



## President urges larger role for non-governmental organisations in society



By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev stressed at the Nov. 27 eighth Civil Forum of Kazakhstan the importance of reducing barriers to interaction between the state and society. The forum looked at the role of civil society in helping implement state programmes. The number of NGOs in Kazakhstan has grown from 5,000 to 22,000 in the last 15 years. Today, governmental social programmes receive financial support totalling \$53.40 million. NGOs address many essential aspects of the social development, said Nazarbayev.

NGOs in Kazakhstan have mainly contributed in helping vulnerable groups of society, developing social entrepreneurship and other projects of social importance. "The participation of NGOs in creating a proactive environment for people with disabilities, children and young people with special needs is positive. The development of an inclusive society is a global practice and one of the key social objectives that are implemented through civil society in all developed countries," said the President. Nazarbayev also instructed the Kazakh government to create an electronic register of NGOs. The organisations "will be registered

on a voluntary basis, posting the necessary materials that will allow forming NGO ratings to ensure their access to funding," said the President. The Civil Alliance of Kazakhstan was also assigned to facilitate state-society relations. "Akims (mayors and governors) of cities and regions need to introduce a system of providing services to the population in open barrier-free spaces on the principle of a single window using digital technologies," said Nazarbayev. The government now must develop a six-year plan to form civil society. The head of state suggested the government and the Ministry of

Social Development study proposals from the forum to create programmes in ecology, social work, children's rights in other areas. The President instructed government to increase its support of volunteer movements. Volunteers helped organise EXPO 2017 and the 26th Winter Universiade. The President said the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme should be continued as noted in the President's recent article "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe." The coming year has been designated the Year of the Youth, so the President also encouraged NGOs to develop youth policy.

## West Kazakhstan region supports small businesses, productivity growth

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The West Kazakhstan region ranks third in the country with a 40-percent share of the medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the gross regional product. This indicator was achieved by increasing the number of operating SMEs to 40,000 enterprises with more than 115,000 people working in this sector, the region's Akim (Governor) Altay Kulginov said in an exclusive interview with the newspaper. The oil and gas sector make a significant contribution to the industrial growth as the region produces 45 percent of the natural gas in the country. Karachaganak Petroleum Operating B.V. expands and develops the Karachaganak field, one of the world's largest oil and gas condensate fields. "Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev set the task of diversifying the economy and developing the processing industry. This industry occupies an important place in our economy. Kondensat

enterprise produces various types of fuels including diesel fuel of environmental class K5. The capacity of the enterprise is 850,000 tonnes per year. The enterprises in the field of mechanical engineering, metalworking, construction, and furniture production also make a contribution to the industrial output. Many of them are export-oriented companies. For example, 95 percent of items produced at the Ural Transformer Plant are export-oriented," said Kulginov. As a result of the industrial production development, labour productivity increased by 26 percent. The production in the processing industry grew by 8 percent to 156 billion tenge (US\$471 million). "Agriculture, especially livestock, has huge potential. The Kublei company launched the animal waste recycling project and switched to non-waste production. Overall, the region has exported about 8,000 tonnes of beef and more than 720 tonnes of lamb to the CIS and other countries over the past four years," he said. **Continued on Page A2**

## Annual diplomatic Christmas bazaar raises funds for charity

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The 11th annual Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar organised by the Ambassadors' Spouses Association (ASA) took place Dec. 2 in Astana. Forty-six embassies, charity organisations and schools sold handicrafts, souvenirs and national products and dishes to support local charities at the bazaar in Astana Radisson Hotel. Thousands attended this year's bazaar, many of whom took part in the annual lottery. Prizes featured baskets put together by embassies, gift certificates, flight tickets and a Lada car. Last year, approximately 42

million tenge (US\$112,154.70) was collected. The amount raised this year was not available at press time. The idea for an event to help people in need and showcase diverse cultures was initiated by ambassadors' spouses in 2007. Today, it is one of the most anticipated events in the capital and records for the amount of funds raised are set annually. "The Japanese Embassy has been participating in the bazaar since the very start, 11 years ago, and I am participating for the third time," said the Japanese Ambassador's spouse Megumi Kawabata, who had been on the charity committee in previous years. **Continued on Page B8**

## Parliamentarians, experts reflect on President Nazarbayev's role in Central Asian cooperation



By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The international conference, Astana – A Centre of Global Integration, Security and Peace, gathered representatives of the Kazakh Parliament, international organisations and think tanks Nov. 26 to discuss Kazakh President Nursultan Naz-

arbayev's global initiatives to promote peace and strengthen interstate cooperation. The conference was organised by the Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament), supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and dedicated to the Day of the First President, assembling high-ranking parliamentarians from Azerbaijan, Italy, Kazakhstan,

Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russia, Spain, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Speaker of the Mazhilis Nurlan Nigmatulin began the event by praising Kazakhstan's newfound role as a centre of security and peace and a global gathering place for discussions on realising political and economic initiatives. "Under the President's lead-

ership, Kazakhstan has come a long way since independence from being a peripheral state of the former Soviet Union to a full member of the world community, enjoying its well-deserved authority and respect, and a responsible partner in addressing global and regional problems," he said. **Continued on Page A3**

## AIFC law conference presents new ways for business cooperation

By Saltanat Botev

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) introduced its services and cooperation opportunities to a local and international audience at its Nov. 23 law conference. The event included four presentations covering AIFC's general legal framework, jurisdiction and financial and ancillary services, participants' registration and listing on the Astana International Exchange (AIX). AIFC advisory council member Sheikh Bilal Khan moderated panel sessions. As AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov was unable to attend, authority chief legal officer and deputy CEO Marat Aitenov

passed his words of welcome to the audience. "The aim of our conference is not only to introduce the AIFC and its bodies, but to create the platform of discussion of current issues related to AIFC general legal framework, financial services framework, listings of AIX and [registration] of the AIFC companies and participants... We are aiming to meet international standards and insure high quality of services... and looking forward to your recommendations..." the message from Kelimbetov said. AIFC legal advisory council member and Norton Rose Fulbright senior consultant Simon Cox spoke during the first panel discussion on the organisation's general legal framework. **Continued on Page A4**

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Kazakhstan launches e-housing register, simplifies residence and work permit procedures

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched an electronic housing register in October, the Central Communications Service reported Nov. 19. The listing now includes approximately nine million people.

Kazakh citizens have been submitting entitling documents for residential premises since 2017. The information can be received online from the address registry using the individual identification number and the electronic housing register system was developed based on the service. The migra-

tion service has started issuing address certificates to homeowners indicating all persons registered at the location.

“The migration service committee is working on automating public services to make them available through the e-government portal. We are working to shorten the period of service and the number of documents required from citizens,” said migration service committee deputy chairperson Galina Sarsenovna.

Birth registration will be provided in conjunction with birth certificates issued through the end of 2018.

This year, 23,877 people received

Kazakh citizenship. Approximately 1.43 million individuals have received citizenship since the country's independence in 1991.

“Next year, the migration service will start providing new services including issuing a refugee travel document and providing an individual identification number to foreign people temporarily staying in the country,” she noted.

Issuing an individual identification number now takes 15 minutes and the period for recording permanent residency has been reduced from 30 to 17 days. In the future, public service centres will issue refugee travel documents.

“Foreign citizens can apply for

a residence permit at the public service centre (TsONs). Migration service centres will be opened in all regions of the country to ease procedures provided by the migration service for foreigners until the end of this year,” said Sarsenovna.

Foreigners can currently secure work permits in centres in the capital, Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau, Petropavlovsk, Shymkent, Uralsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk.

“Today, 11 services are provided at the public service centres in Astana. These include issuing documents for permanent residence, issuing and extending permits for labour migrants and

issuing residence permits and certificates for stateless persons permanently residing in Kazakhstan,” she added.

The committee combined the services for issuing invitations and visas and registering foreigners temporarily staying in the country in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Security Committee. The action has reduced the period from submitting an invitation to issuing a visa from 14 to 5 days. When the invitation is submitted, the foreign citizen's Kazakh address is provided, eliminating the need for temporary stay registration.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev instructed the government to increase pensions 7 percent and social allowances for persons with disabilities and loss of a breadwinner 5 percent from Jan. 1, reported Akorda Press. The average size of social benefits will increase by up to 30 percent from 2020. This year, 2.6 trillion tenge (US\$6 billion) was allocated for the social sphere, which is 21.3 percent more than in the last year. The head of state instructed to develop a new national plan to ensure the rights and improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. “It is necessary to adopt a law providing the increase of the size of the minimum salary by up to 1.5 times. The ministries and regional akimats (administrations) need to take measures to control the provision of minimum salary increases and conduct explanatory work. A real salary increase should cover 1.3 million citizens,” said Nazarbayev.

A one mega-watt solar power station and the five mega-watt wind power station were launched Nov. 30 in the Almaty region, reported the press service of Samruk Energy company. Chinese company Powerchina Zhongnan Engineering built the facilities and donated them to the ownership of Kazakhstan. The solar station consists of 3,608 photovoltaic modules installed on metal structures of two types – fixed and adjustable tilt angles. The wind station includes two wind power plants with a capacity of 2.5 mega-watts each. “According to the results of 72-hour comprehensive tests and testing, the stations are fully operational. The green bridge established between the countries is aimed at further sharing experience in the field of renewable energy sources,” reads the release.

The construction of a new junction from Nazarbayev Avenue to Zhansugurov Street with a ramp through railway tracks was completed in late November in Almaty, according to the city administration. This will reduce traffic on Seifullin Avenue along north-south directions. The technically complex project worth 7.4 billion tenge (US\$19 million) was implemented within the last two years. Approximately 30 traffic interchanges were built in the city in the last 10 years. “The throughput capacity of junction is 48,000 cars per day. The sidewalks are provided and lighting poles with energy-saving lamps are installed. Work continues on the arrangement of staircases and the improvement of the adjacent area,” said representative of the city administration.

The Almaty specialised inter-district economic court ruled to liquidate the Bank of Astana, the press service of the city court reported. “The claims of the National Bank of Kazakhstan on the compulsory cessation of activities, liquidation of Bank of Astana were completely satisfied,” said the report. The decision has not entered into force. The bank was deprived of a license to conduct banking and other operations from Sept. 19 by the resolution of the Board of the National Bank. Earlier, the court made a decision on the liquidation of Qazaq Banki.

A \$100 million high-quality cement plant was recently launched in Rudnyi in the Kostanai region. The plant will export about 200,000-300,000 tonnes of products or 50 percent of design capacity to Ufa in Russia. The plant plans to produce 17,200 tonnes of cement by the end of the year. The plant has already created 190 jobs. With a maximum plant load, the number of workers will be 304 people. “The interest rate to the bank was subsidised to 1.3 billion tenge (US\$3 million) as part of the Business Road Map 2020. Some 750 million tenge (US\$2 million) for utilities, 730 million tenge (US\$1 million) are guarantees, and almost 600 million tenge (US\$1 million) for railway lines were allocated. The most important thing is that cement should be of good quality,” said Kostanai Region Akim (Governor) Arkhimed Mukhambetov.

## Ministry of Education and Science, WB initiate project to improve secondary schools

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Ministry of Education and Science and the World Bank have launched a \$75 million education modernisation project aimed at improving the quality and equity of the nation's secondary education system, according to a report reviewed Nov. 20 at the Central Communications Service.

World Bank education sector manager Harry Anthony Patrinos noted Kazakh education systems must prepare students to succeed in the future workforce.

“There is a race between technology and education. Education has great promise. It can bring jobs and higher earnings, reduce poverty, lead to better institutions and service delivery and improve the overall productivity of a nation. The new project, which will benefit over 2.6 million children mostly from rural and disadvantaged

schools, will help to bridge the gap between rural and urban communities and improve the learning curriculum and quality of teaching across Kazakhstan,” he said.

Approximately three million schoolchildren, including those with special educational needs, 170,000 rural teachers and principals and students from pedagogical universities will participate in the project.

“There are plans to support the updated content of education, to provide multimedia equipment to rural schools, to raise the teacher qualification level in working with poorly performing students, to support children with special needs and to strengthen the training of teachers in universities,” said Vice Minister of Education and Science Elmira Sukhanberdiyeva at the press conference.

The measures will increase school capacity and student achievement and reduce the gap

and quality of education between rural and urban schools. Nearly 60 percent of the financing is aimed at providing more than 5,000 rural schools with multimedia equipment, she added.

At the institutional level, the project will serve to improve the potential of each school and, especially in rural areas, the quality of secondary education at the system level. At the national level, it will help strengthen human capital for the country's sustainable development. The project will also aim to increase competitiveness and have a positive socio-economic effect.

Inclusive education is a priority, noted Sukhanberdiyeva.

“Children with special needs are in need of quality educational services. It is one of the basic and indispensable conditions for their successful socialisation in various types of professional and social activities,” she said.

Methodical training manuals and programmes will be developed. Nine resource centres will be created and eight centres will be renovated to implement practical experience and conduct network interaction on inclusive education.

“We intend to improve the qualifications of defectologists, psychologists, medical and pedagogical staff and correctional officers. A publishing centre will be created to provide textbooks and educational literature in Braille for children at the National Scientific Practical Centre for Correctional Pedagogy,” she added.

## Modernising judicial system will foster public trust, says President

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev called for additional measures to modernise the judicial system at a Nov. 19 presidential administration meeting.

Presidential Administration Head Asset Issekeshiev, Supreme Court Chairman Zhakyp Assanov and Supreme Judicial Council Chairman Talgat Donakov reported on the modernisation of the judicial system.

“Trust in the courts is comparable to trust in the state,” the President noted on the importance of modernisation. “Improving the judicial system is an important aspect of modernising our economy and enhancing the social wellbeing of citizens.”

A key problem area is the judicial workload, which has increased twofold in the past three years.

“In one working day, a judge must hold four meetings, make the same amount of decisions and carry out 150 sanctions. Naturally, the question of quality arises,” said the President, calling for a reduced judicial burden and simpler, quicker and more transparent legal proceedings.

“Another issue of importance is the quality of judicial staff and their degree of preparation and adaptation to modern economic realities, which often require an entirely different ap-

proach. Judges must be models of competence, honesty, fairness and dignity,” he added.

The selection procedure for judges was recently tightened so that only five of 100 applicants were able to pass an exam for the position. Higher wages and more demanding requirements are expected to attract highly qualified lawyers capable of handling complex cases. A draft law to enhance the quality of judicial staff will also be prepared and submitted to Parliament.

As per the law “On the Judicial System and the Status of Judges,” an evaluation of 470 judges will be conducted next year. Nazarbayev emphasised the importance of objectivity in the evaluation process to the Supreme Court and Supreme Judicial Council.

“We will be able to modernise the judicial system when there is robust trust among society in judges – our ultimate goal is an independent and incorruptible judiciary. Therefore, court evaluation will be carried out not only by statistical methods, but also by conducting independent sociological research. Judges ought to understand that evaluation will depend on how transparently they work and inspire confidence. Prompt and transparent justice, based on strict adherence to legislation, is in the interest of society and the country's development path,” he concluded.



## West Kazakhstan region supports small businesses, productivity growth

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The governor also spoke about recent investment projects. The investments in fixed assets stands at 316 billion tenge (US\$845 million). External investments amounted to 197 billion tenge (US\$527 million) and their share in the main capital exceeds 62 percent.

Kazakh Invest earlier announced the region has attracted more than 32 billion tenge (US\$86.9 million) in investment projects at the regional council meeting in Uralsk.

“Attracting investment is one of the top priorities. We created favourable conditions for investors. The regional council for attracting investments and improving the investment climate and the Smart Uralsk operational management centre for investors operate. This year we held three meetings including the visit of President of Tatarstan. We reviewed the projects in the



Altay Kulginov

agro-industrial, tourism sectors, construction industry and recycling of solid household waste. We agreed on projects to build three four-star hotels and several plants,” he said.

A local company World Green, in cooperation with a Dutch company, will build a 13-billion tenge (US\$35.3 million) greenhouse. The greenhouse will

accommodate 4,400 tonnes of cucumbers and 3,450 tonnes of tomatoes.

The region develops a fruitful cooperation with Finnish investors. A joint Kazakh-Finnish enterprise produces environmentally friendly, efficient windows and doors in Uralsk.

Local teachers learn 3D design and information modelling courses as part of a trilateral agreement between the region, the Finnish Business Hub and the Collaprim Oy company.

This initiative seeks to develop BIM technologies in construction and design, the introduction of training modules in vocational education, the governor explained.

The modernisation of solid waste management system is the major project in the field of green economy.

“It is aimed not only at separate sorting and disposal of waste, but also at obtaining biogas. The Finnish-Kazakh consortium was

established. The waste sorting complex is being built. It will be launched at the beginning of next year,” he said.

As for tourism opportunities, the West Kazakhstan region is unique in its kind. The rich history and culture make the region attractive for visitors. Its major city Uralsk is considered the most environmentally friendly city in the country.

“Tourism is closely connected with the small and medium-sized businesses as it directly depends on investments, transport and logistics infrastructure and many other things. The construction of roads is essential. The reconstruction of the highway to Saratov will be completed soon. Next year, we start the repair of the road to Orenburg. Some 500 kilometres of roads are repaired annually,” he said.

The work is underway to develop youth tourism. The Centre for Children's Tourism obtained the status of UNESCO Club.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's Daneliya Tuleshova took sixth place at the Junior Eurovision song contest hosted by Minsk, Belarus. It was Kazakhstan's debut at the contest, which gathered junior vocalists aged nine to 14 years from 18 countries, the others being Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia and the Netherlands. Rokšana Wegiel from Poland earned 215 points to win. Tuleshova performed the song "Ozine Sen" ("Believe in Yourself"). Born in Almaty in 2006, Tuleshova gained popularity after winning the "The Voice Kids" talent show in Ukraine in 2017, the year after she earned the People's Favourite national award in Kazakhstan and a Bravo music award in Russia. The video of her performing "Stone Cold" during "The Voice Kids" has reached 30 million views on YouTube.

Frankfurt recently hosted a business forum that presented Kazakh investment opportunities to 60 German businesses and investors. Kazakh Invest representative in Germany Hans Bischoff briefed participants about doing business in Kazakhstan and promising areas for investments. Businesses also discussed joint projects, one being the construction of a 100 MW solar power plant in Saran, Karaganda region. Kazakh Ambassador to Germany Bolat Nussupov said the sides are also negotiating the construction of two meat processing plants in Kazakhstan. Germany has been among the biggest investors in the Kazakh economy, and German companies have invested nearly \$4.2 billion into Kazakhstan since 2005, with 90 percent of those investments going toward the non-primary sector.

The National Museum of Kazakhstan has unveiled the "Eurasian Utopia: Post Scriptum" exhibition in Suwon Ipark Museum of Art (SIMA) in Suwon, a city in South Korea not far from Seoul. The exhibition brings together more than 100 works by 57 artists focusing on the post-Soviet and contemporary period. "The project is an example of the first successful organisation of a large scale display of Kazakh modern art in the international arena. Nearly 400 works and archive documents by 94 artists were on display in four cities: London, Berlin, Jersey City and Suwon," said project curator Roza Abenova. The exhibition seeks to identify Kazakh art narratives by studying the art of artists of Soviet period and contemporary artists, as well as the birth of contemporary art in independent Kazakhstan.

A Kazakh delegation participated in the 13th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the Central Asia plus Japan dialogue in Tokyo. The platform was first convened in 2004 and covered five areas – political dialogue, interregional cooperation, stimulating business, intellectual dialogue, cultural ties and humanitarian exchange. The meeting agenda included issues such as regional security, tourism, transport and logistics, agriculture, trade and investments. The sides also discussed the upcoming ministerial meeting in December in Dushanbe.

Kazakh director Emir Baigazin won the best film award at the Lisbon and Sintra Film Festival, held Nov. 16-25, for his "Ozen" (River). "Ozen" tells the story of five young brothers living in a remote farm in the middle of the Kazakh steppes with their strict father, who demands obedience from them and justifies his control by saying he must protect his children from the outside world and its dangers. The nearby river that the boys suddenly discover becomes their getaway, but the arrival of Kanat, a boy hailing from the city with his modern gadgets, disrupts the family's rural and isolated life. Announcing the award winner, jury member Martha Argerich said the Kazakh film is a "wonderful film with unusual expressiveness, poetic power, hypnotism, grandeur and humanism and a unique film that struck from the first shot."

## Kazakhstan presents proposals for new EU Strategy on Central Asia

By Elya Altynsarina

BRUSSELS – The Belgian capital hosted the Nov. 23 European Union-Central Asia ministerial meeting attended by the foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

The agenda focused on a new draft of the EU Strategy on Central Asia. According to Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Central Asia is one of the world's most dynamically developing regions which plays a strategic role and has significant human and high economic potential, including excellent natural and industrial resources.

In its vision of the new strategy, the Kazakh side emphasised developing human capital through education, promoting the rule of law and high-quality public administration and developing private entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized businesses focused on women's entrepreneurship.

The delegation noted Central Asia's growing involvement in global economic processes also requires closer cooperation between the regions, including introducing



Photo credit: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

a new technological paradigm and digitisation elements, interfacing transport and logistics infrastructures, sharing experience in energy efficiency and introducing green technologies. The issues of environmental protection and rational use of water resources, as well as joint assistance to help restore and stabilise Afghanistan, are critical. According to the Kazakh side, these and other measures should be taken into account in the document.

In addition, Abdrakhmanov drew participants' attention to the main provisions of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's article, "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe." The writing details how Kazakhstan plans to implement large-scale projects to update the centuries-old historical heritage

and adapt archival, archaeological and other data to be understood and used by citizens at the age of digital civilisation.

EU and Central Asia interaction vis-a-vis the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Belt and Road Initiative, the largest economic projects in the Eurasian space, can make Central Asia an important link in global economic relations. The minister spoke about Astana's readiness, if necessary, to provide a platform to start dialogue on EU-EAEU-China interaction.

Abdrakhmanov drew attention to the need to comply with three key elements to implement the document: ensuring cooperation integrity in the EU-Central Asia format and creating more flexible tools to practically implement the

strategy, as well as enhancing its visual perception.

To achieve the latter, Kazakhstan proposed creating a single online portal that would provide "virtual institutionalisation" of cooperation and could become a universal online window to Europe for 70 million Central Asians.

Following the plenary session, the sides adopted a joint communiqué which stressed the importance of adopting a new strategy in early 2019 "to guide the development of region-to-region relations in a way that brings mutual, tangible and long-term benefits."

Abdrakhmanov and Mogherini later discussed the progress of ratifying and implementing the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between Kazakhstan and the EU, as well as the outcomes of the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit and issues of international and regional cooperation.

The EU is Kazakhstan's largest trade, economic and investment partner, accounting for approximately half of its foreign trade and investment, and is one of the priorities of the country's foreign policy, noted Abdrakhmanov. Kazakhstan ranks 32nd among the EU's largest trade partners, while its share of the EU trade turnover with Central Asia is approximately

80 percent. In the past two years, trade between Kazakhstan and the EU has shown steady average growth of 20 percent and the objective for the coming years is to diversify trade and economic cooperation.

In this context, the sides have high hopes for the EPCA and intend to use the full potential of the new document.

As part of the EPCA, Astana is aiming at further rapprochement between Kazakhstan and the EU. Easing visa restrictions for Kazakh citizens visiting the EU is a priority, said Abdrakhmanov, expressing hope that relevant negotiations will begin after the EU adopts a new union code on visas.

Mogherini underscored the relevance of ongoing political and administrative reforms in Kazakhstan that provide a solid basis for engagement between the nation and the EU. She also stressed the country's important role in regional processes and the significance of initiatives that contribute to deepening regional dialogue.

The sides talked about the EU strategy on connectivity with Asian countries which it presented at the ASEM summit. Kazakhstan found the document provisions relevant and was ready to participate in its practical execution.

## Romania marks 100th anniversary of Great Union with cultural celebrations

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – As Kazakhstan celebrated its First President's Day Dec. 1, Romania celebrated 100 years since its Great Union. The date marks the union of all of Romania's historical provinces, including Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina, and is hugely important to Romania and Romanian identity.

"This National Day is a moment of historical reflection, a moment of conclusions, of joy, of solidarity between all Romanian citizens without any discrimination. It is a moment of responsibility for its destiny. In my opinion, this occasion must be the basis of reconciliation, peace, solidarity and unity," Romanian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Cezar Manole Armeanu told The Astana Times.

Romania's embassy in Kazakhstan will mark this historic occasion with cultural and informational events running until the middle of December.

Armeanu launched what he called an "avant-premiere", a preview, of the Great Union celebration for students at Kazakhstan's State University of Karaganda Feb. 9 with an exhibition featuring images from December 1918 in Romania and a lecture to the students and faculty in the history and literature departments.

Similar exhibitions and events on Romanian history, culture and



Romanian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Cezar Manole Armeanu.

civilisation were organised Nov. 27 in Astana at the Rixos Hotel and Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University. As the Romanian national day also coincides with the 25th anniversary of Romania's first embassy in Kazakhstan, opened in Almaty in November 1993, a parallel exhibition of images of Romanian Embassy in Kazakhstan will also be on display. Romania was among the first states to recognise Kazakhstan's independence, on Dec. 17, 1991.

On Nov. 29, a Romanian cultural centre was opened at Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana. A Romanian history exhibition displays samples of traditional ceramics unique to Horezu, an old town known for its pottery culture, and traditional Romanian clothing that can be dated to 3,500 years BC. The Romanian popular costume finds its roots in the part of Thracian, Dacian and Getae ancestors.

"I think the lectures in Karaganda State University and the cultural centre in Eurasian University will be

very important for us to learn about each other and to create links between our nations," said the envoy.

All in all, over their 26-year partnership, Kazakhstan and Romania have established good relations, Armeanu said. Kazakhstan remains Romania's most important partner in Central Asia.

"In times that are complex and challenging, rapidly changing, the people-to-people contacts, in my opinion, are key elements in ensuring mutual understanding and support," said Armeanu.

The envoy is also committed to deepening trade and economic ties between the countries. Other important spheres of cooperation for Armeanu are in human resources in education, science, sport and culture; as well as innovative information technologies.

"I've noticed the increasing interest shown by our institutions and experts to cooperate in various fields like education, science and culture," he pointed out.

In October, the two countries had their 14th intergovernmental

commission between Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy and Romania's Ministry of Economy.

This year Romanian and Kazakh universities signed 28 memorandums of understanding in Astana, Almaty, Atyrau and Karaganda, as well as by the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs.

"I would like to congratulate Kazakhstan for hosting this year a number of international and prestigious events as well as for the activity at the United Nations Security Council. In times that are complex and challenging, mutual understanding and bilateral support are important in areas that are sometimes affected by geographical distance," added the envoy.

"I take this opportunity to congratulate our Kazakh friends on The Day of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, that was celebrated on December 1, in fact, the same day with the Romanian National Day, and on a very similar holiday, the Independence Day of Kazakhstan, on Dec. 16," said Armeanu.

## Parliamentarians, experts reflect on Nazarbayev's role in Central Asian cooperation

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Nazarbayev's accomplishments include promoting the idea of Eurasianism, leading vast economic reforms, which have attracted more than \$300 billion of foreign direct investment, facilitating peace dialogues via Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), membership of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the Astana Process on Syria as well as advancing modernisation initiatives, such as the recent article "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe."

"The article not only provides for the prospect of modernising our society's historical identity, but also allows for a fresh take on the history of world civilisations," said Nigmatulin.

"In his article, the President emphasises the main role of the Silk Road and notes that it is the cradle of the Turkic world. This

area is currently a bridge between the East and West and, in this way, Central Asia unites Turkey and Europe. Therefore, we believe that Kazakhstan plays a role of great importance," added the Turkish Grand National Assembly Deputy Chairperson Mustafa Şentop.

Nazarbayev will continue cementing Kazakhstan's unique role in the global community as Astana will host a forum for parliamentarians of Asia and Europe in September 2019, which will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the idea of Eurasian integration.

"Direct multilateral dialogue between the leaders of legislative bodies of Eurasian states will contribute to solving the current problems faced by European and Asian countries," said Nigmatulin, expressing confidence the forum will strengthen trust and understanding among the two continents.

Subsequently, panel sessions on Astana Vector: Trust, Security and

Cooperation and Global Initiatives of Kazakhstan – Promoting Ideas of Peace and Concord included experts from China, India, Germany, Sweden and Spain.

At the former session, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst Deputy Editor and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Institute of Security and Development Policy Researcher Niklas Nilsson presented Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr's report "Modernisation and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia: A New Spring?," which analyses the recent emergence of regionalism.

The five Central Asian leaders met in Astana in March, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region" in June and the second summit of Central Asian leaders will take place in March 2019. "There is indeed a legacy of re-

gional cooperation among Central Asian states since their independence," said Nilsson. "Today, we see a new impetus for regional cooperation emerging in Central Asia and key drivers are the increasing prospects for continental trade, reform processes taking place in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and the changing role and perception of Afghanistan in the region."

The report analyses historical and recent trends in regional cooperation, also identifying opportunities and obstacles by drawing on the experiences of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Nordic Council.

"ASEAN has enabled its members to approach foreign great powers as a unit rather than individually. The organisation has also coordinated members' economic and trade policy, fostering considerable growth in Southeast Asia. The Nordic Council, on the other hand, has shown that regional co-

operation can function successfully even when members have very different approaches toward larger integrational structures," the scholar said.

The report's findings centre on ways to ensure good intentions translate into practical actions under cooperation initiatives.

"Cooperation needs to be gradual and flexible to involve all Central Asian states. Of course, the largest economies of the region – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – are indispensable in regional cooperation but models also need to fit smaller states – Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan... The most important point is that membership in these institutions of cooperation should be exclusively Central Asian – it should not be open to external powers. This is to provide a platform through which Central Asian countries can conduct a dialogue with foreign powers as a unit," he concluded.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Nurly Zhol systematically developing infrastructure in key areas, say ministers

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The Nov. 19 government meeting included a review of the ways Nurly Zhol, the state infrastructure development programme, has been and continues to be implemented from 2015-2019.

The programme has been allocated 792 billion tenge (US\$2.16 billion), of which 411 billion tenge (US\$1.12 billion) or 52 percent has been utilised by November, said First Vice Minister of National Economy Ruslan Dalenov. The figure includes 439 billion tenge (US\$1.2 billion) made available from the national budget, of which 335 billion tenge (US\$912.61 million) or 76 percent has been utilised.

“Regarding transport infrastructure development, 25 road projects are under implementation,” he said. “As of today, the overhaul of

805 kilometres of railway tracks is complete.”

Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek noted 7,000 kilometres of national roads were constructed and reconstructed and 10,000 kilometres repaired.

“More than 100,000 jobs were created at all sites and the share of domestically produced materials was approximately 95 percent,” he said.

Road tolls were tested on the Almaty–Kapchagai, Almaty–Khoros and Astana–Temirtau sections and will be installed more widely next year. In 2020, toll roads will cover approximately 6,600 kilometres.

Approximately 807 billion tenge (US\$2.2 billion) has been allocated under Nurly Zhol to improve highway quality, said KazAvtoZhol board chairperson Yermek Kizatov.

“One thousand and four kilometres [of highways] were commissioned with the allocated funds. This year, 19 projects are being implemented, of which 13 projects are financed by the national budget and six projects are financed with borrowed funds. By year’s end, 426 kilometres will be put into operation and work will begin on another 453 kilometres,” he added.

Water transport measures centre on seaports. The annual handling capacity at Aktau and Kuryk ports has increased from 19.5 million tonnes to 25.5 million tonnes.

“Kazakhstan’s share in the maritime transportation of goods in the Caspian Sea is approximately 37 percent,” said Kassymbek.

Growth has also been exhibited in air transport. Nearly 6.7 million people flew in 2018, 9.6 percent more than the previous year. Kazakh and foreign carriers have also opened new routes from Helsinki to

the capital, Moscow to Kyzylorda, Novosibirsk to Pavlodar, Atyrau to Frankfurt, Krasnoyarsk and Riga to Almaty and the capital to Chelyabinsk, Kazan, Krasnodar, Sochi, Tomsk, Tyumen and Vilnius.

Regarding energy infrastructure development, construction of the 500-KW Shulbinsk hydroelectric power plant (Semei)–Aktogay–Taldykorgan–Alma project funded by Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company will be complete by year’s end. Budget loans totaling 35.2 billion tenge (US\$95.9 million) will be issued and 290.6 kilometres of networks will be constructed, of which 118.4 kilometres are complete.

International co-financing organisations have committed 12.1 billion tenge (US\$32.96 million) to Nurly Zhol, of which three billion tenge (US\$8.17 million) or 25 percent has been distributed. Four projects centre on stimulating in-

novation, promoting sustainable development and improving heat, water supply and drainage systems.

Budget loans and subsidies will also be provided to modernise heat, water supply and drainage systems. From 2015-2018, 2,982 kilometres of heat, water supply and drainage networks, 24 boiler houses and 71 other facilities were completed. The plan is to construct and reconstruct another 3,478.6 kilometres of heat, water supply and drainage networks, 29 boiler houses and 95 other facilities.

According to Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov, the national budget funds allocated toward modernising transport, energy, network and housing and public utility infrastructure are being fully utilised. He noted that in identifying risks when specifying its budgetary needs, the state programme optimised its expenditure by 37.5 billion tenge (US\$102.16 million).

Overall, Nurly Zhol activities are proceeding in a timely manner. Upon hearing the ministers’ reports, Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev drew their attention towards undertaking additional measures to update housing and public utility infrastructure.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan is having a record year for investments in environmental protection, finprom.kz reports. During the first 10 months of 2018, 61.1 billion tenge (US\$163.55 million) has been invested, almost three times more than was invested last year. More attention has been paid to environmentally friendly public transport – in one pilot programme, Kazakhstan in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) prepared a plan to replace 300 old buses with modern ones running on clean fuels in Shymkent and Kostanai. The total value of investments will be US\$29 million. Later, they plan to involve more cities and replace up to 2,800 buses, with investments in the wider project estimated to reach \$276 million. Over the next two years, they also plan to construct solar, biogas and four hydroelectric power stations.

At the end of the first half of 2018, 31.2 percent of all investment flows into Kazakhstan’s transport infrastructure sector came from Chinese investors, making China the largest investor in Kazakhstan. Most transport infrastructure projects are linked to Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative. The total number of Kazakh-Chinese investment projects is 51, with a value of around \$27 billion. Chinese investment for 2018-2019 will launch 11 projects worth \$4.4 billion. This will create approximately 20,000 new permanent jobs. Over the last three years, there has been linear growth in investment flows from China, reaching the level of 6.6 percent. In 2018, the main instrument of Chinese investors for the first time was direct investment, which at the end of the first half of the year amounted to \$9.5 billion – 60.3 percent of all investments during the year.

Domestic banks need external loans to support the growth of Kazakhstan’s economy, according to finprom.kz. Over the last 10 years, the volume of foreign bank loans has decreased eight-fold, from \$45.9 billion to \$6.1 billion. Over the same period, the ratio of bank loans to gross domestic product fell twice to 24.6 percent. Corporate lending over the past five years has grown by only 1 percent; the alternative is the stock market and international capital. In the medium term, banks will continue to reduce their scale of funding the economy. The lack of a long-term resource base has forced banks to target the retail lending segment. Thus, over the past five years, the share of loans to individuals increased from 31.9 percent to 40.5 percent.

At the beginning of November, the subsistence minimum in Kazakhstan increased by 11.2 percent to 28,600 tenge (US\$76.60), while prices of goods and services increased by 5.3 percent year to year. According to a new system for calculating a subsistence minimum, non-food items and paid services amount to 45 percent of the total. At the end of October it amounted to 12,900 tenge (US\$34.50). Now, the share of food products occupies only 55 percent of the subsistence minimum, which amounted to 15,700 tenge (US\$42).

The poverty level in Kazakhstan has dropped over the past two decades, falling from 34.6 percent in 1996 to 4.7 percent in the first half of 2018. Experts, however, note that while gross domestic product is increasing, the real incomes of the population have not increased, kapital.kz reports. Between 2015 and 2017, real wages of the population decreased by 3 percent, while real economic growth exceeded 6 percent. The discrepancy in the indicators is explained by the commodity model of the domestic economy, where the demand for labour largely depends on inefficient services. Analysis of the average monthly wage in 2017 showed that the maximum wage was in the mining and quarrying industry, at 341,775 tenge (US\$914.9). Wages in the processing industry and agriculture were about half as much, at 166,739 tenge (US\$446.30) and 91,084 tenge (US\$243.80) respectively.

## AIFC law conference presents new ways for business cooperation

Continued from Page A1

“My colleagues at the council have been working with Marat’s team on the evolution of rules and regulations. I think it is essential to pay tribute to the remarkable work done by them. We’ve got a rule book which [is] 2,300 pages... This is an evolutionary process... Everybody in this room has an interest in making this work and we all need to work together to develop these rules. They are not perfect. They will develop over time; there will be feedback after seeing how things actually work on practice,” he said.

Cox added building a high quality and independent legal system are AIFC’s fundamental issues. Even though the legal framework is based on English common law, participants need not be knowledgeable or experienced in it.

“The rules are brought together without any reference to external bodies of law... The rules [also] have minimum cross references, are comparatively short and easy to read and understand and are accessible on the AIFC website,” he said.

The second panel, dedicated to AIFC jurisdiction and financial and ancillary services, was presented by Astana Financial Services Authority (AFSA) chief legal officer Andre Gelinias.

“We are incorporating, recognising and licensing companies and partnerships... We have nearly 100 on the board so far,” he said.

AIFC’s acting laws are the Kazakh Constitution, AIFC constitutional statute, AIFC management council resolutions, AIFC acts (regulations, rules, orders) and the acting law of the country, which applies in part to matters not governed by the constitutional statute and acts. Gelinias gave an example of the Kazakh laws’ applicability.

“If you have rules governing regulation of banking service, does any of the Kazakh National Banking regulatory framework filter in and apply? In my view, it would be no, because since we have a framework that regulates the activity of banking in AIFC, it broadly excludes the application of the regulatory framework of the National Bank of Kazakhstan. I think it is a key principle in terms of defining the sphere of regulation and law in AIFC,” he added.

He also talked about the meaning of being a part of the AIFC, which occupies a large section of the capital’s left bank. Participants must generally conduct their business in the area, but merely

being located on the grounds does not imply a company is in the AIFC. Authorised firms can also offer and sell their products and services in the country’s broader territory.

AIFC membership can be recognised in two different ways – AIFC recognition of a foreign-incorporated legal entity or a firm’s non-AIFC regulated status by the AFSA. The latter is applicable for Kazakh and foreign securities firms to become exchange or clearing house members.

AIFC Bureau for Continuing Professional Development chief Nursultan Serikbaev presented a discussion on registration and privileges of AIFC participants. The step by step process is outlined at <http://afsa.kz/registration-process>.

In addition to the unique legal and regulatory framework and environment, he noted the centre offers a wide range of organisational company forms, drafting of rules and regulations, a simplified visa regime and special tax regime.

The last session focused on listing on the AIX as explained by AIX Chief Executive Officer Tim Bennett, who noted the Kazatom IPO that recently appeared on the market was an important step in developing the Kazakh economy. For international interested parties, the exchange can offer a regulatory platform, connectivity with other participants and global financial market securities.

Most of the conference participants were interested in understanding the use of international and Kazakh law in different business processes and posed the question to each panel.

“The relationship with broader Kazakhstan is critical economically and in terms of development of the law. It is not a stand-alone regime; there are many aspects such as criminal law where Kazakhstan law continues to apply,” said Cox.

One participant shared his view on the conference and its importance for the international business community.

“People here are living in a completely different geography; this is all new to me. I’m a first timer in Astana so it’s a good opportunity to come and actually see it. This conference helped us to understand how the lawyers’ community and AIFC work here and this gives us good insight into how we can support them... I feel good about it; they are reaching not only in Kazakhstan, but also the entire region. Someday, [I want to] make my contribution,” said Faruh Saad, of Dubai.

## Gov’t transitions to green economy

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Governmental projects directed towards increasing energy efficiency have resulted in approximately 3.5 billion tenge (US\$9.55 million) in annual savings, reported Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek at the Nov. 19 government meeting.

Since the launch of the 2016 energy efficiency map, a national unified list of energy saving and efficiency projects, 68 projects for 15 billion tenge (US\$40.94 million) have been initiated. Twelve use energy service contract mechanisms and public-private partnerships.

The Pavlodarenergo power station decreased brake-specific fuel consumption (BSFC) to supply electric energy by 6 percent in 2017 compared to 2013. Consumption for the sale of thermal energy decreased by 1 percent in the same period. Electrical energy consumption for the country’s own needs decreased from 14 percent in 2017 against 16 percent in 2013. At the same time, electric energy consumption supply decreased from 362 to 351 grams of equivalent fuel per kilowatts per hour in 2017, according to the Eurasian Energy Corporation.

The KazMunayGas group of oil-producing companies decreased its consumption of fuel and energy resources by 1 percent in 2017 compared to 2016. In monetary terms, the cost savings was 410 million

tenge (US\$1.12 million), reported Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev. As a result of more than 80 energy efficiency measures, the total savings of energy resources was more than 12 million kW of electricity, 2,000 gigacalorie (Gcal) of thermal energy, eight billion cubic metres of natural gas and 15,000 tonnes of boiler and furnace fuel.

“Work will continue until 2021 in the exploration-mining sector of the KazMunayGas group. There are plans to reduce the consumption of energy resources by 4.5 million gigajoule (GJ). I would like to note the multiplicative effect of the modernisation of our plants,” he said.

“With the increase in energy efficiency of oil refining after modernisation and a significant improvement in the quality of fuel, the energy efficiency of motor vehicles will also increase proportionally,” he added.

The Ministry of Energy revised energy consumption this year in all major Kazakh fuel and energy complex enterprises. The results of energy audits of 35 energy-producing and 19 energy-transmitting organisations showed expenses can be reduced on average up to 30 percent.

The available data on reducing industrial energy intensity as a whole, however, was criticised as being too general. The statistics do not indicate whether energy consumption was reduced in producing individual products or was the result of production cuts.

The ministry, in conjunction with the United Nations Develop-

ment Programme (UNDP) and the Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund, has started providing subsidies and project guarantees to support energy service projects. To date, 28 projects have received such support.

Eighty-five state and socially significant facilities were selected under a \$21.7-million project with the World Bank. The plan focuses on improving the working and training conditions of more than 50,000 people. The government is also joining with UNDP on two projects totalling \$10 million.

In 2016, the ministry created the state energy registry automated information system as a tool to control energy consumption. It currently contains more than 5,000 organisations.

The system has been running in test mode this year. Nearly 40 percent of those registered provided their energy consumption details online. The ministry plans to consolidate this at the legislative level, said Kassymbek.

The Ministry of Energy also believes full coverage of the electricity commercial metering automated system is one of the most effective measures in preventing losses in electrical networks. The investment programmes will provide for installing the system at all levels of electrical power transmission to the final consumer, said Bozumbayev.

In 2016, the World Bank ranked Kazakhstan 32nd in state energy regulation efficiency.

## Nation to streamline rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh government approved the draft law “On amendments to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on improving rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures” at the Nov. 26 governmental meeting.

The draft law focuses on measures to reduce the time for rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures and simplify liquidation of inactive debtors, said Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov.

The need for the draft was intensified by the significant number of business entities undergoing the procedures. Approximately 4,000 business entities are currently involved in a bankruptcy procedure, while 400 enterprises are in a rehabilitation stage, he added.

The ministry feels one important change is the clarification of certain vague wordings in the laws. At present, a rehabilitation procedure application is filed with a notification of payment termination and of the fact that a debtor has an opportunity to restore solvency.

“The draft law proposes to facilitate this task: a court records a presence of unfulfilled obligations over three months and a fact of a ‘positive’ balance. This confirms a company’s ability to restore its financial position. Similarly, it works in bankruptcy,” said Smailov.

For bankruptcy, a court will need to establish the fact of a “negative” balance on the date of filing an application for declaring a debtor bankrupt as evidence of an entity’s insolvency.

In addition, the draft law will support rehabilitation of individual entrepreneurs. Under the current law, they cannot claim rehabilitation and are often forced to declare bankruptcy. The draft will cancel all arrests on a debtor’s accounts and property from the moment a court approves a rehabilitation plan.

“This will enable the company to proceed with the implementation of planned activities, without being distracted by litigation,” said Smailov.

The bankruptcy procedure can currently take up to eight months, as it requires participation by all creditors, which can be dozens, and some-

times hundreds in the meeting. The draft proposes optimising the process with a more mobile committee of creditors, a smaller group elected as a representative body, and requires creditors to file their bankruptcy claims within the expiration period.

The draft also suggests introducing a simplified procedure for debt or bankruptcy without the involvement of an administrator, which should eliminate unnecessary costs for debtors.

In addition, the ministry revised liabilities for intentional and false bankruptcy. As written, establishing the fact that the official removed a property before bankruptcy and therefore damaged the creditors’ interests will be sufficient.

“The proposed initiatives are expected to allow a 32 percent increase in the use of rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures by business entities, reduce the time by up to 25 percent and the cost of their implementation by up to 40 percent, which will positively affect Kazakhstan’s position on the ‘Insolvency Resolution’ indicator in the World Bank’s Doing Business ranking,” said Smailov.

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

**BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF**

Kazakhstan-based transformer manufacturer Alageum Electric will sign an agreement to purchase goods not yet produced with KEGOC. Chair of Alageum Electric's directors' board Yerkebulan Ilyasov told the energy forum. This year, the company is launching production of power transformers with a voltage class of 220 to 500 kilowatts in Shymkent's Tassai industrial zone, abctv.kz reports. Their initial customer will be KEGOC, but Kazakhstan Railways and Samruk Energo are also interested in engaging in similar contracts. According to its agreement with KEGOC, Alageum Electric is planning to produce four types of reactors not previously produced in Kazakhstan for a cost of 4 billion tenge (US\$10.70 million) until 2022.

Kazakh local flax producers have seen a record harvest this year, making Kazakhstan, for the first time, the world's largest flax producer, reports abctv.kz. The gross harvest of flax in Kazakhstan this year exceeded 700,000 tonnes. Local producers are also developing the production of flax oil and are competing against Russian producers on the international market for the product. Kazakhstan is also competing with Canada, the largest flax importer in the world, on the Belgian market. According to statistics from the Kazakh Finance Ministry's State Revenue Committee, from January to August, Kazakhstan's flax exports to Belgium amounted to 99,000 tonnes for \$31.8 million. Poland is the second largest buyer of Kazakh flax, purchasing 39,000 tonnes for \$12.3 million. The third is Afghanistan, at 27,000 tonnes for \$8.4 million. Overall exports for this period amounted to 219,000 tonnes for \$72 million.

Artisans from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany and Uzbekistan discussed the problems and prospects of the crafts industry at the Nov. 24 Uly Dala Eli ("Great Steppe Country") forum in Astana, reports kapital.kz. Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs Deputy Chair Olzhas Ordabayev emphasised that craftsmen should unite to develop the sphere, giving the example of the artisans unions of Tajikistan and Russia, which in the former unites more than 100 artisans and in the latter unites 70 associations of more than 5 million artisans. In his opinion, Kazakhstan has potential to develop its handicrafts industry as well. The meeting of folk arts representatives was intended to help promote the business potential of the industry and individual producers, and masters attending the forum could both present their products at the exhibition and also make contact with potential partners for expanding their businesses locally or for entering the international market.

Turkestan Invest has begun work on the implementation of 19 major new projects for 507 billion tenge (US\$1.35 billion) in the Turkestan region, reports inform.kz. According to Chair of the Turkestan Social Entrepreneurship Corporation Aitmuhammed Aldazharov, the organisation has three branches: Turkestan Invest, the Digitisation Centre and the Stabilisation Fund. These organisations are working on construction, social projects, tourism, attracting investors and digitisation. Among the 19 projects, six are in alternative electric energy production, five in agriculture and eight in the manufacturing industry. Construction of four enterprises began this year. These projects should provide people with 14,000 new jobs.

North Kazakhstan's agricultural potential is to be developed by increasing its livestock on the principle of anchor cooperation, in which small and medium-sized farms work in partnership, inform.kz reports. Deputy Akim (regional governor) of North Kazakhstan Aidarbek Saparov said that long-term investment programmes are being developed with representatives of agriculture business. This year the number of livestock and poultry in the region has grown from 1.5 to 8.7 percent. About 80,000 tonnes of meat in live weight, 503,000 tonnes of milk and 681 million eggs have been produced. More than 40 breeding (livestock) reproducers have been created based on the imported livestock. Every year the region has 4,000 heads of young livestock. Seventeen modern dairy complexes using foreign advanced technologies are functioning in the region.

## Shymkent Oil Refinery completes modernisation, improves fuel and environmental standards



President Nazarbayev during his visit to Shymkent Oil Refinery at the end of September

**Staff Report**

ASTANA – The Shymkent Oil Refinery recently completed a modernisation allowing it to meet Euro-4 and Euro-5 fuel standards while making the refinery more environmentally friendly.

The \$1.8 billion upgrade also increased the refinery's annual production capacity from 5.25 to 6 million tonnes.

The modernisation of the refinery was part of Kazakhstan's national Industrialisation Programme and was completed in two stages beginning in 2014.

The first stage from 2014-2017 equipped the refinery to meet K-4 and K-5 (Euro-4 and Euro-5) fuel standards, said Shymkent Oil Refinery Director Bolat Bayetov at a recent press conference announcing the completion of project.

"The K5 standard requires sulphur content in diesel fuel to be less than 10 PPM. Now we have

the technical ability to do this. Since we mainly supply local market, consumers are satisfied with the Euro 4 (K4) standard products, but we can also produce Euro 5 (K5) products. Same situation is with gasoline," he said, adding that prior to modernisation, refinery had worked according to Kazakh and interstate GOST standards.

The first stage included equipping the refinery to produce elemental sulphur and building a light naphtha isomerisation unit. The stage also included the reconstruction of the refinery's diesel hydro dewaxing refineries, said Bayetov.

The second stage from 2015-2018 increased the refinery's capacity to six million tonnes per year and improved its refining levels.

The overall project also added over 400 jobs and improved the refinery's ecological standards.

"The main objective from an

environmental perspective is the reduction of sulphur removal in diesel fuel to less than 50 PPM (parts per million). According to GOST, the sulphur content was allowed up to 500 PPM. We reduced it from 500 PPM to 10 PPM," he said.

The refinery is meant largely to meet Kazakhstan's light petroleum product needs and decrease the shortage of diesel fuel of the country.

"We all know that there is a shortage of fuel during sowing and harvesting. Since Kazakhstan is a major agrarian country, much diesel fuel is needed for these periods," said Bayetov.

The refinery is supplied primarily by Kumkol oil filed in the Kyzylorda region. Kumkol oil is low in sulphur with approximately 6 percent of its liquefied gas, 38

percent of its gasoline, 25-27 percent of its diesel fuel, 12 percent of its fuel oil and 6-7 percent of its jet fuel, said Bayetov.

The plant is also equipped for processing oil from the West Kazakhstan and Aktobe regions, which has a higher sulphur content.

Next year the refinery plans to start producing jet fuel of the RT brand with further perspectives to produce Jet 1 international brand for local and international market.

The Technip (Italy), Kazgipronefttrans (Kazakhstan) and China Petroleum Engineering and Construction Corporation as the general contractor developed the project. Global leaders in oil refinery technology licensing U.S. Universal Oil Products and French Axens also worked on the project.



## EBRD: Kazakhstan has decade of preparation for diversification

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – According to the new report of Eurasian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) published Nov. 22, Kazakhstan has 20 years to diversify its economy away from oil and other hydrocarbons and reform public finances as the world starts green economic transition.

EBRD published a report on vulnerabilities of major fossil fuel exporters like Kazakhstan in a future world that will use less oil. The report says that Kazakhstan's fiscal revenues may nearly halve in the next 20 years. At that, the state's public debt may surge. The bank recommends diversification, better management of revenues and spending, and longer-term fiscal planning.

EBRD experts believe the changing dynamics in global energy markets are likely to put pressure on such fossil fuel exporters such as Kazakhstan. The dynamics include the development of alternative energy sources, the falling costs of cleaner energy technologies, and countries' commitments to achieving global climate goals. This will mean that export revenues may fall – due both to lower exports and lower oil prices – by up to 40 percent in the next 20 years. The latter may lead to unsustainable levels of public debt in the country.

The country's oil is a main source of government revenue. That is why this may put pressure on the state budget. Therefore,

EBRD believes good risk management on the fiscal side will be an important priority for fossil fuel-exporting countries.

The report, looking at fiscal implications for Kazakhstan of worldwide transition to a greener global economy, looks at three possible scenarios: business as usual, a partial green transition and a full transition to a low-carbon economy across the globe. The first two scenarios would mean that the world falls far short of the goal to contain global warming to 2°C; however, this may also mean that oil demand remains buoyant in global markets, in which case Kazakhstan's fiscal position would not be under threat. However, if there is a worldwide shift to a greener economy, and oil prices settle at approximately \$65, then over the course of the next decade this could lead to depletion of the country's national savings from oil.

The most significant fiscal impacts are projected to occur in the late 2020s, suggesting that there is a window of opportunity of around a decade in which Kazakhstan could take action to address these impacts.

The report proposes four areas of reform for Kazakhstan, which are also relevant to most other emerging markets reliant on oil exports: diversification of revenue sources, effective management of the revenues from oil, good fiscal policies and medium and long-term planning of public finances.

ACTION

# Vacation in india

## 3

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# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## A new look at Kazakhstan's history builds bridges to the future

Winston Churchill is among those credited with the observation that it is the victors who write the history books. He was reminding us that the version of history with which we are most familiar has often been biased in favour of those nations or regions that have enjoyed not just military but also political and economic superiority.

This explains why, for example, the extraordinary contribution of ancient Chinese or Islamic science and arts to global knowledge has, at least until recently, often been overlooked. The major roles played by the classical civilisations of Greece and Rome and, in more modern times, the undoubtedly large part played by European and North American scientists, thinkers and engineers in furthering knowledge and prosperity have been given a greater emphasis.

But as our world becomes increasingly multi-polar, these partial narratives are being challenged. Chapter by chapter, a more comprehensive picture of the past is emerging – one that reflects the diverse contributions of different peoples and regions to humanity's wider development.

It is against this trend that President Nursultan Nazarbayev's recent proposals in the article, Seven Facets of the Great Steppe, as well as the entire Ruhani Zhandyru programme can be viewed. It is a drive to identify and celebrate – both within Kazakhstan and across the world – the rich history of the country and its people as well as the part played by the region in global civilisation.

There are, of course, particular reasons why Kazakhstan's history and contribution has, in the past, been overlooked. The country has only relatively recently regained its independence and for many decades, its culture was either downplayed or, at times, actively suppressed.

As we have said before, given this reluctance to promote past achievements, the surprise has been how strong the attachment of the country's citizens to their land was. This was especially the case when, because of geography and history, these citizens come from so many different backgrounds. National pride and unity has been one of our young country's strongest qualities.

Since Kazakhstan has become a modern, independent and increas-

ingly self-confident nation, this reluctance to examine and celebrate the past has been overcome. Indeed, we have seen a concerted drive – led by President Nazarbayev himself – to study and promote the country's history and culture.

These efforts stem from recognition that a greater knowledge and understanding of shared roots and values is critical for the health of a nation. As we have seen across the world, such knowledge helps bind a country and its people together. It can also provide, if nations escape the trap of becoming prisoners of this past, a powerful springboard for success in the future.

There is, as Seven Facets of the Great Steppe demonstrates, a huge amount to celebrate in Kazakhstan's history. The domestication of the horse and the advanced production of metals, both of which can be traced back to these lands, are unquestionably hugely important in human development.

We can also learn a great deal about the way those who inhabited these lands lived in harmony with the environment. There is nothing new in sustainable living. It is just that, across the world, we have forgotten these lessons.

So it is right that our country steps up its already considerable efforts to protect and commemorate this history and the wider culture it has inspired. This will include new museums, academic study as well as the more popular depiction of characters and historical events through TV and film.

These new initiatives are important for our citizens so they can better understand the history of these lands and the part those who lived here played in human development. They can only strengthen further the bonds that unite our country as well, of course, as attracting more visitors to Kazakhstan.

By placing these initiatives firmly within the broader Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity programme, President Nazarbayev, however, shows that his focus remains firmly on the years ahead. He believes, no matter how rich the past of these lands, the decades to come hold even more promise. It is this increasingly peaceful and prosperous future that he is determined for our country to achieve.

## Renewable energy potential attracts greater investment to Kazakhstan, says scholar

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Central Asia's renewable energy transformation is gaining momentum and market leaders are taking note, with increased investments flowing in from the East and West.

Natalie Koch, an associate professor at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs studying resource-rich states in Central Asia and the Arabian Peninsula, recently authored "The geopolitics of spectacle: Space, synecdoche and the new capitals of Asia" and "Critical geographies of sport: Space, power and sport in global perspective." In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, she illustrated Kazakhstan's current and future energy landscape.

The country generates approximately 87 percent of its electricity by hydrocarbon-powered plants, 75 percent of which are coal-fired stations and 12 percent gas-fired plants.

"The remaining 13 percent comes mostly from hydroelectric power stations, with a negligible amount coming from renewable energy sources like solar. However, Kazakhstan's National Concept for Transition to a Green Economy sets a timeline to move Kazakhstan from under 1 percent renewable energy sourcing, when it was adopted in 2013, to 3 percent by 2020, 30 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050," she said.

Within this energy landscape, Koch singles out the crucial presence and contribution of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Central Asia's largest institutional investor with approximately \$14 billion committed to more than 750 projects.

Cooperation between the bank and the Kazakh government on green economy began with the signing of the 2008 Sustainable Energy Action Plan on investment and technical assistance and continued with support for the Law "On Supporting the Use of Renewable Energy Sources."

"[The law] lacked a regulatory component and a feed-in tariff system. Without this, renewable energy producers could not realistically be expected to compete with traditional fuel supplies, which have long been, and continue to be, aided by artificially low electricity prices thanks to generous state subsidies... With more legislative support from the EBRD, Kazakhstan introduced a new tariff system in 2013, which guarantees a competitive environment for renewable energy producers for 15 years. In addition to exempting renewable energy producers from electricity transportation costs, the same law established the Cost Clearing and Settlement Centre, which centralised the purchase and sale of renewable energy," said Koch.

In 2014, the country's first large-scale wind power project in the Yereymentau region was supported with a \$70 million loan from the bank and the Clean Technology Fund (CTF). EBRD and CTF also supported Burnoye Solar-1 and Solar-2 in the Zhambyl region with an \$80 million loan in 2015 and \$44.5 million in 2017. Additional funding was provided by Samruk Kazyna Invest, Samruk Energy and United Green.

With so much capital circulating in Kazakhstan's renewable energy market, it is important to understand why countries are pursuing renewable energy.

"Political leaders especially emphasise the potential of renewable energy projects to attract foreign direct investment," said Koch. "Positioning Kazakhstan as a leader



Natalie Koch

in the field of sustainable energy is important in the broader global economic environment because being 'green' is commonly equated with being modern and cutting edge. Thus, developing a new green portfolio – both for the country and for individual companies or sectors – is an important way to demonstrate to foreign investors that Kazakhstan is moving forward with broader global trends."

She emphasised that meaningful progress in renewable energy adoption means reshaping the country's hydrocarbon-oriented energy landscape.

"Changing the appropriate legal and infrastructural structures is possible, but it is a slow process and the political and environmental rewards are distant. Because there are no immediate pressures on Kazakhstan's current energy system, policymakers are more likely to accept the status quo and defer harder projects to the future," she said.

Solar power is Kazakhstan's most promising renewable energy source.

"Two aspects of solar that do not receive enough attention are the issues of cleaning the photovoltaic arrays and what happens to them afterward," she noted. "First, it is important that Kazakhstan's solar industry develops with minimal impact on its limited water supplies. When solar cells get covered with dust, they need to be cleaned. Many places use water to do this but, in arid and dusty environments like Kazakhstan, this is not sustainable."

To adopt renewable energy sources without damaging the environment, she suggests waterless cleaning techniques used by firms such as First Solar.

"Second, there are still many problems to be resolved in the safe disposal of broken or otherwise dead photovoltaic cells. E-waste is a major problem in many developing countries, so it will be important for Kazakhstan's leaders to think long-term," she added.

EBRD committed to closer cooperation with China and the European Union to attract greater investment in Central Asia at Beijing's Nov. 14 Central Asia Investment Forum.

"Kazakhstan might be able to benefit from working more closely with Chinese solar companies to grow their own renewable energy capacity, advance the green technology sector and showcase the possibilities for committing to sustainability in practice rather than just rhetoric. Given the EBRD's wealth of experience in promoting renewable energy in Kazakhstan, it would be exciting to see more investment in this direction with their backing," said Koch on the prospects of increased regional investment.

For further insight, Koch's policy memos on Kazakhstan's energy and natural resources may be found at [www.ponarseurasia.org](http://www.ponarseurasia.org) and [www.centralasiaprogram.org](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org).

## Transparency International notes Kazakh progress in countering corruption, official says

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has cut corruption in the form of bribes by one third and the percentage of citizens focused on stopping corruption has doubled in the last three years, according to the recent International Barometer of World Corruption study Transparency International.

The Head of the Department of the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption in the Pavlodar region Adilbek Mukashev recently spoke to the Astana Times in an exclusive interview about steps the countries take to improve its public service.

"The world experience of state-building has shown that a country needs a special system – public service – to fulfil state functions. The latter plays a crucial role in the implementation of public authority," said Mukashev.

Mukashev noted Kazakhstan has



Adilbek Mukashev

reformed its Constitution, which forms the basis of its national law, defines the form of government and public administration and creates the structure of government branches. The reform also, for the first time, guaranteed the right of citizens to public service and introduced the official institution of public service.

Mukashev said another milestone in the development of public service was the Kazakhstan 2030 strategy,

which defined the formation of a professional government as the long-term priority of state development in 1997.

In 1998, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev issued a decree that established an independent authorised state body – Agency for Civil Service Affairs, which reports directly to the President.

The agency was given the authority to improve legislation and the public service system as well as the organisation of labour of public service employees. It was also given the mandate to monitor and train public service personnel, improve the wage system and control compliance with legislation on public service, including the rules of official ethics.

"Thus, for the first time in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a body that coordinates the entire system of social, legal, personnel interaction of the state body and the social and legal relations of its employees was cre-

ated. This was the first step in the institutionalisation and formation of a national model of public service at the stage of development of the country," Mukashev said.

"In this regard, on June 23, 1999, the Law on Civil Service was adopted. In a short time, the agency developed projects of all basic regulatory acts, in accordance with which the corps of public servants was divided into political and administrative public service, the qualification requirements of administrative public servants were approved, a competitive system for selecting citizens for public service, an electronic testing system and certification of public servants were introduced, standards for the provision of public services were approved," he said.

"Taking into account international experience including of the countries such as the United States, the U.K., and Canada and the peculiarities of the transition period that we were in, a positional model of public service was defined in Kazakhstan, providing a candidate on a competitive basis to take any administrative position that meets qualification requirements," Mukashev explained.

"At the initiative of the President, a new stage of reforming the institution of public administration continued through the creation in 2014 of a unified Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption. Such a step predetermined the urgency of combining the efforts of the state and society in the effective implementation of personnel policy and countering corruption. Moreover, the task of preventing corruption is more important than combating its consequences," he added.

"A system of control over compliance with ethical norms has been formed by introducing an independent institution authorised on ethics issues and transforming the Disciplinary Councils into Ethics Councils, the basic direction of which defines prevention of corruption and ethical offenses. The measures taken are positively evaluated by international rating agencies and national experts," Mukashev said.

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Editor-in-Chief  
The Astana Times

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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## New Turkestan Oblast, beaming with opportunities, set for remarkable growth, governor says

By Assel Satubaldina

In an exclusive interview with this newspaper, Akim (Governor) of the recently created Turkestan Oblast Zhansait Tuimebayev discusses the significance of the step and the impressive prospects for the development of a strategically located region known for its cultural heritage, density of population, economic potential and entrepreneurial spirit.



Zhansait Tuimebayev

Photo credit: onimnik.gov.kz

**What is the vision for developing the region and what are the prospects? What major sectors will be focused on – agriculture, industry, tourism?**

First and foremost, we should note the truly historic decision our head of state made this June. A new Turkestan Oblast has been created with the centre in Turkestan.

We all are aware that Turkestan has for many centuries been the heart of the political and spiritual life of the Kazakh Khanate.

This truly historic decision has marked a new page in the history of Kazakhstan and in the future will serve as the starting point for the revival of Turkestan as the spiritual and cultural centre of the entire Turkic world and will boost the social and economic development of our region. Therefore, this wise decision has already outlined the priorities and prospects for the development of the region.

In line with the task set by the President, construction of new administrative, social and cultural facilities will be launched soon. At the first stage, the state envisages about \$2 billion of investment in the construction of buildings, facilities and infrastructure. New buildings, theatres, residential houses, an airport and an administrative and business centre will be constructed. A new international airport will create opportunities for investment and tourism growth. The development of Turkestan will be based on advanced technologies in the field of construction and digitisation. It will be a safe and smart city of the future.

Local and foreign companies will actively work here. We are particularly pleased with the activity and social responsibility of the private sector. For example, some domestic and foreign companies have already decided to invest in construction of five-star hotels and shopping, entertainment and sports centres, as well as other facilities worth over \$100 million.

Our agriculture, industry and services sectors are gaining momentum. There is a huge potential for the development of export-oriented production, as well as border trade. If we fulfil this potential, our manufacturers will get access to a common market of the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union with a population of more than 170 million people, as well as China and Uzbekistan.

Our region is traditionally considered to be agrarian. Fertile soil, abundant sunshine and vast pastures create great opportunities to develop diverse agricultural sectors in the region. This is, first of all, irrigated farming and animal husbandry.

The region ranks first in the country in terms of the area under vegetables and gourds (111,000 hectares), as well as in terms of vegetable harvesting (109,000 hectares). We plan to increase the area under crops to 881,500 hectares by 2025 and planting of gardens through the use of advanced technologies.

Due to smart technologies, this year the harvest of vegetables and gourds was a record 2.7 million tonnes, 500,000 tonnes of which have already been exported to Germany, Latvia and Russia. We have ample opportunities to implement investment projects for the storage and processing of agricultural products.

We produce 100 percent of the total national volume of cotton and 70 percent of grapes and gourds.

Thanks to the favourable climate conditions, 80 percent of the country's greenhouse facilities are located in the Turkestan Oblast.

The region also ranks first in the country in terms of the number of cattle, over one million animals.

This year alone, our farmers exported 35,000 tonnes of meat to Iran and Uzbekistan, which is 52 percent of the total volume in the country. Negotiations have been launched on the supply of meat products to China, which opens up unlimited opportunities in the development of animal husbandry.

There is no doubt, as an agrarian region and food base for the whole country, we will focus on enhancing the processing of agricultural products. We plan to increase the supply of agricultural products not only in the country, but also abroad. I am sure we can do this.

However, despite the agrarian character of the regional economy, we plan to pay attention to other areas of the economy. I think it is necessary to follow the lead of the traditional triangle "industry – agriculture – services."

Moreover, the tourism sector will develop as part of industry and services. We plan to introduce the advanced foreign expertise of successful tourist countries, carefully studying all the features of the development of this crucial sector of the economy.

If you look at a geographical map of the region, you can see the diversity of landscapes and their saturation with water courses, as well as rich flora and fauna. The oblast has a large number of archaeological, historical, cultural and religious sites and sacred places. Therefore, the region is promising for the development of any form of domestic and international tourism.

Our government has adopted the concept for the development of tourism in Kazakhstan until 2023. In the coming years, the Turkestan Oblast and Turkestan will be the main tourist sites of the Revival of the Great Silk Road cluster. Turkestan was also included in the top 10 promising projects of the map of tourism development of our country.

**What are the objectives of the Turkestan Oblast in economic terms? Do you plan to develop new sectors and create new jobs?**

Today's Turkestan Oblast is the most densely populated region in Kazakhstan, with a favourable warm climate and a population of two million.

The oblast has a favourable geographic location at the crossroads of land routes that link China and Southeast Asia with the Middle East and Europe. For example, within a radius of 1,000 km from Turkestan there are seven capitals of foreign states. Our region is located in the heart of the Silk Road and is the southern gate of Kazakhstan.

The main objectives of the regional economy are agriculture, tourism and industry. It is obvious that the effective development of these sectors will require the attraction of foreign investment. With the participation of foreign capital, we plan to implement 24 projects in the oblast totalling \$1.4 billion and create over 15,000 jobs.

**What are the opportunities in tourism development, given the sacred places of the region?**

We have a lot of opportunities for the development of this most important area in our region. This applies to both regional and international levels.

We have major tourist destinations. They include health tourism in the Saryagash district, ski tourism in the Tolebi district (Kaska-Su), historical and cultural tourism (pilgrimage) in Turkestan and others.

We have unique architectural, historical and archaeological monuments, amazing nature and unique culture. There are over 1,000 historical, cultural and archaeological sites as well as four protected areas (Aksu-Zhabagly, Karatau, Sairam-Ugam and Syr Darya-Turkestan) in the oblast. In 2017, more than 270,000 tourists visited the oblast, which is 40 percent more than in 2016.

The city of Turkestan, which is more than 1,500 years old, is truly the holy land of our ancestors. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people come from different parts of the world on pilgrimage. Twenty-one khans, 52 batyrs, 19 biys and eight sultans of the Kazakh people are buried here.

The main attraction of the city is a masterpiece of human creative genius – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site, Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi. It is not by chance it is called the "Second Mecca" and people say "Mecca has Muhammad and Turkestan has Khoja Ahmed." This October, we celebrated the millionth visitor to the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi; it was a married couple from North Carolina, USA.

Tourists are also attracted to the ancient settlements of Khankorgan, Oksyz, Otrar, Sauran and other monuments of ancient culture. Therefore, the further establishment of Turkestan as a centre of international tourism and pilgrimage is one of the priorities for the development of the region.

As I noted above, we have all the opportunities for tourism development. First, the territory itself and the infrastructure of the region allow for the comprehensive development of tourism. We are talking about the historically established Great Silk Road, many tourist sites of historical and cultural heritage and a high degree of urbanisation and growth of the population as a traditional culture bearer.

Second, it is about our geographic location, with climatic conditions and proximity to the borders of neighbouring states.

Third, natural diversity provides an opportunity to intensively develop medical, health, eco-adventure, children's, business, event, rural and sports types of tourism.

We began landscaping the Arystanbab Mausoleum, Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, Otrar settlement and Sauran. We pay special attention to the development of the so-called soft infrastructure of tourist facilities in the region.

Every year we take an inventory of tourist facilities and organise expeditions to explore new tourist routes. For example, this year with the participation of local history experts, historians, photographers and representatives of travel agencies we organised an expedition to Sozak district.

Now, together with McKinsey, we are developing a comprehensive master plan for further development of Turkestan. According to preliminary estimates, the number of tourists by 2030 will be over 1.6 million people annually.

As you know, in our region there are mineral water sources called Saryagash. The Saryagash Resort Area allows us to actively develop medical and health tourism. One of its advantages is a wine chateau of French vintage wines and a golf course that meets all international standards. In early November, we held the Saryagash Open 2018 international golf tournament in Saryagash. Over one hundred golf lovers from Russia, South Korea, Turkey and Uzbekistan took part in the tournament. There is also a great potential for mountain and beach tourism in our Shardara Reservoir and Ugam-Sairam National Park.

**What will the transformation of Turkestan into the cultural capital of the Turkic world mean, in practical terms?**

As is known, last year Turkestan was the cultural capital of the Turkic world. Many cultural events took place in the city. A concept paper for the development of Turkestan for 2018 to 2021 has been developed. Last September the President approved the concept paper of the master plan for the development of Turkestan as a cultural and spiritual centre of the Turkic world. It is not too much to say that the concept paper is focused on preserving Kazakhstan's cultural and historical heritage with a world-class spiritual, cultural and tourist centre.

Work is already underway on the administrative division of the city into three areas. These are the area of regulation of developments, the historical and sacral area, and the administrative and business centre.

We plan to restore the historic surroundings of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi and the medieval settlement. Cultural and leisure facilities, a visitors' centre, an open-air museum, an amphitheatre and fountains will be erected in the immediate vicinity of the mausoleum. Therefore, the preservation and improvement of the settlement, and the open-air museum will attract tourists.

The Turkic world centre, Khoja Ahmed Yassawi Centre, Kazakh Khandary Men Bileri Cultural and Historical Centre, Uly Dala Eli Centre, Museum of Fine Arts, Astana Park, and other facilities including a hammam will also be constructed in the city.

**Given the special attention currently devoted to the development of Turkestan itself, what can you say about the development of the city's transport infrastructure?**

I think it would be more correct to consider the development of the transport and logistics infrastructure not only of the oblast centre, but also of the entire region.

As is known, the international Western Europe-Western China highway crosses our region. I think you do not even have to be an economist to understand that this opens truly tremendous transit and logistical opportunities for entering the billion-dollar markets of China and Europe.

International transport corridors cross our area. The Turkestan, Tashkent and Sughd Oblasts and the cities of Shymkent, Tashkent and Khujand strategically connect international markets; Turkestan Oblast is located at the crossroads of the Western Europe-Western China highway and the Central Asia-Siberia highway, and the Tashkent and Sughd Oblasts are tourist centres of Central Asia. Moreover, all three regions stand out for a certain level of economic complementarity, especially in logistics, agriculture, the food industry and close historical and cultural relations between the three countries.

The region has the highest concentration of population, 9 million people, which represent 15 percent of the population of Central Asia within a distance of only 420 km, including such cities as Turkestan, Shymkent, Tashkent, and Khujand.

All this creates a favourable environment for the development of cross-border cooperation, logistics infrastructure and services in the region.

To this end, with the support of the Asian Development Bank, we have initiated the creation of the Turkestan-Shymkent-Tashkent-Khujand Economic Corridor that is a strategic section of the International North-South Transport Corridor.

A project will be implemented in the region to create the Central Asia International Centre for Cross-Border Cooperation (ICBC) on the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The construction of a dry port at the Kazakh-Uzbek border and a modern distribution infrastructure in the region is also being consid-

ered. This will ensure the active development of new industries through subcontracting and industrial outsourcing with manufacturers in developed and industrially developing countries.

**Turkestan recently hosted an investment forum. Could you tell us how you will generate investment? What are the priority sectors and what mechanisms will be used?**

Indeed, in September, we held the first "Ancient Turkestan, New Opportunities" international investment and tourism forum. This international event was held on the sacred land of Turkestan for the first time. Two hundred and fifty delegates and representatives of a number of states, including from Europe, Turkey, Russia, South Korea, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Pakistan and Uzbekistan, visited us.

International experts participating in it commended the forum. To be perfectly frank, some guests could not help but be amazed at how we managed to ensure the participation of major and renowned experts and companies in such a short time.

As we planned, we saw an economic effect in the form of signed agreements and memorandums. Thus, we signed 19 memorandums worth about \$1.7 billion. Agreements were concluded between the akimat of the Turkestan Oblast and investors from Iran, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Italy, Poland and China.

By holding this forum, we, in fact, laid the first stone for the construction of a new economic and investment brand of Turkestan. A spiritual and cultural brand, as I mentioned, has already existed for more than 1,500 years.

Turkestan's promotion in the international arena as the spiritual capital of the entire Turkic world requires significant investment in infrastructure development, introducing advanced practices and technology.

To ensure Turkestan's investment attractiveness, we continue to work on a special economic zone called "Turkistan". Here, investors will be provided with land with existing infrastructure and tax benefits for 25 years. These investment preferences are provided not only for tourism projects, but also for the construction and industry sectors.

As for raising investment, we create the most favourable conditions for this in the oblast. We regularly work to improve the business climate, resolve administrative issues as quickly as possible, try to help every investor, ensure comprehensive support for each project. Therefore, the business climate of the region today is attractive for both local entrepreneurs and foreign investors.

For instance, in 2017, investment attracted in our oblast amounted to \$1.4 billion. According to this figure, our region is one of the leaders in the country. Almost 60 percent of investment is generated by small and medium-sized businesses. We also hold one of the leading positions in terms of the number of SMEs in the country. The oblast has 130,000 SMEs. Over 1,000 of these enterprises successfully cooperate with foreign companies in trade, industry, agriculture, construction and the production of building materials. With the participation of foreign capital, we plan to implement 26 projects totalling \$4.8 billion and create 10,000 jobs. We have already implemented 12 projects worth \$2.1 billion.

The economy of the region is quite diversified. We are not dependent on the sale of raw materials; the manufacturing industry makes up more than 60 percent of the regional economy.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the oblast has created all the necessary conditions for attracting investment.

First, at the legislative level, investors are provided with invest-

ment preferences in the form of investment subsidies, exemption from taxes and customs duties, as well as the provision of land plots as in-kind grants.

Second, the region has nine successfully operating industrial areas, where land plots are provided with existing infrastructure.

Third, special financial institutions that are ready to co-invest up to \$3 million in investment projects with foreign participation have been created under the akimat of the Turkestan Oblast.

Fourth, we have created the Turkistan Invest investment centre that provides full 24/7 support to investors starting from the idea to the full launch of projects.

**How will you develop cooperation with Uzbekistan? What specific projects will be implemented? What are the prospects for creating an international zone of cross-border cooperation?**

We have close, centuries-old good-neighbourly relations, shared culture and traditions and a long history of strategic partnership with Uzbekistan.

In recent years, bilateral relations at the political level have significantly intensified.

Our President declared 2018 the year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan. This once again confirms the fraternal nature of our relations, whose roots go deep into history. We have registered 64 joint ventures with Uzbekistan in the oblast. Currently, 31 of them are active.

In 2017, bilateral trade increased by 30 percent and amounted to \$2 billion. The leaders of our countries set a task this year to increase trade to \$3 billion, and by 2020 to \$5 billion.

The key items exported from Uzbekistan generally include vegetables, fruits, dried fruits, textiles and cars, and Kazakhstan supplies mainly flour, oil products, metal ware and cement to Uzbekistan.

As for specific investment projects, a \$330,000 project for the production of gas stoves was implemented in 2017 in the Badam industrial area with the participation of Uzbek company Artel Manufacturing. In the Shardara industrial area, with the participation of Uzbek business, the Aykazyh company is finalising a \$2.5 million project for the construction of a cotton processing plant with a capacity of 50,000 tonnes per year.

We plan to develop joint tourism projects with Uzbekistan. As I noted earlier, there is great potential for mountain and beach tourism in our national park Ugam-Sairam and Lake Shardara. We have prepared specific projects and proposals for joint cooperation in this regard. Considering the well-developed inbound tourism in Uzbekistan and its close proximity, we plan to develop joint tour packages that will extend the stay and raise the interest of foreign tourists in our cities.

Recently, we successfully held the first Forum of Interregional Cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. We discussed the development of economic and investment relations and cross-border trade. Memorandums were signed between the Turkestan Oblast, the cities of Jizzakh, Tashkent and the Tashkent Oblast.

We have great prospects and enormous opportunities in agriculture, favourable conditions for the development of cross-border cooperation in transport, logistics and services in the region. Since our countries are landlocked, we need to develop overland transport to ensure a full and sustainable access to developed markets.

As I mentioned, the favourable location of the region along the Western Europe-Western China highway opens great transit and logistical opportunities for entering the billion-dollar markets in China and Europe. A joint project will be implemented with the Uzbek side to create the Central Asia International Centre for Cross-Border Cooperation (ICBC) at the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Growing bilateral relationship noted at celebration of Omani National Day

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The ambassador of Oman to Kazakhstan spoke with The Astana Times about political, economic and cultural relations between the two nations during the Nov. 21 celebration of Oman's 48th National Day at Astana's Radisson Hotel, stressing tourism, agriculture and energy as the main fields of cooperation.

The event started with a welcome speech from Ambassador Saeed bin Mohammed bin Ali al-Barami and Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko.

"I have the pleasure to welcome you at this festive ceremony dedicated to the 48th glorious anniversary of the National Day of the Oman Sultanate and thank you very much for your participation. It has been 48 years of the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in Oman ... During this period of its history, the Sultanate has enjoyed security, stability and well-being ... We will always work for peace, security and stability in our region and the world," said the ambassador.

He also congratulated Kazakhstan's citizens on their upcoming Independence Day. Vassilenko pointed out the strong relationship between Oman and Kazakhstan.



L-R: Omani Ambassador to Kazakhstan Saeed bin Mohammed bin Ali al-Barami and Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko.

"On behalf of the Kazakh government and myself, I would like to extend our wholehearted congratulations to our Omani friends on the 48th anniversary of the Oman Sultanate's National Day. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Oman, our bilateral co-

operation has been successfully developing due to the political will of our leaders. The official visit of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Oman in 2008 gave a strong impetus for further cooperation and allowed us to verify our position on topical international and regional issues. In addition, the documents

signed then laid a solid legal basis for our bilateral cooperation," he said.

The deputy minister also touched on current conditions of the bilateral relationship, mentioning that overall direct investment from Oman to Kazakhstan from 2005 to 2018 amounted to more than \$250

million and that Oman's national oil company is helping develop the Pearl oil field in Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian Sea and the Dunga deposit in the country's western Mangystau region.

Tourism is a sector the countries are eager to build, and the two recently signed an agreement on mutual exemption from visa requirements for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports.

Oman sees tourism as a rapidly developing sphere and hopes to sign a similar visa waiver for all citizens, the ambassador told The Astana Times.

Vassilenko concluded by emphasising the cultural ties between Oman and Kazakhstan.

"I would like to highlight that Kazakhstan Film Week and the 'Astana, Heart of Eurasia' photo exhibition took place in Muscat this year. Today I must also underline the high potential and tremendous opportunities that enable us to raise economic, trade and cultural ties to a new level... I would like to express our strong confidence in the further dynamic development of Kazakhstan-Oman relations for the benefit of both countries' people," he finished.

Barami also heralded the strong relationship between the countries.

"Kazakhstan and Oman have a great relationship. Oman is the first country in the Arab world that

recognised the independence of Kazakhstan. President Nursultan Nazarbayev's first visit to Oman was in 1997, during which several agreements and memoranda that contributed to the Oman-Kazakhstan relationship were signed...

For us and for Arab world countries, Central Asia has an importance because we have ancient relations in a cultural and traditional context," he commented.

Many Omani companies work in Kazakhstan, particularly in the oil and gas sphere. Many Omani business delegations have travelled to the country.

"We cooperate in the tourism, energy, business, and oil and gas spheres. We also have an interest in agriculture that includes grain and meat. Last year, we imported 1,000 sheep to Muscat," said Barami.

The celebration gathered approximately 400 guests, who were gifted the first Kazakh language book about Oman, written by scholar and former Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sailau Batyrshauily.

"This is the first book about Oman in the Kazakh language written by the first Kazakh deputy minister after [Kazakhstan's] independence, Sailau Batyrshauily. The book covers the history, politics, economy, nature and tourism of the country," said the ambassador.

## Central Asian self-governance enabled by greater regionalism, say scholars

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Central Asia is shedding its image as a mere domain of competition among great powers and increasingly asserting its agency, said a Swedish scholar in a recent visit to Astana.

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst Deputy Editor and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI) and Institute of Security and Development Policy (ISDP) Researcher Niklas Nilsson presented Nov. 26 Svante Cornell and Frederick Starr's report "Modernisation and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia: A New Spring?" at the conference, Astana – A Centre of Global Integration, Security and Peace.

In an interview with The Astana Times, CACI & Silk Road Studies Programme Joint Centre Director, ISDP Director and Co-founder and the report's co-author Cornell explained the research findings and their significance.

The report begins with the grand vision that Central Asia is to potentially become a truly self-governing region, "where problems are resolved by Central Asians; where foreign powers can cooperate, but not engage in destructive rivalries," write Starr and Cornell in its preface.

Over the past year, Central Asian states have certainly made remarkable progress on resolving problems that impeded closer regionalism. The leaders of the five countries met in Astana in March, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the resolution "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region" in June and the second summit of Central Asian leaders will take place in Tashkent in the spring of 2019.

"Now, we are seeing closer informal coordination in important areas," Cornell said. "These include how to jointly approach the policies of great powers, how to promote and develop transportation routes and how to play a supportive role in Afghanistan's development. The most important accomplishment was the UNGA resolution on Central Asia passed this summer."

The new impetus for regionalism



Svante Cornell

in Central Asia is driven by greater opportunities for continental trade, political and economic reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan post-oil price drop and the changing role and perception of Afghanistan in the region.

"Some factors have been there for some time, particularly the pressure of great powers like China and Russia on the region. Yet that could have worked both ways, by either leading regional states to closer cooperation or to further division if they proved unable to coalesce. The cold shower of the oil price collapse a few years ago was important in making it clear that business as usual in the economic realm would no longer be possible. That, in turn, meant diversification. Without regional cooperation, diversification through development of the transportation sector would not be possible," said Cornell.

The conditions for closer and more meaningful regional cooperation have been increasingly present as Central Asian statehood underwent consolidation, "but it takes leadership to actually take the step toward building a region, which is what we saw happen in the past two years, particularly through the actions of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev," he added.

Two regional cooperation structures, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Nordic Council, hold relevance for Central Asia. A comparative analysis suggests that institutions matter greatly.

"ASEAN has enabled its members to approach foreign great powers as a unit rather than individually. The organisation has also coordinated members' economic

and trade policy, fostering considerable growth in Southeast Asia. The Nordic Council, on the other hand, has shown that regional cooperation can function successfully even when members have very different approaches toward larger integrational structures," said Nilsson at the report's presentation.

"ASEAN and the Nordic Council have been successful precisely because the founders of these organisations paid close attention to the structures and institutions that would enable cooperation to thrive. Institutions mean that cooperation will develop organically and at all levels of government and become part of each country's political culture – even at times when the highest levels of government are not able to focus much of their time on regional cooperation," said Cornell on the importance of institutions' quality for long-term cooperation.

The authors conclude by illustrating what effective regionalism would look like, emphasising an exclusively Central Asian model of cooperation that is inclusive of all Central Asian states, whether big or small.

"Cooperation needs to be inclusive in the sense that the smaller regional states must feel their voices are heard," said Cornell. "It is obvious that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will take the lead because of their size and resources but the interests of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan must also be recognised. I think leaders in Astana and Tashkent are very aware of this. Moreover, the role of Afghanistan in regional cooperation will need to be agreed upon. There is a consensus that Afghanistan is part of Central Asia, but it is not clear how that gets translated into practice."

"The most important point is that membership in these institutions of cooperation should be exclusively Central Asian – it should not be open to external powers. This is to provide a platform through which Central Asian countries can conduct a dialogue with foreign powers as a unit," added Nilsson at his presentation, noting that possible relationships with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Mongolia may be considered at some point.

The report is available at [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org).

## Kazpost issues stamp commemorating country's membership on UNSC

By Malika Orzagaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs held Nov. 26 a ceremony marking the issuance of a postage stamp from the memorable and jubilee dates series titled Membership of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the United Nations Security Council.

In 2016, 130 UN member states elected Kazakhstan as the first Central Asian country to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018.

According to Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev, Kazakhstan's membership in the Security Council is one of the overarching foreign policy achievements of the country over 27 years of independence.

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"It is symbolic that today's ceremony was held on the eve of the Day of the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who was at the core of our country's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council," he emphasised.

The postage stamp is made by

offset printing in four colours in the form of a sheetlet of ten stamps. The edition is 20,000 copies. The price per copy will be 250 tenge.

Ashikbayev and Managing Director of Kazpost Baurzhan Aina-bekov attended the event to launch the stamp.

## IAEA purchases low-enriched uranium for LEU Bank in Kazakhstan

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has signed contracts to purchase low-enriched uranium (LEU) to start operation of a Low-Enriched Uranium Bank in Kazakhstan in 2019.

The purchase will be the IAEA's largest procurement since its foundation in 1957. The acquisition contracts were signed with two suppliers, Kazatomprom National Atomic Company from Kazakhstan and Orano Cycle. They both will supply LEU, the basic ingredient to produce nuclear power fuel, for transport to a facility in Ust-Kamenogorsk (the East Kazakhstan region) where the material will be stored.

According to the IAEA's standard procedures for open tender, the names of the successful bidders have been published at the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGMP) web site. The LEU acquisition process was carried out

in strict adherence to the principles of transparency, fairness, competition and best value, the agency said.

In 2010, the IAEA management decided to establish the LEU Bank to ensure the supply mechanism of last resort for IAEA member states. The bank will help the member states, which have a supply disruption due to exceptional circumstances and face challenges with the purchase of nuclear power fuel from the commercial market.

The LEU bank is owned by the IAEA and is operated in Kazakhstan. It will be a physical reserve of up to 90 metric tonnes of LEU suitable to make fuel for a typical light water reactor, available for eligible countries.

The operation of the LEU Bank is fully funded by voluntary contributions from IAEA member states totalling \$150 million. The latter is enough to cover estimated costs for 20 years of the bank's operation. At that, the bank's operation has no impact on the agency's budget or other activities.

The bank is based at the Ulba Metallurgy Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk in the East Kazakhstan region. The plant has dealt with and stored nuclear materials for more than 60 years without incidents.

The idea to establish the LEU bank was initially put forward in 2006 by Ted Turner and Sam Nunn, co-founders of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a non-profit organisation aimed at strengthening global security by minimising the proliferation of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. The IAEA authorised the initiative in 2010 and Kazakhstan volunteered the following year to host the bank.

Kazakhstan is promoting initiatives voiced by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, including contributing to a global nuclear disarmament movement. In the 1990s, Kazakhstan voluntarily renounced the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, which it had inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

# Nation&Capital

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**CULTURE**

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**SPORTS**

**Kazakh boxers improve their BoxRec ranking**

**B7**

## TEDxAbayStWomen, TEDxYouth@AbaySt promote openness, provoke conversation that matters



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Almaty residents and guests had a chance to immerse in the TED Talk experience, famous for its “ideas worth spreading” mission, as the city hosted TEDxAbayStWomen Dec. 2. The day presented speakers an opportunity to share unique stories and ideas about the role of women and girls in Kazakhstan, their decisions, choices and power to be change makers.

Started in 1984, TED conferences feature speeches on topics ranging from science and art to politics and business with a series of special events, such as TED Women and TED Youth. Local organiser Leyla Zuleikha Makhmudova, a gender and education consultant, spoke about their goals and experience in an

exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

The team also coordinated the Nov. 17 TEDxYouth@AbaySt, with “x” denoting an independently organised event. The “Be Equal” motto gathered people to speak about the role of youth, the importance of their ideas and that their opinions should be treated equally.

Makhmudova believes rhetoric about women and young people is similar.

“It is from top to bottom. Someone, by virtue of gender or age, tells women and young people what they need to do, how they should behave or should not behave. Their [women and young people] opinion and vision are in most cases left unseen and undervalued both professionally and personally,” she said.

She and her team organised the first TED Women event two years

ago, which started as an “enthusiastic idea.”

“It was in 2016, when we were running an education centre with a partner. Then, we set a goal to build a sort of community around our education project and we were looking at different formats. I came across the TEDx format and we really liked it, because the idea, values, concept and organisational aspects were very similar. I saw that the event was well planned and truly promotes such values as openness and diversity and makes ideas visible,” she noted.

“There were hardly any platforms to discuss gender topics. Why is it like that? When I saw this ‘women’ format and that there is so much not said and so much not covered, I thought that this platform should exist here,” she added.

Riveting speeches and ideas can provoke conversations that matter.

“There is no hierarchy; all participants get invited, no special places for partners or someone else. There are no logos of sponsors on the stage. The focus is solely on the conference and the idea,” said Makhmudova.

She emphasised the opportunity to create your “own community and provide a safe space for all speakers.”

The platform has changed over the years, as the concept of gender has changed.

“It became not only about women, but also about gender, gender roles, what it means to be woman and man, to what extent a person has a right to be himself or herself, if he or she does not want to live up to the standards of men and women in his or her society, about discrimination. It is related to all,” she added.

Continued on Page B5

## Afghan-American activist challenges perceptions of disabilities

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – U.S.-based motivator and activist for people with physical challenges Mohammad Sayed presented Nov. 26 in Astana the comic book he created about a man in a wheelchair.

“The important thing I want people to get out of this presentation is no matter what kind of disability we have, what part of the world we are from, we all face challenges... and go through difficulties. But the important thing is we should never give up, we should be hopeful and work hard to achieve our dreams like everybody else,” said Sayed.

Sayed was born in Afghanistan in a family with two brothers and a sister. His mother died when he was five and two weeks later, he was paralyzed when his house was bombed. His father took him to the hospital and Sayed never saw him again. He lived for seven years in the hospital run by a non-governmental organisation in the Panshir Valley.

“From that age, I was on my own and I lived in this hospital in the mountains... Since I had no family to take me home, they [hos-

pital staff] gave me a place to stay and I started to go to school to get an education... I started a small business fixing and repairing cell phones... to make enough money to pay for the school, food and clothing,” said Sayed.

He also made friends with some of the people at the hospital.

“Because the hospital was run by foreigners, there was an American doctor who came there to help people, victims of war. I met him. He wanted to learn to speak [Farsi] and he taught English to me... He became my doctor and over time, we really bonded,” said Sayed.

After seven years of life in the hospital, he had to find a new way to survive, as the hospital had to close.

“After seven years, when life was getting on the right path, an Italian journalist was kidnapped. Since the hospital was Italian, they decided to shut it down and everybody left. Once again, I was on my own. I had to figure out again [how] to survive... During the time I was living there, one doctor gave me a camera and the other gave me a printer, so I started a photography business,” said Sayed.

Continued on Page B2

## Experts call for more information on Almaty reconstruction

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Urban Forum Kazakhstan recently gathered experts to discuss the Almaty renovation plan scheduled for next year. The project envisions reconstructing the Esentai and Malaya Almatinka embankments and Dostyk, Gogol, Kazybek Bi, Tole Bi and Zhibek Zholy streets.

The meeting included architects, ecologists, businesspersons, sustainable transport experts, urban professionals and specialists focusing on historical legacy.

In September, Almaty city Department of Architecture and Urban Planning published its plan to rebuild some of the central streets of Kazakhstan’s largest city. Kazybek Bi Street will be reconstructed in the 4.07 hectares from Dostyk Avenue to Nauryzbai Batyr Street. The plan is to plant 1,288 trees,

change the colour of house and public building façades and install bins and lights.

Part of Zhibek Zholy Street from Zheltoksan Street to Seifulin Avenue will also be renovated, with 207 trees to be planted. Baiseitova Street will be updated from Kabanbai Batyr Street to Tole Bi Street, while Tole Bi Street will be refurbished from Kaldayakov Street to the Esentai River embankment. The project also includes part of Gogol Street from Kaldayakov Street to Central Park.

This year, the city administration has been working on improving pedestrian walkways on Abai, Abylaikhan and Nazarbayev avenues, Republic Palace Square and Gogol and Zheltoksan streets. The reconstruction process, however, did not involve the public in the discussion.

Continued on Page B4

## Kazakh PhD students in UK initiate collaboration, research exchanges to achieve SDGs in Central Asia

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s PhD Association in the U.K. will organise the second Central Asian Research Forum on Sustainable Development and Innovation March 18 in Loughborough and April 4 in the Kazakh capital. Loughborough University and Nazarbayev University will host the student-led initiative.

As a preview, The Astana Times spoke with association founder and president Aliya Sembayeva to learn about its activities and projects.

“The forum will provide a platform for researchers to present and discuss their cutting-edge and action-oriented research projects on the sustainable development of Kazakhstan and Central Asia and to implement these projects in cooperation with potential partners from the government and business sector,” she said.

The forum will seek to establish institutional links and strengthen collaboration between Kazakh and British universities and stimulate sustainable development research



Aliya Sembayeva

across all local universities in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations.

The association organised the first

forum in March with the support of the Kazakh Embassy in the U.K.

“Kazakh researchers demonstrated projects aimed at improv-

ing the life conditions of people in Kazakhstan and the entire Central Asian region,” she added.

Continued on Page B5

**THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO**

**BARYS ARENA**

<b>December 6 at 7.30 p.m.</b>	HC Barys – HC Traktor Chelyabinsk
<b>December 18 at 5 p.m.</b>	HC Barys – HC Severstal Cherepovets
<b>December 20 at 7.30 p.m.</b>	HC Barys – HC Lokomotiv Yaroslavl

**ASTANA OPERA**

<b>December 16 at 5 p.m.</b>	Gala Opera, concert
<b>December 21 at 7 p.m.</b>	Turandot, opera

**CONGRESS CENTRE**

<b>December 21, 22, 23 at 5, 8 p.m.</b>	Mr. Adam, chamber orchestra concert
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**ASTANA BALLET**

<b>December 22, 23 at 6 p.m.</b>	The Nutcracker, ballet
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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

# Kazakhs and Cossack communities share historical roots, cultural similarities, says community leader

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The Akmola Department of Cossacks serves as the region's ethno-cultural organisation for Cossacks, who number approximately 100,000 in Kazakhstan.

The similar-sounding ethnonyms Cossack and Kazakh in the Kazakh language are suggestive of the way in which the ethnic groups' history is closely tied.

Historically, Cossacks in Kazakhstan consisted of several territorial groups that were separate troops. The Ural, Orenburg, Siberian and Semirechensky Cossack troops constituted Russia's political, military, economic and socio-cultural presence in Kazakhstan and would directly interact with the Kazakh population. Their relations were often mutually beneficial, accompanied by trade and technology transfers. At other times, relations were strained,



President Nursultan Nazarbayev meets with Cossacks on the Day of Unity of the People of Kazakhstan.

instead accompanied by military clashes and struggles over land resources.

The country's Cossack commu-

nity has come a long way since the registration of its first organisation, Ural's Cossack Historical and Cultural Society, in 1990. Members

of the ethnic group increasingly find that the culture that they seek to preserve is really a synthesis of cultures, said the community's leader Yegor Shadrin to The Astana Times.

"Speaking on behalf of the Akmola Department of Cossacks, many of us were born in Kazakhstan so we truly think of it as our homeland. We certainly have our own culture and seek to preserve it, but we also try to converse in Kazakh – many of us are fluent. Generally, our culture is close to that of the Kazakhs. Our roots are one and the same – Turkic," he said.

Community members preserve their culture by researching historical facts and their great grandfathers' stories and taking part in national songs and dances. Still, Cossacks and Kazakhs are likely to spend a particular day of the year in much the same way.

"New Years is the most important celebration for us and for many

others. It is a big holiday during which, among other things, we go to Church and eat our national dish of pelmeni (dumplings). Without the latter, a New Year's celebration is incomplete," he said.

The Akmola Department of Cossacks was recently registered in October, having previously been a part of the World Union of Cossack Atamans.

"I believe that we are one of the first, if not only, ethno-cultural organisations to have formed a department just for the Akmola region," noted Shadrin. "We are now establishing a Muslim Department of Cossacks, the first in the northern region."

Its mission is, first and foremost, to present its culture within Kazakh society.

"Our mission is in no way military-based," he said. "We seek to show our culture, devoid of harmful stereotypes. Likewise, we wish to foster our members' interest in Kazakh culture."

The community leader emphasised the community-oriented nature of their projects.

"We will be submitting our suggestions to the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs and regional akimat (administration) on, for instance, helping out with street patrols if necessary. We are networking in order to be invited to city-wide events, where we can present our culture to the public. We are trying to rent a place to host a youth club so that, instead of hanging around the courtyard, our youth may have a space to develop their interests and also learn about Cossack and Kazakh culture. Regarding our humanitarian work, we will be providing assistance at elderly homes and orphanages," he said.

The department is not yet a part of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan but "looks forward to making its contribution if and when it is able to join," concluded Shadrin.

# Founder of local NGO brings unique therapy to children with disabilities

By Saltanat Botu

ASTANA – Yerlan Kumiskaliyev, chair of the Atyrau Is a Small Country public fund and one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces, is working to support children with brain and spinal cord injuries. He is also building a small village for the youngsters to help them adapt and become full members of society.



Yerlan Kumiskaliyev

Born in 1971 in the Atyrau region, Kumiskaliyev's life was shaped by two family situations. When he was young, his father suffered a stroke, and the son decided his future would be devoted to helping others.

After graduating from high school, he entered medical college. He worked in the healthcare field, then enrolled in Kazakh Law University in Taldykorgan. After returning to Atyrau, he taught at the Humanitarian and Technical College.

The second part of his story began when he took his sister to China for a medical examination. While there, he was also checked and diagnosed with a significant illness. During his treatment, he decided that if he recovered he would dedicate his life to helping people in need.

"I was shocked. From that time, I started a fight for my life. I had so many dreams and plans... I was very young... During the treatment, I lost 30 kilogrammes... One day I opened my eyes – my bed was in front of the window – I saw a huge moon and I said, 'if God makes my dream to return home come true, I will dedicate my life to those with difficulties who need my help,'" he told The Astana Times.

Returning to Kazakhstan, he wanted to open a canine therapy centre based on his own experience of communicating with dogs during his recovery.

"It was 2007. I remember that dogs were brought to our clinic. Volunteers brought them once a week... It was a great happiness for us (patients). We waited every Wednesday of the week... I believe that my recovery is a merit of dog therapists. When they come and lay on your hands looking with kind eyes, everything changes. At that time, an idea came to my mind, 'there are also patients in my city,'" he added.

tary donations and attracts volunteers to help.

"The principal difference of our organisation from others is that we do not ask for funds from the government. It is my choice. My mission in life is to help my country and to try to solve at least one problem... We develop social entrepreneurship. We earn funds for ourselves," said Kumiskaliyev.

Seventy percent of patients are children of single mothers. The centre also tries to help them, as a child's successful rehabilitation depends on their psychological state. The mothers can attend various clubs such as dance, fitness and beauty for free.

Approximately 80 percent of the patients are children with arm and leg sensitivity. Despite all the difficulties, some have been able to attend kindergarten and school after recovery. Kumiskaliyev travels around Kazakhstan helping children from different regions and cities. In addition to his two original male dogs, he has also raised a female Labrador.

"Just from the Atyrau region I have 370 children and approximately 50 children in Almaty. Also, I have children from Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Uralsk and other cities," he noted.

In the last several years, Kumiskaliyev has initiated plans for a small village for children with disabilities where he hopes to offer special facilities and different animals to create a pleasant atmosphere for their recovery. The village is expected to open in the spring.

"Currently, we are building a small village on a territory of five hectares that the [Atyrau] region's akim (governor) gave us. It is a special village, because it is the third such village in the world. The first one appeared in Aberdeen in the United Kingdom, the second one is located in the Yaroslavl region of Russia and our 'small country' will be the third one. This territory is for helping these children to acquire certain skills that they cannot acquire in the city. Most important for us is to help a child become independent without help from parents," he said.

Kumiskaliyev expressed his deep gratitude to all those supporting him in the projects.

"When society recognises you, it gives you a lot of strength. Because we work with children who are in such a difficult situation, we spend almost 24 hours a day with them. It is very difficult emotionally and when you get such a reward it inspires," he said.

# Afghan-American activist challenges perceptions of disabilities

Continued from Page B1

The American doctor Sayed had befriended was back in the United States and asked a nurse going to Afghanistan to check on Sayed's condition after the closing of the hospital. In 2009, the nurse invited Sayed to move to the United States and began a new life.

"In 2009, she asked me if I wanted to go to America with her and be her family... and I agreed... She is now my mother. I live with her and we have two birds... I have a family," said Sayed.

After arriving in the United States, Sayed endured several surgeries over six months.

"My condition was really bad. I had a lot of different issues. My spine was really curved. Actually, doctors told me if I did not come to America, I would have been dead by the age of 18. Right when I arrived, I went into six months of intensive surgeries. They straightened my spine and legs... Then after I recovered, I started school in America," said Sayed.

Today he creates comic characters to inspire people in wheelchairs to think and feel different about themselves, and to challenge the society's perception about people with disabilities as well. For Sayed, people with disabilities are heroes because they face difficulties and challenges every day.

"In America, we have a lot of superheroes: Superman, Spiderman, Batman and others. But there was nobody that represented disabled community. I went to Boston Comic Con and saw everybody in costumes. Nobody showed a sign that people with disabilities could be superheroes too. So, the first

thing we did was we wanted to create five original superheroes, which are Wheelchair Man, Wheelchair Woman, Wheelchair Girl, Wheelchair Boy and Captain Afghanistan. We want them to be not only diverse in disability, but also in gender, race and ethnicity," explained Sayed.

His goal is also to draw the attention of people all over the world to the abilities of those who live and move in wheelchairs. After starting his company, Sayed's activities expanded.

"In 2017, we launched Wheelchair Man and it really made headlines... We started to collaborate with different organisations around the world. I was just an inventor and once it started to make news, I was pulled into different directions, like now, advocacy and travelling around the world sharing my story. I started to create next comic books. In 2018, we launched Captain Afghanistan, which is based on my best friend's story who lost his leg and an eye. When I left Afghanistan, he was unfortunately living in the streets. He was my hero and I was his. This was my way of honouring him in his memory," said Sayed.

The Sayed's next comic book will be about a woman in a wheelchair from India. For that, he wants to travel to India in 2019 and find a role model for the book's character.

"The storyline is that she was paralysed, and her parents took her to a facility and left her there. She started to go to school. After graduating she started to give back to her community by fighting for equality for girls in India," added Sayed.

The reason Sayed chooses to share his ideas and thoughts through

comic books is that, for him, this is a good way to reach out to young generation. He believes he can influence and change the mentality of people through his works.

"The goal for anybody in any part of the world is to accept us in community and see that we have a lot to give to the community... Changes do not happen overnight. We are not alone fighting for equality, justice and being involved in the community. It will be a long road ahead, but it doesn't mean we shouldn't fight for that," noted Sayed.

Wanting to convey his message about hope and the empowerment of people with disabilities around the world, Sayed is now focusing his creative talents on helping others with spinal cord injuries through the development of adaptive tools.

"Since I had this creative mind, I always wanted to invent and solve problems. Along with my high school education I started to take courses at MIT and Harvard to get different skills, because I wanted to start creating different tools to not only help people physically, but also psychologically. In 2016, I graduated from high school and founded my first company to bring my visions to life. During that time, when I was creating these assistive devices, U.S. President Barack Obama... heard that I use 3D technologies and invited me to the White House," said Sayed.

For Sayed, that was a huge motivation.

The Astana event presenting his latest comic book was organised by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Commission named after Kairat Imanaliyev in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy. Sayed will also visit Almaty and Shymkent cities.



Mohammad Sayed (centre, seated) meets with readers at the presentation on Nov. 26 in Astana.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Dimash Kudaibergen performs solo concert in London



Staff Report

ASTANA – Famous Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen performed his exclusive “DQ” solo concert Nov. 19 in London at O2 Arena’s Indigo Hall.

The concert joined the celebration of Days of Kazakh culture in the United Kingdom organised by the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Kazakh Embassy in London.

“When you are performing in front of such a vivid audience with sparkling eyes and when you sing your favourite songs, it is difficult to say right away how this concert influenced you. The only thing I can say now is I am very glad,” said Kudaibergen.

The programme featured his hits and new songs that he performed exclusively in London.

Kudaibergen also performed some of the world’s popular singles and paid tribute to Kazakh figure skater and Olympic medalist Denis Ten who tragically passed away in July, singing “S.O.S. D’un Terrien En Detresse.”

The organisers said fans from 45 countries came to watch the Kazakh singer’s concert and nearly 100 of them welcomed him at the Heathrow Airport.

Aktobe native Kudaibergen,

who has a vocal range covering five octaves, four notes and one semitone, was the winner of the Grand Prix of the Slavic Bazaar 2015 competition in Vitebsk (Belarus) and the People’s Favourite National Prize in Kazakhstan.

He was also awarded the Certificate of Honour of the Kazakh President.

His popularity in Asia grew tremendously after his participation at “Singer,” one of the most popular music TV shows in China.

In March 2017, the Kazakh star won the top award at the China Top Music Awards in the category Best Asian Popular Singer for his outstanding performances in the show.

Kudaibergen will also perform at the Song of the Year concert and take part in the making of New Year Blue Light show aired annually on New Year’s night on a Russia TV channel.

Prominent Russian composer and producer Igor Krutoi invited Kudaibergen to perform.

“When I met Igor Krutoi, I had a special feeling. He worked with great singers, such as Andrea Bocelli, Dmitry Khvorostovsky, Lara Fabian. Igor Krutoi is an easy going and kind person. I accept each of his invitation in all sincerity,” said Kudaibergen.

## Spirit of the Great Steppe exhibition displays Kazakh art in Turkey

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Mustafa Ayaz Modern Arts Museum in Ankara recently opened the exhibition “Spirit of the Great Steppe” that showcases 32 works of contemporary Kazakh artists.

The exhibition features nomadic culture and traditions of the Kazakh steppes.

“Through these paintings, we see the world through the eyes of Kazakh artists,” said Abbas Ketiz, an associate professor at the Department of Fine Arts of Gazi University.

Some art works depict the atmosphere of ancient Kazakh national games with the competitive fervour and tension of the battle, finest lyricism, while others illustrate historical figures, nomadic migrations on camels, commercial caravans, women’s national dresses and the culture of Kazakh hospitality.

The artists used techniques,



Photo credit: inform.kz

such as the realistic poetics of Dulat Aliyev, the abstraction of Marat Bekeyev, Gaisha Madanova and Andrei Noda and the graphic work of Yevgeny Sidorkin.

“Turkish people must visit this exhibition. Works are performed

professionally. For example, such pictures in graphics technique have not been drawn for a long time. Lectures about this technique were held twenty years ago at the Academy of Fine Arts. As you can see, the technique of ‘li-

thography’ in Kazakhstan has remained intact,” said Ketiz.

The exhibition was displayed in the Turkish capital until Nov. 25 and will next be presented in mid-December in Bursa, Turkey.

The Abylkhon Kastejev State Museum of Art organised the exhibition.

“Thanks to the organisation of such exhibitions in different cities of the world, the Kastejev Art Museum brings the art of Kazakhstan to an international level, introduces the international public to the history and culture of our people, to the works of our artists,” said Gulmira Shalabayeva, director of the Kastejev State Museum of Art.

The exhibition was presented as part of the Ruhani Jangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme and initiated by the Kazakh Ministry Culture and Sports, International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY) and Kastejev State Museum of Arts.

## Astana Chamber Choir performs Rock Opera and Broadway hits

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Chamber Choir of the State Academic Philharmonic of the Astana Akimat (city administration) performed worldwide hits from rock operas and musicals Nov. 27 in Astana Opera.

In the last few years, rock hits performed by local orchestras have been well received in Astana’s concert halls. The rock opera as a genre dates back to the 1960s. It is still an opera that narrates a story, but the plot is revealed through vocal compositions written in the rock style. In addition, guitarists and other rock musicians can be onstage along with vocalists.

The choir sang popular compositions from rock operas such as “Jesus Christ Superstar” by Andrew Lloyd Webber, “Mozart, l’Opéra Rock” based on a book by Dove Attia and François Chouquet, “Juno and Avos” by Alexey Rybnikov, as well as the songs “Bohemian Rhapsody” by

Queen, “Stand by Me” by Ben King, “Ain’t Now,” “We Shall Overcome” and others.

The performance also included pieces from musicals recognised worldwide. Musicals, being drastically different from the classical operatic vocals, are done with a unique combination of musical, dramatic, choreographic and operatic art.

The concert programme fea-

tured the song “Araily Astana” by Kazakh composer Zholaman Tursynbayev and hits from the musicals “My Fair Lady” by Frederick Loewe, “West Side Story” by Leonard Bernstein, “Chicago” by John Kander, “Rent” by Jonathan Larson, “Mamma Mia!” by Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson from ABBA, as well as “Roméo et Juliette: de la Haine à l’Amour” by G. Presgurvic, “No-

tre-Dame de Paris” by R. Cocciante and many others.

The Chamber Choir of the State Academic Philharmonic of the Astana Akimat under the direction of honorary artists of Kazakhstan Gulmira Kuttybadamova form a team that has repeatedly won awards at several international competitions and toured many cities across Kazakhstan and abroad.



## Young artist uses art to draw a connection between Great Steppe and human soul

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Young artist Adil Aubekeroev opened his personal exhibit “Lines and Destinations” Nov. 22 at TSE Art Destination. The show will continue through Jan. 12.

“Adil Aubekeroev, an artist of the 21st century, is looking for signs of purpose not in the ingenious science of fortune telling, but in patient questioning of reality about the meaning of their art. He is waiting for the beauty in full arms to mature in his heart and will tell the moment for the action, the moment when it should enter into this world. This is a special kind of hunt for power,” said exhibition curator Yerzhan Akatayev.

An ethnic Kazakh, Aubekeroev was born and raised in Astrakhan, one of the Russian cities of cultural and economic importance. He connects with the Great Steppes in his own way.

“What I do is this great song of nothing less than the Great Steppe. Since my place of birth is the Astrakhan region, this steppe climate also inspires me very much. Therefore, all that is collected here is a kind of love for these places,” he said.

His works were well received



Adil Aubekeroev

at exhibitions in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Saint-Tropez and previously shown in France, Germany and Spain. They reflect his thoughts on the history of his homeland.

“I see a dialogue with the past. It is the ancient cultures that might have populated the localities that

we could get inspired from,” he added.

Aubekeroev visited Kazakhstan in August to participate in the three-part Astana Art Show, one of autumn’s brightest events. He painted the façade of the gallery. His display continues the theme of the steppes and sacred places of

“Ghost Exhibition,” the last part of the show.

“His paintings beam a strong energy and power. The energy is very positive. Some people might think that some images are frightening, but he explained to me that these images, on the contrary, guard a person. Just like the chi-

meras in Notre Dame or like some Japanese houses that have these scary monsters on their roofs, they are there to protect the owners from evil spirits,” said gallery owner Dina Baitasova.

The exhibit contains both his earlier paintings and new ones created exclusively for the show. “The mirror of a soul” is the first work that catches one’s eye.

“I always liked the feeling of a portal. These lines are from vibration; i.e. I try to paint sound periodically,” said Aubekeroev. “This silhouette is like a mirror; i.e. you come up to a mirror and contemplate yourself on a bigger scale; what are you in relation to beauty, nature?” he asked.

One can see human shapes reminiscent of faces and hands in nearly every painting. All represent the inner state of a person and, maybe, even the visualisation of a soul, he said.

“These are the eternal themes on the crossroads of life and death. Nobody knows what’s in there. It is important for me, as a painter, to think about. In all of these, there is something mystical,” he added.

Aubekeroev also noted the importance of the visitor’s final perception, because “each painting has a detail that completes some-

thing in the next painting... They work in complex to create a general picture.”

As the exhibit name indicates, lines and destination are the keys to understanding the painter’s mind.

“The line of life is the complex of everything. All of my visual culture forms with lines. If you take a look at a human, some combination of lines gives its figure. We read this is a building or a cup or a spoon with minimal quantity of lines that give us the description. Everything should work in a complex,” he said.

Aubekeroev often paints in an unconscious manner, letting his feelings and inner state dictate his motions. At the same time, his paintings are very serious and address certain issues. His work is similar to many European artists of the 20th century who were interested in unconscious art, whose brushstrokes unveiled the stories that Aubekeroev notes are “stored in our subconscious mind.”

“All of this initially splashes unconsciously, but then it gets corrected by my own preferences and experience. It is not possible to say that it is only unconscious. Unconscious energy is chaos; it is important to direct this energy,” he said.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

# Kazakhstan to modernise police, conduct performance appraisals

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced plans to reform the police and other agencies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the Nov. 18 meeting at the Akorda.

“Every year, more than 4.5 million citizens report crimes to the police, but the conditions for them are not created. The police need to deal with their problems promptly and in accordance with the law. This is the new standard of work with the population,” he said.

The existing relationship stand-

ards between police officers and citizens are outdated.

“The activities of the internal affairs bodies do not meet the expectations of society and cause complaints from citizens. People do not feel safe. We cannot ensure the best quality of life without this. Safety is of great importance,” he added.

The President noted the need to create comfortable, technically-equipped front offices with convenient work schedules.

“Digital technologies will be introduced in the internal affairs departments. The cities will be equipped with public safety moni-

toring systems. The new services will improve public feedback online,” he said.

Digitisation will help reduce corruption and optimise management links and staffing levels. The changes will affect the penitentiary system, where violent criminals will be separated from other convicts.

Nazarbayev also directed taking measures to minimise street crimes.

“The crime rate decreased by 17.5 percent over the past three years. Some 779 police officers died and approximately 2,000 have been injured over the years

of independence. The current state of preventing violations does not fully meet the requirements of people,” he said.

The changes in internal affairs should occur in accordance with the directions in the Oct. 5 state-of-the-nation address. The head of state also set the task to cut staff and exclude non-mandatory functions.

“There is a need to focus on the fight against crime. The staff number will be reduced by 10 percent. These measures will lead to a decrease in the number of police officers from 471 to 424 for every 100,000 citizens as well as the European Union average level.

This will save 16 billion tenge (US\$43.4 million),” he said.

The released funds will be earmarked to improve the employees’ labour remuneration system and social protection. A need also exists to conduct systematic work on finding additional internal reserves and eliminating inefficient administrative costs.

“An additional 21.4 billion tenge (US\$58.1 million) will be allocated to increase the salary of the police officers. Citizens pay taxes and they expect that law enforcement agencies fulfil their duties properly,” he added.

Police officers dismissed for

misdeemeanors will lose all benefits.

“We need police officers of the new formation. The system of selection, training and promotion of personnel will be revised. The training will undergo major changes. We need the new police academies for a quality education which meets international standards,” said Nazarbayev.

The ministry will operate only five of its 12 educational institutions.

“The certification will be organised for acting police officers. Employees who do not pass this examination will be fired,” he added.

# Research institute to enact comprehensive plan to counter cancer mortality

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Research Institute of Oncology and Radiology has prepared a 35 billion tenge (US\$93.88 million) action plan to reduce cancer mortality rates for the next year, Director of the institute Dilyara Kaidarova told the recent Innovations in Healthcare forum.

The comprehensive plan to fight cancer includes the purchase of innovative equipment, some types of

which are not yet available in the country.

The institute plans to update all radiotherapy technology in country’s regions, to allow doctors to use more modern methods. All patients will be able to receive treatment free of charge.

Some of the plan’s funds will be allocated to install equipment for proton therapy at Astana’s new oncology centre. The therapy is one of the most progressive and safest treatment methods. Surgeons use the method most often to treat can-

cers of the brain and cornea in children. According to Kaidarova, there are 57 such centres worldwide.

“Now, within our institute at Nazarbayev University, we are conducting a large scientific study on the identification of gene mutations that contribute to the development of cancer in the Kazakh population, because Kazakhs have certain types of cancer that are not the same as in Europeans or Americans,” she said.

Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov said changes are also un-

derway in the care system for patients with cancer.

“We are rebuilding the entire system of oncological care. Today, there is a gradual shift to early detection and diagnosis of cancer based on screening research and high-tech detection methods, including laboratory detection,” said Birtanov.

Over 10 years, the death rate from cancer has decreased by 1.5 times in Kazakhstan.

According to screening data, Kazakhs suffer more often from breast, lung and colorectal cancer.

# Experts call for more information on Almaty reconstruction

Continued from Page B1

Experts noted the information published on the department website and its Facebook page, which mostly includes before/after images, is insufficient to draw conclusions and understand the scale of the work.

“During two weeks, our experts were working, examining materials and projects and collecting documents that we have consolidated into a single presentation. The main task was to examine the planned project taking into account three questions – what information is lacking, what we can conclude from the proposed material and whether we can take into account the experience from past years,” said Urban Forum director Assel Yeszhanova to open the meeting.

“The point is that we, as citizens, learn about the upcoming reconstruction post factum and we could no longer have a voice in the decision-making process. We must take part in these projects at the invitation of the city administration and not gather at a neutral platform. Our experts analysed the reconstruction plan, but the information is not sufficient,” he added.

Architect Aisulu Uali agreed with her colleague.

“We started to study the projects published on Facebook and their official website and it was evident from the start that this information is not sufficient to make conclusions in full,” she said.

Uali underlined the need for project documentation, an important link in the process from contract to working project.

“When we see that, for instance, Kunayev Street [three kilometres subject to renovation] has only one picture, there is not a general plan, façades or any information about the materials’ use. We would like to note this and receive some feedback from the department and receive, first and foremost, the general plan. We also would like to know whether there was any concept design stage. It is a very important part, because we are talking here not about an individual building, but the city where thousands and hundreds are living and we need to bring this to discussion,” she added.

Experts raised questions about

the streets’ capacity to manage precipitation and runoff, which has proven to be a serious problem for the city after heavy spring and summer rains and the failure of the sewage and water management systems to properly control them.

They also underlined the lack of lighting at roads and walkways and need to adapt streets for the low mobility population.

The plan should be more practical, they noted, and take into account historical buildings located on the streets.

“It would be good if the architecture and urban planning department published the list of buildings with their addresses and type of planned work. The status of buildings should also be mentioned. Many were built in different years and different styles. We need to assess to what extent these buildings need reconstruction,” said sustainable transport expert Elena Yezakovich.

“Changing the cladding and colour of some façades contradicts the goal to preserve the architectural landscape of the Almaty historic centre. In particular, the colouring of natural stone on some buildings subject to reconstruction in 2019 is unacceptable,” experts stated in the document with recommendations.

Petr Smirnov, speaking on behalf of residents, questioned the need to renovate the central streets.

“The key question is whether we need these projects in the central part of the city, which is in proper condition now. Many wonder why we are dealing with the centre and not doing anything with the city’s peripheries,” he said.

Almaty architecture and urban planning department deputy chair Almashkan Akhmedzhanov assured the forum that the city administration will consider its recommendations.

“We will take into account, without doubt, all your comments. We will once again raise some serious issues and will make changes to the project documentation. We would disagree with you at some points, because there are still certain construction norms and requirements of the current legislation. I would like to note that all our projects are evaluated by international experts,” he said.

# Language policy programme brings positive results, considers terminology update

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The state programme on language development and functioning is in full swing throughout the country. More than 42,000 people have attended language courses at the training centres and 52,245, including 20,057 civil servants, passed the KazTest examination of their proficiency of the Kazakh language in a seven-month period, said Vice Minister of Culture and Sports Aktoty Raimkulova at the Nov. 26 government meeting.

The programme was augmented with tasks to clarify the phased switch of the Kazakh language to the Latin script to improve spelling and ensure accessibility.

One state and 88 regional national language centres operate throughout the country. Approximately 600 civil service employ-



Aktoty Raimkulova

ees from central executive bodies participated in language courses this year and the government supported 26 ethnic groups in studying the native language to preserve the nation’s linguistic capital.

“The share of total document circulation in the state language

was 93 percent, including 91 percent in central executive bodies, 95 percent in local executive bodies and 46 percent in national companies in nine months of this year,” said Raimkulova.

Vice Minister of Culture and Sports Aktoty Raimkulova. Photo credit: primeminister.kz.

Kazakh language documentation for all sectors is available at Qujat.kz. The onomastic website Atau.kz, orthographic portal Emle.kz, Tilmedia.kz trilingual website and Balatili.kz children’s website have been launched.

The ministry is also monitoring the use of terms. The national terminology commission approved 21,000 terms, including 40.8 percent rooted in Kazakh and 59.2 percent borrowed and mixed.

In addition, the ministry is monitoring terminology principles and solving the main tasks of applied terminology to preserve the purity of

the Kazakh language and translate it into scientific language. Kazakh equivalents for a number of foreign language terms were revised.

More than 45,000 school graduates passed the native language assessment and literature test and mastered their level to B1, said Minister of Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev. The indicator increased to 90 percent this year.

Work is underway to introduce the standard practice of continuous state language education in the kindergarten – school – college system.

Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev proposed creating a new language development and functioning programme for 2020-2024. The programme would ensure the harmonious co-existence of the state language as the major factor in strengthening Kazakhstan’s identity and unity and the languages of all ethnic groups living in the country.

# Healthcare Ministry proposes reducing confidential abortion age to 16

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Vice Minister of Healthcare Lyazzat Aktayeva suggested reducing the age when adolescents can have an abortion without their parents’ permission (confidentially) to 16 during a Majilis (lower house of Parliament) meeting. Children’s health is the most important issue and access to timely medical services is essential, said the ministry’s public health policy department director Aizhan Ismagambetova after the session.

According to current Kazakh law, underage girls cannot terminate a pregnancy without their parents’ or guardians’ consent, which limits medical services to minors.

“This restriction prevents the timely receipt of medical services for the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and in the case of unwanted pregnancy, abortion and childbirth. Despite the fact that the number of births among adolescents over the past three years

has decreased by 26 percent, their number was 3,443 in 2017,” she said.

Aktayeva also proposed the Education and Science Ministry revise the topics and increase the hours dedicated to healthy lifestyle subjects in the school curriculum.

Young people aged 15-29 compose 22 percent of Kazakhstan’s population, she said. Comprehensive medical and social assistance are provided at 105 youth health centres.

“Today in Kazakhstan, there are separate legal entities in primary healthcare organisations such as youth centres that provide psychological counselling... We aim to ensure that young people go to these centres, receive counselling services and medical assistance and this affects the protection of young people’s reproductive health,” she added.

“From year to year, the number of applicants is growing. Since the beginning of 2018, more than 256,000 young people have applied there.”

Receiving medical care with a guardians’ permission could be difficult if the child lives at a distance, noted Ismagambetova. The ministry wants to provide timely medical care.

“They (adolescents) cannot receive medical care without legal representatives. To bring a legal representative from somewhere in the region 300 kilometres away is difficult. Therefore, today we are pursuing a law to ensure that minors have access to medical care,” she said.

**Young people aged 15-29 compose 22 percent of Kazakhstan’s population.**

In an emergency, the immediate family will still be notified, while the doctor will assume responsibility for the quality of medical

care. The patient will sign acceptance documents. Exemption from classes (for students) will depend on the patient’s health condition, she added.

Ismagambetova noted having an abortion at age 16 does not contradict international norms. In Russia, students can terminate an unwanted pregnancy without their parents’ consent beginning at age 15.

“In some foreign countries, there is no lower age limit at all. According to our research, which was conducted in the country, 70 percent of young people enter into their first sexual contact before the age of 15,” she said.

She noted Kazakh youth, due to their low level of awareness, do not use condoms.

“Young people do not use contraceptives. It is typical for their age to have low awareness. We envisage distribution of contraceptives for free to be implemented in the health code. This is also in the discussion process, because it is costly,” she added.



# SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Fab Lab at Nazarbayev University promotes material innovation, tech savvy

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Nazarbayev University's Fab Lab (fabrication laboratory), is a place where innovative solutions are nurtured with the help of engineering and fabrication tools.

The lab, part of the Nazarbayev University Research and Innovation System cluster, is intended to contribute to the innovative and technical potential of the country, Fab Lab manager Asselya Bizhanova told The Astana Times in a recent interview.

Digital fabrication allows people to produce tangible items addressing an array of day-to-day problems. Fab Lab users have access to advanced rapid-prototyping equipment, such as laser cutters, computer-controlled desktop milling machines, 3D printers and scanners, and a soldering station.

The "fab lab" concept grew from a class called "How to Make Anything", taught by Professor Neil Gershenfeld at the Massachusetts



Institute of Technology Centre for Bits and Atoms.

The Fab Lab at Nazarbayev University opened in July last year and is part of a global fab lab network connecting a worldwide community of innovators, researchers and makers.

"In the first year we were dealing mostly with documentation and agreeing on a budget. This year, we started organising events, trainings and courses more actively. A wider public now has access

to our lab – not only students but others," said Bizhanova.

The main goal of the lab is to develop engineering skills and technical potential in young people.

"Because we are a relatively new department at NURIS, we are only now at the stage of finding common ground with our professors, students. We are trying to involve more of our research and academic potential," she added.

The majority of Fab Lab users are students at Nazarbayev

University. Some visit the lab out of personal interest; some are assigned coursework there.

"Professors send their students to implement projects in the Fab Lab. We have completed our first session, with 62 students working on 31 projects. This was part of the academic programme for first year students in the Fundamentals of Engineering course. Step by step, we are building a model of cooperation with the university," said Bizhanova.

A subscription is required to use the lab. The price for students is 2,500 tenge (US\$6.81); for professors and university workers, 10,000 tenge (US\$27.23); and for organisations outside the university, 12,000 tenge (US\$32.67).

Bizhanova noted that using the lab requires certain skills.

"A person should possess at least some skills when he enters the lab. You should be able to use software programmes, for example, in 3D modelling, such as Solid Works, Fusion 360 or Core or any other," she said.

For those with no skills, but with an enthusiasm to learn, the lab conducts training courses.

"We are now running a training course on Solid Works consisting of approximately nine classes lasting two hours each over three weeks. We teach in Kazakh and Russian," she added.

The lab also organises free master classes every Thursday.

"We have different master classes. Some teach 3D printing. This week we had a class on the Fusion programme," she said.

Trainings can also be organised on demand, she added. "People come and see and if they want to understand this programme in a more detailed way, they can submit an application asking for a master class on that particular topic to be arranged."

One of the biggest projects run by the lab is Makeathon, an international social project that generates solutions to help people with special needs overcome their everyday challenges.

The event was held Nov. 30, and

Bizhanova says it "represents a bright example of the lab's activities."

"It has three stages. In the first, people with special needs and makers meet to discuss the problems people with special needs face. The second stage is a 72-hour block of work, during which makers work to develop a product to address these problems," she said.

The second stage produced five prototypes.

"One of them is verticaliser for people who cannot walk. The task was to build a device that would help a person not only walk but also to conduct water procedures. For those who take care of people, it is sometimes difficult to hold them," she said.

The event displayed these products as well as other devices produced by lab users, including a self-made 3D printer, robots and mechanical watches.

Bizhanova said the lab plans to expand its activities next year, including reaching out to school students.

## Zhurekten Zhurekke charity fund founder among Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Zhurekten Zhurekke (From Heart to Heart) charity fund promotes charitable culture in Atyrau and beyond by helping children diagnosed with severe diseases, people with disabilities and low-income families.

Founder Aigerim Doskaliyeva is among the country's 100 New Faces. The project includes 102 exemplary individuals from around the country, whose sustained efforts could inspire other Kazakh citizens. In September, the project entered its second stage.

Doskaliyeva founded the organisation in 2013 and many young peo-

ple have volunteered to assist with the organisation's projects.

The fund has attracted nearly 30 million tenge (US\$82,000).

An exhibition displaying handmade items made by children from the Shanyrak orphanage was the first project organised by the fund.

The organisation's mission has found widespread support across Kazakhstan with 11 more cities opening branches.

The volunteers also reach out to elderly population.

"What I like most about our fund is that we first respect each other. Our volunteers believe that children can overcome their challenges. We have different campaigns. My favourite is when we sell balloons.

Once we gathered 1 million tenge (US\$2,734) within a day and after that I started to believe that our future is in our hands," said fund volunteer Ainur Yesengaliyeva.

Among the key projects are Give Life to Child, Smile Therapy, Give Warmth to Family, Kindness in Children's Eyes, Road to School and Soul Warmth. The recent one was a city campaign meant to encourage citizens to donate blood.

Doskaliyeva also believes reaching out to parents is important, as many face challenges in bringing up kids with special needs. The fund recently organised a national forum for mothers in Atyrau, gathering doctors and medicine workers from big cities, including Almaty and Astana.

## Pharmaceutical plants to provide majority of essential medicines

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Local pharmaceutical plants will provide 1,144 essential medicines for free in 2019, according to a Nov. 23 report by the Central Communications Service. The list includes drugs to treat arterial hypertension, diabetes, oncology, haemophilia, multiple sclerosis, heart failure, pneumonia, bronchial asthma and other diseases.

"We concluded the contracts with domestic producers and held negotiations with foreign manufacturers. We purchased 83 percent of the total number of medicines for next year. The items will be delivered to the warehouses of a single distributor in early December and beginning in early 2019 they will be shipped to medical organisations," Lyudmila Byurabekova, Chairperson of the Ministry of Healthcare's Pharmacy Committee, said at the press conference.

Other specialised medicines will be added for treating HIV-infected patients, multi-resistant tuberculo-

sis, post-transplantation issues and listeriosis.

"The procurement process was carried out in several stages. The first stage was the preparations according to the concluded contracts with domestic manufacturers," she noted.

Medical organisations submitted applications totalling 203.5 billion tenge (US\$556 million). More than 550 medicines designated for 45 diseases were identified as part of outpatient treatment offerings, 482 of which were purchased for outpatient care.

Local facilities will supply 494 medicines worth 50 billion tenge (US\$136 million) next year, including drugs for cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, oncology, HIV and other illnesses. Approximately 106 medicines that do not have registered analogues in the country will be purchased from foreign manufacturers.

Plans are underway to purchase 25 medicines for 8.7 billion tenge (US\$23 million) as part of the agreements with the United Na-

tions International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The public procurement is estimated to save the budget more than 16 billion tenge (US\$43 million).

SK Pharmacy has launched a contact centre to provide citizens with free medicine.

"Patients can contact for free through telephone number 1439. Operators will provide information on the terms and planned dates of delivery of the necessary medicines," said SK Pharmacy acting board chairperson Berik Sharip.

A single electronic guide will indicate the availability of free drugs in medical organisations.

Domestic pharmaceutical plants have increased production by more than 73 percent, registering in excess of 100 new drugs last year. Forecasts indicate their share of public procurement will grow to 80 percent in the next five years. Many medicines are in demand not only in Kazakhstan, but also in foreign markets.

## TEDxAbayStWomen, TEDxYouth@AbaySt promote openness, provoke conversation that matters

Continued from Page B1

Though the concept of gender has become more common, it remains within its narrow sense at the local level.

"Honestly, at the local level, it is still difficult to talk about gender. We are still at that level when we mean women [when we talk about gender], about rights, their role, choices they can make. We really want to expand the topic of gender, so that not only women, but also men can speak on our stage," said Makhmudova.

The team does not have the goal of inviting popular figures, but rather people ready to tell their stories. The 23-person organising group is divided into three subgroups, each having different responsibilities.

Research is an important part of the speaker selection process. The team browses news, media and all open channels to determine topics that matter over the year with a focus on diversity of speakers, disciplines and themes. Each person can also nominate speakers.

"We compile a long list, including these recommendations, and then we have a short interview where we can get to know the person and see if they are a fit [for the event], whether their activities reflect their idea," she said.

Speakers have strict requirements, as they need to go through a thorough preparation process.

"They should send their drafts, work it out with a curator, rehearse several times. If we see the person is ready and is committed to our values, then we invite him or her as a speaker," she added.

Compared to her experience of organising the 2016 event, Makhmudova noted the community is growing. Kazakhstan is part of the global media space with its far-reaching impact. Topics like gender equality and feminism are becoming more wide spread.

"I see a certain community built around our platform, who are somehow related to gender projects. In 2016, there was nothing like this, but now, it is here. We need to understand that all these trends are external. It is not that the Ministry of Culture or Education decided to put the topic of gender on the agenda. Unfortunately, it does not happen," she said.

"The story is unique, but if it is out there, then it can turn to a norm. The point is to what extent we are ready to accept the fact that your 16-year-old son or daughter can do serious things and they could really know what they want."

The team plans to expand the number of participants. At present, the event can accept only 100 audience members and the demand is growing.

Speakers shared different stories during TEDxYouth@AbaySt that sought to make young people heard.

"There was a talk that discussed the work of teenagers, because the law sets work restrictions if you have not reached 18 years. There is also a cultural perspective that if you are young, then you are not treated seriously," she said.

Among the speakers was a 16-year-old who works in big data and transnational services companies. He stayed in the country to develop his start-up.

"The story is unique, but if it is out there, then it can turn to a norm. The point is to what extent we are ready to accept the fact that your 16-year-old son or daughter can do serious things and they could really know what they want," she said.

The event also featured sensitive issues, such as an HIV infection in Shymkent in 2006, when at least 150 kids contracted AIDS through tainted blood transfusions.

"We did not know what is going on with them today. We had a speaker, Bauyrzhan, who is the only one who lives with an open HIV status. Among those kids, he is the only one who discloses it. All his friends and teachers know about this and, of course, this is huge work for his parents, how they worked with schools, students," she said.

"This is all about the initiative and enthusiasm of people around me. Perhaps we started it and the interest will increase. You never know what will happen next," said Makhmudova.

## Kazakh PhD students in UK initiate collaboration, research exchanges to achieve SDGs in Central Asia

Continued from Page B1

The initial conference joined the association and Centre for Social Cooperation and Communication to actively involve PhD researchers in Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund projects and publish research results in the SK News corporate magazine.

Sembayeva is one of 71 PhD students currently studying in the U.K. She is pursuing her doctorate in chemistry at the University of Liverpool.

"The mission of our association is in line with the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development that is to end poverty, protect our planet, promote peace and ensure prosperity for all by achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030 and improving the quality of life in Kazakhstan for the current and future generations," she said.

This year, young leaders launched Global Village School, a sustainable development project which turns rural schools into local cultural, educational and research centres operating according to the best global and cutting-edge

managerial, academic and research practices.

"We want to set up primary and secondary schools in villages with the best global and inclusive teaching practices. We want to give a chance to children with any learning abilities and academic capabilities to get high-quality knowledge in their villages without the need to travel to bigger cities and to increase the competitiveness of graduates of village schools compared to the graduates of city schools," she noted.

The project seeks to address issues such as the underdevelopment and degradation of villages and their marginalised populations and the significant development gap between villages and the major cities of Almaty and Astana, which leads to growing social tensions between their residents, rural unemployment and youth migration to urban areas while children and elderly remain in the villages.

"But the main thing to remember is that the ultimate success of the SDGs depends on solid collaboration and partnership among all concerned actors: the United Na-

tions, governments, policy-makers, civil society, business sectors, local communities and, of course, researchers and universities," said Sembayeva.

The association has also organised ongoing seminars and workshops in both countries.

"We conduct meetings once every two-three months, where we discuss our research projects and future plans. We invite professionals as our guest speakers to share their expertise and insights with all the interested students. We organise seminars and practical workshops led by our own experts. The upcoming practical workshop will be organised by Khalida Azhigulova, who is our PhD candidate in asylum and migration law at the University of Leicester, a Fellow of the British Academy of Higher Education, a certified UNHCR (United Nations Human Rights Council) trainer of protection learning programmes and a Central Asian expert in the law and politics of human rights and forced and labour migration in Central Asia," she added.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Semey – a historic city abundant with museums

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The city of Semey in the East Kazakhstan region has a rich history reflected in its many museums. The exhibits are an attractive cultural tourism destination.

Semey's history as a settlement started in 1718 when Tsarist Russia built the Semipalatinsk fortress. The fortress, which emerged as a border and military support base, became an important trade point between Central Asia, Russia and Western China bringing different people to the city. Semey was Russian writer Feodor Dostoyevsky's place of work beginning in 1854 and Kazakh writer Abai Kunanbayev's homeland (born in 1845). It was the capital of Alash Autonomy in 1918, gathering political leaders and intellectuals from different parts of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic.

The history and geography of the region are presented at Semey Regional History Museum, founded in 1883 as an initiative of political exiles. At different times, Kunanbayev, his nephew, philosopher and thinker Shakarim Kudaibergenuly and writer Mukhtar Auezov contributed to the museum's development. During the October 1917 revolution, the building was called the House of Freedom, as Alikhan Bokeikhanov, leader of the Alash (Kazakh intellectuals) movement, spoke to city residents there. The same year, the first Kazakh Semipalatinsk Regional Congress was held in the museum building, where



Nineteenth century Semey.

forming Kazakh Autonomy was discussed.

The museum has 2,489 archaeological exhibits (427 units) from the early and middle eras of history, zoology, botany, mineralogy (1,860 units) and ethnography (162 units). The exposition is in six halls in sections such as Palaeontology and Geology, Native Land's Nature, Archaeology and Ethnography, City's History, the Alash city and Alash Movement, Semipalatinsk Nuclear

Test Site and Semey in the Years of Independence.

Kunanbayev's Literary and Memorial Museum, the city's second oldest museum opened in 1940, presents the writer's life, work and public activities. In addition to his creative work, Abai, as he is more commonly known, was engaged in public affairs, education and charity. Among those he helped was Aniyar Moldabaiuly, sending him to study in Russia. The two-storey mansion

where Moldabaiuly lived, built in the 20th century, has survived to the present day to become the museum. Kunanbayev often stayed in the house and his room and its furnishings have been maintained.

In the 1970s, the museum was expanded and transferred to the former house of traders the Ershov brothers. Adjustments were also made on the eve of Kunanbayev's 150th anniversary in 1995. The museum building remained the same,

but it merged into a single architectural ensemble with the administration building (an old two-storey mansion) and mosque with Ahmet Riza Madrasa (college), where Kunanbayev studied. The madrasa has some of the oldest books and manuscripts in the collection in Arabic, Chagatai, Farsi, Tatar and Turkish.

The museum's former building became the Alash members' museum in the Kunanbayev museum complex. Moldabaiuly's house was

a meeting place for Alash movement activists, where they discussed their strategy and plans to struggle for the Kazakh people's freedom. In 1919-1920, Bokeikhanov and writer and educator Mirzhakyp Dulatov lived in the house with their families.

To mark Auezov's 100th anniversary, the museum opened the "Alash Arystary (defenders or bearers) and Mukhtar Auezov" exhibit in the house in September 1997. Visitors are introduced to Auezov's life and work and Alash movement members' lives and activities.

Semey's other significant cultural heritage spot is the Dostoyevsky Literary and Memorial House-Museum, the only museum outside Russia dedicated to the writer. Founded in 1971, the wooden house built in 1838 where Dostoyevsky lived in 1857-1859 became the museum's home. In the 1970s, a two-storey extension and bronze sculpture of Dostoyevsky and his close friend, Kazakh geographer and scientist Shokan Ualikhanov, were added. The museum tells the writer's life story, emphasising the time he spent in the city.

The newest gallery, the Fine Arts Museum, was established in 1985. Yulyi Nevzorov, who owned a large collection, was willing to present his works for display and visited 15 Soviet Union cities. With the exception of two pieces, his family left almost the entire exhibit, donating 569 artworks including 177 paintings. In 1991, the museum was named for the Nevzorov family. Its stored collection currently has more than 5,000 works representing 17th-19th century Russian Fine Arts, Soviet artwork, European artwork of the 16th-19th centuries and 20th century Kazakh artwork.

## Mangistau region: land of 362 saints and historical monuments

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Mangistau region, located in south western Kazakhstan, is known for a myriad of historical sites. Though the region is better known for its vast oil and gas onshore and offshore reserves, it is also known among locals as the land of 362 saints attracting pilgrims.

Located east of the Caspian Sea, bordering Uzbekistan on the east and Turkmenistan on the south, the territory is diverse in landscapes from Caspian lowland, plateaus, such as Ustyurt, Mangyshlak and Kendirli-Kayasan to Aktau and Karatau mountains and desert lands.

The Ustyurt Plateau, a clay and stony desert occupying an area of almost 200,000 square kilometres, is a must visit sight in one's journey in the region. Rocky sand cliffs rise more than 300 metres across the plateau.

The Beket Ata underground mosque is a famous sacred site

not only in the region, but nationwide. Born in 1750, Beket Ata was one of the greatest religious teachers, scientists and philosophers in the history of Central Asia. He was a great spiritual teacher of Sufism and famous throughout the Turkic world.

After returning home from Khiva, in what is now Uzbekistan, where he learnt science, he built four mosques in the Mangistau lands, three of them were underground. The first was built in his birthplace Kulsary; the second was cut out of the chalk cliffs near the village of Beineu and then in the Bayshatyr lands on the Ustyurt plateau and the last carved out of the cretaceous rock of the Oglandy Mountains, where he was buried.

The region is also home to another beautiful piece of architecture, Shakpak Ata underground mosque.

Shakpak Ata was a student of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, prominent Sufi master. The mosque is located in the Tub-Karagan dis-

trict and is considered most ancient architectural monument in the western region of Kazakhstan dating back to the 9th-10th centuries.

Similar to some of Beket Ata mosques, Shakpak Ata mosque was carved out in a mountain chalk rock. Legends say that Sufi followers hid in the cave to practice healing magic and treat people. Among the unique aspects of the site is that it has remained in its original form.

The Seisem Ata necropolis, where some of the most prominent historical figures were buried in pantheon is also among the destinations in the list. The architectural sight was building for five centuries.

Tourists also visit ancient Kyzyl-kala city, one of the Great Silk Road cities.

Getting there is a challenge but worth the effort. Air Astana

and SCAT Airlines offer flights from Aktope, Almaty, Atyrau and

Astana to Aktau Airport. Another option is train with a final stop at

the Mangyshlak Station, 20 kilometres from Aktau.



Beket Ata mosque.



Seisem Ata necropolis.

**KAZAKHSTAN**  
*Land of the Great Steppe*

**DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP**

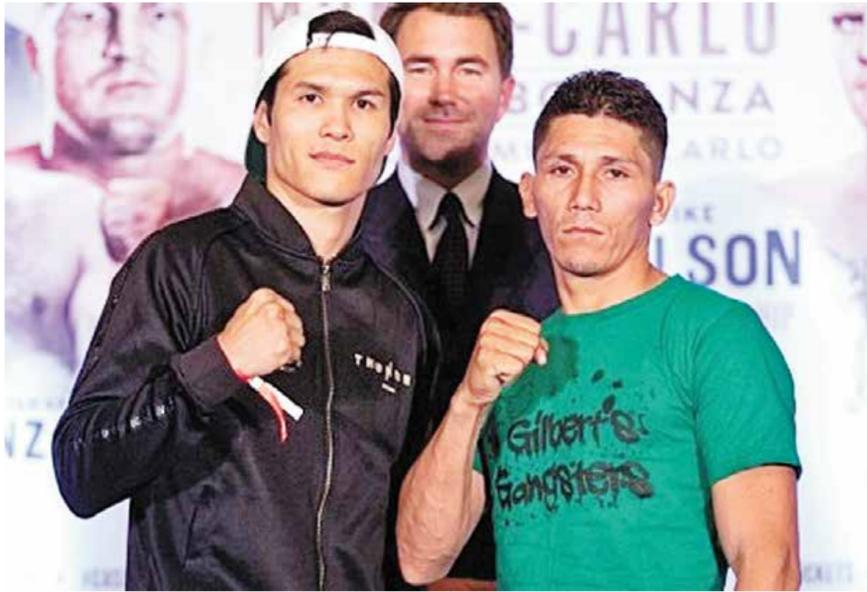
A unique digital product – “Kazakhstan – Land of the Great Steppe” – is one-of-a-kind high quality interactive application, presenting multimedia on the most representative geographic, political, touristic, historical, economic facts about Kazakhstan. It contains hundreds of high quality unique photographs,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

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

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

## Kazakh boxers improve their BoxRec ranking



Daniyar Yeleussinov (L) and Marcos Mojica.

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakh boxers Daniyar Yeleussinov and Sultan Zaurbek improved their rating on the BoxRec International Boxing Record Keeping Platform after their Nov. 24 wins at the Salle Médécin of Monte-Carlo Casino in Monaco, reported sport.kz. Yeleussinov's fight ended in the

third round with Yeleussinov's victory over Nicaraguan Marcos Mojica (16-3-2, 12 KOs).

In the second round, Yeleussinov twice knocked down his rival. In the third round, the referee counted Mojica another knockdown, but let him continue the fight. However, the Latin American boxer was defeated during the next attack by the Kazakh boxer. Ultimately, the

referee intervened and stopped the bout.

In the welterweight ranking, Yeleussinov moved up 48 positions and now ranks 184th at the BoxRec.

"I am happy, it's very good performance. I feel I improved under the John David Jackson guidance. Thanks to everyone, my team and Eddie Hearn! Do I believe in my

power? I believe more in that I hit on time rather than that. In general, the fight in Monte Carlo is great for me, it's a new level," said Yeleussinov.

Currently, 27-year-old Yeleussinov has five victories in professional boxing. His professional debut was April 28 in New York, where he defeated local boxer Noah Kidd in the third round (3-1-1, 2 KOs). Then victories over the Hungarians Zoltan Szabo (25-13, 11 KOs), Gabor Gorbics (26-13, 16 KOs) and another American Matt Doherty (8-6-1, 4 KOs) followed. The defeat was the third of Mojica's career.

"Yeleussinov used his speed and timing to punch Mojica already in the first round. In the second, he twice knocked down a boxer from Nicaragua with a sharp blow to the left and to the body. A gong saved Mojica. In the third round Yeleussinov again sent him to the canvas with a deafening combination. Mojica refused to give up in his heart, but after a powerful uppercut the referee had no choice but to save him from further beating," said Fightnights.com journalist Ryan O'Hara.

Another Kazakh super featherweight boxer Zaurbek (2-0, 1 KO) knocked down the Nicaraguan boxer Johnson Telles (12-45-5, 6 KOs) in the third round on the third night boxing. He moved up to 638th place in his division for 154 positions. Zaurbek will fight again Dec. 14 in London.

Photo credits: sport.kz

## Almaty hosts national electronic sports finals



Photo credits: Qazaqstan Cybersport Federation

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The winners of the Nov. 11 Kazakhstan national final of the World Electronic Sports Games (WESG) cybersports world championship in Almaty will participate in the online Central Asia qualifiers for the opportunity to compete in China in the 2019 WESG Grand Final and win its \$5.5 million prize, reported vesti.kz.

The national finals were held at the Baluan Sholak Sports Palace in Almaty. The Empire Orchestra performed the opening ceremony. The event also included mini-tournaments from competitions' sponsors, prize draws, autograph sessions and performances by cosplayers, people dressed up as a game, movie or anime character. Q-pop musicians, such as EQ, Ziruzha and Newton performed.

More than three thousand people came to watch the competition.

The tournament prize pool was \$14,752, which was divided among game disciplines, such as Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Dota 2, Hearthstone, StarCraft II and Pro Evolution Soccer (PES). The greatest interest among the audience was in the final in Counter-Strike.

The Dota 2 battle between the Patriot and Seven7sport teams lasted more than two hours. In the end, the Patriot team prevailed. The K23 (Gambit) team won in Counter-Strike.

In addition to team disciplines, individual champions were determined. In the football simulator, 2019 PES, the athlete Kanysh Abykeov, under the nickname Abdulkin, became the winner. In the Hearthstone competition, Vyacheslav Takizhanov (Cagey) was the best, and Almat Toleugaliyev (Replicant) took the lead in the Starcraft 2 tournament.

According to Qazaq Cybersport Federation Vice President Yevgeny Bogatyrev, many different tournaments are planned for the next season.

"Now e-sports is on the verge of joining the Olympic Charter. Very soon, we will be represented in the Olympic Games. In this regard, our main goal is to create the necessary conditions for the development of e-sports in the country. We will have our own team to represent the country in the world," he said.

Kazakhstan recognised cybersports as an official sport on June 25. According to Qazaq Cybersport Federation President and Kazakhtelecom Chair Kuanyshbek Yesekeyev, this is a first step to e-sport development in Kazakhstan.

"For our IT industry, e-sports is the key to a digital future. Similarly, large aircraft with all Boeing and Airbus starts with the launch of models from cardboard and plywood aircraft. These players, fanatically clicking on the mouse and keyboard, tomorrow will become the leaders of the global digital economy," he said.

According to WESG official website, Alisports, the organiser of the international tournament and the Olympic Games' partner, announced the third WESG's official start on June 29, 2018 in Kuala Lumpur. This tournament is the world's only Olympic-style e-sports. The last WESG season attracted 68,000 players from more than 126 countries and regions offering the US\$5.5 million prize.

"Kazakhstan has good chances of becoming the centre attracting large-scale events in the electronic sports field. We have [Qazaq Cybersport] Federation (QCF) that will do everything to develop sports," Kazakh Culture and Sports Minister Arystanbek Mukhameduly told the athletes competing in the Nov. 11 tournament.

## Sharipova forced to postpone fight for WBC champion belt

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh boxer Firuza Sharipova has postponed her fight with World Boxing Council (WBC) champion Eva Wahlström of Finland originally scheduled for Dec. 22 in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Sharipova was injured while preparing for the bout, and according to doctors needs at least a month to recover. Despite the injury, the 24-year-old spoke about her willingness to compete as planned, but her team decided to rearrange the fight so she can show her best.

"This is a battle of such a level that we simply cannot allow her to do so. We decided to postpone the fight with the coaching staff. We will follow the recommendations of doctors to preserve the health of Firuza. We would not want to miss the chance to win the title of the

most prestigious boxing organisation," said her personal manager Sergey Zavileiski.

Wahlström's team was contacted to reschedule the fight.

The date will be announced once the negotiations are finished.

"We are ready to offer her partial compensation for the

training process and hope that she will not conduct an interim fight," Zavileiski added.

Sharipova defeated Russian Yulia Kutsenko Sept. 9 in the main match of a boxing evening in St. Petersburg. The fight was designed for ten rounds and she defended her Women's International Boxing Association (WIBA) lightweight champion title. The match went the distance and Sharipova won with an unanimous decision and scores of 98:92, 96:94 and 96:94. Kutsenko, 29, suffered her first defeat following seven wins (three early) and one draw.

Sharipova has nine victories, four early and one final. She also holds the International Boxing Organisation (IBO) and WBC silver titles in the featherweight and lightweight professional boxing champion divisions, which she won Dec. 30 in a fight against Belgian Djemilla Gontaryuk in Almaty.



Boxer Firuza Sharipova.

Photo credits: inform.kz

## PetroKazakhstan supports open youth tennis tournament in Shymkent

Staff Report

ASTANA – More than 70 children participated in a recent open tennis tournament in Shymkent.

The tournament was sponsored by PetroKazakhstan Oil Products (PKOP) as part of an ongoing effort by the company to promote sports in the region.

Tennis is popular in Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Tennis Federation often sponsors national level tournaments. However, the sport remains out of reach for many as a result of associated costs.

So, the company stepped in to sponsor the open four-part Shymkent Cup juniors tennis tournament.

The first three parts of the tournament were held at the International Tennis Centre in Shymkent and were among some of the region's most well attended sporting events of the autumn.

Players from around Kazakhstan participated, including from Uralsk, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Aktobe, Taraz, Almaty, Astana and Petropavlovsk.

According to the results of the third competition of the Shymkent Cup 12 & Under held Nov. 2, Karakat Koilybayeva won among girls, while Damir Ibragimov won among boys. Daniel Tazabekov and Anastassiya Krymkova won the mixed doubles.



"I am so pleased that I won!" said Karakat. "My parents first took me to the tennis centre and I spend two hours there every day, and I enjoy it all."

"I had two tough opponents in the tournament and it wasn't easy. I want to play as well as I can and to do so I need to train more. I'd like to become like

Raphael Nadal. I chose tennis myself," said Damir.

The fourth round of competition is planned for this December.

Winners received gadgets since the rules for those under 18 allow no cash prizes.

"After receiving prizes from the first competition, a lot of the players were motivated to take part in

subsequent tournaments, and we saw more and more children taking part," said Chief Tournament Referee and Trainer Ruslan Areprintsev.

International Tennis Centre in Shymkent is well known in Kazakhstan. It helped to reveal the potential of young Dastanbek Tashbulatov, one of Kazakhstan's brightest youth tennis

stars. Tashbulatov set a record this year at the category A unofficial youth world championships in the United States, the Orange Bowl Dunlop International Tennis Championships, which is held annually in Florida. Tashbulatov came second in this tournament and has risen to No. 50 in the world.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018

# Annual diplomatic Christmas bazaar raises funds for charity



Continued from Page A1

"I think that the bazaar is a good example of how the diplomatic community, across all nations and across all dividing lines, can help charity," said U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Theodore Lyng at the event.

Embassies promote their cultures by selling authentic national products.

"A lot of the things are made by people at the embassy and are really homemade, so we wanted to showcase our individual touch and our people-to-people contact with the people of Kazakhstan," said Lyng on the U.S. bazaar stand.

"This year, we are concentrating a lot on handmade ornaments for Christmas trees because a lot



of our ornaments with beads are made by hand by craft workers,

especially in the Kwazulu-Natal region where they do beautiful

beadwork and in the Eastern Cape where they also have

a lot of beadwork. Many people are not aware of this but, on our Christmas trees [in South Africa], we have African objects that are made with beadwork, wood and fabric and are handcrafted, which is very unique," said South African Ambassador to Kazakhstan Keitumetse Seipelo Thandeka Mathews on what her country had to showcase at the bazaar.

"Japan has some really lovely porcelain, and the very unique Portuguese jewelry from the north of Portugal that is called filigree caught my eye. At the Malaysian table, they have the silk kaftans which are very beautiful, so there is a lot that I liked. Everybody has something special," she added.

The funds raised at the event will be distributed among organi-

sations assisting orphans, people with disabilities and families from low socioeconomic backgrounds to buy food, clothing, medicine and special equipment. The recipients of the funds were chosen from many applications to the charity committee, with Lyng noting that this year's "choice of charities is really inspiring."

"We make sure that the money goes where it is meant to and that it is really helping people," said this year's Charity Committee Chair and the Finnish Ambassador's spouse Maria Kivikoski in an earlier interview with The Astana Times. "After the bazaar, we make many visits to see the projects that they are doing with our funds. We make sure that the money helps people in Kazakhstan, all over the country."

## Mayor announces plans to achieve presidential initiatives

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Astana Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov shared at a Nov. 22 meeting plans to achieve Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's ideas, which the President put forth in his article "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe," reports the capital's akimat (city administration).

The president has recently written on equestrian culture, ancient metallurgy, the Great Silk Road and the political and economic pursuits of Kazakh ancestors and other topics.

At the meeting, Sultanov emphasised the President's role in shaping and developing the city as a capital.

"A year after moving the capital, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural



Bakhyt Sultanov

economic, cultural and spiritual development. Astana approaches its anniversary as a beautiful and modern city, known throughout the world and recognised as an important interactive platform on a global scale."

In addition to celebrating its recent history, the akim noted the importance of preserving the capital's rich past. In focusing on its relatively young age, it is easy to overlook the broader context of the city as a continuation of the Great Silk Road.

"In his article, the President recounted the importance of an awareness among the newer generations of their national history, in all its versatility and multidimensionality," he said. "[Astana] is based on a historical territory combining past, present and future because it was here, in the Middle Ages, where the ancient settlement Bozok was located. Located on the

city's main axis, Bozok occupies a special place."

By 2020, the city akimat and the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sport will create a historical and cultural complex. The area of Bozok is to become a cultural and tourist centre where research on archaeological antiquities will also be carried out.

"We plan to start implementing a project on creating a three-dimensional model of Bozok with augmented virtual reality and a series of archaeological discoveries representative of medieval Kazakhstan, which will give everyone the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the historical heritage of that period," he said.

The capital is to be conceived as a symbol of independent Kazakhstan and the foundation upon which the national idea Mangilik Yel (Eternal Nation) is based, said the mayor.

## Construction to begin in 2019 on Kazakhstan's second World Trade Centre

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The World Trade Centres Association (WTCA) will begin construction in late 2019 of Kazakhstan's second \$200-million World Trade Centre (WTC), reports Tengrinews.kz.

A WTC is a building or complex of buildings established and operated by the World Trade Centres Association (WTCA). It places all services associated with global commerce under a single roof to foster networking among governments and businesses. WTC complexes are located in cities, such as Amsterdam, Dubai, New York, Seoul and Tokyo and are often occupied by offices of major corporations.

international corporations and financial institutions to Kazakhstan, after which construction on Astana's WTC was agreed on.

The same month, Kazakhstan jumped from 36th place last year to 28th in the 2019 World Bank Doing Business Report, the 16th in a series of annual reports exploring the regulations that influence domestic firms' activities in 190 countries. In the Ease of Doing Business score, the country ranked higher in enforcing contracts, starting businesses, trading across borders, enforcing contracts dealing with construction permits, getting credit and resolving insolvency.

"The jump in eight places is an objective reflection of the per-

## Astana considers designated parking for electric vehicles, introduction of electric buses

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Astana's 2018-2020 comprehensive plan to make the capital a greener city calls for designated parking spaces for electric vehicles at all socially significant facilities, administrative buildings and shopping malls.

"This is one of the tools to stimulate the benefits of electric vehicles, because many old cars and others emit a lot of harmful substances. And they [electric cars] contribute to the improvement of the environment," Aigul Solovyova, chair of the board of the Association of Ecological Organizations of Kazakhstan, said during a recent government administration meeting to discuss the comprehensive plan.

At least 10 percent the affected



parking areas will be designated for electric vehicles, and the measure is supported by Astana Akimat (administration).

The comprehensive plan includes "development and approval of a traffic management scheme to

stimulate the operation of electric vehicles."

In addition, the plan includes placing approximately 100 refuelling stations.

"Some people say that 'we have already allocated places for people with

disabilities, now for electric vehicles.' But, nevertheless, we are defending our position. In the world, this trend is being actively implemented. This project is planned to be launched in pilot mode until 2020," she said.

The akimat further discussed launching electric buses during their recent regular meeting on the plan's progress.

According to Solovyova, a route has been determined and a company has been found to implement the programme.

Before introducing electric buses to the public, the buses will be tested on the route for a year. They will be observed for the amount of carbon emissions and performance in the capital's severe climate.

"Astana has become a start and a pilot for us, since the openness of the akimat and the desire to involve the public was quite large," she explained.

In the Ease of Doing Business score, the country ranked higher in enforcing contracts, starting businesses, trading across borders, enforcing contracts dealing with construction permits, getting credit and resolving insolvency.

The latest WTC will be located on two hectares of the EXPO 2017 campus and the main building will be 150 metres tall.

"There is an investor who will bear all implementation costs – we are partners and currently dealing with the provision of land and permits from state bodies," said Astana Socio-Entrepreneurial Corporation (SEC) Chairperson Nurlan Zhakupov at a SEC meeting earlier this month.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met with WTCA Deputy Chairperson Rolf Draak and Director Mehran Eftekhari during his October visit to Belgium to discuss attracting major

sistent work of the Kazakh government, which has been implementing a special programme to improve the business climate in the country for some time now," TALAP Centre for Applied Research director Rakhim Oshakbayev told The Astana Times in October.

The WTCA is a non-profit organisation established in 1968 which has 317 members in 91 countries. It seeks to advance the WTC concept, promote international business relationships and foster world trade expansion among industrialising nations.

Kazakhstan's first WTC is located in Almaty.