a key driver for the development of our country," said SFK public policy initiative director Bota Ayazbayeva.

Continued on Page B5

## Treaty ratification, signature remain global priority, say CTBTO Youth Group members

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) Youth Group (CYG) recently emphasised signing and ratifying the CTBT remains a key global objective 20 years after its introduction.

"I want all of the younger participants to know that I am grateful for your interest and for the energy you bring to our common cause," said CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, addressing CYG members at an Aug. 28 conference in the capital. "I believe that the time has come to bring youth more firmly on board."

The group, launched in 2016, gathers prominent young leaders in global security, many of whom are students committed to advancing the cause of the nuclear test ban. Its objectives include revitalising CTBT discussions among decision makers, scholars, experts, students and the media; raising awareness about the nuclear test ban; transferring knowledge among the younger generation and integrating new technologies in CTBT promotion.

Current group members include undergraduate and graduate students from Nangarhar University (Afghanistan), University of Western Ontario (Canada), University of Lahore (Pakistan), Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (Russia), Oxford and Cambridge universities (United Kingdom) and George Washington University, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, Stanford University and University of California, Davis (United States).

Central Asian group members include Yerassyl Kalikhan, an analyst and Nazarbayev University graduate, and Marzhan Nurzhan, an Abolition 2000 Youth Network convener and Parliamentarian for Nuclear Non-Proliferation coordinator for Commonwealth of Independent States, who spoke to The Astana Times on their involvement



CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo (second row, C) along with CTBTO Youth Group and Group of Eminent Persons participants in Astana on Aug. 28, 2018.

and members' activism since meeting in the capital.

"Almost two million people have been affected [by the Semipalatinsk nuclear tests], suffering from severe health problems, cancer, birth deformities and death, which will continue for many generations to come," she said. "Therefore, I believe that the role of the CTBTO is vital and instrumental in banning nuclear tests everywhere in this world forever in order to prevent further damage to human health and the environment."

CYG's second international conference "Remembering the Past, Looking into the Future" gathered youth in Astana this year "to build a deeper understanding of the impact of nuclear tests and the imperative for nuclear disarmament," she added.

Students collaborated with and learned from the CTBTO Group of Eminent Persons, drawing on the experts' impressive experience and knowledge on nuclear-related issues. Kazakh participants, in par-

ticular, used their knowledge of their country's nuclear legacy and role in the anti-nuclear cause in discussions.

"At the conference, I interpreted for The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador and anti-nuclear activist Karipbek Kuyukov and, upon meeting him, was heartened to find that Kazakhstan is so proactive and vocal on the international stage in advancing the cause for the nuclear test ban," said Kalikhan.

Participants also visited the former Semipalatinsk test site to reflect on and witness first-hand the after-effects of nuclear testing.

"I put on protective clothing and was reminded to not touch anything and not walk on the dirt because of radiation," he added. "Upon leaving [the site], I thought 'Soon I will be home and away from all of this, in peace and tranquillity.' Still, deep down, I understood that if the nuclear arms race continues among the superpowers, we may end up with a third world war. Then, it will not be safe anywhere."

CYG founding member Ilya Kursenko posted his thoughts on the website's blog, at youthgroup.ctbto.org.

"We must not lose the spirit we developed in Astana. We must keep it in our hearts all the time. What's more important than anything else and upon which the destiny of the treaty lays, as well, is that we must deliver the spirit of Astana to our communities and to our leaders," he wrote.

Kalikhan and Nurzhan noted participants have since regularly engaged in CTBTO events, networks and outreach activities such as the ninth Ministerial Meeting of the Friends of the CTBT, Thailand's ratification and Tuvalu's signature in September. It is no surprise social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have become powerful tools for participants' activism. Reflections by CYG members Sarah Bidgood and Sylvia Mishra on the importance of women's participation in policy decision making on weapons of mass destruction were recently published online.

### THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

#### ASTANA ARENA

**November 8 at 9.50 p.m.** FC Astana - FK Jablonec, UEFA Europa League

**November 11 at 3 p.m.** FC Astana - FC Irtysh, Kazakhstan Cup 2018, semi-final

**November 15 at 9 p.m.** Kazakhstan - Latvia, UEFA Nations League

#### ASTANA OPERA

**November 10 at 6 p.m.** Gala Ballet

**November 16, 17 at 7 p.m., 6 p.m.** Le Corsaire, ballet

#### BARYS ARENA

**November 14 at 7.30 p.m.** HC Barys - HC Amur, Khabarovsk

**November 16 at 7.30 p.m.** HC Barys - HC Dynamo Moscow

**November 18 at 5 p.m.** HC Barys - HC Salavat Yulaev Ufa

## PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Entrepreneur seeks new ways to make movement more accessible for people in wheelchairs

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan 100 New Face's entrepreneur and Paralympic sportsperson Shahan Zholdasbayev directs all of his power and will towards creating an inclusive society by constructing ramps that allow people with limited mobility to easily move around the city. He expanded the social Pandus-Ok project into a company and now builds cost-effective lifts to help them feel like full members of society.

For Zholdasbayev, 2007 was the year he was forced to re-dress his life after a terrifying car accident tied him to a wheelchair without a chance to walk again. He could hardly imagine how to move around the city on his own.

He recalls moments of despair, tears and gloom. He was responsible for his two little sisters and elderly mother, however, and decided to stay strong and move forward. Zholdasbayev realised the infrastructure built by those who have never experienced a day of a person in a wheelchair utterly disregards how difficult it is for them to enter a Kazakh high-rise building. In many cases, ramps are uncomfortable and dangerous or not provided at all.

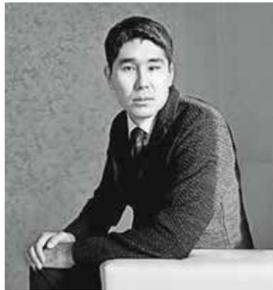
Having some background in engineering and understanding the struggles of wheelchair life, Zholdasbayev developed a business idea that won two million tenge (US\$5,396) for its realisation at the 2013 Atameken Start-up competition. The following year he launched Pandus-Ok with the slogan "Don't build for us without us." His social project is now recognised as one of the best in the Aktobe region and the only one licensed to organise access for people with limited mobility.

To date, the company has done more than 70 projects to partially or comprehensively adapt buildings and surrounding areas. They have become popular throughout Kazakhstan and in some Russian cities.

The company has expanded its focus from ramps to other means of easier entrance.

"We realised that many buildings cannot afford to build a good, long ramp that meets the standards due to the lack of production space. Then, we thought about the production of lifts," said Zholdasbayev.

The first such lift was in-



Shahan Zholdasbayev

stalled in the President's Central Park in Aktobe. The project received support from the city akimat (administration).

"Good foreign analogues were very expensive, approximately two-three million tenge (US\$5,396-\$8,094.). For a customer, they were unaffordable. As a user of this structure, cheaper Russian-made models did not suit me because of the flimsy, unreliable construction and the absence of handrails. We thought about our own production, developed a project and implemented it," he added. Zholdasbayev focused on making a lift system as high quality yet as inexpensive as possible.

"In 2015, I visited the United States at the invitation of their embassy and saw their inclusive environment. I intend to realise this accessibility in our country as well," he said.

A year after his accident he joined the Society for the Protection of Paralymped in Aktobe, where he was motivated to participate in Paralympic swimming. Completing 100 metres in 2 minutes, 23 seconds, Zholdasbayev won the bronze medal in the German open championship for people with disabilities.

Being listed among Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces was another achievement that made one more dream on his bucket list a reality – meeting Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"Shortly before the accident, when I worked in Astana at the Ministry of Environmental Protection fulfilling one of my official assignments, I managed to visit the Akorda building. I came from a small village and walking along the main building of our republic, I imagined meeting the President, because he works within these walls. Then, I set myself a goal that I will definitely succeed and deserve this meeting," said Zholdasbayev.

## Philanthropists in Kazakhstan honoured at Altyn Zhurek award ceremony

Staff Report

ALMATY – Kazakhstan's top 12 charity givers were announced Oct. 27 during the 2018 Altyn Zhurek award ceremony at Almaty's Abai Opera and Ballet Theatre.

The Altyn Zhurek award, established in 2006 by the public fund Bauyrzhan, is given to individuals and commercial organisations for their contribution to Kazakhstan's charity projects. Approximately 150 individual and 150 organisation nominees competed for the award. Expert and public councils, composed of representatives of the government, non-governmental organisations, mass media and business, selected 36 winners in 12 categories.

Khareket Foundation was awarded in the Organisation of the Year category (Almaty), Sergey Glushkov in the Philanthropist of



the Year Category (East Kazakhstan), Bulat Utemuratov in the Charity Giver of the Year category (Almaty), www.bestdoctor.kz in the Informational Charity Giver category (Astana), Olga Batutina and Ilya Baygabulov in the Contri-

tribution to Kazakhstan's Development category (Moscow, Russian Federation), environmental project Tazalyk in the Contribution to Environmental Protection category (Almaty), Roza Alimkhanova in the Contribution to Healthcare category (Karaganda), Assylbek Kozhakhmetov in the Support for Education category (Almaty), Arman Mashimov in the Support and Development of Sports category (Semey), Gulnar Kabybekova in the Help to Children from Orphanages category (Usttobe, Almaty region), Seidakhmet Kaltayev in the Care for Veterans category (Taraz) and Nurzhan Alzhanova in the Care for People with Disabilities category (Almaty).

Award recipient Professor Alimkhanova developed a unique method for treating musculoskeletal disorders among youth and got

over 2,000 children back on their feet without resorting to surgery. She is also one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces and the 2017 Best Kazakh Female Inventor nominee.

The award ceremony was sponsored by PetroKazakhstan, a partner since 2011. In presenting the Organisation of the Year award to the Khareket Foundation, the company's president Wei Yuxiang emphasised the award's role in promoting humanism, mercy and kindness. The foundation helped in purchasing 35 apartments for families in need and has provided assistance throughout Kazakhstan for 90 million tenge (US\$241,436).

Guests and nominees enjoyed the photo exhibition 100 Good Deeds and were greeted by Kazakhstan's musicians Medeu Arynbayev, Madina Sadvakassova and Miras Kuralai.



## Kazakh developers win award at NASA competition in New York

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh developers Timur Ryspekov, Vladislav Polonski and Anastasiya Kletscheva won Best Use of Hardware award at the recent Space Apps Challenge competition finals organised by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in New York. This year's competition brought 25,000 participants from more than 70 countries.

The Space App Challenge is an international 48-hour hackathon organised simultaneously in different cities around the world that seeks to address global problems by using an open data, robotics, data visualisation, hardware, design, among other specialties.

The Kazakh team developed a laser beam random number generator that analyses NASA data and performs simulations to forecast potential disasters, including volcanic eruptions, and seeks ways to address them.

The teams worked across six



Timur Ryspekov (L) and Vladislav Polonskiy (R).

challenge categories and each with a specific mission – "help others discover the Earth," "can you build a," "volcanoes, icebergs and asteroids," "what the world needs now is," "an icy glare" and "a universe of beauty and wonder."

NASA experts reviewed the results and choose global winners.

The judges used several criteria to evaluate the projects. Impact, creativity, validity, relevance as well as an ability to communicate the project in their presentation were among the selection criteria.

Along with the generator, young developers presented a robot that can collect data near volcanoes

and on asteroids and transfer the data to Earth, which are characteristics not always present in robots.

"We addressed the problem of transferring the data by a robot to the Earth. The robot can analyse more combinatorial information within a unit of time. Smart management of the battery in the Mars research vehicle increases its service life in case of continuous dust storms on Mars," said Ryspekov, as quoted by Tengrinews.

The team started working on the project in the summer, the research began two years ago.

They submitted their project first on the Product Hunt platform in August where the team received 374 votes within a day.

"We were attending many meetings presenting the project, were contacting companies and eventually realised the importance of our product for data science. Then, as winners of different hackathons, we were invited to take part in the NASA Space Apps Challenge in New York," said Ryspekov.

## Urbanism activists preserve architectural heritage through research and dialogue

Continued from Page B1

"An event which garnered the most resonance was the Architectural Code of Almaty pop-up museum, which was notably held in the former government building, now Kazakh-British Technical University. We received very emotional feedback from those who, prior, had not considered Almaty's architectural value and who then thanked us for pushing them to reflect on how our architectural landscape is changing and what ought to be preserved," they said.

Cities' cultural heritage is important to both study and preserve. "It is thanks to history and our collective memory that places acquire meaning, uniqueness and context," said Moldakhmetova.

A brief look at Almaty's history suggests the many ways in



Anel Moldakhmetova

which its architecture is unique in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Its architecture began taking a distinctive shape in the 1930s by



Adil Azhiyev

undergoing constructivism, followed by Stalin's neoclassicism and the Soviet modernism of the 1960-1980s. Many architectural

projects were initially carried out by visiting experts from Moscow, after which local designers began to get more involved.

"Local architects managed to give projects a uniqueness by adding façade design, solar protection and natural materials such as Mangystau shell rock and anodised aluminum," they noted. "Kazakh Soviet-era communist politician Dinmukhamed Kunayev strongly promoted the creation of national architecture, so it was during those years that significant progress was made in shaping the face of the city."

Azhiyev and Moldakhmetova single out several barriers to preserving architectural heritage. A clear, locally-applicable criteria for assessing its value is underdeveloped, so experts tend to draw on the United Nations Education-

al, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) broad criteria. He added the city's culture department lacks the resources to carry out the research necessary for developing its own points of reference.

A lack of transparency and the top-down nature of the procedure for adding monuments to the architectural heritage list are also major hindrances.

"[Often, there is] no clear mechanism for monitoring the quality of building restoration and reconstruction and licensed institutions' decision making on restoration, reconstruction and demolition projects," they noted.

"Society is not engaged in these processes. In fact, people only begin to write requests to the culture department when a specific building is already under the threat of

demolition, at which point it is difficult to effect change," they added.

Getting involved in preserving one's urban cultural heritage is a straightforward, if not easy, process.

"Start by exploring the history of your city's cultural heritage," said Azhiyev and Moldakhmetova. "Find a circle of like-minded people via social networks and events in order to begin discussing the fate of the architecture. Then, disseminate information on the value of the city's architecture by working with the press and produce articles on these issues. Finally, do not remain indifferent to historic buildings which are being demolished or poorly restored – write appeals or petitions to your department of culture and highlight these issues in local and international media."

# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Film director brings domestic violence into spotlight

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakh independent film director Zhanna Issabayeva's latest film, "Rejected," was presented in late October and distributed nationwide on the Chaplin Cinema Network. The film is a portrayal of attitudes and beliefs about infringing on women's rights and domestic violence among those residing in rural and remote areas.

The movie focuses on 25-year-old Aiganym, a villager who risked giving birth to her son without being married. Her family refused to accept her motherhood and she was isolated from them, but returns to her parents' house seven years later after her father's death. Aiganym suffered quite a bit and wants her son to be a part of her family.

Writing the script was a year-long process and production started in 2016. Issabayeva created the script in cooperation with Viktor Nemchenko. Producer Alisher Yelikbayev supported the project and invested in making the movie.

"Any premiere feels like an examination. You put all your efforts into something and the audience reviews your work. Even if you are confident that you made a good film, you are still nervous. Fortunately, the film received a warm response from viewers. We are especially glad to get positive reviews from acclaimed critics such as Vadim Boreiko and Madi Mambetov," Issabayeva told The Astana Times.

The main message of the film is that every woman must know her worth.



Zhanna Issabayeva

"When I first saw Zhanargul Zhanaymanova, I understood that she should play the main part. I was looking for a soft-hearted and tender girl with a strong character. This is a very rare combination. It is a great pleasure to work with Zhanargul, as she is a talented and highly disciplined person. She bravely endured the burden of filmmaking. I can say she is my person," she noted.

Young actor Yessim Turarbek played the part of Timur and Issabayeva shared some moments from the set.

"It was very cold during the shooting but, according to the script, the action took place in summer. Yessim stood wrapped in a blanket and when we started to shoot, we took off his blanket. Thank God, neither the boy nor the other actors got sick," she said.

"Once we needed to film some scenes with a child, but he got sick. What to do? It was a big problem but I didn't even know about it,

because our actress, editor and my friend Kenzhe Kairbayeva immediately found another baby and I didn't even notice that the actor was replaced. She has demonstrated an extremely high degree of professional proficiency. I am grateful to Kenzhe that she supported me during the shooting," she added.

Issabayeva spoke about the possible power of the movie.

"I cannot say that the film will change the problem of domestic violence in the country as a whole, but the first step to solving the problem is to recognise that it does exist. My film is a social project. We do not need box office revenues. Later, the film will be available online and we want more people to watch it. I hope this film will help some women understand that their lives do not belong to anyone except them. No one has the right to oppress us. The filmmaking was a challenging task at all stages for three years. It did not change me. The film let me know that my crew is the best in the world. I work with great professionals who give me their talent, love and time and it is only thanks to them that we can bring to life such ambitious projects," she said.

Issabayeva's filmography includes "Bopem," "Nagima," "Karoy," "Sveta" and "Talgat." She is the winner and laureate of international film festivals and a member of the Asian Film Academy. Laura Koroleva, who played the main role in "Sveta," was recently nominated for Best Actress at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2018.

## Kazakh-born pianist Ivan Gusev takes US stages

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has given birth to many talents, one of whom is Ivan Gusev, the Karaganda-born pianist currently residing in the United States and performing concert programmes on its world-famous stages.

Born in 1988, his family moved to Korolev in the Moscow region in Russia when he was four years old. His passion for music has its roots in his childhood.

"This is a very peculiar story, as I was not born into a family of musicians. When I was three or four years old, I had a toy-like piano, a small grand piano of blue colour. I used to play it for nearly 30-45 minutes every day," Gusev told The Astana Times.

As a child, he attended the School of Arts in Korolev and was invited to continue his studies at the Chopin Music School of the Moscow College of Instrumental Performance when he was nine.

"I started going to a music school when I was seven and probably no one thought it would become something serious, but it came about of itself. I started winning competitions; at first regional ones, then national ones," he said.

"My parents, though, are quite musical. They had vinyl discs that I listened to and my grandmother and great grandmother sang very good as well," he added.

Talent is certainly a key to building a music career, yet it takes years of hard work and true commitment to succeed.

Gusev enrolled in Moscow's Gnessin College of Music in 2004 while continuing to participate in national and international competitions. He graduated from Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory with highest honours in 2013 and two years later earned his master's degree there.

"I was doing good in sciences and at some point in time, I believe when I was 11 years old, I performed the first part of the concert. This music mesmerised me so much up to the point when I realised I could do nothing but music. My brain stopped grasping math and sciences; then, I decided that music is what I want to do," he said.

Embarking on this path, however, was a challenge.

"Choosing a profession, not to be afraid, is hard. No one could support me in my family in a professional aspect. In this sense, it was a kind of challenge," he noted.

"My first, I would say, serious composition that I played in a music school was Pyotr Tchaikovsky's 'Sick Doll.' It is still in my memory. Sometimes I play it, too. Of course, there was interest



in Chopin and I believe all pianists at some point in time go through it," he added.

Gusev is a laureate of the Mauro Monopoli Prize International Piano Competition in Barletta, Italy (2013), Benditsky Russian Piano Competition (2014), International Keyboard Institute and Festival in New York (2015), third International Stanislav Neuhaus Piano Competition in Russia (2015) and New York Festival and Piano (2017), among other awards.

He has been performing in the United States since he arrived almost three years ago. His next concert is scheduled for Nov. 17 in Carnegie Hall in New York. Tickets can be purchased online.

"It is very good to be here – many opportunities to perform," he said, "The audience is very warm and welcoming. They are not shy to express their emotions and give standing ovations."

His concert programme is versatile, as he is interested in different styles and eras.

"It is very interesting to learn something new and get back to something you have not played for a long time and rediscover it, similar to meeting your old friend," he said.

"I play classics from Scarlatti and Bach to the 20th century to Prokofiev and Shostakovich. I performed works of American composers and contemporary music if I like it," he said.

In 2017, Gusev won the George Gershwin International Music Competition in New York, which he described as an "unexpected win." The jury described his performance as "superb," "extraordinary" and "the highest level of mastery."

While in the U.S., Gusev gradu-

ated from the Mannes School of Music at The New School with a master's degree in piano performance.

Throughout his career, he has noted his parent's support.

"I was very lucky – my parents have always been supportive of me. My grandfather still lives in Karaganda. He is 91 years old and he is a very good philologist and my grandmother was also a philologist. They taught Russian literature in Karaganda University. I was lucky to be growing up learning a lot about literature and art and this all influenced me and served as a huge support for me," he added.

Being a musician entails a constant search.

"There is no predetermined path that you could accomplish. You are always in search and in pursuit of something from one side to another, countless experiments," he said.

Gusev has performed frequently in Russia and toured Finland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain and Sweden. One day, he hopes to perform in Kazakhstan.

"I hope very much that it will happen. I was recently invited by the Kazakh community to perform in Boston Dec. 16 [Kazakhstan's Independence Day]. I left [Kazakhstan] when I was four years old and I was there almost every summer, but there has been no chance yet to come to Kazakhstan with a concert programme," he said.

Gusev noted he had "pleasant and strong" memories of Kazakhstan.

"I would be really very happy to share the emotional experience accumulated over the years," he added.

## Qarakoz features evil spirits from folk tales

Staff Report

ASTANA – The new horror film "Qarakoz," featuring evil characters from Kazakh tales and legends in all their glory, went into wide distribution Nov. 1.

The film opens at night, with five youngsters sitting around a campfire in the woods sharing their scary "true" stories of confronting monsters. The demon-like creatures from Kazakh mythology include Zhalmauyz Kempir (a witch) and Zhezyrnak (a vampire-like character with copper nails) and the Kapchagai highway ghost (a legend that appeared four-five years ago).

Yet the most frightening among them is Qarakoz, which derived its

basic idea from a folk play of the same name. In the original tragedy, Qarakoz was a female character who suffered a fate similar to Juliet in Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," but was completely recreated for the film.

Producer Ibrahim Makhmutov talked about the movie during its premiere at the Chaplin Cinemas polemic club in Almaty.

"We came up with Qarakoz, the angel of revenge. There is an idea about [creating] a series of prequels, the Qarakoz Universe, about the spirit of revenge, with films in the genre of self-irony and references to horror films," he said.

The film brings the old folk characters to life, which many Kazakh children could only imagine in their heads. The authors chose

not to dive into the folk theme, however, only telling about fairy tale heroes in a superficial manner. The goal was to make a true horror film that would scare people, said director Roman Sidorenko.

The production team plans to create a full-fledged Kazakh universe, using all the popular characters from legends and tales.

"We are writing a new script, where there will be deeper development of this topic. Now, we just wanted to remind people about the existence of these characters, open someone up again and then we'll immerse the audience. [We will] make more horror. It can be different, but we want to do it in the spirit of 'Predator' (a science fiction film with Arnold Schwarzenegger)," said Makhmutov.

## Astana Opera's symphony orchestra to perform music for all times

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Astana Opera's symphony orchestra will perform "Music for All Times" Nov. 8, featuring the best pieces of famous composers such as Max Bruch, Tles Kazhgaliyev and Pyotr Tchaikovsky.

The evening will open with a symphonic scherzo, the light and playful "Kyz Kuu" from Kazakh composer Kazhgaliyev's "The Steppe Legend" suite. The suite has rightfully become a hallmark of Kazakh art on the international arena.

"The work was originally written for a ballet and it draws on Kazakh elements like the landscape of the steppes and traditional characters of the Kazakh culture. The piece is very powerful and vibrant, almost too powerful for a small concert hall like Cadogan. It is full of colour and energy, with beautiful, nearly graphical sounds which stimulate the mind, making one easily imagine a group of young people riding freely on horseback

across the wind swept, immense steppes," wrote reviewer Margarida Mota-Bull for Music Web International.

Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, opus 26, another piece that has taken a rightful place in the repertoire of the world's most famous orchestras, will be featured in a performance by the opera house's orchestra soloist and first violin Bagdat Abilkhanov. It is among the most popular violin concertos and widely recognised as one of the greatest romantic masterpieces. The spectacular dialogue between the soloist and orchestra has been captivating audiences for more than 150 years. Its expressiveness, depth, rich imagery, beauty of the melodies and distinctiveness of the virtuoso solo fascinate from the start.

As its name suggests, the concert's enduring compositions will include Tchaikovsky's landmark work Symphony No. 4 in F minor, opus 36. Listeners can plunge into his world, feelings, thoughts about life in general, the fate of a person



and the relationship of a human being to the surrounding world. The work summarises the composer's early searches in various areas of symphonic music, while at the same time puts forward new tasks and a new understanding of the genre. Tchaikovsky's symphonic compositions are distinguished by the romantic intensity of feelings, picturesque musical language, sharp expressive contrasts and perfection of the form.

The symphony orchestra will perform under the direction of Honoured Artist of Russia, maestro Alexander Titov of St. Petersburg, who will be performing at the Astana Opera Grand Hall for the first time. Titov has worked as a guest conductor at the Mariinsky Theatre, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Teatro alla Scala and Bolshoi Theatre of Russia. His awards include a victory at the Tokyo International Music Competition for Conducting, the highest theatre award of the St. Petersburg Golden Soffit.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Prosecutor General's Office transitions activities to digital format

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Office of the General Prosecutor is transitioning its criminal and administrative proceedings to electronic format, automating the registration of inspections of state bodies and the consideration of appeals of citizens under Digital Kazakhstan programme. The transition is meant to increase citizen protections, ensure timely justice and increase transparency.

Electronic criminal cases, electronic appeal, unified registration of administrative proceedings, unified registration of subjects and objects of inspections and analytical centres are among the main areas of digitisation process. Some of the efforts are meant to assist law enforcement agencies identify law enforcement issues and social tensions.

A functional assistant to the investigator with the use of artificial intelligence, which will contribute to the detection of crimes, is being implemented. This year, the first phase of the E-Criminal Case project is being implemented in cases



of minor gravity and misconduct. In general, during the implementation of the project, more than 12,000 criminal offenses were investigated in electronic format, of which about 4,000 were sent to court.

The Office of the Prosecutor General is also automating administrative proceedings in state bod-

ies. Approximately 1,500 police officers are equipped with tablets and printers. Around 330,000 electronic protocols have been compiled.

The programme has shown positive results in increasing the efficiency of business inspections. Since the launch of one of the project modules July 1, almost 50,000 inspections

have been registered electronically. All inspections must now be scheduled through the system.

In addition, the Prosecutor General's Office is implementing the Electronic Appeals project to automate the filing and management of applications from citizens and legal entities.

## Modernisation increases defence industry productivity

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Kazakh defence industry has grown steadily as a result of modernisation and management changes, the Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry press service reported Oct. 25.

In the past year, machine and technological equipment were renewed at military-industrial factories. Labour productivity reached \$52.6, a 60-percent increase in 2017 compared to \$32.7 in 2016. The figure is 2.4 times higher than the average level in mechanical engineering.

The military-industrial complex currently includes more than 40 enterprises providing in excess of 8,000 jobs. Founded in 2003, Kazakhstan Engineering units have

more than 20 machine-building enterprises.

New methods of production technology and competent management contributed to the results.

A 40-percent increase in production assets is expected at the Petropavlovsk Heavy Engineering and Kirov plants. The hike would allow increasing localisation and producing new types of goods, including lifting units and cementing control systems.

One of the most important tasks implemented by the ministry was modernising enterprises and systematising domestic defence industry development, said military-industrial department head Marat Karabayev.

More than 100 jobs will be created and approximately one bil-

lion tenge (US\$2.7 million) in tax deductions are expected annually. Productivity will increase 1.5 times.

“Development of military equipment provides new opportunities for the development of high-tech technologies used in other spheres,” he added.

According to forecasts, military and civilian goods production will increase manufacturing by 40 percent by 2021.

Highly qualified personnel are necessary to develop advanced weapons systems, the officials say.

The salary growth rate that will outpace the increase in labour productivity could become one of the conditions to attract new specialists. Experienced personnel in the military-industrial complex will ensure further growth in labour pro-

ductivity and breakthrough technologies in this area.

Kazakhstan Engineering is currently working to execute the Digital Kazakhstan programme. The company introduced digital production processes, expanded the range of manufactured goods using new technologies and set measures to develop export-oriented items.

With the support of the design bureau, the Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering plant is able change equipment design to fit customer's specially assigned tasks. The automated systems are also put into operation at other plants. The company plans to introduce the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to keep detailed records for the central office and optimise production works.

## Pension recipients to make single application for pension fund services

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Receiving pension savings from the Unified Accumulation Pension Fund (UAPF) will be conducted via a single application, reported the fund's press service.

According to the one-window approach, those who have reached retirement age or seek pension payments from obligatory pension contributions or obligatory professional pension contributions may submit a single application exclusively to the Government for Citizens' service centre.

The beneficiary will receive a pension payment within ten working days from the application date or when he/she becomes entitled to pension payments. Subsequent monthly payments will be made according to the payment schedule established by the fund.

Payments from the state budget and UAPF pension savings will be completed on the same day and to the single bank account indicated in the application, which will particularly benefit pension recipients who have reached retirement age.

The beneficiary will also be provided with the fund's services, which include issuing pension scheme agreements, insurance company transfers and payments, individual pension account information and consultation.

Kazakhstan's retirement age is 63 years for men and 58 years and six months for women. Pensions are a combination of the basic pension payment and/or

pension payments based on age and length of service from the UAPF or voluntary accumulative pension fund.

UAPF, established in 2013, is Kazakhstan's single administrator and operator of all pension system financial information and related services. Recent changes include increases in the basic pension payment and minimum pension, which affected more than two million pensioners, and a revised method of assigning basic pension payments, where the payment figure now depends on the duration of the individual's participation in the pension system.

The beneficiary will receive a pension payment within ten working days from the application date or when he/she becomes entitled to pension payments.

“The UAPF's other functions, including conducting payments related to permanent residence, disability, inheritance and voluntary pension contributions, as well as issues of registration, the calculation of monthly pension payments according to obligatory pension contributions and obligatory professional pension contributions and various strategic objectives, remain unchanged,” added the press service.

## Citizens withdraw more than \$21.6 billion from payment cards



Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh citizens withdrew 8.6 trillion tenge (US\$21.6 billion) from payment cards from January-August, a 26.4-percent increase compared to the same period last year. At the same time, they are more actively using non-cash payments.

According to a study by ranking.kz, withdrawals from international system cards accounted for 99.9 percent of the amount. Figures show 95.3 percent was transferred using Visa and MasterCard.

MasterCard, the most active system in the last two years, has become the driver of Kazakhstan's card market. The annual increase in cash withdrawals accounted for 70.7 percent (2.7 trillion tenge or US\$7.3 billion) in the first eight months of the year. In 2017, growth in the same period was 66.5 percent.

Despite the fact that Visa is confidently leading the market with a 63.7-percent share of the total volume of funds cashed out

from international cards, annual growth was only 17.7 percent. The figure was 11.5 percent the previous year.

Kazakh cash withdrawal from January-August hiked 25.1 percent compared to the same period last year. Almaty and the capital are the leaders. Almaty is in first place, as expected, with 2 billion tenge (US\$5.4 million), posting 21.4-percent growth for the year. At the same time, its share of Kazakhstan's total volume decreased from 24.4 percent to 23.6 percent. The capital is in the second place with 951 billion tenge (US\$2.6 million) withdrawn, a 23.6-percent increase compared to last year. Its share of Kazakhstan's volume decreased from 11.4 percent to 11.3 percent.

Approximately 10.1 million active bank cards were registered in the country as of the end of July, 19.2 percent more than a year earlier, according to National Bank. The volume of non-cash payments that month was 488.9 billion tenge (US\$1.36 billion). The figure has increased by 20 times in the last ten years.

## More than 700,000 Astana residents have contacted city's nonemergency call centre

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Astana's city utility services response centre iKomek has received more than 703,000 inquiries in 2018, of which 99.7 percent were processed, reports the city administration's press service.

The number of inquiries increased by more than 300,000 over 2017. The centre also marked a 20 percent decrease in the number of official requests to district offices and akimat (city administration) departments in comparison to last year.

iKomek merges all call centres of the city's utility services, functioning as the single point of contact for its residents. It offers more than 1,050 types of services in its catalogue, which an operator may provide upon the first call. Its expanded scope of work includes advising on school or kindergarten enrolment, filing capital house maintenance firm (KSK) complaints and transferring emergency calls in Kazakh or Russian. Seventy seven percent of requests are fully processed upon the first point of contact, and the centre aims to improve this figure to 85 percent.

Common inquiries concern street flooding, road and pavement damage, elevator maintenance and repair, open manhole and well covers and stray dog capture. For the resolution of issues in a timely manner, appeals are processed and, if necessary, entered into the Astana resident appeal registry with an assigned registration number for further transfer to state bodies and public utility services. Within seven days, the appropriate authorities respond to the centre on the issue and residents are promptly notified. In this way, iKomek continuously works on improv-

ing and developing life in the capital.

Residents may communicate their inquiries to operators through the social network hashtag #astana109, Facebook (@astana109), Instagram (@astana109), Telegram channel (@astana109112), Telegram chat bot (@astanaikomek109\_bot), Astana Akimat website www.astana.gov.kz and the toll-free number 109 for landline and mobile phones.

The centre's social media presence also informs residents on activities in the city, such as scheduled water, heat or power outages and emergency situations.

## Senate adopts amendments to 2018-2020 budget plan

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Senate adopted changes to the national budget for 2018-2020 during its Oct. 25 plenary session.

The updated document increased the expected exchange rate per dollar from 340 tenge to 350 tenge and raised the expected price for a barrel of oil from \$55 to \$60. It also incorporates the revised data from 2017 and projects the nominal GDP in 2018 to reach

58.2 trillion tenge (US\$157.37 billion), one trillion tenge (US\$2.7 billion) higher than the April indicator.

Real GDP growth has been maintained at 3.8 percent and inflation remained within the 5-7 percent corridor.

With rising oil prices, exports are forecast to grow to \$56.5 billion, with imports declining to \$32.2 billion.

Revenues are expected to reach 5.718 billion tenge (US\$15.46 billion). In light of recently establish-

ing the Turkestan region, an additional 15.1 billion tenge (US\$40.8 million) will be transferred from the Turkestan region budget to the Shymkent city budget.

The plan also envisions spending at 9.6 trillion tenge (US\$25.95 billion), a 12.6 billion tenge (US\$34 million) increase from the previously voiced figure.

The National Fund, which accumulates excess revenues from the country's oil and gas industry, is expected to receive 3.1 trillion tenge (US\$8.38 billion), 1.2 tril-

lion tenge (US\$3.2 billion) higher than the previous figure.

Senate deputies also adopted changes to the law on national statistics. First Vice Minister of National Economy Ruslan Dalenov said the bill is designed to improve legal regulation in state statistics.

“It is also meant to increase transparency of state bodies working in statistics, collection, processing and spread of information, increasing the quality of the collected data and official statistical information,” he added.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

# Smart service hackathon encourages smart city solutions

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The city hosted the Smart Service hackathon Oct. 27-28, where 160 participants had the chance to suggest their solutions to make the capital more innovative, attractive and comfortable.

The teams had 48 hours to develop a product that would meet the city's needs as tasked by Astana Innovations and its partners, including ARTA Digital Services, Ernst & Young, Open Technologies Group and the Sustainable Development Centre.

Capital residents face an array of problems that the administration is trying to address and more efforts are needed to facilitate people's involvement in city life, their ability to oversee its development, participation in the decision making process and opportunity to report problems they face to state bodies.

The participants presented 21 projects, with the jury panel of 12 experts selecting 10 finalists. First place went to the Usynys team with their project that connects state bodies, citizens and private organisations in a single register of civil initiatives and problems.



They received a 500,000 tenge (US\$1,358) cash prize.

"We serve as an integrator between these three large segments. We simplify the work for state bodies. For private organisations, we provide access to citizens," said the team.

"To identify key problems, we carried out an online survey with 250 respondents. We asked several questions; for instance, whether they faced any problems in the city. More than 70 percent

answered yes," added the project representative.

The survey also queried whether any measures were taken to address the problems and 60 percent of the respondents answered no, as many did not expect positive developments should they reach out to the city administration with their requests.

"For the main question about what ways you can suggest to tackle an issue, more than 70 percent said they would like to have an app that will collect all initia-

tives and problems in one place," said the team.

The team also plans to use a point system to encourage people, where a user can receive points for each problem he or she reports and receive prizes.

The AIKA team, which developed a bot that processes the technologies and specifics of the Kazakh and Russian languages, took second place with a 300,000 tenge (US\$814.80) cash prize.

"The bot serves as a link be-

tween the city administration and city residents, provides information about violations and fines, accepts requests and can conduct conversations," said the project team, whose members study math and computer science at Nazarbayev University.

The Astana Reality team design allows city residents and guests to identify objects via a photo recognition mechanism hard-coded in a mobile app. The team received 200,000 tenge (US\$543.20).

Astana Innovations Deputy Chair Meiram Dyusyukov noted the role of technology and communications in developing a smart city. He believes young, creative people are key to reaching the goal.

"A smart city is when its objects and subjects work with maximum benefit for the city and its residents. Therefore, state and business should become full-fledged partners in addressing not only economic, but also social issues," he said.

He reaffirmed developing an innovative eco system and culture among the company's main goals.

"We will provide significant support in innovation projects at all stages," he added.

Astana Innovations Challenge organised six events last year devoted to different areas of the city's development. The organisers received more than 2,000 applications with 60 finalists and 18 winners. Six projects have continued operating.

"We plan to bring the projects of our start-upers to an international market and conduct acceleration programmes. This competition is for sure not the last one this year," said Dyusyukov.

# Rehabilitation centres for children with cerebral palsy open across country

Staff Report

ASTANA – Rehabilitation centres for children with cerebral palsy are being developed across Kazakhstan's regions to make treatment more accessible.

More than 19,000 children have been diagnosed with cerebral palsy in Kazakhstan. Twenty percent are undergoing rehabilitation, and the rest await in line for treatment.

There are 35 rehabilitation centres for children with cerebral palsy in the country. Government

support provides for rehabilitation at least once a year at the National Centre for Children's Rehabilitation, the Aksai national children's clinical hospital and the Balbulak national children's rehabilitation centre.

In 2014, the Kasiyetty Zhol public charity foundation opened a rehabilitation centre at Astana City Children's Hospital No. 2. Two thousand nine hundred and thirteen children from all regions have since received assistance. In 2018 alone, 1,226 children were rehabilitated at the centre.

With the support of Samruk Kazyna Trust Social Projects Development Fund, Kasiyetty Zhol opened a similar rehabilitation centre in Shymkent in 2017. Every month, 50 children aged 2-15 years old with cerebral palsy, congenital malformations and Down syndrome undergo rehabilitation.

The same year, the Early Intervention Centre at Astana's Perinatal Centre No. 1 was established for children under 2 years old, where 56 patients undergo treatment for ten days every month.

Among the 2,000 children who

underwent rehabilitation with the support of Kasiyetty Zhol is six-year-old Nuriya Koyshiyeva, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth.

"We arrived at the Kasiyetty Zhol centre in 2014," said Nuriya's mother Venera Koyshiyeva. "We began treatment and, within only a few sessions, saw improvements. It is impossible to convey my emotions with words. Nuriya started to lift her head, straighten her back and turn from one side to the other. These were small steps but, for us, they were great achievements."

# State programmes increase salaries, improve vocational education

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The state programmes designed to increase wages, the employment rate and entrepreneurship are showing positive results, reported representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population at the Oct. 30 government press centre.

Since January, Kazakhstan's minimum wage has increased by 26 percent to 28,000 tenge (US\$75.90). The ministry is working to raise it to 42,000 tenge (US\$113.90), noted Vice Minister of Labour and Social Security Nariman Mukushev.

"All issues related to increases in wages are actively supported as part of the development of productive employment among young people," he said.

The ministry and Agency for Civil Service Affairs are working to introduce a new methodology for revising civil servants' wages, said Zhenisbek Dulatov, director of the ministry's Department of Employment and Labour Market Development.

"Two state bodies and two regions are already participating in the pilot project, where wages have actually increased 2-2.5 times. Starting next year, this methodology will be applied in other government agencies and regions," he added.

The programme to develop productive employment and mass entrepreneurship for 2017-2021 covers more than 563,000 citizens, 458,000 of whom were employed and 327,000 have permanent jobs.

Regarding employment rates, the ministry has created a number of requirements for educational institutions and centres such as the presence of an appropriate material and technical base, using dual education system elements (the practical part includes on-the-job training) and employing at least 60 percent of those trained.

The ministry is also seeking to create a register of educational centres and institutions to reaffirm the in-demand profession and skill list.

"The whole programme is aimed at teaching exactly what is in demand on the market. We already know this; we have a public employment service through which

the whole picture is visible. Forming the overall picture together with the market, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, we form the target areas for which we need employees to be trained," said Mukushev.

He noted the ministry recognises digitising the state sets new directions, requirements and work format. As part of the programme, the ministry closely interacts with employers, encouraging them to requalify and retrain their employees and, hence, keep them at the pace of the latest technological advancements.

**The ministry closely interacts with employers, encouraging them to requalify and retrain their employees and, hence, keep them at the pace of the latest technological advancements.**

The Mangilik El Zhastary – Industriyaga (Youth of the Eternal Nation to the Industry!) programme has been training personnel with higher technical and vocational education, thus keeping graduates in their fields of study.

The first result of these projects under the Yengbek (Labour) programme is 18,000 employed of 31,000 attendees who completed short-term vocational training, noted Mukushev. The highest numbers of employed were recorded in the Akmola, Almaty, Kostanai and North Kazakhstan regions.

Yengbek's second objective is developing microcredits to support start-up projects and create new jobs. As of October, 42 billion tenge (US\$113.91 million) was spent on microcredit, 74 percent of which was allocated to rural areas.

Agriculture, forestry and fishery projects, industries which should be developed to strengthen the Kazakh economy, use nearly 81 percent of all issued microloans, he added.

# KAZGUU introduces more flexible educational process

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – KAZGUU is the first Kazakh university to introduce Canvas, an LMS (learning management system) that makes the educational process flexible, secure and scalable. It can be adapted to users' needs and releases teachers and students from paperwork.

"After the business trip of the university's President Talgat Narikbayev to a foreign university in order to exchange experiences, we got acquainted with a system that allows us to implement an online educational environment for students and teachers. Canvas plat-

form is the product of American developers and the company has about 4,000 partners worldwide," said distance learning department head Sarman Tuleubayev.

"After a long study and analysis, we came to the conclusion that this platform has a number of competitive advantages and satisfies the needs of a modern university, which aims to provide high-quality and modern education," he added.

Designed to manage educational activities and develop and distribute online materials, Canvas is in line with KAZGUU's decision to reduce paperwork. Students and faculty no longer need to deal with hard copies or books, as all teaching materials can be down-

loaded to the system, thereby simplifying and structuring a lecturer's work.

The platform also offers speed grading, which allows the faculty member to set criteria according to estimates and recommends a particular grade for a student. The function involves the principles of artificial intelligence, according to the university press service.

Canvas is used by more than 3,000 universities, educational institutions and millions of individuals throughout the world, including Brown, Harvard, Northwestern and Yale universities; Columbia Business School, University of California – Berkeley, University of Chicago – Booth School of

Business and University of Pennsylvania.

The system has a mobile app that allows users to download tasks to their smartphones. Most importantly, students can create a virtual online environment, allowing them to share knowledge and information within the platform.

Canvas conforms with the Digital Kazakhstan programme, which President Nursultan Nazarbayev presented in September 2017 when he highlighted the importance of highly qualified personnel training. It demonstrates the need to revise educational policy and KAZGUU is implementing the new technology under the programme, according to the university administration.

# Vulnerable groups to be supported in seeking state-guaranteed legal aid

Continued from Page B1

The aim of the EU-funded project is to improve protection for vulnerable groups' rights, particularly if they are within the criminal and civil justice system, by enhancing the quality of and access to SGLA. Its main findings on seven Kazakh regions centre on identifying categories of vulnerable groups, barriers to accessing SGLA and ways to improve national legislation.

Zhovtis singled out convicts, orphanage alumni, juvenile offenders and women in difficult life situations as salient categories of vulnerable groups. Thirty-five percent of convicts surveyed were not informed of their right to free legal aid and 65.5 percent of the 225 orphanage alumni surveyed did not

seek any legal assistance. The latter were more likely to turn to parents, guardians or relatives than lawyers.

Even if these groups are aware of the aid's availability, they are unlikely to pursue it. Seventy-eight percent of the 263 minors surveyed did not apply for legal aid, despite 59 percent having an understanding of this assistance. Among the 53 percent of the 1,500 women surveyed who sought legal aid, only 14 percent reached out to lawyers or a court. Instead, they were more likely to seek out a public service centre or notary.

"In addition to providing the research findings, the project garnered public awareness on mechanisms for obtaining SGLA and allowed for the study and analysis of Georgia's best practices," said

EFCA executive director Rinad Temirbekov. "We believe there is a need to improve the quality and availability of SGLA to vulnerable groups and tailor it to their needs."

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's 100 Concrete Steps initiative highlights that economic prosperity goes hand in hand with a fair, effective and humane criminal justice system. The event served as a platform for developing a common vision on further steps toward improving the SGLA system with the critical participation of representatives of the public sector, civil society, legal organisations and international organisations. Similar collaborative platforms on criminal justice reform have contributed to Kazakhstan's shift from ranking third to 71st on an

index for the number of prisoners per capita within six years and its steady improvement in judiciary rankings.

EFCA is a public organisation mobilising public and private resources to help citizens actively build and strengthen their local communities and enhance civic and economic welfare. SFK is an NGO promoting public policies to safeguard fundamental human rights, ensure budget transparency and increase social activism and tolerance within society. The EU has funded several projects as part of its support for judicial reform in Kazakhstan programme to strengthen the country's rule of law and judicial reform by helping in implementing the national policy on humanising the justice system.

NATION&CAPITAL

# TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

## Zhambyl Region launches sacred sites website, multivolume encyclopaedia



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Zhambyl Region Department of Culture recently launched the Aulie-Ata sacred sites map as part of the Ruhani Zhanryu (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) state programme. The 25-million tenge (US\$67,781) project seeks to promote the region's hallowed locations.

"The project is being implemented. The list of sacred places is updated based on the materials of the study. Now, their number has increased from 35 to 52.

The study consists of collecting photographs, maps, aerial photographs and archival documents, stories and legends about places included in the geography of sacred places in Kazakhstan. A map in 3D format and a hologram will be posted online and an album book titled 'Sacred Map' will be published," said regional culture, archive and documentation department head Duissenali Bykybayev on Oct. 22.

Scholars and historians, ethnographers and representatives of leading research institutes are participating in expert councils

and working groups. During expeditions, they will conduct archaeological research.

"We plan to launch a three-language site of sacred places with digital passports of each object. A virtual map of sacred places in the region will also be available. All this will be available for scanning and copying. You can download the QR code of the system onto your mobile phone via Android and other mobile servers," he noted.

The department also intends to release a multivolume literary encyclopaedia about the Aulie-Ata district.

"A working group will collaborate with experts from the Auezov Institute of Literature and Art. The books will be dedicated to warriors, singers, aitys (song competitions) and dance traditions. The book will also reflect the natural resources of the region. Publication of the encyclopaedia will take place in 2020," he said.

The region has more than 3,000 historical and cultural monuments, including five of international importance. The Aktobe (Balasagun) settlement, Akyrtas palace complex, Kostobe, Kulan and Ornek are

included in the list of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage sites.

Eight monuments are listed among the 100 Sacred Sites of Kazakhstan. The catalogue includes famous monuments of ancient architecture – the Aisha Bibi mausoleum (which dates to the 11th–12th centuries), Babadzhi-Khatun mausoleum (10th–11th centuries) and Karakhan Tekturmas mausoleums (12th–14th centuries); the Baisak Batyr mausoleum, as well as the archaeological monuments such as the Akyrtas palace complex

(8th – 19th centuries), ancient Taraz settlement and Merke-Zhaisan memorial complex.

Launched in 2017, Ruhani Zhanryu is aimed at reviving the nation's spiritual values in light of contemporary risks and challenges of globalisation. It includes the Tugan Zher special project promoting patriotism among residents and Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan project about sacred sites, their history and descriptions, as well as other related projects such as the 100 New Faces highlighting success stories of self-made individuals in various walks of life.

## Ethno tourist centre opens in West Kazakhstan

By Saltanat Botev

ASTANA – Sayat, an ethno tourist centre, was launched recently in Michyurin rural area of Zelenovskiy district in the West Kazakhstan region. The centre seeks to develop local tourism and create conditions for active recreation, reported the West Kazakhstan region Akimat (administration) website.

Regional akim (governor) Altai Kulginov, veterans of World War II and representatives of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) and Kazakhstan Equestrian Federation attended the opening ceremony. National equestrian sports, such as kokpar and tenge alu, and different breeds of horses, were shown to the guests.

The project, part of the Business Roadmap 2020, was funded by a government grant issued in 2016. The centre was in the development stage for two years using a 300 million tenge (US\$822,810) investment. A 240 million tenge (US\$658,248) loan was provided by the government programme funding small and medium businesses and the balance came from independent sources. The centre currently has a staff of 12 and is planning to expand to 22.

Local businessperson and Beles Group head Murat Dzhakibayev developed the idea for the centre.

"I would like young people not to lose their passion for horses, ride a horse and even participate in sports competitions. This is the purpose of the centre," he said, according to Kazinform.

Sayat currently has 20 horses and its main activities will focus on sports and medical tourism. The former includes teaching horseback riding; developing equestrian sports, including Olympic competitions such as jumping and dressage, and promoting national sports. The centre will also conduct hippotherapy, which helps people with different illnesses to rehabilitate through horseback riding and communicating with the animals.

The centre also plans to develop educational and recreational

tourism. It will conduct rides through the region's historic and cultural sites to show locals and foreigners the beauties of West Kazakhstan nature and expand

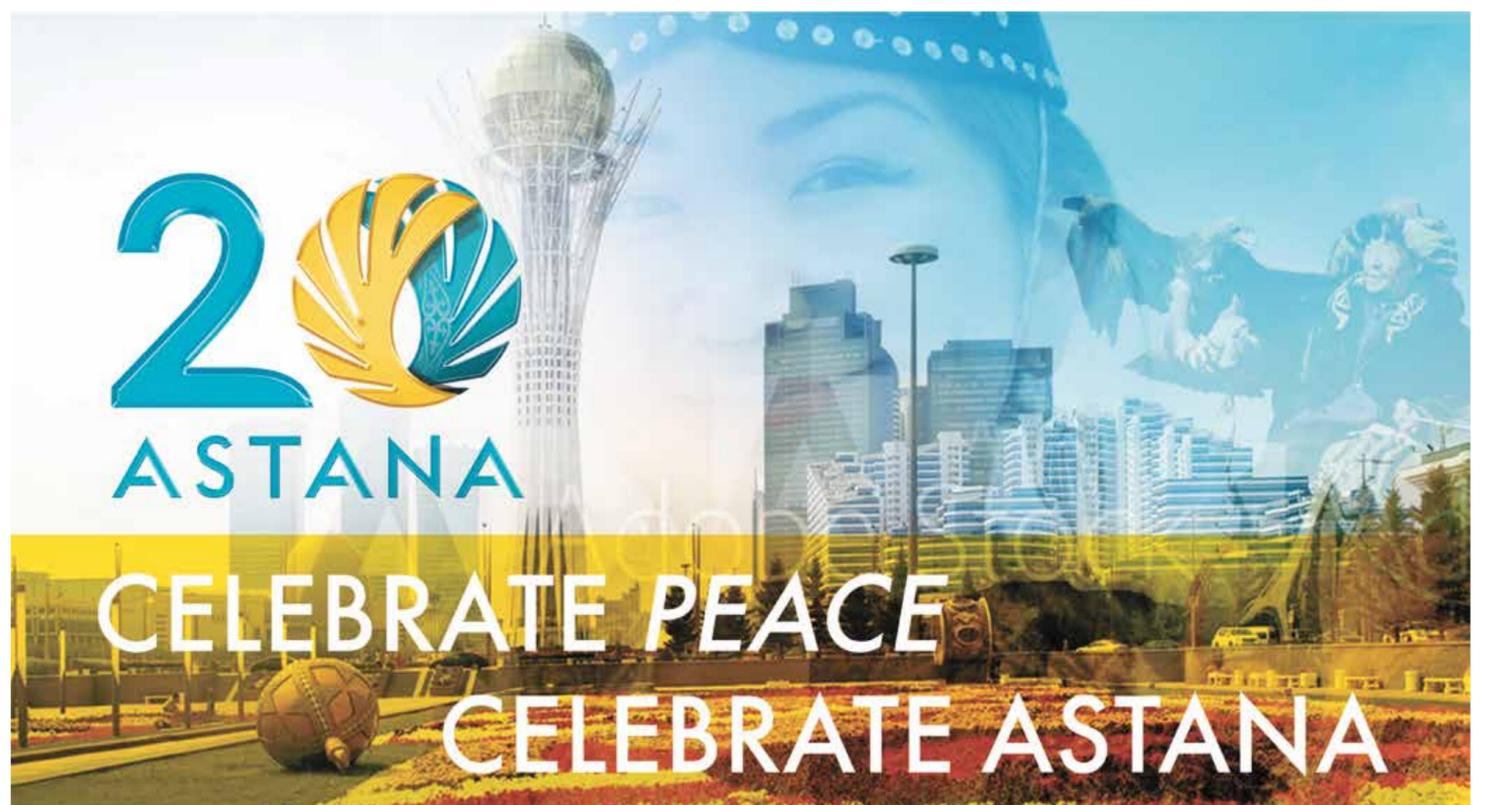
their knowledge about its history.

With the support of the regional APK, the Menin Yelim (My Motherland) ethno village will be opened on the centre's grounds.

It will present the traditions of local ethnic groups and offer hotel-type houses where guests can absorb their atmosphere and everyday life.

The administrative and household complex will have a café, hotel and parking area. The 20-hectare complex will include a stable, indoor riding arena and meadow,

basketball and volleyball courts and a football field. The centre will soon build the necessary infrastructure for water sports, hiking, skiing and cycling.



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

# SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018



Photo credit: nbf.kz

## Women's basketball team wins first silver at Asia U18 championship

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh basketball team consolidated its claim to second place in the Division B final of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Under-18 (U18) Women's Asian Championships Nov. 3 in Bengaluru, India, reported nbf.kz.

Although the team lost its first match of the group stage to the Syrians by a score 56-40, they took revenge in the semi-finals with a 76-56 victory.

In the final match, however, the odds were not in their favour, as they played against the host team. The Indian squad had an advantage in the overwhelming support

from their native stands and win streak history. Nevertheless, the game was intense, as the Kazakh team gave its rivals a fitting rebuff and did not give up until the very end. While the Indian players scored 16 points in both quarters of the first half, the Kazakh team only managed to score as much in total.

The road to silver was full of challenges. Despite the bad start against Syria, the Kazakh players under coach Alexander Gusev rebounded to beat the Samoans in the second game, 67-51. In the final group stage match, luck turned away from the team again and the Hong Kong squad celebrated with a 80-73 victory. By securing the final third place in

the group, the Kazakhs reached the quarterfinals, playing against the Iranian national team. They won 71-56, leaving their opponent no chance.

The silver in the first for the Kazakh team which began participating in the tournament in 2007. That year, the squad took third place in the division and the overall ninth place. In 2008, the national team was the best in the division, earning the right to participate in the elite Division A at the next Asian championship, but was forced to return to Division B after taking the last line of the final standings in 2010. Two years later, the players won bronze medals, then took fourth place in the 2014 and 2016 championships.

## Almaty opens children's football stadium

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Almaty city akimat (administration) and Zhas Kyran (also Orlyonok) football centre have renovated the old Soviet Sputnik stadium into a football training complex for children with the capacity to train more than 500 young sports enthusiasts, the akimat press service announced Oct. 20.

The centre employs a 50-member coaching staff. The refurbished stadium, with a hinged roof and below-stand spaces, seats 800. The field has a drainage system and the latest generation of Italian artificial turf certified by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), reported bnews.kz.

"The main goal is for children

to enjoy sports and grow as patriots. Football should bring happiness to all our parents, so that there are positive emotions from each match played," said Zhas Kyran Kazakhstan League of Children and Youth Football President Berik Kaniev.

The new football academy programme was created on the basis of the Olympic Reserve No. 2 specialised sports school for children and youth opened in 1964.

"In the state-of-the-nation address, our President paid special attention to the development of sports and gave clear directions for improving the country's sports infrastructure. The Zhas Kyran football centre did a lot of work on the stadium's major overhaul. You all know that Sputnik has a rich history. Many national football stars started their professional

careers right here. I am sure that all this will give a new impetus for the further development and education of young talents," said Almaty Akim (Mayor) Baurzhan Baibek.

Sports in my Yard, the most notable initiative to promote and support accessible sports for children, has involved more than 18,000 Almaty youth since the beginning of the year. Batyl Bol (Be Brave), a second, equally large-scale project organised by direct compensation to private sports organisations, has promoted physical education for children and teenagers from low-income families.

The Almaty bicycle track is currently undergoing renovation and a 5,000-seat indoor athletics stadium will begin construction next year, noted Baibek.



## Kazakh skater wins silver at World Short Track Cup in Calgary



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakh athlete Abzal Azhgaliyev finished second in the 500 metres at the season-opening World Cup Short Track Nov. 2-4 in Calgary, Canada.

Finishing the race in 40.136 seconds, Azhgaliyev placed second after Wu Dajing, China's 24-year-old champion and gold medal winner at the Winter Olympics in South Korea, whose result was 39.915 seconds.

Shaolin Sandor Liu of Hungary finished third.

This weekend's World Cup featured 500-metre, 1000-metre and 1500-metre races in both the men's and women's events at the Calgary Olympic Oval.

There were a women's 3000-metre relay, a men's 5000-metre relay and a 2000-metre mixed gender relay.

The season start was good, said Azhgaliyev.

"The first day, I reached semi-finals, but unfortunately without a

medal. In the final day of the first stage, I made it to the finals and took second place. In the final, I was racing with three Olympic champions. I hope there are more wins to come," he said.

Another Kazakh short tracker Yerkebulan Shamukhanov finished fifth in the men's 1000-metre race.

"The first day, I reached semi-finals, but unfortunately without a medal. In the final day of the first stage, I made it to the finals and took second place. In the final, I was racing with three Olympic champions. I hope there are more wins to come."

Two teams from Kazakhstan took part in the relay event finishing fifth. The women's team consisted of Anastasiya Krestova, Assel Taishmanova, Olga Tikhonova and Kim A Jong, while the second

mixed team included Azhgaliyev, Denish Nikisha, Anastasiya Krestova and Kim A Jong.

The next World Cup event will take place Nov. 9-11 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Almaty will host a World Cup stage Dec. 7-9 for the first time in Kazakhstan.

The season includes the ISU Eu-

ropean Short Track Speed Skating Championships, the ISU Junior World Short Track Speed Skating Championships and the ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships.

## Beach volleyball team wins country's first world tour gold medal

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Kazakh beach volleyball team of Alexey Sidorenko and Alexander Dyachenko won a golden medal at the recent Caspian Sea Series World Tour in Bandar Anzali, Iran. It is the first golden medal in a world championship in the history of Kazakh beach volleyball, volley.kz reports.

In the finale of the Caspian Sea Series, Sidorenko and Dyachenko competed against Iranians Bahman Salemi and Arash Vakili.

"Sidorenko and Dyachenko are our leading volleyball players. In competition with the strongest competitors from around the world, they managed to win a competitive tournament in Iran, which indicates their strength and serious intentions. In the final match, our

duo overcame the experienced and titled hosts of the site, the silver medalists of the last Asian championship," said Volleyball Team Coach Denis Rovkin.

In the first set, Sidorenko and Dyachenko took the lead. Near the end of the game, with the score 20-18 in favour of Kazakhstan, Vakili injured his ankle and was unable to continue the game.

Sidorenko and Dyachenko also got a prize of \$1,000 and 200 rating points to previously earned points at the Asian Championships in Satun and the second tournament of the Caspian Series in Babolsar. Three weeks earlier, they won bronze medals at the Asian Championships in Thailand, while Iranian team got silver medals.

In the World Tour rankings of International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), the Iranian team is at

111th and Kazakhstan team is at 187th place.

The Caspian Series third and final tour has one-star status in World Tour FIVB. Twenty-six male pairs from 11 countries attended it this year.

The main draw of the competition is 16 pairs that are divided into four groups. The best 12 pairs are directly seeded into the main draw. The remaining four places are for the best teams of the qualifying round.

This year, the main draw of the tour consisted of five pairs from Iran, one pair each from Poland, Slovenia and Thailand, and two pairs from Kazakhstan. The Kazakh teams included the pairs of Bogatu and Yakovlev, and Sidorenko and Dyachenko in the main draw and Aldash and Mohammad, and Kuleshov and Petrosyants in the qualifying round.



Alexander Dyachenko, Denis Rovkin and Alexey Sidorenko (L to R).

Photo credit: volley.kz

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

# Astana Invest is a partner to businesses in capital, works to create comfortable city – deputy chair

By Assel Satybaldina

ASTANA – The bustling Kazakh capital is waiting for investors, offering a myriad of platforms and mechanisms to turn ideas into reality, says Astana Invest Deputy Chair Muhamed Kabuldinov.

Astana Invest helps investors implement projects in the capital. Kabuldinov discussed the organisation's objectives and activities with The Astana Times.

Founded in April 2017, the company helps the local administration, which has witnessed tremendous growth over the past decade and is still developing.

The population has grown nearly four-fold, from 287,000 people in 1997 to more than 1 million this year. It is projected to reach 1.7 million by 2025.

The volume of investments reached 957 billion tenge (US\$2.635 billion) last year and almost 8 trillion tenge (US\$22 billion) over the last 20 years.

"Our main mission is to contribute to the development of the capital by attracting investments in priority sectors of the economy, particularly of the city. We have priority sectors of the country, but the city has its own sectors, its own life and its own lifestyle," said Kabuldinov.

Assisting new projects isn't a matter of dispensing advice and parting ways, he said. Rather, "we start working with them. We direct them on how to set up a legal entity, how to get a visa if it is a foreigner, [on how to deal with] land issues. We assist with any problem



Muhamed Kabuldinov

they might have, even if it is an ongoing project," said Kabuldinov.

The regional strategy developed last year indicated 10 priority sectors – five tradable and five supportive sectors.

Tradable industries include tourism, development, modern production, the Astana International Financial Centre launched in July, and services provided for the public sector, international organisations and transnational corporations. The supportive sectors include education, health, trade and logistics, culture and sport, and creative activities.

"In developing the strategy, big metropolises such as New York and Tokyo were studied, and cities with a population of 15 to 20 million – how they were developing, what industries are strong and what they are focusing on," he said.

Each city has its own cluster that drives growth. As an example, Kabuldinov mentioned the strong information technology cluster in Tel Aviv and the proper use of post-Olympic facilities in Salt Lake City, Utah, that continue to benefit the city and the country since the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Astana is waiting for investors, said Kabuldinov, offering many platforms to help them realise their ideas.

"We need people to come and do things. There are investors that do almost everything on their own and understand what they might not be able to do on their own and then they come. I am telling our business people that unless you start really to do things and move, you will have nothing. It is not right to wait for something from the akimat [local administration] or the government. There are

instruments that one just needs to use in the right way," he said.

"The population of our city exceeded one million. We have a growing trend toward healthy lifestyles. We need more fitness centres, more sport sites, so people can do sports any time. We must use sport facilities such as Barys Arena right. We need to have big clusters around them, so that people can spend time there, come to watch hockey and after that go somewhere. Everything needs to be centred [around such facilities]," said Kabuldinov.

The creative sector can also bring money, he added. Astana's Family Day, organised in September, is an example of how the creative sector can work.

"It lasted two days. Not many knew about this park. If you pass it now, hardly anyone is there, but despite the weather, people still came. People and companies participating there were very satisfied. These mass events create positive things. People start opening up instead of being closed. They are starting to take part in the city life," he said.

Among the projects the organisation is monitoring is the construction of Abu Dhabi Plaza, an 88-storey multifunctional complex with an estimated cost exceeding \$1.6 billion.

The construction, however, has caught fire several times and had other problems.

"We are now assisting the city administration in monitoring the implementation of the project. We have learned all their problems. The project is long, yet very in-

teresting and very significant. The city needs it. The project is megaproject even for Kazakhstan. It will make its contribution," he said, stressing the company's efforts to overcome misunderstandings between local bodies and the Arab companies running the project.

"We have several projects in education. We are now developing two of them involving foreign investors that will build private schools. The city lacks schools and here investors came and expressed an interest in building them. They studied the market. We also have several investors that want to build hotels. We consulted on several projects in the special economic zone," he said.

Attracting investments, however, is not an end goal, as creating conditions where people and investors feel comfortable is a priority.

"The goal, after all, is creating jobs, some social and economic component, so that our residents, both those who were born here and those who have moved here, feel comfortable," he said.

Comfort, he noted, is not only about building parks and squares, though that is central to urban development.

"This [comfort] also entails living conditions, places of work, how a person gets there and how he goes back, what he or she sees on his way. All this is done for the city to be attractive and to give an opportunity to everyone not to feel separated," said Kabuldinov.

He believes Astana has distinct features and charm that are "steadily taking shape."

"I believe in the next five or 10 years the city will be different. In the past two years, the city has already changed. I have been living here for 17 years and it is growing, not only because all this construction is going on, but because the culture and trends are changing. This is a positive development," he said.

The company, noted Kabuldinov, does not differentiate between foreign and local investors.

"We offer an opportunity to understand, when coming to Astana, where a project could find its place, what mechanisms of state support a project can use. We help investors receive permitting documents in obtaining land; technical documents; connecting to electricity, water and infrastructure. We control this process to avoid bureaucracy and eliminate corruption," Kabuldinov explained.

The services the organisation provides are free of charge.

"We do not ask for any money from investors and they do not give us any money. They of course pay for things they have to pay by law; for example, some permits," he said.

Astana Invest works directly with the city's Investment and Business Development Department, and with Astana's akim (mayor) and deputy akim.

"If we are not able to do something on our level, we bring it to the akim. We have a regional council to attract investments that seeks to address problems for investors, and there akim raises the matter," he said.

## Astana school launches distance learning



Photo credit: inform.kz

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The capital's gymnasium school No. 22 has launched Free from School, a project allowing student-athletes and children who need an accelerated or delayed educational programme to study remotely. Its official name is Creating a Distance Learning Form on the Moodle Platform.

"We presented the project at the scientific council in the education department of Astana, which was held in August. Already in September, we received an order that the project could start in the gymnasium school No. 22 – and now we are engaged in the implementation of this project," said organiser Vera Sadykova.

The project, in development for three years, has a phased approach. The creators studied international experiences and clearly understand it should be implemented systematically.

"Now the first stage of the project is underway, when we create a community of parents who are interested in this form of teaching children and begin to form student groups. Children in grades one-four will begin to study remotely, starting from the second quarter of 2018, and fifth graders will start in November," she noted.

"We have already started to work with first-fourth grade students and in November-December we will

start to work with fifth grade and higher students. We decided that we will not bring ninth-11th grade students into the project this year, because they are already preparing for exams. We will not offer them this opportunity now, although we have a lot of applications from parents and children of this age," she added.

Parents must complete an agreement with the gymnasium and Centre for System Technologies, the technical organiser of the project. Each child has a personal account on the Moodle platform and once created, the student has access to what he or she should learn.

"We are currently working on lists. The first thing that parents need to do is to go to the website of our project and register there. After the registration, the manager is contacted by the parent and the parents send the data of their child, which is included in the list," said Sadykova.

She is a strong supporter of the project.

"There are children who learn very quickly and there is no sense in keeping them with a standard educational programme from September-May. We delay their development when they can finish two classes in one year or go deeper into the knowledge of physics or other subjects. This is the 21st century! All technologies are open now and we must give the children this opportunity," she added.

## City begins e-architecture pilot project

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The electronic (e-) architecture pilot project was recently presented in the capital, reported the Astana Invest (City Development Centre of Investments) press service. The system will be implemented in all major cities in the future.

"The main mission of the system is to create a tool for the automated process of providing online services in compliance with the requirements of regulatory legal and technical acts," company representative Daulet Assylbayev told The Astana Times.

E-architecture allows individuals and organisations working in urban planning to submit a pre-

liminary design and architectural planning task for approval online. They can present a full package of documents, monitor further procedures and receive a response to the application from the authorised bodies.

"We plan to launch additional modules including issuing decisions on reconstruction and outdoor advertising, providing materials for reconstruction, accounting for agreements on share participation in housing construction and other services," he said.

Developers are currently negotiating with law enforcement agencies regarding publication safety for issuing a copy of the topographic plan and returning the updated copy.

The project aims to optimise ser-

vice provision, reduce administrative barriers, support and expand the services for the population and businesses and raise awareness in urban planning, architecture and the construction industry. It also reduces the impact of citizens' and businesses' locations on the service provision process by ensuring more effective and less costly interaction with the State Department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Land Use.

"We are glad to receive feedback from designers who have questions and propose suggestions for finalising our system. We place great emphasis on usability. While developing each module, we properly study the state standards and think over each interface, excluding ambi-

guity. Our advice and user manuals in the system are available. We are open to suggestions from our users, and we are constantly working to improve our product," he said.

The department hosted the Oct. 15 presentation with the support of the Astana Invest new economy development sector project office. Design and construction companies had the opportunity to learn about the [www.saulet.astana.kz/decor/](http://www.saulet.astana.kz/decor/) website and the prospects of the electronic service.

The developers noted the new system will contribute to the professional development and growth of companies' competences and have a positive impact on the city's construction sector and investment attractiveness in particular.

## Astana considers reducing speeds in bus lanes to prevent accidents

Staff Report

ASTANA – The speed on certain sections of bus lanes in Astana will be reduced to decrease the number of traffic accidents, said Deputy Chairman of Astana LRT Beibut Yeszhanov at a recent press conference.

To reduce the number of accidents involving cars and public transport, the Administrative Police Department of Astana Internal Affairs and Astana LRT transport company started work to limit bus lane speeds. The police department has designated several sections of the lanes, where speeds will be limited.

"As a proposal (to reduce the number of accidents), the only way is to reduce the speed of public transport on the bus lane. But even having reduced speed, drivers and pedestrians should be vigilant," said Yeszhanov.

The possibility of introducing this practice on certain sections of the lane is being considered. Astana LRT and the police department have already marked emergency sites. After several ac-

cidents, signs of 50 and 40 kilometres per hour were installed at these sites. Analysis of the sites will continue.

"We have one section where we have reduced the speed to 40 kilometres per hour. This is on Saryarka Street. A sign 3.24 (the article in Kazakh road traffic regulations) and a speed limit of 40 kilometres per hour (was implemented)," noted Yeszhanov.

In this regard, road users are advised to be attentive since a set of

road signs 3.24 (the article about maximum speed limit) and 7.14 (the article about lane) will appear above the public transport lane. The first such sign has already appeared on Turan Avenue.

According to the police department, currently, road gaps are also being studied with the possibility of increasing the speed of movement to improve turnover capacity.

If this practice decreases the number of traffic accidents, the

speed at other problem areas will be reduced.

The bus lane project implies a separate lane for public transport, which provides unimpeded movement of the transport. The purpose of this project is to create conditions for passengers' comfortable travel and prioritise the movement of public transport.

This initiative is being implemented with the Astana Passenger Transport Department and the police department.



Photo credit: aif.kz