



Okean Art: school for children with unlimited possibilities



By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Okean Art is relatively a small school which opens a whole new dimension that can change lives. Thirteen years ago, the school started as a small art therapy centre for children with disabilities and has now created an

inclusive environment that offers a broad range of opportunities.

The school focuses on psychology and arts. The psychological path offers art therapy for all children, whether healthy or with almost any form of disability, be it emotional, mental, behavioural, neurosis, fear, shyness, delayed speech development, mental de-

velopment, autism or hearing impairment. It also houses an art school.

In addition, the centre has psychological consultations for adults. Seminars are offered both for specialists who want to gain professional skills in psychology and art therapy and newbies who want to learn what it is. Adults, especially

parents, are invited for a therapeutic training once a month.

School director Tatyana Zhan- yarova selects and educates the staff herself, as she had an opportunity to study art therapy in depth at Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies (BCAT) from 2003-2004.

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Kazakhstan offers investors stable political, social and economic climate, says Kazakh Invest executive

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is able to offer stable political, social and economic conditions and sufficient infrastructure for global investors, said Kazakh Invest Deputy Chairman of the Board Marat Birimzhan. In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, he indicated the country's agriculture, transportation and logistics have great potential and should be attractive for investors.

The past year was full of uncertainties, economic downturns and unpredictable decisions by some state leaders and 2019 promises to be difficult as well.

"Most notably, the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union (EU) and trade wars between the United States and China, as well as sanctions be-

tween Russia and the EU, have created considerable barriers for international investors. All this means that investing in 2019 is unlikely to get easier, especially in regions where uncertainties will be felt the most," he said.

In this uncertain time, Kazakhstan is able to offer stability, security and a business-friendly investment climate. He emphasised the country has the mineral resources to produce advanced technologies that are central to modern world economies.

"Our nation is at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. For centuries, it has been critical to East-West trade routes. With low production costs, abundant natural resources and direct access to a rapidly growing regional market of 500 million people, our nation is ready to do business," he noted.

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Kazakhstan introduces single entry electronic visa

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Beginning Jan. 1, Kazakhstan has introduced a single-entry electronic visa for citizens of 117 countries. An electronic business or tourist visa or one for medical treatment will be issued using a valid invitation considered by the nation's migration service. Foreigners wishing to benefit from the new arrangement can enter the country through checkpoints at the Astana and Almaty international airports.

The new procedure is available to tourists and individuals from 23 countries visiting for business or medical treatment. The electronic visa is valid only for the recipient and does not apply to accompanying persons. Paid consular fees are not refundable.

The passport provided by the visa recipient should meet the following criteria – not cause doubts in authenticity and belonging to its owner or have

marks of extension, reservations, notes, erasures and corrections, torn or unsewn pages; have at least two blank pages and expire no earlier than three months from the expiry date of the requested visa.

The Kazakh person or organisation extending the invitation must inform migration authorities about the person's arrival within three working days.

The step-by-step e-visa issuance algorithm involves registering on the visa website and migration website at www.vmp.gov.kz; learning about the requirements for getting an electronic visa; entering the invitation number, which is sent by the inviting person or organisation from Kazakhstan, and filling in the visa application form; paying the consular fee; printing the electronic visa and showing the hard copy when passing through passport control at the two airports.

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Car sales jump 25 percent in 2018

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Car sales in Kazakhstan increased 25.8 percent from January-November over the same time last year.

Dealers sold 52,467 cars totaling \$1.3 billion. Of those, 48.2 percent were cars produced in Kazakhstan.

"In November, the Kazakh car market completed the seventh consecutive quarter of growth. The process of recovery in consumer demand continues at a steady pace, and by the end of the year, Kazakh citizens' spending on car purchases will approach the level of 500 billion tenge (US\$1.35 billion). This year will end exactly in line with the forecast announced by us a year earlier: market sales will show a 25 percent increase and exceed 58,000 cars," said KazAvtoProm Chairman Oleg Alferov.

He also said the target for 2019 is 75,000 cars sold with 50 percent coming from Kazakh automakers.

Sales in November, 5,328 units, exceeded last year's value by 13.1 percent. The volume of the market in value terms for the month reached 46.1 billion tenge (US\$124.5 million), exceeding the figure a year ago by 30.6 percent. In total, 27,178 vehicles, 51.8 percent, were imported, KazAvtoProm Union of Automotive Enterprises of Kazakhstan reports.

According to 2018 sales, the most popular brand was Lada: since the beginning of 2018, 12,061 vehicles of the Russian brand have been sold in the country. Sales of Toyota models amounted to 11,215 units. The third position was taken by Hyundai with 7,626 sold cars. The top five are rounded out by KIA (2,593 cars) and GAZ (2,463 vehicles). The top 10 brands also

include Nissan (2,188 units), Renault (1,824 cars), Ravon (1,727 vehicles), Volkswagen (1,382 units) and UAZ (1,348 cars).

Toyota Camry (4,208 units), Lada Granta (3,147 units) and Lada 4x4 (3,036 units) are the most popular passenger cars in Kazakhstan. TOP-5 models also include Lada Vesta (2,547 units) and Hyundai Tucson (2,400 units).

The top twenty consumer preferences also include Lada Largus (1,848 units), Toyota Land Cruiser Prado (1,800 units), Hyundai Elantra (1,781 units), Hyundai Accent (1,766 units), Toyota Rav4 (1,515 units), Hyundai Creta (1,481 units), Toyota Corolla (1,280 units), Ravon Nexia (1,041 units), Toyota Land Cruiser 200 (1,014 units), Volkswagen Polo (958 units), Toyota Hilux (885 units), KIA Sportage (846 units), Lada XRAY (801 units), Renault

Duster (766 units) and JAC S3 (652 units).

BIPEK AUTO – AZIA AUTO holding keeps the status of the largest dealer in the market. According to the results of the reporting period, 31.2 percent of all buyers of new passenger cars (including LCV) chose the offers of this dealer. At that, 22.3 percent of the market fell on sales of Astana Motors. The ten most notable participants in Kazakhstan's autoretail also included Virage (8.1 percent), Toyota City Almaty (5.2 percent), Allur Auto (2.5 percent), Mercur Auto (2.5 percent), Toyota Centre Zhetysay (2.2 percent), Aster Auto (2 percent), Autoworld (2 percent) and Toyota Centre Atyrau (1.2 percent).

According to the results of 11 months, residents of Almaty purchased most of new cars, 13,951. Astana residents got the second place with 9,471 new cars. In Atyrau, dealers sold 3,893 units.

President reshuffles government, appoints three new ministers

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – In a reshuffle aimed at strengthening the investment attraction and export promotion efforts of the Kazakh government, President Nursultan Nazarbayev reorganised three ministries and appointed new ministers through a string of presidential decrees Dec. 26.

Nazarbayev significantly strengthened the economic diplomacy credentials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by giving it oversight over the work on attracting foreign investment and promot-

ing Kazakh exports abroad, taking away these responsibilities from the reformed Ministry for Investment and Development.

He appointed Beibut Atamkulov as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Askar Zhumagaliyev as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aerospace Industry and Zhenis Kassymbek as Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development.

Nazarbayev relieved former Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov of his responsibilities due to his transfer to another job, as yet unannounced. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs Atamkulov

was transferred from his former position as the Minister of Defence and Aerospace Industry.

Kassymbek was appointed to lead a newly revamped Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development, into which the Ministry for Investment and Development was transformed. Some of the former ministry's functions were transferred to the Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Atamkulov was born in the Alma-Ata region in 1964. In 1986, he graduated from the Kazakh Polytechnic Institute, receiving the profession of engineer-metallurgist.

In 2000, he graduated from the St. Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance and received a degree of Candidate of Economic Sciences (similar to PhD).

In 1986, he started working in the Shymkent Lead Plant as a smelter, senior engineer. From 1991 to 1995, he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, and served as the Republican Foreign Economic Enterprise Kazmetallexport's organisation Chermeteksport's Chief Specialist and Director, and as the first deputy director at the Kazakhstan Sauda foreign trade company.

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Junior hockey team wins hearts at World Juniors, retains spot in top division

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh junior hockey team retained its place in the top division at World Juniors after defeating Denmark 4-0 Jan. 4 in Vancouver, Canada.

Kazakhstan's Davyd Makutski (#12) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Denmark during relegation round game. Photo credit: Minas Panagiotakis/HHOF-IIHF Images.

Team captain Sayan Daniyar

and David Makutskiy scored first-period goals and Artur Gatiyatov scored a pair of empty-net goals during the last minutes of the game.

The loss relegated Denmark to Division I Group A at the 2020 International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) U20 World Championship in the Czech Republic, while Germany was promoted to the top group to replace the Scandinavian nation's team.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Kazakhstan aims to improve transparency of law enforcement agencies

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The conference on the transparency of law enforcement agencies, held in the capital Dec. 25, served as a dialogue platform between the agencies, non-governmental organisations, lawyers and researchers aimed at generating discussion on their functions and effectiveness.

The conference was organised by the Kazakh Public Council on Internal Affairs Bodies' Activities, Qadir Qasiyet Public Fund and Penal Reform International (PRI) in Central Asia.

Transparency of state bodies includes openness and accountability of data, legislation and budgets; assessing the effectiveness of government agencies.

The participants discussed the importance of transparency in activities of the prosecution and internal affairs authorities and anti-corruption and economic investigation services.

Transparency of state bodies includes openness and accountability of data, legislation and budgets; assessing the effectiveness of government agencies; dialogue between the state and society and mainly implementing civil control mechanisms.

"Today, the discussion has led to an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the state's approach to ensuring the integrity and accountability of law enforcement agencies. Attention is paid to monitoring legislation; mechanisms for monitoring, controlling and supervising the behaviour of law enforcement officers; the implementation of their functions; developing procedures, training standards and materials; guidelines for fair and objective selection of employees and improving the procedures for receiving visitors, victims and witnesses," said Qadir Qasiyet Public Fund Director Aida Zhusipaliyeva.

The conversation also focused on statistical data, function and effectiveness overview of law enforcement agencies and conducting audits and risk analysis. The Office of the Prosecutor General has a staff of 5,716 with a 26.6 billion tenge (US\$71.63 million) budget; the Internal Affairs Ministry, 159,371 employees and a 323.2 billion tenge (US\$870.37 million) budget and the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption, a 25.1 billion tenge (US\$67.59 million) budget.

The government is currently considering the Roadmap on Law Enforcement Agencies Modernisation, which has a separate section on anti-corruption issues, said Marat Kogamov, Chair of the Public Council overseeing the work of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

"Police sometimes commit acts of corruption. Many police units are engaged in providing public services. Therefore, the automation of these processes, the separation of the police officer from the specific service recipient, is necessary. This is the first direction," he said in an interview during the conference, as reported by inform.kz.

He added internal security service will also be strengthened.

"The draft roadmap stipulates that the internal security services of the ministry will be greatly strengthened and developed. They will fight against corrupt officials inside the police force and, secondly, protect honest employees from undue influence on them during the detection and investigation of a crime, including organised crime. It's hard work," he added.

The law enforcement system includes a large number of both central and regional government bodies and departmental organisations, including penitentiary system institutions. According to PRI, in 2018 the number of imprisonments decreased, influencing the increase in punishments unrelated to imprisonment.

"Today, there is a decrease in the level of the population in prison in direct proportion to the increase in punishments unrelated to imprisonment. So, at the end of 2018, the number of the prison population in isolation from society was 30,944 people, while almost 61,000 passed through the probation service records," according to PRI.

National award highlights prominent public figures in different fields

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The eighth annual Khalyktyn Suiiktisi (People's Choice) national award ceremony was held Jan. 12 at the Rixos President Astana hotel. Public figures, activists, sportspeople, artists and government servants chosen by online voting were awarded in 27 categories.

The award is given in different categories, noted founder and Respublika-Aймаq-Damu (Republic-Region-Development) Public Fund President Galyam Baituk, reported tengrines.kz.

"There are the main categories, for which Internet voting was held, and honorary and special awards," he said. "Voting was based on the long lists of 30 people allocated by users of social networks... Almost 500,000 unique votes were cast."

Three new awards – Military Person of the Year, Police Person of the Year and New Faces of Labour Unions, were added this year.

In the main categories, Kazakh actress Samal Yeslyamova was the Breakthrough of the Year winner. The star of the film "Ayka," she also won Best Female Role at the Cannes Film Festival and the movie is currently on the Oscar short list for best foreign language film.

Yeslyamova was unable to attend the ceremony, as she is abroad, and recorded a video message.

"Dear compatriots, thank you very much for supporting me. Happy New Year! I would like to wish you good health and success in everything. Thank you!" she said.

Meirzhan Turebayev was recognised as the Favourite Viner (an actor performing in vines, or short-form videos) of the Year. He became famous in the Kazakh Internet community in his role as a police officer in numerous humorous vines.

"I take a detached view and think, 'why am I in the same row with such great people as teachers and doctors?' But I decided that this was probably because we all do what we love and this is always welcome. Thank you for this award! It is very pleasant that the year begins with such an event," he said.

Tokan Sultanaliyev, chief surgeon

at the National Research Centre of Oncology and Transplantology in the capital, won in the Best Doctor of the Year category. The title of Best Teacher of the Year was given to Astana Schoolchildren's Palace Director Yerbol Irgebay.

PyeongChang Paralympic Winter Games gold medalist Alexander Kolyadin and 2016 Paralympic Games and 2018 Asian Paralympic Games gold medalist Zulfiya Gabidullina were named the Best Male Athlete of the Year and Best Female Athlete of the Year, respectively.

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Parliament Senate Deputy Bakytzhan Zhumagulov won in the Best Parliamentarian of the Year category. He was unable to attend the ceremony and his colleague Senator Byrganym Aitimova spoke on his behalf.

Political scientist Islam Kuraev was named Best Publicist of the Year. Architect, poet and cinematographer Bakytzhan Ashirbayev took the award as Cultural Figure of the Year.

Kazinform was named the Best Internet Information Edition of the Year. Kazybek Freydmann, who posts on Twitter and Facebook, was named Leader of Blogosphere of the Year.

Designer and fashion designer Malika Duissenbayeva won in the Fashion Leader of the Year category. Guests of the ceremony enjoyed her fashion show.

DalaFrukt Fruit Production Company founder Bolatbek Aliyev (Turkistan region) and Karasu Agriculture Company Director Almat Tursunov (Kostanai region) won in the Best Farmer of the Year category. The Best Entrepreneurs of the Year were Zhas Kanat 2006 Director Kairat Maishev (Kostanai region) and Raduga Director Dmitry Sharapayev (North Kazakhstan region).

The Best Public Figure of the Year was political scientist Yerlan Sairov. The favourite TV pre-

sender was Layla Sultankyzy from Channel 7.

The Braveheart honorary award was given to Astana Police Department Road Patrol Police Inspector Azamat Baltabayev. In June, he saved a six-year-old child from falling from the ninth floor of a building. On Dec. 14, President Nursultan Nazarbayev awarded Baltabayev the Order of Aibyn of the II degree.

Health veteran, Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan and Kazakh SSR Minister of Healthcare from 1971-1982 Toregeldy Shar-

manov won the Golden Era honorary award.

The capital's State Commission for Redeployment of Higher and Central Bodies Chairperson Farit Galimov received the Contribution to Development of Astana honorary award.

Patron of the Year honorary awards were given to businesspeople Bekbolat Achibekov (Aktau) and Sergey Blok (Kostanai) and Atyrau Maslikhat Deputy Alibek Semgaliev.

The Military Person of the Year award was given to Reconnaissance and Assault Company Squad of Assault Troops Commander Galymzhan Aleukhanov, who saved two small children from a fire July 2017.

The New Faces of Trade Unions awards were given to Pavlodar region Trade Union Centre Chairperson Dinara Aitzhanova, Zholdasbai Agro farm breeder (North Kazakhstan region) and union member Rauan Bralin and Senim Health Workers Union Kostanai branch representative Tatyana Bulgatseva.

Traditionally, a portrait of each winner is drawn by Kazakh cartoonist Valery Krestnikov and sold after the awards ceremony at a charity auction. His cartoon of Tursynov, the most expensive portrait, was purchased by Blok for one million tenge (US\$2,637).

appointed to his new position, he was the chairman of the board of Kazatomprom national atomic company since 2015.

The new Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Kassymbek was born in 1975 in the Zhambyl region. He graduated from the Kazakh Leading Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering in Almaty with a degree in architecture and design. He also studied at the Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana graduating with a degree in economy and earning the Candidate of Economic Sciences degree.

Over the years, Kassymbek worked as the Head of the Department of Railway Transport and Ports of the Agency for Regulation of Natural Monopolies and Protection of Competition, Head of Coordination and Tariff Policy Department, and Director of the Water Transport Department of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. He also led the Aktau International Seaport.

In 2005, he was the Vice Minister of Transport and Communications. In 2009, he became the Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. After five years, he headed the ministry. Since August 2014, he became the First Vice Minister of the Ministry of Investment and Development. Before being appointed to his new position, Kassymbek served as the Minister for Investment and Development since 2016.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

This year, 25 kindergartens and 37 other schools will be built in the capital, Kazinform reports. By 2023, there will be 124,000 more students in Astana. Fifteen additional health facilities will also be built. "The comprehensive plan for compact development of the city for 2019 to 2023 was adopted to improve the quality of services in the urban environment... Taking into account the annual growth of cars by 8 to 9 percent, it is planned to build 121 kilometres of roads, two transport interchanges, three bridges, an overpass, a tunnel and the first line of light rail transport by 2023," said Astana Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov.

A pilot project on e-housing cooperatives was launched in Atyrau, according to the regional administration. Residents there can now open a personal account to receive information about home services and city utilities and to communicate with maintenance companies. "The project helps to establish communication between homeowners, housing cooperatives, management companies, service organisations, utilities and tenants. The Atyrau open city unified system was created to modernise and digitise the housing sector," said head of the Department of Information Technology and Public Services Samat Embergen.

Freight turnover increased by 6.6 percent and reached a value of 222.5 billion tonne-kilometres on the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy network in 2018, reports the company's press service. "Volume of transportation by rail amounted to 254.8 million tonnes with an increase of 13 million tonnes compared to 2017. More than 170 million tonnes were transported within the country and more than 84.7 million tonnes were exported. Transportation of socially significant goods was fully provided. More than 105 million tonnes of hard coal were shipped, which is 3 percent more than in 2017. More than 72 million tonnes of solid fuel was shipped domestically, which is up to 4 percent more than in 2017. Some 11.5 million tonnes of grains were shipped and 8.8 million tonnes of these were exported. The shipment of iron ore increased by 8 percent, non-ferrous ore by 5 percent and construction materials by 6 percent compared to 2017," reads the release.

More than one million messages from Astana residents were registered by the iKomek system, reports the city administration. Some 68,000 of these were received via social networks. The response time to incidents reported by residents shortened by 23 percent. The number of calls to the mayor's office and administrations were decreased by 20 percent. "The system unites all utility service call centres and is a single point of contact with city residents. All appeals are processed and entered into the register with a registration number, and then transferred to state bodies and utilities. Some 60 iKomek operators around the clock monitor the safety of citizens with the help of 6,000 video cameras. About 3,677 offences were revealed. The iKomek mobile app will be launched this year," said a city press representative.

Kazinform reports that a sorting plant for solid household waste with a capacity of 100 tonnes of waste per day will be launched in Atyrau. The Ministry of Energy imposed a ban on burying plastics, all types of paper waste and glass at landfills from January. Atyrau has 300 containers for collecting plastic waste, and their number will increase to 500 by the end of the year. Up to 300 tonnes of waste are exported daily to the city landfill. Part of the collected plastic is sent to Russia for processing and the rest is used in the production of building materials. "Currently, an investor has provided funds for equipment. The plant will open at the beginning of the second quarter and will create up to 70 workplaces. We will open 10 receiving points for collecting plastic, paper and glass waste in March," said head of Spetsavtobaza company Almas Iztelevov.

President reshuffles government, appoints three new ministers

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During the following two years, he worked as the Karaganda Metallurgical Plant's First Deputy Director. From 1996 to 2002, he was the Rakhmet Metals President. Over the next four years, he was the Rakhmet Companies Group's president and chairman of the board.

Since 2006, he worked in the diplomatic service. He was a minister-counsellor at the Kazakh Embassy in Russia and Iran. From 2008 to 2010, he worked as the Kazakh Consul General in Frankfurt am Main. For two years, he served as the Kazakh Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Malaysia, as well as to Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines concurrently.

From 2012 to 2014, Atamkulov was the Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies, after which he was at the same position in the Investment and Development Ministry. Since August 2015, he has been the South Kazakhstan region's Akim (governor). His last position was the Defence and Aerospace Industry Minister, which he led from 2016.



Beibut Atamkulov

The new Defence and Aerospace Industry Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Zhumagaliev was born in 1972 in the Orenburg region, Russia. He graduated from the Sverdlovsk Suvorov Military School and studied at the Kharkov Higher Military Command Engineering School of Rocket Forces. In 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he transferred to the Kazakh National Technical University in Almaty, graduating with a degree in radio communications, broadcasting and television. He received a second bachelor degree in jurisprudence from the Kazakh Humanitarian Law University and



Askar Zhumagaliev

a master's degree in e-government from the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne.

From 2006 to 2010, he was the chair of the board of Kazakhtelecom national telecommunications company, when he worked on the introduction of new communication technologies and the barrier-free customer service principle. From 2010 to 2012, he worked as the Minister for Communications and Information. During his work, he launched 3G services, digital satellite and terrestrial television. He also developed the e-government portal and large-scale modernisation and automation of



Zhenis Kassymbek

the Public Service Centres (PSC).

Since 2012, he was the Minister of Transport and Communications. During his work, specialised public service centres for car owners were opened, standards for providing services in the transport industry were developed, 4G network was launched, tariffs for communication services were reduced and automation of public services was carried out.

In 2014, he became the Chairman of the Agency for Communications and Information. Later the same year, he was appointed as Vice Minister for Investments and Development. Before being

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's Partnership for Peace training centre has earned the United Nations certification that will allow it to train and prepare peace officers from around the world. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations, has signed the relevant document. The Almaty training centre was visited in December by representatives of the UN Peacekeeping Department, who evaluated its material and technical capability, instructors, programme content and compliance with UN standards. The centre offers language and specialised courses to teach students the principles, goals and basic practices of peacekeeping operations. Many graduates serve on peace keeping missions.

The Kazakh expedition In the Footsteps of Ancestors arrived in Jordan to study the legacy of mamluks and Kipchak tribes there. Scientists believe the tribes inhabited the country in the 13th century and played an important role in building relations between the Muslim and Christian world. The expedition visited the Ajloun and Karak castles. "This castle is a strategic object located in the south of Jerusalem and Damascus. Kipchak mamluks hailing from the Great Steppe ruled this territory. Our ancestors owned several fortifications in this area, and this is the most important for them. Sultan Beibars ordered the construction of several towers in this castle," said expedition head Sapar Iskakov. Before Jordan, the expedition visited India, Egypt, the United States, South Korea, China and Ukraine.

Kazakhstan will for the first time take part in the Tata Steel Chess tournament, one of the most prestigious and oldest events in the international chess calendar. This year's tournament is being held from Jan. 11 to 27 in Wijk aan Zee, the Netherlands. Prominent Kazakh chess player Dinara Saduakassova, international master and women's grandmaster, ranked 17th in the world among women, will represent the country at the tournament that has brought chess veterans and young talents together since 1937. She will compete in the Challengers group with 14 of the most promising chess talents from around the globe. "It is a great honour for me to receive an invitation to this elite tournament... and play against world's strongest grandmasters. The average rating is quite high at 2,582. I hope I will be able to perform at my best and achieve the best result," said Saduakassova.

Kazakhstan was ranked 57th in the Sustainable Economic Development Assessment (SEDA) released by the Boston Consulting Group. The steppe nation was followed by Argentina (58), Russia (59), and Georgia (60). The ranking examined 152 countries based on data collected from 2007 to 2016 to analyse their performance in converting economic growth into well-being of their citizens. Well-being is analysed based on 10 dimensions grouped in three categories. These include economics (income, economic stability, employment), investments (education, health, infrastructure) and sustainability (environment, equality, a strong civil society, sound governance). Kazakhstan's performance was highest in economic stability (86.9) and equality (89.3).

Open Asia Magazine and SOAS University of London organised a round table in London that explored Kazakhstan's record as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council during 2017 and 2018. Among Astana's central tenets were nuclear non-proliferation, peace in Afghanistan and the fight against terrorism. "Kazakhstan was able to steer the body to undertake its first high-level visit to Afghanistan since 2010, highlighting the links between security and development. With regard to non-proliferation, Kazakhstan was uniquely placed to tackle the issue. Having inherited the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world, Kazakhstan gave it up for a seat at the international table and financial incentives, thus enabling it to present a positive model for approaches to North Korea which accentuate the carrot over the stick," said Stephen M. Bland, award-winning author and journalist specialising on Central Asia.

Kazakh FM supports stronger regional relationship with India at India-Central Asia-Afghanistan Dialogue

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atamkulov stressed the need to establish a closer relationship between India and Central Asia during the Jan. 13 India-Central Asia-Afghanistan Dialogue in Samarkand. The event included the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the host nation, Uzbekistan.

Atamkulov urged the implementation of joint projects with India in medicine, pharmaceuticals, new technologies and finance through the International Technopark of IT startups Astana Hub and the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

He also suggested creating a consortium with all Central Asian countries to connect the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran and Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran rail routes with the port of Chabahar to transport cargo along the Central Asia-India route.

The foreign ministers also discussed economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation among Central Asian nations, including trade, business association contacts, transit and transport and communication capacity. They also discussed establishing joint initiatives to create international and regional transport corridors and to attract Indian investments and technologies to Central Asian economies.

The ministers approved a joint statement noting positive relations between India and Central Asia as well as affirming the desire for regional cooperation to ensure security, stability and sustainable development in the region.

The proposal to hold the first ministerial meeting in the framework of the India-Central Asia Dialogue was preceded by a series of meetings at the expert level held since 2012. The initiative to hold



The first meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan took place in Samarkand on Jan. 13.

such meetings was proposed by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) together with the Ministry of External Affairs of India.

cussed bilateral and regional cooperation as well as the implementation of the agreements reached between Kazakh President Nursul-

tar attention to the development of regional cooperation. Our countries play a key role in the integration processes of Central Asia. We will make every effort for further movement of bilateral relations with Uzbekistan," the Kazakh Foreign Minister said.

Atamkulov also noted the potential for cooperation in financial services, processing and the food industry, as well as the digital industry.

Atamkulov also met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Chingiz Aidarbekov. The ministers discussed trade and economic cooperation, the water and energy sectors, regional

and cross-border cooperation, as well as the implementation of the agreements reached between Nazarbayev and President Sooronbay Jeenbekov.

Atamkulov and Aidarbekov noted their countries' similar positions on international issues and reaffirmed their intention to work together within international organisations.

Kazakhstan's foreign minister also discussed bilateral cooperation and regional issues in meetings with Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov and Tajik Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Muhriddin.

Atamkulov urged the implementation of joint projects with India in medicine, pharmaceuticals, new technologies and finance through the International Technopark of IT startups Astana Hub and the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

Atamkulov also met during his trip with Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov. They dis-

tan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. "Our head of state pays particu-

Kazakh Culture and Literature Centre opens in Tashkent

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Kazakh Culture and Literature Centre opened at the Alisher Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan in Tashkent Dec. 26 as part of the Ruhani Zangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme and the 2019 Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan, reported inform.kz.

Visitors can become acquainted with Kazakh traditions, culture and art through the collection of more than 200 works of famous Kazakh writers and poets in Kazakh, Russian and English. The collection also includes works by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev dedicated to his activities and role in the international political arena.

Uzbek National Library Director Alisher Abduazizov, Kazakh National Academic Library Deputy Director Aliya Kozhabekova and counsellor of Kazakh embassy to Uzbekistan Mursal-Nabi Tuyakbayev attended the opening ceremony, where the libraries' representatives signed a memorandum of cooperation.

In his welcoming speech, Ab-



duazizov noted the importance of developing cultural ties and exchanging experience between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

"As part of the event, the National Library of Uzbekistan received 200 books as a gift. Certainly, these books will arouse the

interest and aspiration of Uzbek readers to get acquainted with the cultural wealth of the Kazakh people," he said.

The main goal of the centre is to create an intellectual environment and access to information not only in traditional printed forms, but also in digitised formats that will simplify access for all interested individuals, said Kozhabekova. This will stimulate cultural and scientific contacts between the countries.

"We hope for a constructive, fruitful continuation of this project. Certainly, the fund will be replenished and studied. Access to the Kazakh National Electronic Library will be organised. We also plan to open the same centre in the Kazakh National Academic Library," she said.

As a part of the Ruhani Zangyru programme, similar cultural centres were opened in 27 countries around the world, the 28th in Uzbekistan.

"I would also like to note that we are opening our national centres in other libraries of the world. In particular, such centres were opened in France, Iran, Germany, Spain, in the U.S. Congress Library and in the New York Public Library," said Kozhabekova.

Kazakhstan introduces single entry electronic visa

Continued from Page A1

Citizens of the following countries may obtain an electronic single-entry tourist visa – Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African

Republic, Chad, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo (Republic), Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Faroe Islands, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon,

Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Macao, (Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar (Burma), Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda,

Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Swaziland, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Vatican, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Citizens of the following countries may obtain an electronic single-entry business and medical treatment visa – the Bahamas, Bermuda, Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, Greenland, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Kuwait, Laos, Macao, Macedonia, Morocco, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Serbia, South Africa, Vatican, Vietnam and the Virgin Islands.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Manufacturing labour productivity grows 1.2 times, third five-year plan focuses on export-oriented enterprises

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Labour productivity in manufacturing has increased 1.2 times during the current industrialisation plan, First Vice Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar reported Dec. 29.

“The government introduces various incentive tools to support the local enterprises. The Productivity 2020 initiative provides a number of mechanisms.”

The third five-year plan will be game changing for the country's ecological economies and manufacturing industry. The concept of the industrial-innovative development programme is being developed to ensure labour's continued growth.

“The growth was observed from \$29,000 to \$31,400 with an increase of 3.6 percent. The gov-



ernment provides support and this significantly impacts productivity. Modernisation and digital technologies boost labour productivity, which is a key factor of competitive products. We work to improve this indicator,” he said.

The level of manufacturing technology is preventing further productivity growth.

“The government introduces various incentive tools to support the local enterprises. The Productivity 2020 initiative provides a number of mechanisms. In 2018, about 500 million tenge (US\$1.3 million) was provided for the introduction of new technologies and subsidies for scientific research and development work. The

leasing loans of the Development Bank of Kazakhstan allow companies to be better equipped and competitive. In addition, special export support programmes stimulate enterprises while entering foreign markets. This also affects an increase in labour productivity,” he added.

The ministry's main mission is

to provide enterprises with state support mechanisms.

“We try to take into account all the challenges of our time in this programme. An enterprise which cannot increase productivity is not a competitive one. We need to think how to avoid this,” said Sklyar.

The new programme ensures measures including automating production processes and digitising and state support incentives to increase exports. Priority will be given to enterprises set to increase export potential and labour productivity and introduce the components of Industry 4.0 and measures to improve the environmental situation.

According to the ministry, more than 80 percent of manufacturing enterprises have manual labour jobs or semi-automated production. Some are still at the stage of transitioning to full automation. There is a need to stimulate others to invest in modernisation by developing financial support instruments, including increasing the volume and availability of long-term financing and toughening requirements for projects that receive state support in terms of advanced equipment and technologies. Digitising industry will also increase the enterprises' technological requirements and standards.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's external debt to gross domestic product (GDP) shrank by 8.6 percent or \$3 billion in the third quarter of last year, mainly due to the debt securities reduction that decreased it by \$1.4 billion. Kazakhstan's external debt had been \$161.5 billion or 94 percent of GDP for the first nine months of 2018. Inter-company debt still comprises the biggest share of external debt, at 63.7 percent. Public external debt by Kazakh government and National Bank accounts for 7.1 percent and external liabilities of the banking sector is 3.5 percent; debt in other sectors accounts for the remaining 25.7 percent. Net foreign debt was \$48 billion in the third quarter of 2018.

The National Bank projects that Kazakhstan's economic growth will be 2.7 percent by the end of 2019, and inflation will begin to hit its new target of 4 to 6 percent, kursiv.kz reports. Inflation will depend heavily on Russian inflation in the face of increasing value-added taxes, the weakening of the rouble's exchange rates and pressure from demand associated with wage growth and accelerated consumer lending. Also, Kazakhstan's own planned increase in the minimum wage of public sector workers will put additional pressure on inflation from the demand side. The pressure on inflation will be partly mitigated by a “planned reduction in tariffs of natural monopolists, which will undoubtedly have a positive effect on the service component,” said the National Bank in the statement.

Investment support for the education sector is weakening. The volume of investment in the sector has decreased by a quarter at once. For eleven months of 2018, investment in education amounted to 180.5 billion tenge (US\$484.64 million), a year on year decrease of 23.8 percent. Half of the total investment in fixed capital of the educational segment was seen in five regions. The share of investment in the educational sector of the total investment in Kazakhstan has decreased starkly from 3.2 percent to 1.9 percent. The largest volume of capital investments in the educational segment is concentrated in big cities and in the Mangystau and North Kazakhstan regions, whereas the largest decline in investment was observed in the West Kazakhstan region, falling 61.5 percent year on year.

The number of visitors to the Khorgos International Centre for Cross-Border Cooperation (ICBC) increased by 8 percent in 2018 compared to the same period in 2017, the ICBC press service reports. The total number of tourists in 2018 reached 1.22 million. At the end of 2018, 12 investment companies were attracted to the area, building facilities with a total construction area of 32.7 hectares and a building area of 193,000 square metres. In 2018, a single operator system was introduced in the centre, ensuring the movement of visitors on new buses and taxis, as well as updating the fleet with 15 low-tonnage trucks. The area of the luggage terminal was increased from 900 square metres to 3,500 square metres.

The credit interests of Kazakhstan's banks are concentrated in retail. Loans to legal entities decreased by 9 percent over the year, loans to the population increased by 16 percent. In general, bank loans to the economy of Kazakhstan amounted to 13 trillion tenge (US\$34.91 billion). Long-term loans comprised 85.2 percent (11 trillion tenge or US\$29.54 billion) of the total amount of loans, while the share of short-term loans is 14.8 percent (1.9 trillion tenge or US\$5.10 billion). The volume of loans in national currency increased by 5.7 percent year on year and reached 10 trillion tenge (US\$26.85 billion). Credits in foreign currency dropped by 17.5 percent over the year and amounted to 2.9 trillion tenge (US\$7.78 billion). At the end of November, the amount of loans to legal entities for the year had decreased by 9.4 percent and amounted to 7.6 trillion tenge (US\$20.41 billion).

Employment, training programme bring positive results, focuses on competencies for Industry 4.0

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 500,000 people were employed in an 11-month period in 2018, including more than 368,000 for permanent positions, as part of the Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development Programme 2017-2021, reported the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

More than 632,000 individuals participated in the programme. Approximately 40,200 enrolled in professional and technical training and 41,500 in short-term courses and 14,006 received microloans – 12,760 in rural areas and 1,246 in cities.

“The government set the task to take priority measures to modernise and prepare the labour market for the new challenges of the digital economy. The initiative will now focus on creating an effective system for obtaining skills and qualifications in demand in the labour market, the development of mass entrepreneurship and an effective model of labour mediation,” reads the report.

The retraining programmes will be launched to provide the labour market with qualified personnel with Industry 4.0 competencies. The retraining will be subject to at least 50 percent co-financing by employers and the remaining 50 percent from government funds.

The project ensures the review of the approaches for short-term vocational training takes into account the needs of the economy. The list of in-demand occupations and skills will be approved based on the analysis and forecast of the needs of the regional labour market.

Plans are underway to launch a pilot project to construct and acquire housing in the North Kazakhstan region. It aims to stimulate resettlement in the labour-deficient northern regions.

“The integrated map will be developed to create jobs in the regions and economic sectors using project management tools. The state bodies will strengthen their activities in terms of monitoring job creation as part of the state programmes, investment

projects and in the sphere of small and medium-sized businesses,” said the press service representative.

The country's 200 employment centres are now connected to the Electronic Labour Exchange, which was launched last year. More than 87,000 employers and 416,000 applicants used its services; approximately 392,000 were placed in permanent jobs and 137,000 in temporary positions.

More than 632,000 individuals participated in the programme. Approximately 40,200 enrolled in professional and technical training and 41,500 in short-term courses and 14,006 received microloans – 12,760 in rural areas and 1,246 in cities.

The base, with 745,000 job vacancies and 480,000 resumes from employers, employment centres, private employment agencies and applicants, is updated daily with new vacancies.

Individuals who start their businesses in rural areas and single-industry towns are provided with preferential 8,000-monthly calculated income (MCI) microloans (19 million tenge or US\$50,654) at 6 percent per annum with a term of up to five years. The loan is given for up to seven years for projects in animal husbandry as part of the Bastau business project. It has also introduced 100-MCI grants to implement new business ideas.

More than 20,000 people, or 100 percent of the annual plan, participated in basics of entrepreneurship training; 19,500 defended their business projects and 6,300 received microloans.

Mazhilis discusses Digital Kazakhstan's progress in creating smart cities

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – After examining international practices in building smart cities, the Kazakh government has developed its own concept, announced Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev at a recent Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) government hour.

The concept is Digital Kazakhstan, a state programme adopted a year ago composed of five main areas, including 17 initiatives with 120 events. Abayev believes these activities will advance Kazakh cities onto the smart cities list.

McKinsey analysts have forecast the world will have 600 smart cities by 2020. The urban centres will produce nearly 60 percent of the global GDP after five years.

The five focus areas are housing

and communal services, education, health, safety and transport. The ministries responsible for these areas have created digital deputy minister positions and all akimats (city administrations) have been developing projects in these areas, said Abayev.

One notable example is Sergek, a video surveillance system which has resulted in a 16-percent reduction of vehicle accidents on the capital's roads. The smart street lighting system in Almaty has produced in a 40-percent energy savings.

The new online registration is currently used by 90 percent (approximately 2.7 million children) of Kazakh school students. Each central state agency has also conducted 19 days of digitisation, engaging more than 180 domestic IT companies.

More than half of public services

have been automated. The remaining 42 percent include “receiving documents and enrolling children in kindergartens, accepting documents for organising individual free education at home for children, issuing state allowances for mothers with four children or more, registration of the establishment of paternity and adoption,” according to Mazhilis member Ivan Klimenko.

Mazhilis members were concerned about the digitisation effect on the labour market, especially the way it would affect the unemployment rate, and noted the importance of preparing and training people for new jobs requiring new skills created by digitisation.

They noted the project is being actively conducted and the emerging issues are resulting in systematic solutions.

Housing prices expected to grow 10 percent in 2019, Astana remains highest priced city

Staff Report

ASTANA – Housing prices in Kazakhstan are expected to increase 10 percent in 2019, according to a recent report by the Union of Builders of Kazakhstan.

The rising exchange rate of the U.S. dollar versus the tenge can be one of the reasons. Luxury residential complexes with parking and other amenities are not in demand now. Real estate developers focus on economy class projects. To sell apartments in that price range will be much easier due to the 7-20-25 mortgage programme.

“All construction materials are brought from Russia and the near abroad. We do not produce fittings, brick, concrete and travertine. The imported goods are more expensive than domestic

ones. The prices will rise due to the dollar exchange rate,” said Executive Director of the Union of Builders of Kazakhstan Azamat Karlygashev.

According to forecasts, a seasonal holiday lull is observed in the real estate market. Rise of sales are expected closer to spring.

“We expect some inexpensive construction projects in remote areas of Almaty to be sold in early spring. This will lead to an increase in sales. It will not affect the number of deals for the next three quarters because it will deal with the unfinished construction. The mortgage deals will lead in the share of completed deals,” said Vice President of the Union of Builders of Kazakhstan Nina Lukyanenko.

Astana is still considered the city with the most expensive housing. According to the committee

on statistics, prices for new housing grew more than 5 percent in the capital last year. The prices for secondary housing increased 7.5 percent. The location impacts the housing costs.

“An apartment costs 300,000 tenge per square metre (US\$800) in the Almaty district. The same apartment costs 280,000 tenge per square metre (US\$745) in the Saryarka district. The price per square metre is 330,000 tenge per square metre (US\$880) in the Yessil district on the left bank,” said head of a real estate agency Ainur Moldakhmetova.

Last year, approximately 4,000 residents utilised the 7-20-25 mortgage programme. The city administration will continue issuing housing certificates for 1 million tenge (US\$2,700) for budget organisations.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Korean confectionery Lotte Confectionery has acquired 92.44 percent of Kazakh confectionery Rakhat, reports Kapital.kz. The total market value of Rakhat shares is 25.2 billion tenge (US\$67.66 million). The company, operating since 1942, is the country's leader in the market of chocolate and sweets confectionery. Products are exported to Afghanistan, China, Germany, Mongolia, Russia and Tajikistan. Last year's gross revenue was 10 billion tenge (US\$26.85 million). Lotte Confectionery, founded in 1967 in Seoul, is part of the Lotte Group and produces more than 200 products in its factories in Daejeon, Pyeongtaek, Seoul, Siheung and Yangsan.

Nikolay Mechsheryakov was appointed chair of Tsesnabank's board of directors, replacing Kairat Satylganov, while Yerzhan Tadzhayakov, who joined the board of directors in June 2018, was dismissed. The bank's board of directors now consists of Eduard Babayan, Nikolay Mechsheryakov, Ulan Baizhanov, Ulf Wokurka and Viktor Fogel. Mechsheryakov, a graduate of Chelyabinsk Polytechnic Institute, joined the bank's board of directors in November 2008 and was appointed chair of the board of directors of Financial Holding Tsesna in October 2018. Tsesnabank was founded in 1992 and provides corporate, small-to-medium enterprise, insurance and retail banking products.

Forbes Kazakhstan named Serikzhan Seitghanov business person of the year for 2018. He heads Ontustik, South Oil Company, Smart-Oil, Munay Kurylys Servis, Central Asia Mining, Talas Investment and the Rixos Khadisha Shymkent Hotel. Last year, he occupied 17th place on the magazine's list of Kazakhstan's 50 wealthiest businesspeople with \$331 million. Six years prior, he was ranked 31st with \$178 million. Most recently, he began building petrochemical plants and the five-star Rixos Khadisha Turkistan Hotel. The latter will cost 10 billion tenge (US\$26.85 million) and will feature 120 hotel rooms.

A new low-cost airline will make short-haul flights across Kazakhstan, said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at an Akorda meeting in late December 2018. Air Astana's low-cost unit FlyArystan will launch in the first half of 2019 and serve both domestic and international flights over short distances, including, possibly, Tashkent and Bishkek. He noted that the airline's flights will be two times cheaper and feature more seats and less luggage space. Low-cost carriers usually feature lower fares, online ticket sales and check-ins, a single passenger class, a single aircraft type and employees working multiple roles.

The number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) increased by 21.9 percent, their production volume grew by 17.1 percent and the number of persons employed increased 6.2 percent in the capital, reports the Astana Akimat (administration). This is the outcome of the Business Roadmap 2020 programme, which contributes to business sector development by supporting export-oriented industries and new initiatives by SMEs with state-subsidised loans. It approved 1,028 projects for 177.3 billion tenge (US\$476.05 million) since 2010, including 132 projects for 32.3 billion tenge (US\$86.73 million) last year.

More than 27,000 suppliers have registered with the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund's new e-procurement service, Zakup.sk.kz, reports Kazinform.kz. The platform consolidates the procurement process online, featuring procurement planning, supplier selection procedures, contract conclusions, reports and analyses. For example, procurement plans are generated in an electronic format, posted on the platform and approved with customers' electronic signatures. The use of electronic contracts reduces the likelihood for corruption and the contract conclusion time to one to 10 days. Another new procurement method, an electronic store, will be launched this year to simplify the process for customers' goods purchases.

West Kazakhstan region approves 12 investment projects worth \$107 million



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A \$6 million export-oriented feedlot for nearly 20,000 cattle will be built in the Kazalovski district in the West Kazakhstan region, the regional press service reports.

More than 100 new jobs will be created during construction. The first phase of the facility, expected to be completed by the end of 2019, will house 5,000 cattle.

"The head of state, [speaking] at the plenary meeting of the Council of Foreign Investors, said that Kazakhstan has unique agricultural resources.

This sector has huge potential for domestic and foreign investors. Our region has all the opportuni-

Approximately 13 billion tenge (US\$35.3 million) will be used to construct a greenhouse based on Dutch technology.

ties for the development of this sector and we try to implement large agricultural projects. Our

export-oriented enterprises deliver goods to the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and Iran," said regional Akim (Governor) Altai Kulginov.

The goods will be delivered to China, Iran, Russia and Uzbekistan. The facility, which will boost breeding transformation and increase the breeding stock in the district, will also contribute to the growth of the gross regional product.

Overall, the regional council of investors approved 12 projects worth 40 billion tenge (US\$107 million) this year. More than 900 jobs were created.

Approximately 13 billion tenge (US\$35.3 million) will be

used to construct a greenhouse based on Dutch technology. An additional 4.5 million euros (US\$5.1 million) will be used to build a second feedlot facility for up to 10,000 cattle and beef feeding station for 3,000 head.

The plans also include constructing DoubleTree Hilton and Holiday Inn hotels.

ICM Recycling Consortium, a joint Kazakh-Finnish company, will introduce the Finnish model of municipal solid waste management. The company studied the solid municipal waste landfill and developed a comprehensive investment plan. The design shows construction of a sorting line to process the waste into

three-four segments. Biogas will be produced after three years of proper waste disposal, which can be used to generate thermal and electrical energy. The 4.5-million euro (US\$5.1 million) project was presented at EXPO 2017.

"The investment projects will make a contribution to the development of agro-industry, tourism and the construction industry. The region will create favourable conditions for both domestic and foreign investors. The region supports small businesses and contributes to the development of the economy and improves the welfare of the population," said a press service representative.

Kazakhstan sets record for beef exports

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Beef exports have reached 18,800 tonnes in 2018, 25 percent more than the 15,000 tonnes planned by the Ministry of Agriculture. Almost half was exported by the Turkistan region. By comparison, beef exports in 2017 totalled 5,500 tonnes.

Large-scale implementation of a long-term programme to develop animal husbandry began in the second half of 2018. The programme is based on small and medium-sized farms, and Sybaga, a special preferential credit product, has been initiated for its execution. The plan has already exceeded last year's projection; to date, more than 700 farmers have received loans.

The annual plan allows cattle farms to purchase 50,000 head. Applications for more than 67,000 head were received in the first 11 months of 2018 and corresponding loans were approved

and issued for 55,000 head. The Alтын Asyk programme also financed the purchase of 170,000 sheep.

The plan includes breeding brood stock conversion for one million head of cattle. To date, approximately 977,000 head, or 98 percent, are involved in breed transformation.

Of that figure, 14,500 head were brought to Kazakhstan. The main reasons for the delivery delay were the short time interval (July-December) and unfavourable epizootic situations in the importing countries.

According to the regional departments of agriculture, 22.8 million tonnes of grain were harvested. In general, the gross grain harvest exceeds 2017 level by 760,000 tonnes, or 3 percent.

The Ministry of Agriculture reported the cultivated area for cucumbers increased by 2,500 hectares this year. The gross harvest was 460,000 tonnes, 50,000 tonnes more than the last year.

Domestic consumption of cucumbers is 480,000 tonnes.

The main reason for vegetable price fluctuation is the seasonality of production. In addition, the rise

in prices is influenced by cost increases for goods and services that directly affect production costs (fuel, electricity, utilities). The government is forming regional

food product stabilisation funds and constructing wholesale and retail centres in five major cities to stabilise prices for socially significant food products.



Two Kazakh entrepreneurs shared top entrepreneurial prize at People's Choice Awards

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – General Directors of Raduga diversified enterprise Dmitry Sharapayev and Zhas Kanat smart poultry farm 2006 Kairat Maishev were recently awarded the Narodnyi Liyubimets (People's Choice) Awards as the Best Entrepreneurs of the Year. They received 35 and 32 percent of votes respectively.

Both launched their businesses in the 1990s and have used innovative technologies to expand. They also have participated in state support programmes, such as the Business Roadmap 2020. They were also nominated for the 2017 list of the nation's 100 New Faces, who personify success.

Sharapayev is a businessman from Petropavlovsk. His father Anatolii Sharapayev started the Firma Raduga company that only distributed goods to households.

Then, his two sons, Dmitry and Pyotr Sharapayevs developed it into the Raduga people are famil-



iar today, which is a large enterprise that produces goods using 65 percent of local products.

Dmitry Sharapayev studied management in the Moscow Institute of Business. He began his career as a carpenter at the Bishkul poultry factory, then became a gas and electric welder and worked as a salesman in a shop. Under his vision, Raduga has grown from a small family business into a big goods producer and distributor in the country with an annual turno-

ver of 10.5 billion tenge (US\$27.74 million). Raduga provides 1,500 people with permanent jobs.

The company distributes food supplies and household goods from leading manufacturers from Kazakhstan, Russia, China and Europe, as well as produces its own products. It has its own same-name supermarkets chain with a large assortment of recycled goods giving second life to plastics. Usually, they produce pots, buckets, hangers. Recycling plastic put

them on the map as a socially responsible company and they won the "contribution to the environment" category at the Paryz national contest.

"We have always understood that, although we work for profit, money is not the main thing, not everything is measured by money," said Sharapayev. "We strive to ensure that employees, partners and customers of the company feel part of a large friendly family. We always find an opportunity to provide assistance to those who need it. We help large families, orphans, we are sponsors of children's entertainment in the city and region, and we care about environmental protection."

Maishev, before getting involved with Zhas Kanat 2006 smart poultry factory in Rudny, held positions of a director in similar enterprises, such as Daulet M and Altyn San Kuz between 1998 and 2006. In 2006, he acquired Zhas Kanat 2006 and has pushed it through three stages of modernisation under the Business Roadmap 2020. He installed infrastructure and pur-

chased high-tech equipment, such as Japanese Nabel's equipment.

Maishev's leadership automated almost all stages of production processes, including the system of electronic weighing of raw materials, the mixed fodder preparation process, modern cellular equipment with automatic systems, the transportation of eggs to the sorting shop, the modern sorting machine and the automatic poultry slaughter line.

The automation of the processes increased the production of eggs from 7 million to 250 million per year, meat production from 30 tonnes to 500 tonnes. Poultry production increased from 100,000 to 1.4 million tonnes. Labour productivity has grown by more than 1.5 times. In an eight-hour working day, Zhas Kanat 2006 transports and packs up to one million eggs.

Their products are sold throughout Kazakhstan and exported to Russia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. They also plan to expand to the Iranian and Chinese markets.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Emphasis on economic diplomacy positions Kazakhstan well to attract investment in times of growing competition

In today's highly competitive global environment, economic and trade ties are an increasingly important part of international diplomacy. Nowadays, official government visits focus not only on international political issues, but also on developing closer economic cooperation, encouraging investment and promoting exports. Embassies deal with diplomatic and consular issues and also increasingly engage with foreign investors, businesses, and trade organisations.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev was, therefore, right to task the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to attract high quality foreign direct investment to Kazakhstan. Under the ministry's expanded remit, it will be responsible not just for attracting FDI but also for promoting the export of the country's products around the world.

These changes make sense. As President Nazarbayev noted, the foreign ministry's staff speak numerous languages and know the countries of their missions' presence well. Perhaps, most importantly, the ministry has the ability to conduct economic diplomacy through embassies and foreign missions across the globe.

The newly appointed Foreign Minister Beibut Atamkulov is the right person to lead this important change. He has dedicated most of his career to the economic success of Kazakhstan. His decades of professional experience, working closely with foreign businesses, will give the MFA the economic vision and leadership it needs to meet this important challenge.

Attracting high-quality investment is becoming even more competitive, with many countries around the world vying for the same foreign business and reliable sources of capital. For this reason, it is important for Kazakhstan to continually adapt to new global realities and stay ahead of the curve.

Each year the foreign ministry and its global diplomats help to organise more than 300 trade, economic and investment events and approximately 600 foreign delegation visits to Kazakhstan and vice versa. Such engagements have already facilitated an increase in foreign direct investment and the President's most recent

changes will provide even greater impetus.

Building upon this, major achievements were made in 2018 in the sphere of economic diplomacy. This included implementing agreements reached by President Nazarbayev during foreign visits and promoting the transit and transport potential of Kazakhstan through the Nurly Zhol programme, which enables major investment in Kazakhstan's infrastructure, as well as in conjunction with China's Belt and Road Initiative.

These will remain important priorities for 2019, in addition to supporting Kazakhstan's domestic companies and developing the tourism industry (the foreign ministry is directly involved in helping implement the state programme for tourism). Enabling foreign direct investment, promoting exports, as well as contributing to the development of the Eurasian Economic Union, are also amongst other important priorities.

When it comes to securing foreign investment, Kazakhstan has attracted more than \$300 billion dollars in FDI since independence, making the country the leading investment destination in Central Asia. Over the past two years alone, foreign investors have invested over \$20 billion dollars annually in Kazakhstan's economy.

However, attracting high-quality investment is becoming even more competitive, with many countries around the world vying for the same foreign business and reliable sources of capital. For this reason, it is important for Kazakhstan to continually adapt to new global realities and stay ahead of the curve.

As a Kazakh deputy foreign minister noted during a recent interview, "As we seek to further modernise our economy in order to reach our goal of joining the top 30 most developed countries by 2050, we naturally need to strengthen our efforts to attract a diversified range of foreign investments and technologies."

The foreign ministry will now oversee the work of the Committee for Investment, as well as the work of Kazakh Invest, the national company tasked with attracting FDI to Kazakhstan. This expanded remit will give the foreign ministry the additional capabilities and resources needed to deliver for Kazakhstan and its people.

Placing economic diplomacy under the remit of the foreign ministry, an organisation with extensive international experience, is a positive and forward-thinking decision. It will help to safeguard Kazakhstan's economic future and have a clear impact on our country's ability to attract foreign investment and promote the exports of a diverse range of national products.

In a highly competitive global environment, this move will ensure Kazakhstan can remain the top investment destination in Central Asia and an economic powerhouse in the wider region.

Singapore welcomes AIFC establishment, minister says, as FinTech seems most promising area of cooperation

By Karlygash Ezhzenova

Singaporean Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Dr. Koh Poh Koon shared his views on relations with Kazakhstan, the prospects of cooperation with AIFC and the future of talks on a free trade agreement between Singapore and the Eurasian Economic Union, among other subjects, in this interview.



Dr. Koh Poh Koon

Singapore is seen by Kazakhstan as a key partner in Southeast Asia. Many of the reforms in Kazakhstan are based on its successful experience. How has Singapore supported implementing your solutions in Kazakhstan and have these solutions been executed successfully in other countries?

Singapore welcomes Kazakhstan's interest in Southeast Asia and we are glad that Kazakhstan views us as a good partner in the region. Kazakhstan and Singapore share a close relationship – President Nursultan Nazarbayev was a personal friend of the late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew.

Singapore is happy to share our developmental experience with our friends and partners and I'm happy to note that it has been useful to Kazakhstan when formulating your own policies. I am also heartened that these policies, spanning across areas from education to public administration and pension reform, have been successfully implemented.

To support Kazakhstan's public administration reforms, Kazakhstan and Singapore have established institutional linkages, such as the collaboration between Singapore's Civil Service College and Kazakhstan's Academy of Public Administration on leadership training, with two workshops for 150 Kazakh officials conducted in 2016. The Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy also renewed its partnership with Nazarbayev University to offer Masters programmes and courses to promising Kazakh executives. The Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy has conducted courses for more than 700 senior Kazakh officials to date as well.

The Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE), an agency of the Singapore government, has also been active in facilitating deeper collaboration between Kazakhstan and Singapore by organising study visits and workshops for Kazakh officials. For instance, there was a study trip last November for the Housing and Construction Savings Bank of Kazakhstan to learn more about Singapore's public housing policies. I understand that the bank's mission is to promote homeownership in Kazakhstan and I hope Singapore's experience with public housing can contribute to that mission in a meaningful way. SCE is also working with the Kazakhstan Embassy in Singapore to organise a series of cyber security, digital electronics and aerospace workshops for Kazakh government officials in Singapore in 2019.

Singapore's growth over the past 53 years has been a result of Singapore adopting best practices from various countries around the world and more importantly, adapting it to the Singapore context to ensure its continued relevance and success. In the same way, Singapore's "solutions" can also be adapted to fit the local context of other countries. We have seen this in a number of places, including in Tatarstan, Russia. The President of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnikhanov, has personally cited Singapore for inspiring many of Tatarstan's reforms, including the transformation of Tatarstan into one of Russia's most investment friendly regions.

What are your views on establishing the Astana International Financial Centre? How promising can it be for Singaporean investors?

Singapore welcomes the establishment of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) as part of Kazakhstan's efforts in becoming a gateway for foreign investments across Central Asia. Singapore looks forward to the development of the AIFC and is confident that the AIFC will have a positive impact on the financial landscape in the Central Asian region.

I understand that FinTech is one of the key activities of the AIFC. This could be a potential area within which to explore collaborations and connections with the FinTech ecosystem in Singapore and the Central Asian region.

Despite the efforts made by certain powers to isolate the Russian economy, Singaporean business, instead, has opened a window for Russia, providing an opportunity to interact with the whole world. What is Singapore's interest in Russia?

Singapore believes in maintaining good bilateral ties with as many countries as possible. Our policy is to serve Asia as well as our trade partners from all over the world. We thus view our relationships with our partners as "all-weather relationships" and will continue to promote opportunities for our trade partners within the rule of law. This principle and policy apply to Russia and to any other country that trades with Singapore.

With over 80 percent of the world's top trading companies anchored here and a strong network of global companies, Singapore is in a good position to serve as a gateway for Russian and Kazakh companies to venture into the Southeast Asian market. We are a safe and reliable springboard from which Russian and Kazakh companies can expand into the region. Our agencies provide a wide suite of services to facilitate this and we have many success stories. Singapore has also developed in-depth market experience and strong regional connectivity through our membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This has helped to cement our status as a regional trading hub. Our strong commitment to free trade is echoed in our policies and is reflected in our strong trade infrastructure and skilled, globalised workforce.

What has been the outcome of the free trade agreement (FTA) draft between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Singapore? What will be the format and content of the agreement? What key areas are identified? Is there any chance for a similar project between Kazakhstan and Singapore?

A joint feasibility study on an EAEU-Singapore FTA by the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and Singapore found that there is much scope to catalyse, expand and diversify trade and economic relations through the FTA. At present, the FTA is set to be the first comprehensive trade agreement negotiated

between the EAEU and an external party. It covers areas beyond traditional trade in goods and includes services, investment, e-commerce, competition policy and intellectual property rights.

Kazakhstan, as a member state of the EAEU, will naturally be able to enjoy the benefits of the EAEU-Singapore FTA when it enters into force. It is, therefore, not necessary to duplicate this effort by Kazakhstan and Singapore embarking on a separate bilateral FTA. There are also existing agreements between our countries. Kazakhstan and Singapore have concluded a bilateral investment treaty which was signed when the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev visited Singapore last November.

To support Kazakhstan's public administration reforms, Kazakhstan and Singapore have established institutional linkages, such as the collaboration between Singapore's Civil Service College and Kazakhstan's Academy of Public Administration.

How do you see the future and cooperation perspectives between EAEU and ASEAN countries?

The ASEAN market holds huge potential for EAEU companies. The region is experiencing development at an unprecedented pace, with a combined GDP worth \$2.6 trillion and a consistent upward growth trajectory. Our combined population of more than 640 million presents a huge market for companies looking to grow their presence in the region. ASEAN is projected to become the fourth largest economy in the world by 2030, after the U.S., China and the European Union (EU). The EAEU-Singapore FTA will be an important step towards strengthening trade infrastructure between Singapore and the EAEU and might potentially be a stepping stone for an eventual ASEAN-EAEU FTA, which will bring together a collective market of 780 million people and combined GDP of over \$6.6 trillion and deepen integration between our regions.

Currently, both regions are involved in cooperation activities geared towards enhancing economic relations, specifically those under the post-2017 ASEAN-Russia Trade and Investment Cooperation Work Programme. ASEAN and the EAEU are also working towards finalising a non-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU) between ASEAN and the EEC on economic cooperation. In the immediate to mid-term, I look forward to more cooperation between ASEAN and the EAEU in the areas of customs procedures and trade facilitation (CPTF), sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures, e-commerce, investment and SME development, among others.

This interview was originally done by Karlygash Ezhzenova, Editor-in-Chief of Exclusive.kz magazine, and published here with permission.

THE ASTANA TIMES

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Sincerely,
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Editor-in-Chief
The Astana Times

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THE ASTANA TIMES

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Greenhouse industry faces low demand, competition from Uzbekistan

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh businesspeople establishing greenhouses in the country face competition from Uzbekistan producers and lack of retail availability. While healthy food is trending, the demand for fresh herbs and salad fixings is still low.

Despite the odds, the Almaty region's GreenEco greenhouse in Panfilovo village of Talgar district is making a go of it. The facility is distinguished from other Kazakh greenhouses by cutting edge equipment and the highest level of computerisation and automation of all processes. Greens and herbs are grown year-round using the latest technologies from Denmark, Holland and Israel.

Despite the established procedures, the business can hardly be called profitable and requires significant investments, said company director Roman Shneiderman, according to kapital.kz.

"We started the construction of the greenhouse in 2016. In October 2017, we started production. Since this is a conveyor production, it took about five months to set up the technical parts of the operation. These include agricultural tests, material selection, line setting and correctly built light and temperature conditions. It takes 35 days from the moment of sowing to harvest," he noted.

The greenhouse is unique, as



Photo credit: kapital.kz.

no others in the country have the same technical equipment and quality. GreenEco is a fifth-generation complex. The control system is completely computerised and monitored by a single operator. Without a sales department, the 30-person staff is a very low number for the field.

"The working area is 1.3 hectares and design capacity is up to 60 tonnes per month (three million beams per year). But, unfortunately, the production is not working at full capacity, but at approximately 65-70 percent. This is due to the low consumption culture of greens and the fact that we cannot sell all

the grown products. To do this, we enter the markets of other cities. In addition to Almaty, we supply products to Astana and Karaganda, as well as to two large retail chains in Pavlodar and Taldykorgan. Also, there are separate private deliveries to Taraz, Atyrau and Ust-Kamenogorsk," said Shneiderman.

The products are in demand in Russia, but the company faces a logistics problem.

"Since this is a fresh product, it should be always fresh. Therefore, now we are working on the technology of its delivery, after which we will be able to enter the Russian market," he noted.

The company currently grows 18 varieties of salads and herbs.

"We do not plan to expand the range of products, because we even had to reduce it a little bit. Our range began with 24 types; later, there was a need to reduce it. The most exotic species were removed, because people simply did not understand what to do with them. Very few perceive greens as a complete product in the diet, although healthy food today is a trend that is rapidly gaining momentum," he said.

Although the company hoped to convince its fellow Kazakhs of the importance of salads in their diets, the demand for green consumption it expected did not materialise.

"Europeans eat an average of 25 bunches of lettuce a year and Almaty residents eat 10 times less. Of the three million lettuce bundles produced, two million are sold in Almaty. For a long time, the salad was in the luxury price segment, and, so far, this culture has not developed," he said.

According to Shneiderman, the company also faces unfair competition from some Uzbek suppliers, who import their products illegally, especially in summer.

"About 90 percent of such greens come from Uzbekistan. If this situation were controlled, we would be more competitive. The products brought here without customs duties and additional tax deductions, without verification by the State Inspection Committee, without quarantine certificates and tests for nitrates, of course, will be much cheaper. On the market, such products have a low cost and this is hard dumping in relation to us. It is unhealthy competition," he claimed.

GreenEco has also faced the unwillingness of the retail market to work with its product, although the situation has improved.

"When we started trading, we did not plan to create our own sales department, but only deal with production. The distribution company was to work with the stores, but it turned out that they do not know how to deal with such a fragile product as greens. They do not comply with the temperature and throw boxes. As a result, the stores received a product of very low quality and we received complaints first of all," he noted.

"After that, we decided to create a sales and logistics department. Almost every consumer was forced to take the goods themselves and monitor their layout and proper sale. Now, we serve more than 90 supermarkets in Kazakhstan and very few of them are ready for the correct sales of the goods," he said.

Kazakhstan offers investors stable political, social and economic climate, says Kazakh Invest executive

Continued from Page A1

"The World Bank estimates that there are over 5,000 unexplored deposits of mineral reserves still present in Kazakhstan valued at more than \$46 trillion. Advanced technologies are... heavily dependent on the rare earth metals that Kazakhstan can extract and process," he added.

The country's geographic position makes it a regional hub creating opportunities to invest in logistics and offer a faster transportation route across its land.

"Kazakhstan is playing a crucial role in China's Belt and Road Initiative, which creates many opportunities for investors in the infrastructure, logistics and transportation sectors... Kazakhstan is central to the New Silk Road project, as major international transport corridors such as Western Europe-West-

ern China, TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe, Caucasus, Asia) and the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route will run through Kazakhstan, cutting the time it takes to move goods between Asia and Europe by two-thirds," said Birimzhan.

Agriculture, which received particular attention from the government, should be attractive to investors.

"The government has placed a particular focus on agribusiness, where Kazakhstan has unparalleled potential. We are one of only a handful of countries globally with exactly the right conditions for growing wheat and grain without artificial irrigation... Kazakhstan's arable land represents an area larger than the entire United Kingdom, meaning there is incredible potential for investors willing to think big," he noted.

Kazakhstan offers global investors an institutionalised sys-

tem and particular economic benefits.

"Investment and tax benefits are being offered to investors, especially for priority projects. These include exemptions from corporate income tax and land tax for up to 10 years and from property tax for up to eight years," he added.

Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), launched in 2018, also offers global investors an internationally recognised system for doing business and investments and provides certain benefits in the country.

"The AIFC is governed by English common law and English is also the official language of the AIFC. It offers its participants tax exemptions for 50 years, a simplified visa and employment regime and will connect Astana with other global financial centres such as Dubai, Singapore, London and New York," he noted.

Kazakh Invest was established in 2017 to give investors timely and impartial support.

"We provide end-to-end support to foreign investors and businesses seeking to capitalise on Kazakhstan's progressive, business-friendly environment. Our dedicated team of specialists offers timely and impartial advice on key investment projects across a range of national industries. We have international representatives in many of the world's leading economic centres and act as a single point of contact for businesses setting up or investing in Kazakhstan," noted Birimzhan.

"Even though many countries around the world are putting up barriers and creating obstacles for investors, businesses should feel confident that Kazakhstan will continue to actively facilitate and support global investment," he added.

Finance ministry presents draft law to improve rehabilitation, bankruptcy procedures

By Laura Tussupbekova

ASTANA – The Ministry of Finance presented Jan. 10 the draft law on improving rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures of business entities at the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament).

Approximately 4,000 business entities are undergoing the bankruptcy procedure and 400 enterprises are in need of rehabilitation.

"The number of business entities in difficult financial situations is much more. The current law does not allow an entrepreneur to shut down business in a short time. The rehabilitation and bankruptcy are also complicated



Kanat Baedilov

procedures. The court rejects bankruptcy, as it cannot provide

an objective assessment of the financial condition of the entity. A minor asset is regarded by the court as an opportunity to pay off debts," said Vice Minister of Finance Kanat Baedilov.

The same refers to the rehabilitation procedure application.

"The court refuses to use rehabilitation procedure as the debtor is solvent or has not proved the availability of resources to restore solvency. The draft law aims to resolve these issues. Its main mission is to simplify the conditions for rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures and liquidation of inactive debtors," he said.

The law provides that a legal entity will be declared bankrupt

on the basis of a negative balance when liabilities exceed assets. The rehabilitation procedure will be performed on the basis of a positive balance, subject to non-payment, when assets exceed liabilities.

The rehabilitation procedure will also be available to individual entrepreneurs.

The proposed initiatives will increase the rehabilitation and bankruptcy procedures by business entities to 32 percent. The reduction of terms to 20 percent and costs up to 40 percent is expected to positively affect the position of Kazakhstan in the Resolution of Insolvency indicator in the World Bank's Doing Business rating.

AGF Group increases home textile exports



Photo credit: kapital.kz.

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – AGF Group, Kazakhstan's first specialised home textile manufacturer, has supplied 4.4 billion tenge (US\$11.9 million) in

products to foreign markets in 2018, increasing export production sevenfold. In 2015, the company signed a contract with IKEA to supply bed linens using timely state support.

Located in Shymkent, AGF Group was the first specialised garment factory and one of the country's largest home textile manufacturers. Established more than seven years ago, it has been exporting products for five years.

To increase the volume of production and production capacity, as well as develop new markets, AGF needed a bank loan. The company decided to use state support, receiving a 200-million tenge (US\$540,000) loan from the Kazakh Export national company and increasing its staff to 250. Using the borrowed funds, the company was able to export seven times more products compared to the same period the previous year.

AGF Group's share of bed linen exports reached 93 percent in 2016, growing to 96 percent in the first half of this year. Two years

ago, the company's annual revenue from product sales was 450 million tenge (US\$1.2 million); the export volume in the first 11 months of 2018 has reached 4.4 billion tenge (US\$11.9 million).

AGF Group plans to create new brands such as Arua, a home textile and bed linen line made from natural materials, and Suave, a line of premium textiles.

Kazakh Export can provide services for any Kazakh enterprise which produces non-primary goods and plans to enter international markets. The organisation protects any Kazakh business from unwanted risks and provides 13 different tools to support small and medium-sized businesses, including credit insurance, bank payment guarantee insurance and pre-export financing.

A subsidiary of Baiterek Holding, Kazakh Export was established to support export growth of non-commodity goods, works, services in priority sectors of the economy and forming financial-insurance and non-financial support for Kazakh enterprises. By 2023, it plans to become a key development institution in implementing state foreign economic policy in the Central Asian region and countries within the Eurasian Economic Union.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Businesswomen elevate small retail business to new level

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – When sisters Nasima and Nafisa Rozikova realised the format of the store near their house did not meet their needs, they decided to open their own.

The new shop is distinguished by good-neighbourliness, thoughtful consumption and the choice of useful and eco-friendly products. They intend to change people's minds and help local manufacturers enter the Almaty market.

"We will affect the market due to the fact that local organic products will appear on the shelves of regular stores," said Nasima Rozikova, according to Kapital.kz.

The small but cosy store is located in a high-rise building. Inside, everything is arranged neatly and with taste, which immediately distinguishes it from the usual markets.

"I used to do clothing retail and Nafisa worked in restaurants and catering. We began to wonder how we could combine all our experience and make a joint project. We



agreed on the opening of the store, but we decided that it will be different from all others," she said.

"On average, a person goes to

such a shop three times a week only for the most necessary food-stuffs. There are many good manufacturers in Almaty, but they are

all dispersed. If you want to buy something special, you have to go to an expensive and beautiful supermarket, and if you need spices,

you should go to a market. We thought it would be good to put them together and influence the selection of products. That is, this is a completely different format of the store near the house – to give people what they didn't even ask for," she added.

The shop is within walking distance, allowing customers to pick up fresh coffee and a bun on the way to work. It offers the comfort and atmosphere of a good supermarket, with a product selection similar to Esentai Gourmet.

"I have been living most of the time in France for the last eleven years. There, bio-shops are very popular. These stores are much smaller than ordinary supermarkets, but not so small. We were inspired by them, but in the process, we made our own adjustments," said Nasima Rozikova.

The entrepreneurs noted they cannot call their store a bio or eco shop, as Kazakhstan does not have a bio-certification procedure at the national level.

"We call our products good-looking products. Before putting

it on the shelf, we check it for composition and environmental friendliness. For now, we are forming the composition of what we ourselves would like to see in stores. Also, people confuse eco, farm and organic products and these are completely different things. So far, we all perceive this as one and our task is to show the difference," said Nafisa Rozikova.

The store offers spices, dairy products from farmers, vegan products and vegetables grown in a "good way." Products are supplied directly by local manufacturers or distributors.

The concept of thoughtful consumption reflects people's choices when they vote for a certain product. Internal business ethics also apply to environmental friendliness.

The attitude towards customers is similar to a coffee shop. The businesswomen note it is important to know and remember the name and preferences of each of their clients, which helps them to connect with customers and recommend future products.

Kazakh ice cream gets silver in Forbes Russia top 10 new brands rating

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Forbes Russia, one of the most popular and authoritative economic rating agencies, has ranked Shin-Line's Bakhroma ice cream second among its top 10 best new products of 2018.

"One of the main directions of development of our company is export. In 2018, we exceeded the 10 percent level in exports. The Bakhroma brand, which had been developed for two years specifically for export markets, made a significant contribution to this growth. This product is innovative and completely corresponds to international trends. The ice cream is made using a high-tech line and has a complex structure. It is impossible to reproduce it using any simple production line. Therefore, this type is unique; it is very rare and is made only by world leaders in ice cream production," said Shin-Line President Andrei Shin.

Forbes noted the company, operating since 1995, is one of the world's largest ice cream producers. The Bakhroma brand was developed to expand its market share beyond Kazakhstan's borders, with plans to enter Russia and Europe. Exports last year totalled 2,100 tonnes.

During development, focus groups were studied in China, Kazakhstan and Russia. As a result, the name Bakhroma was chosen, which can be understood both in Europe and Asia, and designers created a separate graphic element

for each type of ice cream. The brand entered the Russian market through the Auchan retail chain, with Forbes valuing sales in the past year at 427.5 million roubles (US\$6.4 million).

Sales in Russia comprise approximately 60 percent of the company's exports. Thanks to active sales in the market last year, which reached 950 tonnes, exports

increased by three times. While the figure represents a small percentage of the 350,000-tonne Russian ice cream market, Shin-Line plans to increase sales at least twice in the coming year. The company's other brands, such as Trolls, Mishka at the Arctic Pole and Bomb, can be found in Russian cities including Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Sochi.

Shin-Line products are available in Central Asian markets in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan; Mongolia and China, one of the largest and highly competitive consumer markets in the world. Negotiations are underway to enter the Caucasus and Ukrainian markets and products are also being tested in Belarus.



Tele2 AB telecom operator to leave Kazakh market

Staff Report

ASTANA – Swedish company Tele2 AB has announced its intention to sell its stake in Mobile Telecom Service (Tele2), the Tele2 Group-Kazakhtelecom joint venture, to Kazakhtelecom. The closing is expected in approximately six months.

The Dec. 12 agreement, whereby Kazakhtelecom will purchase 75 percent of Kcell from Telia Company and Fintur, gives Tele2 AB the opportunity to exercise its put option and sell its shares in the joint venture to Kazakhtelecom. Tele2 AB filed a put option notice with Kazakhtelecom Dec. 28 to initiate the process.

"The put option price is based on a fair market value principle

and will be determined through an agreed valuation process, based on standard methodology, including independent third-party advisors," according to a statement on Tele2 AB's website.

When Tele2 Group leaves the Kazakh market, Kazakhtelecom will control three (Altel, Kcell and Tele2) of the country's four mobile operators.

The joint venture will continue its work and Tele2 AB will continue its management until the transaction is closed.

An 87-billion tenge (US\$ 229.51 million) shareholder loan from Tele2 to the joint venture is to be fully repaid at the time of

closing. The joint venture represented 9 percent of Tele2 Group revenue from January-June 2018.

In 2010, Kazakhtelecom sold 51 percent of its shares in Kazakh mobile operator Mobile

Telecom Service to Tele2 Group. In March 2016, Tele2 Group and Kazakhtelecom completed a transaction to merge subsidiary mobile operators Altel (Altel 4G) and Tele2.

According to the terms of the agreement, Kazakhtelecom and

Tele2 received 51 percent and 49 percent of the share capital and 49 percent and 51 percent of the voting shares of the joint company, respectively.

When Tele2 Group leaves the Kazakh market, Kazakhtelecom will control three (Altel, Kcell and Tele2) of the country's four mobile operators.

Kazakhtelecom is the largest fixed-line operator in Kazakhstan. The company's main shareholder is the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund with 45.9 percent of the authorised capital (52.03 percent of ordinary shares).

Founded in 1993, Tele2 Group is an international telecommunications company serving 13 million subscribers in nine countries.

Kostanai region foreign investments increase two-fold

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Kostanai region has developed 40 investment projects totalling more than 2.1 trillion tenge (US\$5.5 billion) to implement in 2018-2025, reported Kazinform. Fourteen projects have been launched since 2017 and four projects worth 20 billion tenge (US\$52 million) were executed last year.

The region has worked hard in recent years to attract investments. Foreign investments of 6.1 billion tenge (US\$16 million) in 2017 increased almost two-fold to 11.7 billion tenge (US\$30 million) last year.

"The indices of physical volume of investment in fixed assets were 82 and 92.5 percent, respectively, in 2015 and 2016; this figure stood at 104.3 percent in 2017. This year, it achieved 112.9 percent," said Kostanai region Deputy Akim (Governor) Meirzhan Myrzaliyev.

A meat processing plant launched in Arkalyk in December expects to reach its design capacity of 10 tonnes per day by 2020. Plans are underway to start a one-billion tenge (US\$2.6 million) feedlot for 3,000 cattle in September.

Composite Group intends to produce up to 3,000 Belarus tractors annually in the Kostanai industrial zone under license of the Minsk Tractor Works. The project, valued at 2.3 billion tenge (US\$6 million) in its initial stage, will increase to 15 billion tenge (US\$40 million) in the coming years.

Approximately one billion tenge (US\$2.6 million) will be invested in a building materials and metal structures plant.

"The largest mill complex in Kazakhstan with an annual capacity of 155,000 tonnes of flour was also launched last year. The entire production cycle, starting from the receiving operation to the packaging of finished products, is under a single computerised accounting. The plant will export to Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The single processing line, with a capacity of 700 tonnes per day of grain, operates on a multisystem of control and management. It is possible to switch the flour-milling industry to fully automatic mode," according to the regional press service.

A \$100 million concrete plant has started operation, producing high-quality cement to cover construction industry needs in the country and southern regions of Russia.

This year, Kazakh enterprise BioGrain and China Marine Bunker will build a \$300 million agricultural hub for deep processing of grains and oilseeds for export to China.

The Kostanai car assembly plant will produce Peugeot 301s using the small assembly method for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) market. The release is included in the Peugeot-Citroen production programme and the facility has set an ambitious task to assemble 25,000 cars this year.

In 2017, the SaryarkaAvtoProm plant produced 7,772 cars, 93 trucks and 76 vehicles capable of transporting 10 or more people.

Twelve projects worth more than one trillion tenge (US\$2.6 billion) will be implemented in the zone in the near future. The projects relate to the engineering, agriculture and gas industries.



Nation&Capital

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PEOPLE

Physically challenged coach promotes Paralympics sports

B2

CULTURE

Astana Ballet launches backstage tours

B3

SPORTS

Boxer Gennady Golovkin splits with his promoter

B7

Kazakh designer wins NASA competition

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh designer Arsen Seksenbayev was among the winners of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) competition with the best sketch for the space laboratory.

Seksenbayev's sketch will be the basis for building a laboratory aboard the International Space Station to study extra-terrestrial plants. NASA has offered a preliminary contract and invited him to work in the United States for three years.

The designer has received his honorarium, but is still considering the conditions of the contract. Should he sign it, he will be forced to leave his family and interior design business.

"One of the conditions is that I



am moving [alone]. There will be no invitation to my family. It will be a contract to work for three years. It will be directly connected with my participation. As we say in design, we have author's supervision," he said.

Seksenbayev learned of his win from close friends. When he received the e-mail from the space research centre, he placed it in the trash thinking it was a spam.

"I did [the sketch] as I would have if I were in the place of these scientists. But as I said earlier, I believe that this is a coin-

idence of circumstances; I was really lucky," he added.

The results of the contest were announced Dec. 26. NASA picked three winners among the nearly 100 entries, which also included Chinese game animation developer Lee Hong You and English supervisor Hugh Turner.

Seksenbayev, who lives and works in the capital, provides services to Kazakh and Russian pop stars and cinema. He designs furniture and has developed his own design, known as geometric style.

Moviegoers view Central Asia through cinematic lens at documentary film festival

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The recent 2018 Central Asian Documentary Film Festival (CADF) in Almaty explored themes of environment, identity and migration in the region.

The documentary festival was part of Almaty's fifth Clique Film Festival and included short and feature-length film directors from Canada, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands and Russia. They were evaluated by jury members, including Oxford Brookes University lecturer Rico

Isaacs, International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) Bertha Fund head Isabel Fernandez, film director Tinatin Gurchiani and IDFA programmer and producer Viktoriya Kalashinkova.

Zaheed Mawani's documentary "Harvest Moon" was awarded best picture, which also recognised the work of operator Sebastián Hiriart, and the best director award went to Denis Shabayev for his documentary about a young Tajik, "Not My Job."

"'Harvest Moon,' a film about a family that harvests walnuts, was shot beautifully and told in a way in which it was a universal story about a family, which I think is

important – to not present Central Asia as an obscure and oriental 'other'... It could have been a story told anywhere in the world, but Central Asia was the setting," said Isaacs in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

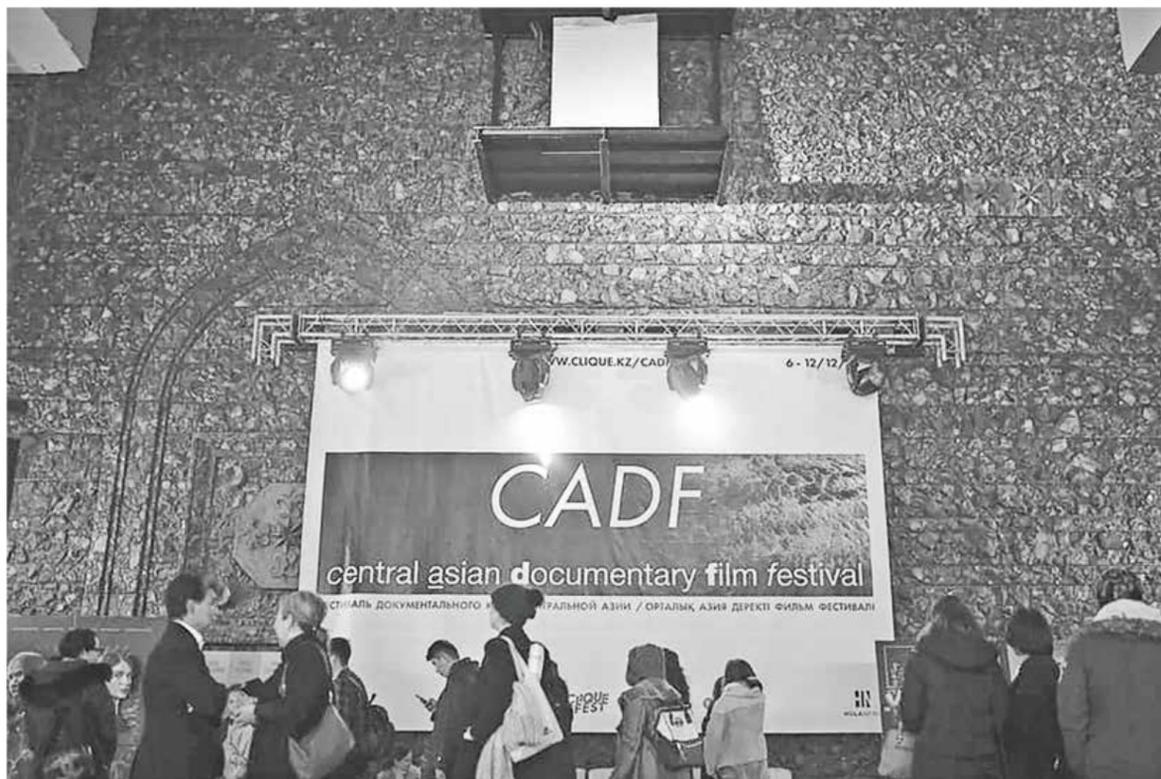
In addition to considering technical aspects such as cinematography and character development, the jury paid close attention to the films' substantive content.

"To what extent do you have an emotional relationship with what you are watching?" he asked regarding the jury's criteria for awards. "There was a very charming protagonist in the documen-

tary 'Songs of Abdul' about a Tajik from Pamir who goes to work in Moscow. He really won you over and was a joy to watch. Life is difficult for him, but through song and dance, he manages to accentuate the positives in life."

"One key theme [across the documentaries] was the question of migration, explored in different ways," he added. "In terms of labour migration, there were a few films about Tajiks migrating to Russia for work, the difficulties that imposes upon them and what that tells us about Tajikistan and its economic situation."

Continued on Page B3



Astana Opera stages "Swan Lake," "The Nutcracker" ballets in Italy, Spain

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Astana Opera Ballet Company presented Pyotr Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" Dec. 20-23 at the Carlo Felice Theatre in Genoa.

"The audience is amazing. They gave us a warm welcome. When we performed on the first day, the children screamed and asked for an encore. Children are the most sincere audience. They believed in the fairy tale because we were able to convey the idea of a magic nutcracker in this ballet," said Astana Opera leading soloist Madina Basybayeva.

Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Aigerim Beketayeva performed

the part of Marie and Bakhtiyar Adamzhan played the role of the Nutcracker Prince. The Carlo Felice symphony orchestra and chorus performed under the leadership of Astana Opera conductor Arman Urazgaliyev.

"The tickets for all six performances were sold out before the tour. The ballet extravaganza is addressed to the wide audience. The Italian public enthusiastically greeted the ballet about the enchanted prince. The viewers appreciated the large-scale sets, skillfully crafted props and the main attraction of the stage décor – a giant Christmas tree," according to the release.

Continued on Page B3

Local organisation stimulates Astana's interest in arts

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Art Masters London is a commercial educational organisation that holds one-time and short-term visual arts courses and lectures in the city. The unique educational project aims to engage individuals and develop their interest in art, said founder and art expert Assel Kambalova in an interview with The Astana Times.

"I created the project when I was a student in England. I lived in London for a long time. I still spend most of my time there, approximately [the last] nine years. My friends and I started a part-time job because we wanted to have a work experience. In London, most of the museums and galleries are free for visitors. Thus, we used this opportunity and held excursions. With time, it turned into a business. Then, when I started to come to Astana frequently, I decided to turn it into a private educational project in arts and humanities," she said.

The organisation focuses on lec-

tures in creative and mixed formats to engage and interest listeners.

"We stress high quality knowledge and experience. Our courses and lectures' formats are breakfasts, branches and art tours. Along with the National Museum, we made a tour on Picasso and Tretyakov Gallery when it was in Astana," she added. "Once we had an art and wine format lecture when people enjoyed wine and listened to a lecture about muses. We always set the table with drinks."

Along with the format, Kambalova pays specific attention to the quality of the information and way it is presented.

"Our motto is 'cultivating knowledge,' but not dull academic knowledge. Not that it's bad, but quite boring. Not every person is able to tell about his or her subject with inspiration year after year. Therefore, we decided to create courses with people who are excited about their subject and theme and able to tell it beautifully in the two hours of the lecture," she said.

Continued on Page B3



THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

BARYS ARENA

January 17 at 7.30 p.m. HC Barys – HC Salavat Yulaev Ufa

ASTANA OPERA

January 18 at 7 p.m. An Evening of Rachmaninoff's Music

January 25 at 7 p.m. An Evening by the Fireplace, concert

January 27 at 5 p.m. Kazakh Quartet Concert

January 30 at 7 p.m. Manon, ballet

RADISSON HOTEL

January 19 at 7 p.m. Astana Burns Supper 2019

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Physically challenged coach promotes Paralympics sports

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

ASTANA – Although blind in one eye, Kuralbai Orynbassaruly has achieved excellent results in sambo and judo without any concession to his vision impairment. Following his first and only experience in the Rio 2016 Summer Paralympic Games, he has focused on popularising sporting opportunities for Kazakh individuals with disabilities.

"I lost my eye when I was 10 years old. I have an ocular prosthesis in my left eye. I always tried to conceal my physical impairment from others. I was afraid that this would stop my career in sports," he said in an exclusive interview for this story.

Orynbassaruly is a three-time winner of the Asia Sambo Championship and bronze medallist at the Sambo World Championship.

Orynbassaruly's works as a senior His mentees have remarkable achievements in sambo, judo and kazaksha kures.

He started to speak about his disability when Kazakhstan's National Paralympics Committee introduced him as a participant in the Rio Games, where he competed in Paralympics judo.

"I was 37 when I participated in the Rio Paralympics. It was my first experience of participating in Paralympics Games. I saw that the Paralympics movement has developed in other countries. My interest was not just in judo and sambo. I saw how the system works for different sports. I got many insights from participation in the most important international tournament in my life. Now, my goal is to promote the Paralympics movement in Kazakhstan. In 2019, I plan to open a sports club for disabled people in Shymkent. I



Kuralbai Orynbassaruly

want to give them an opportunity to realise their potential in sports. I will be happy to coach them and share all the experience I have in martial arts," he said.

Orynbassaruly, who works as a senior coach at one of Shymkent's sports schools, became an honoured coach of Kazakhstan in 2017. His mentees have remarkable achievements in sambo, judo and kazaksha kures (Kazakh wrestling).

Sabyrzhon Abildauly was the winner of the Kazakhstan Sambo, Judo and Kazaksha kures Championships and bronze medallist at the Asia and World Sambo Championships; Abdyrazak Baglan, winner of the Asia Sambo Championship and bronze medallist at the World Sambo Championship; Ruza Duktrubayeva, winner of the Asia and Kazakhstan Sambo Championships and silver medallist at the World Sambo Championship, and Gaukhar Turmakanova, winner of the Kazakhstan Sambo, Judo and Kazaksha kures Championships, Asia Sambo Championship and World Sambo Championship.

"My participation in the 100 New Faces project is a great example for the young athletes I coach. I always tell them that they are able to reach any goal if they work hard. A professional will always get respect and recognition. Hard work will pay off. My life is a vivid example of this. I do not even know who introduced me to this project. I do not know the people who voted for me. I am grateful to all of them. Now, thanks to this project I can present my ideas to a wide audience through mass media and promote Paralympics values in Kazakhstan," he said.

One of 100 New Faces trains young sportspeople in rural area

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

ASTANA – Almas Beissenov, an 18-time winner of the Kazakhstan Athletics Championship, is sharing his experience with young athletes. He works as a coach at a sports school in a North Kazakhstan village, achieving great results despite severe weather conditions and lack of training facilities.

"We have many talented athletes here, but I am especially proud of Kristina Morozova. She was 17 when she participated in the Buenos Aires Youth Olympic Games 2018. She came in 10th in race walking. I think it is a great achievement for a girl from the countryside where athletes do not have access to modern sports facilities as they do in large cities. She worked very hard. Now, she studies at Almaty Sports College.



Almas Beissenov

She was included in the National Olympic Team," he said in an exclusive interview for this story.

Saumalkol village is located 248 kilometres from Petropavlovsk, the regional capital. Four-month snowy winters, with the temperature getting extremely low, are typical.

"We do not have any large sports facilities here. Our athletes have to train outside, even in winter.

Hopefully, we will have a sports and fitness complex in our village soon. The local authorities plan to start complex construction next year. I saw the building design. The issue is that the building has a standard design and does not include race tracks or other athletics training facilities. I made a request to local authorities to change the design and include the facilities for athletes' training. I also asked the regional business community to finance this part of the construction. I hope all these efforts have results and our athletes get an opportunity to train effectively all year round," he added.

Beissenov focuses on vulnerable children. He feels the importance of sports in educating orphan children and those from dysfunctional families cannot be overestimated.

"Stepan Spasskiy is an orphan child. He is a winner of several

regional athletics championships. In 2018, he won the Karaganda International Armanga Zhol (The Path to Dream) marathon. It is symbolic that he won this marathon. He was very happy to get his first prize money in this competition. It is very important to get these children involved in sports. They learn to set and achieve goals and a coach becomes their mentor not only in sports, but in life," he said.

In 2018, Beissenov was recognised by the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science and the North Kazakhstan regional administration for his contribution to educating the younger generation.

Thanks to the 100 New Faces project, he has become well-known in the region and beyond. Schools and universities often invite him for meetings with students, where he shares his knowledge and popularises sports among youth.

Tajik cultural heritage, local culture awareness encouraged in Kazakhstan, says community leader

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Avicenna, Almaty's Tajik cultural centre founded in 2009, seeks to strengthen Kazakhstan's inter-ethnic harmony and ensure the preservation and development of the ethnic group's traditions, customs and culture.

The community of up to 100 members studies Kazakh-Tajik historical and cultural relations and organises music, dance, art, literature and poetry events. Key projects include Sunday school to learn the Tajik language, attended by approximately 600 students, and the book "The Tajiks of Kazakhstan," which recounts their origin and daily life in the country.

Avicenna vice chair Shuhrat Tashpulatov has led the association's youth centre since 2012.

"I was born in Almaty, learned the Tajik language and have not

experienced the loss of my culture. Rather, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) is an institution that preserves ethno-cultural communities and their traditions, while also maintaining unity... I can observe that, over time, ethnic groups residing in Kazakhstan have not only preserved their culture, but are keenly aware of Kazakh and other cultures," he said in an interview with Assembly.kz.



Shuhrat Tashpulatov

Nauryz, the Persian New Year, is a celebration shared by Tajiks and Kazakhs.

"The Tajik embassy and ethno-cultural associations jointly gather the community outside, usually renting a field, or additionally at home to celebrate Nauryz. We really make an effort to engage closely with one another," he added.

In addition to their native land, Tajik communities may be found in neighbouring Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Approximately 47,000 Tajiks live in Kazakhstan, 80 percent of whom reside in the southern regions.

"The first Tajiks appeared on Kazakhstan's territory following the introduction of Islam in Central Asia, approximately in the 9th and 10th centuries. Tajiks were Zoroastrians and worshipped fire, which caused conflicts on religious

grounds, so many had to migrate to other places. In this way, some Tajiks migrated to Kazakhstan from the eastern part of Central Asia," said Tashpulatov.

Tajiks were later linked to Kazakhstan in the early 1900s by their work in rural areas.

"The southern region, as you know, is a fertile area for agriculture – the climate is warm and the land fertile. For this reason, Tajiks continue to work there in agriculture nowadays," he noted.

"It would be impossible to establish such an effective institution as the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan without certain qualities of the Kazakh population, such as warmth, hospitality and openness. These qualities were also displayed in the early 20th century, when the Kazakh population accepted many migrant ethnic groups into their homes," he added.

Okean Art: school for children with unlimited possibilities

Continued from Page A1

Zhanyarova graduated from Utemisov West Kazakhstan State University where she studied arts pedagogy in the 1990s. The decade represented the first years since Kazakhstan's independence and witnessed the tangible effects of economic crisis and high rates of unemployment. Despite the odds, she received an offer to teach art at the university.

The experience made her realise the university's "old school" Soviet teaching methods had to be changed. Zhanyarova was concerned with the methods for art education and her students were taught to draw "algorithmically."

"For example, the teachers tell you to draw a bear like this [as if there is only one way]. You do this [step], next [step], then this and you get a bunch of [almost] identical drawings. Some are neater,

some are less... this is not art, this is 'Do as I told you!' Art is about creating unique things," she said.

As she started developing a programme that would connect all the subjects, she experienced many unexpected and life-changing results. Her very first student, who had been diagnosed with autism and became healthy after a year of therapy, was the first time she realised that her work mattered and she needed to continue.

"I understand that if that kid had not received the art therapy, he could have lived disabled for the rest of his life. This changed his life. He graduated from an ordinary [public] school. Now, he is a young healthy adolescent," she said.

A student's progress is the best reward for her work.

"I was overwhelmed from how many new possibilities it can open and I decided to develop art therapy," she added.

Okean Art began as a more specialised school that only worked with children diagnosed with disabilities. A single question changed it into what it is today.

"We were working in an open space of Duman Oceanarium... It was very important for me to work with children with disabilities. [And to work] not their disabilities, but rather their abilities. That day, one mother came to me and said 'Does my kid have to have Down syndrome to go to your school?' And then there came a moment when I understood that there are many children who are clinically healthy, but still have psychological problems that parents or school pedagogues are not competent enough to solve," said Zhanyarova.

Okean Art doesn't segregate children in accordance with their clinical history. When forming a group, the school joins children based on their individual compatibilities. Age and health status do not play a role in forming a group and they are formed to be



Tatyana Zhanyarova

the most beneficial for all students.

"As for the parents of healthy children, they understand that there is nothing really scary about such an environment. Of course, there are parents who are somewhat scared of an inclusive class. For them, the school provides explanatory sessions," she added.

It is no coincidence that the school has the motto "Okean Art is for kids with unlimited possibilities," a word play in Russian that mirrors the narrow term "children with disabilities."

"For me this is not a charitable deed because [I work with] these 'poor and unfortunate' children. In fact, I am very interested... It is a very well-known fact that those kids who are visually impaired are better at hearing. The people who have some disabilities in one area always have

some better skills in other areas in terms of perception and physically. For healthy kids, it is not only learning about mercy, but learning to communicate, i.e. in a clinically unhealthy child you can find many healthy things," said Zhanyarova.

Okean Art has always provided free courses for children with disabilities. For the most part, the funds were provided by the school itself with occasional one-time subsidies.

The courses are mainly in Russian, but art therapy is available in three languages. For the latter, Zhanyarova believes language is secondary, because art transcends language and can speak for itself.

"I had an experience working with a French child and I don't speak French. The therapy went well, because there are many nonverbal interactions," she added.



CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Local organisation stimulates Astana's interest in arts

Continued from Page B1

"Our aim is to spread high-quality knowledge to people with different interests and views, who are not able to study at the university right now. They can choose the theme specifically where they have a gap or what they are interested in," she added.

The lectures can be one-time events on a certain theme or a short period as an academic course. At the end of the latter, students who attend 90 percent of the sessions can receive a certificate of completion. Depending on the audience, the lectures are in Russian, Kazakh or English.

"We have full-scale courses where we cover epochs and styles. In the last course on the History of Western Art, we started from the history of Ancient Greece and Rome and ended with 20th-century arts. It was a pilot version and it was successful. It lasted one and a-half months, four hours a week," said Kambalova.

The lecturers also provide exclusive content that they collected from experience and study.

"Books (on arts) cannot cover everything that the lecturer will tell and that he or she collected for many years. During my studies, I spent half a year in Rome in villas, where I collected a huge amount of material that I include in my lectures. This is the point of education when you can get concise and interesting information in several hours," she noted.

"For now, I give most of the lectures. Yerzhan Akatayev has recently joined our team. He is a fine arts expert, collector and fine arts consultant," she added.

So far, the lectures have covered fine arts themes, but Kambalova is planning to expand their content.

"We have a course on the History of Western Art including architecture, sculpture and paintings. Also, we are launching lectures on cinematography and dance genres. We also are thinking about the music sphere. We will have a multi-disciplinary focus. Currently, it is a selective covering of fashion and visual arts," she said.

The team is small, but it works with other art-related organisations in the capital and the lead charity project with Kazakh National Museum.

"We have organiser-manager Balkiya here in Astana. We work in a partnership with TSE Art Gallery, its founder Dina Baitassova and the Kazakh National Museum.

Recently, we held the Dec. 8 Ayala Inclusive Project with them for children with cerebral palsy and autism," she noted.

"Approximately a year ago, the Social Development Department was created at Kazakh National Museum. They work with low income families and children with special educational needs. I spent two months at the museum... because of my previous job and I knew its staff and once I came and asked about their social projects. We decided to make Ayala Inclusive Project together. Art Masters London developed the programme and we got private sector sponsors. We are planning to continue the project," she added.

For children's art therapy, Art Masters London invited Natalya Bozhenova, an art therapy teacher who is also pottery master from Kastejev Museum in Almaty. Approximately 110-120 children, 80 percent of whom have cerebral palsy or autism spectrum disorders, worked with clay and thick felt.

"There were four art therapy classes that started at the same time. Approximately 50 children came in the morning with tutors, teachers, parents and doctors. Approximately 60 children came in the afternoon," she said.

The organisation is constantly searching for new ideas and lecturers. The first lecture of the year was Jan. 13 with Akatayev on "Criminal masterpieces: fakes and crimes in art."

"Over the last three-four years, people's interest in art in Astana grew, especially after EXPO 2017. Art came to be seen as a part of urban planning. I know that investment in art also attracts more interest," said Kambalova. "In a cultural context, EXPO 2017 did its work. Cirque Du Soleil, Astana Contemporary Art Centre, Creative Energy Zone and other events and concerts shook up Astana... Mass interest in art appeared that pleases for sure. However, people are a little cautious about more theoretical knowledge in fine arts, for example."

"Every time I come to Astana, I see the changes. I really like what Astana Ballet implements. Currently, for example, they are implementing the behind-the-scenes project when any person can visit backstage of the ballet and see the preparations," she added.

Astana Opera stages "Swan Lake," "The Nutcracker" ballets in Italy, Spain

Continued from Page B1

"The dances incited great emotions in us: the Snowflakes Dance that created a fantastic image of the silent winter nature, the comedic Chinese Tea Dance and Indian Coffee Dance. This is a great ballet with incredible music and interesting choreography. Overall, the enchanting action left us with the most joyful impressions before Christmas," said audience member Nicoletta Balbo after the performance.

The theatre performed "Swan Lake" Jan. 11-13 staged by Astana Opera Ballet Company Artistic Director and People's Artist of Russia Altnai Asylmuratova.

Urazgaliyev noted some changes were made in the production, while preserving Lev Ivanov and Marius Petipa's canonical staging.

"The ballet art of Kazakhstan is now of great interest in the world; the company is invited to perform at prestigious venues. Certainly, all of us are excited. We face the main task – to please the audience, to give the viewers an emotional charge, so we will be making every effort," he said prior to the tour.

The internationally-known classical music masterpiece was written by Tchaikovsky in 1875. Its



incredible popularity has made the play a symbol of academic ballet art.

The company also staged "Swan Lake" Dec. 29, 30 and Jan. 2-5 at

the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia. The troupe performed at the invitation of famous opera singer Placido Domingo.

The tour is held as part of the

Rukhani Zhangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme with the support of the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Astana Ballet launches backstage tours

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Ballet has prepared a special gift for resi-

dents and guests of the city. The ballet has launched weekly backstage tours, showing patrons what mysteries are really behind the big scenes.



Guests will be able to see what is usually hidden from viewers' eyes and feel the atmosphere, experience the world of dance and touch the art. Multi-layered tutus and ballet dancer's pointe shoes, the main positions in ballet and the famous plié – all will be part of the tour. A learned guide, a cicerone, will explain why "the theatre begins with a hanger" and etiquette rules are needed.

An exhibit authored by Russian photographer Alexei Krivtsov awaits visitors. The graceful bends of the artists' bodies as seen through the lens of a master, whose works are in private collections in many countries, were presented to the Kazakh people for the first time in April. They are now decorating the theatre foyer, delighting the audience.

In addition to interesting stories about the birth of ballet in Kazakhstan and the world, visitors can see a colourful excerpt from "The

Nutcracker," immersing themselves in the magical atmosphere of the New Year's miracle. Each tour will be thematic, containing excerpts from upcoming repertoire performances.

The programme includes a visit to the dressing room and decoration workshop, where the real magic takes place, as masters of their craft make up the artists, sew costumes and create decorations for performances. For the first time the theatre will also open the doors to the rehearsal hall, where visitors can see how the artists warm up, hone their skills according to the current repertoire and learn the movements for "Beibars," the premiere historical production.

Especially for "The Nutcracker," guests will have the opportunity to take pictures against the background, which have been moved to the front of the house in a special area for photo shoots.

Moviegoers view Central Asia through cinematic lens at documentary film festival

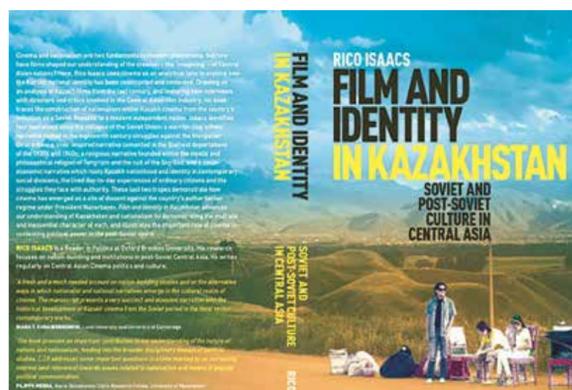
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There were also two films about the return migration of Germans who had left Kazakhstan after the collapse of the Soviet Union and come back 25 years later and were exploring the things that had changed."

Isaacs sees a space for Central Asian content produced by Central Asians themselves, which may facilitate a more balanced representation of life in the region rather than the predominant focus on drug trafficking, rural life in the mountains and Aral Sea degradation.

"Another element to life in Central Asia is that lots of people live in cities. In fact, Almaty has grown immensely over the last 20-25 years because people were migrating to the city looking for work and there could be stories told about urban life in that way," he said.

He singled out the documentary "Sing your Songs/in Kazakhstan," about the Qazaq pop group Ninety



One, as an insightful look into how Kazakhstan balances the global and the local.

"There's a concept in cultural theory called hybridity, which is this idea that global influences arrive at a particular country and are then modified within that context with traditions and particularities," he said. "I think that the band Ninety One is an example of that

with their commitment to singing in the Kazakh language. But their influences are also global, and that does not necessarily mean Western, as their biggest influence is the K-pop movement in Korea. To me, they are an embodiment of this very abstract concept of hybridity in cultural studies."

Local filmmakers, too, are balancing the global and the local

in shaping the country's cinema. Kazakh films produced in the mid-1980s-early 1990s have been particularly formative for recent Kazakh art house cinema, but there are challenges.

"Given the ways in which cinema is a global and universal medium, to carve out something that is distinctly Kazakh in cinematic language is a very difficult thing to do," he noted.

In his recent book "Film and Identity in Kazakhstan: Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture in Central Asia," Isaacs relies on cinema as an analytical lens.

"Cinema reflects what is going on in society at any given time," he said. "Since 2005, there has been an emergence of more [Kazakh] films with greater state funding, and the film studio Kazakhfilm became a joint stock company... With independence, important social questions emerged in Kazakhstan that were reflected in cinema, such as nation building, the country's multi-ethnic demography, Soviet-era political repres-

sion and finding and defining what it means to be Kazakh... Watching these movies, representations of these questions seem to come out directly – in 'Nomad,' 'Myn Bala: Warriors of the Steppe' and 'The Gift to Stalin' – and indirectly – in 'Racketeer' or even 'Kelinka Sabina' ('Bride Sabina')."

The documentary festival was part of Almaty's fifth Clique Film Festival and included short and feature-length film directors from Canada, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands and Russia.

Through analysing 20th and 21st-century Kazakh films and interviewing directors and critics, Isaacs identified four such interpretations of Kazakh nationhood and identity – ethnic, civic, religious and socioeconomic narratives rooted in Mongolian Oirat tribe conflicts; Stalinist deportations; the Tengrism religion and

contemporary socioeconomic divisions, respectively.

"These narratives demonstrate that there is no correct or single reading of Kazakh national identity, as there is no right reading of any nationality around the world. Nations are made up by different groups,

interests and classes, each with different ways of understanding and interpreting nationhood. Thus, how we understand national identity and the ways nations come to being is ultimately through social construction," he added, encouraging additional narratives to be found through film analysis.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Surgeons performed first hybrid cardiac surgery in country, eighth in world

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Presidential clinic surgeons performed hybrid cardiac surgery in the capital Dec. 19 for the first time in the post-Soviet space, reported its press service. The operation was the eighth completed in the world.

Hybrid cardiac surgery combines surgical and catheter-based intervention in the heart. The approach is less invasive and associated with minimised risks compared to traditional open heart surgery. Because of its complexity and expense, however, the surgery is very rare.

Although the clinic has been practicing hybrid surgical procedures for three years, this particular surgery, with transcatheter aortic valve implantation (TAVI) followed by an immediate mam-



mary coronary artery bypass, was completed for the first time.

The patient, 74-year-old Yuri Dudarev, suffered from heart failure and arrived at the clinic in critical condition. A traditional open heart operation could have ended his life, said cardiac surgeon Serik Mendykulov.

"In addition to problems with the vessels of the heart and critical stenosis of the aortic valve, he had structural damage of other organs. Because of critical aortic stenosis, he developed related problems and diseases, such as hepatic and renal failure and circulatory insufficiency of the brain," added interventional cardiac surgeon Rustam Rakhimov.

On average, hybrid surgeries such as this one cost approximately 20 million tenge (US\$53,275). Dudarev was fortunate it was conducted free of charge. The Ministry

of Healthcare allocated more than 6 million tenge (US\$15,982.5) for the operation, while the clinic paid the rest.

The final price depends on the kind of implant inserted. In addition, the surgery is followed by several weeks of recovery requiring expensive medications.

The need for hybrid surgery with TAVI replacement is increasing due to the growing numbers of aging individuals. Open heart operations are often contraindicated for older patients.

"For several years now, there has been a trend of carrying out hybrid operations that allow one or several organs to be taken simultaneously, to do several types of surgical interventions. Such operations are effective, since the stage of waiting for the second operation disappears and time in such cases is critical," said Rakhimov.

Government to increase irrigated land area to 3.5 million hectares

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The Kazakh government plans to increase the nation's irrigated land area from the current 7 percent to 16 percent by 2028, said First Vice Minister of Agriculture Arman Yevniyev at a recent government meeting.

The plan is to put back into operation 600,000 hectares of irrigated land and add an additional 1.5 million hectares of irrigated land to bring the nation's total to 3.5 million hectares of irrigated land.

Agriculture is an important economic sector for Kazakhstan where cultivated land areas occupy an estimated 81 percent of the total area.

The plan is to put back into operation 600,000 hectares of irrigated land and add an additional 1.5 million hectares of irrigated land to bring the nation's total to 3.5 million hectares of irrigated land.

In Kazakhstan, however, where climate is predominantly arid and steppe and desert account for more than 80 percent of the country's territory, agriculture is difficult without irrigation and water systems, which are currently inefficient in Kazakhstan and in decline since the country's independence in 1991.

Tariffs in Kazakhstan are also among the world's lowest, which are not sufficient to finance a needed reconstruction of water channels and hydro technical facilities. With this, the current irrigation system is expected to be out of service within 44 years, according to a World Bank forecast.

Seven billion tenge (US\$18.8 million) on average has been allocated annually to renovate water infrastructure in the last five years.

The government has also sought financing from multiple channels. These include a \$316 million financial package signed with the Islamic Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development that envisions investments to upgrade

irrigation systems across the Zhambyl, Aktobe, Turkestan, Almaty and Kyzylorda regions that have been most equipped for full control irrigation.

The funds are provided to Kazvodkhoz national water operator.

The EBRD is also assisting local authorities on tariff reform to help Kazvodkhoz make the new irrigation systems financially sustainable.

An additional 118 billion tenge (US\$317.8 million) to rebuild irrigation system across 256,000 hectares of land will be allocated from international financial organisations.

Local executive bodies and private investments will be also involved.

The ministry plans to use public-private partnerships, said Yevniyev.

Yevniyev said the efforts will increase land use efficiency, increase accumulated water resources, create cooperatives and expand agriculture exports.

The public-private accommodation requires a partner, who is a private investor that will set up a separate financial company to attract investments from international financial organisations, the Unified Accumulation Pension Fund and second tier banks. The partner will run project design, construction and, upon the commissioning, will oversee the use and technical service of the facilities.

The approach was discussed with business representatives, he added.

The Asian Development Bank is also expected to finalise soon a memorandum to be signed with the ministry to invest up to \$2 billion in Kazakh agriculture between 2019 and 2021.

The ministry plans to use public-private partnerships, said Yevniyev.

Giovanni Capannelli, country director of the ADB Kazakhstan resident mission, said the central aspect of the document is to help modernise aging irrigation infrastructure.

Yevniyev said with the measures in place, the total output is expected to reach 3.7 trillion tenge (US\$9.97 billion), which is a 4.5-fold increase from the current indicator and two-fold growth in labour productivity.

New tax regulation will serve as safety cushion for self-employed Kazakhs

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The New Year started with enforcing the Unified Cumulative Payment (UCP) programme for informally employed Kazakh citizens.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the amendments to the Tax Code on Dec. 27. The law now directly addresses the problem of a significant number of Kazakhs who choose to avoid tax payments.

The UCP is now a single payment that combines four types of payments – individual income tax (10 percent), social insurance funds (20 percent), mandatory pension fund (30) and medical insurance (40).

The programme has simplified the registration process for the self-employed. People will automatically register their activities after a payment, while a payment suspension will result in terminating an individual's activities. Registering or submitting additional tax reports will not be required.

The improved taxing system should not only speed up the process of registering the self-employed and collecting information about their incomes, but will ensure their social protection.

Individuals will be able to receive social benefits in cases of disability, job loss, wage-earner loss, pregnancy, child adoption and care for a child under age one, as well as a

basic pension payment that will depend on the length of participation in the pension fund. Most importantly, they will gain access to unlimited amounts and types of medical services, with the right to choose a medical institution, said Minister of Labour and Social Protection Madina Abylkassymova at the Senate's Dec. 20 plenary session.

The UCP has a fixed minimal fee of one monthly calculation index (MCI), or 2,525 tenge (US\$6.70), for urban citizens and one-half MCI for villagers.

For 2019, applicants are considered eligible if they earn less than a sum equivalent to 1,175 MCI (2.97 million tenge or US\$7,916.60) per year.

Payments will be extended to individuals who "perform work, provide services for other citizens, do not use the labour of employees or sell agricultural products of a personal part-time farm for consumption," she said. The ministry estimated the UCP will affect approximately 500,000 people.

In addition, the term "self-employed" has been redefined and divided into "an employed person" and "an independent worker." The new terms comply with the International Labour Organisation's employee classifications.

According to the results of the third quarter of 2018, 8.7 million Kazakhs are classified as employed, divided between 6.6 million employees and 2.1 million self-employed.

Heat supply to remain uninterrupted throughout winter, say ministers

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev and the then Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek reported on the country's heat supply in the autumn-winter period at a Dec. 25 government meeting.

Generally, consumers have been fully provided with electrical and thermal energy. The maximum electrical load of 14,740 megawatts was reached Dec. 24, a record figure in recent years.

Power plant repair is nearly complete, meaning that provision of heat will continue uninterrupted. Eight power units, 44 turbines, 52 boilers, 500 boiler houses and

28,300 kilometres of power lines were repaired.

"Four million tonnes of coal and 112,000 tonnes of fuel oil were accumulated at the power plant fuel depots, which corresponds to our standards," added Bozumbayev. "At the boiler houses in the centralised heat supply zone, the reserve is 978,800 tonnes of coal and 115,200 tonnes of fuel oil."

The autumn-winter schedule for assigning 312,000 tonnes of fuel oil to regions' social facilities was also approved. In October-November, an approved schedule was complete 86 percent.

Next, Kassymbek reported on monitoring technological violations in networks of sanitation and heat and water supply.

"Since the start of the heating sea-

son, 24 technological violations have been registered on communal life support systems, which is two times less compared to the same period last year. Akimats (regional administrations) noted that technological violations were eliminated within a short period of time," he said.

In addition, the country's coal mining companies produced 109.2 million tonnes of coal in 2018, and the expected volume of coal production by the year's end is approximately 112 million tonnes. They also transported 46.8 million tonnes by rail in May-December and shipped 56.4 million tonnes, of which 12.4 million tonnes went to households and 27.7 million tonnes were exports. Coal reserve availability is at 93.2 percent, and all regions are ahead of the annual coal supply schedule.

"Over the past four weeks, in all regions of the country, the coal price for households has decreased by an average of 15-20 percent due to the memorandums signed between akimats and coal distributors," the minister said. Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev noted that the current heating period have so far generally passed without serious technological violations and instructed akims to keep these violations under tight control. Local executive bodies were further tasked with attracting additional technical resources, providing heat and power supply facilities with the necessary volume of fuel and materials and organising round-the-clock response teams for the relevant organisations.

Kazakhstan spends more than \$5.3 billion to improve housing in last two years

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Approximately two trillion tenge (US\$5,332,054,000) was invested in housing through the Nurlu Zher housing programme over the past two years, with 5.5 tenge (US\$0.02) of private investment attracted for every 1 tenge (US\$0.0027) of public funds, reports Primeminister.kz.

Approximately 354.4 billion tenge (US\$840,864,915) and 1.73 trillion tenge (US\$4,612,226,710) of private funds were invested in housing in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

Since December 2016, the Nurlu Zher programme has provided housing to 197,573 families and aims

to improve housing availability for 1.5 million families in the next 15 years. The programme centres on increasing mortgage loan availability, setting up a credit system for housing, creating a rental housing fund for socially vulnerable groups, developing individual housing construction, stimulating private housing construction and implementing previously adopted public housing programmes. Citizens, developers and second-tier banks are provided with financing and subsidies.

According to the Kazakh Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development, 22.16 million square metres of housing was commissioned in the past two years. Last year alone, 11 million square me-

tres of housing was commissioned, which is 96,731 houses.

Overall, an increase in the volume of commissioned housing was observed throughout the two years for all regions. This year, more than 13 million square metres of housing will be commissioned, which is more than 100,000 houses.

Further measures on developing the housing market include providing more accessible bank loans through Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund. Banks received 84 applications from private developers for 72.5 billion tenge (US\$193,286,957.50), of which 51 contracts were set up for subsidised loans of 45.2 billion tenge (US\$120,504,420.40).

An additional 152 billion tenge (US\$405,236,104) of subsidised loans will be issued by 2020.

Leaders in housing construction since 2016 include Astana with 4.7 million square metres of housing, Almaty with 2.6 million square metres, the Mangistau region with 1.8 million square metres, the Atyrau region with 1.3 million square metres, the Almaty region with 1.3 million square metres and the Kyzylorda region with 1.2 million square metres. The largest volume of housing construction was also observed in Astana with 22,565 apartments, Almaty with 15,020 apartments, the Mangistau region with 8,367 apartments, the Aktobe region with 5,941 apartments and the Almaty region with 4,824 apartments.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Mangystau youth receive up to one million tenge for social projects from World Bank



By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Mangystau region youth have received up to one million tenge (US\$2,664) in World Bank grants for social projects,

As a part of the Aktau Summit, the Friendship of Youth 2019 forum involving young people from neighbouring countries will be held this year, he added.

said regional Youth Policy Department head Bauyrzhan Tuyakov during a press conference related to the 2019 Year of Youth in Kazakhstan organised by the Ministry of Information and Communication.

The Year of Youth was announced in accordance with Presi-

dent Nursultan Nazarbayev's Nov. 13 decree. The region's Zhas Project, organised by the Ministry of Education and Science and the World Bank, is one of 100 events dedicated to the celebration, reported inform.kz.

The project should help resolve issues surrounding employing young people and their involvement in the business environment. The venture will not be a profit-making one and the products produced will be delivered to the region's orphanages, low-income families and vulnerable population.

The participants will attend a three-stage training programme to gain vital skills and project management, implementing their social projects within six months. The monthly stipend will be 60,000 tenge (US\$159.82) for university graduates and 40,000 tenge (US\$106.55) for all others. The project also offers mentorship for participants while their projects are executed.

In addition to the grants, young people can receive a special grant

from the Mangystau region's akim (governor) for higher education, said Tuyakov. Career counselling offices will be opened in all schools in the region and public hearings will be held every six months. A map showing specialties demanded in the labour market will be developed and distributed to educational institutions.

As a part of the Aktau Summit, the Friendship of Youth 2019 forum involving young people from neighbouring countries will be held this year, he added.

The Zhas Project, which last year covered the Aktobe, East Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Kyzylorda, North Kazakhstan and Zhambyl regions, is being executed from 2017-2020. Participants are chosen among young people age 14-29 (except for schoolchildren) living in the territory of the project areas. In 2017, the programme attracted approximately 2,000 youth; last year, the figure reached 3,500.

The host organisations, mentors and young applicants compete for their place in the project.

Healthcare Ministry to set price ceilings for medicine

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare will set price ceilings on the sale of medicine across all regions in the country, said Pharmacy Committee Head Lyudmila Byurabekova during a recent online Primeminister.kz conference.

When the law "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts on the Circulation of Medicinal Products and Medical Devices" enters into force, the ministry will determine limits on wholesale and retail prices of medicine. Changes in the pricing of medicine will occur at the producer, wholesale and retail levels, as well as for free medical care and compulsory social health insurance.

Byurabekova emphasised that price regulation will not affect the quality of medicine. Upon registration in Kazakhstan, companies must present documents confirming their products' safety and quality.

"Price and quality are two cri-



Lyudmila Byurabekova

terials of the region. In this way, pharmaceutical market players will take on greater responsibility, and medicine will be much more affordable to the wider population. The law will also regulate seasonal price fluctuations, as prices will be set twice a year in January and July.

To accompany the new law, the National Centre on Medicinal Product Evaluation developed a mobile application that provides users with information on a given medicinal product, such as its price and whether it passed a safety and quality assessment. Users may also provide feedback on price hikes.

teria that are always taken into account. An expert organisation, the National Centre on Medicinal Product Evaluation is responsible for product quality... If the drug is registered in Kazakhstan, then it has confirmed its safety and quality," she said.

The aim of state price regulation is to ensure uniform pricing mechanisms for medicine in the wholesale and retail sector, re-

"If a person sees that the price is higher than indicated on the mobile application, he or she will be able to take a photo and send an immediate appeal that the price is too high at the given pharmacy. In addition, all prices will be posted on the online resources of the Ministry of Healthcare, the Pharmacy Committee and the Drug Evaluation Centre," explained Byurabekova.

Freelancers will no longer need to pay mandatory pension contributions

By Inga Seleznyova

ASTANA – Freelancers who combine work and have employment contracts will soon be exempted from the obligation to pay pension contributions.

According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Law of Kazakhstan on Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative on Employment dated Dec. 27, 2018 was amended to simplify the procedure for paying mandatory pension contributions.

The changes are expected to be

implemented in the first quarter of 2019. Once implemented, citizens combining labour activity as an employee (that is, within individual labour contracts) and performing work or services under civil law contracts nature, will be exempted from the obligation to pay mandatory pension contributions from their income.

But the ministry also reported that individuals who perform work or provide services under contract agreements concluded with individuals are entitled to participate in the accumulative pension system. They can independently disburse mandatory

pension contributions in their favour.

Legal entities or individual entrepreneurs will pay for individuals performing work or services and having contracts with the legal entities or individual entrepreneurs. In this case legal entities or individual entrepreneurs act as tax agents who calculate and pay individual income tax for freelancers.

The ministry's press service also reported that the ministry considered the opinion of many representatives of this category of working citizens, government officials and legal entities in making the changes.

Mama Pro fund supports mothers of children with special needs, offers entrepreneurship courses

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Mama Pro, a public fund which helps vulnerable children and their families, received the Tanyim award this year. Launched in 2017, the organisation makes an invaluable contribution in addressing the challenges faced by mothers of children with disabilities.

One participant recently noted

that thanks to this project, she emerged from an eight-month journey of not wanting to live to a life of inspiration and drive.

In an exclusive interview for this story, Mama Pro co-founder Aizhan Alzhanova noted the organisation's main goals are to form a community of parents who are willing to promote and advocate for their children's rights and empower women who are trapped in maternity leave

due to their youngsters' special needs.

Originally, the fund was a place where parents shared important information, organised seminars with experts and taught remote work skills. They also helped single mothers and women suffering domestic violence.

"We currently have six people on our team. We all have children with special needs. Due to this, we set the tasks based on personal

experience. Initially, we created a club in support of parents. Its main mission was to support and help face the situation. We did not have a choice; we all gathered on our interests," she said.

A financial expert by occupation, Alzhanova became engaged in social work after her daughter's birth. She received a Master's degree in Inclusive Education Leadership from Nazarbayev University.

"When we opened the coworking room with a nursery, we decided to launch a kind of mini business incubator. The training aims to help women to determine their interests and get out of the daily routine," she said.

The centre offers programmes in various fields. To date, 60 women have taken part in training.

"Now, we are conducting a second training on the basics of entrepreneurship and computer literacy at the Mama Pro training centre," she said.

The centre's text bureau agency posts pictures on Instagram. It also offers copywriting courses, allowing women to combine childcare and work.

"We won a grant from the Soros-Kazakhstan Foundation to create the Mama Pro training centre in July. As part of the programme, 60 women will take part in free entrepreneurship courses and about five initiators from other cities will receive guidelines for opening Mama Pro in their cities. A programme is de-



L-R: President of the Fund Gulsim Semenova, Aizhan Alzhanova and Public Relations Manager Assiya Tikeeva.

signed for six months to study the basics of business, accounting, reporting, computer literacy, goal setting and planning for two months," she said.

As a U.S. State Department graduate, Alzhanova applied for a grant from the American Embassy in Kazakhstan. Their project was recognised as one of the best among more than 1,000 programmes worldwide.

"We will conduct entrepreneurship courses for 50 women, including women from the regions. Next year, we plan to expand the fund's activities in the regions and launch psychological support in our centre. The Mama Pro centre

will soon be launched in Almaty," she said.

The foundation seeks attention to promote its courses and help more parents.

"To us, the results are important. We are glad to see how women are getting enthusiastic about what they are doing. Their smile is the best reward. The most interesting thing is the unexpected outcomes. Initially, we wanted to support parents. We were surprised to know that our centre helped to improve the skills of socialisation among children. Many of them are on home-based training now. They come with the mothers to the centre and they enjoy and develop better," she added.



TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Programmes seek to attract more medical tourists

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Medical tourists from 45 countries come to Kazakhstan annually, reported Deputy General Director of the National Centre for Health Development Aiman Iskakova.

Ninety percent of them are citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), mainly from Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Uzbekistan while other visitors come from China, Iran and Turkey. Overall, 1,604 foreign patients were registered in the first 10 months of 2018.

The centre expects the project to attract about 32,000 foreign tourists and bring more than 1 billion tenge (US\$2.6 million) from inbound medical tourism. The centre will cooperate with tour operators, national and international associations.

“We have highly-qualified specialists. We have advanced medical equipment and favourable geographical location. Most importantly, our medical services are provided at lower prices. International experts conducted an analysis of seven surgical services. It shows that prices in our country are lower than in India, which is recognised as the world leader in terms of costs for medical services,” said Iskakova.

Kazakhstan takes the 25th place in terms of the number of organisations accredited at the Joint Commission International (JCI) ranking. JCI provides leadership in international healthcare accreditation and quality improvement. Currently, seven local organisations have a JCI accreditation. Also, about 500 medical organisations have national accreditation certificates, recognised by International Society for Quality in Healthcare since 2012.

Tourists most often seek care

related to cardiac surgery, neurosurgery, reproductive medicine, dental services, transplantology, orthopaedics and health procedures.

“We offer not only high-quality services. We have many unique facilities for recreation, tourism and sports. More than 140 organisations offer health services based on the integrated use of unique natural sources. This sector of medical tourism includes climate therapy, hydrotherapy, mud therapy and pantoherapy,” she said.

The development of medical tourism and other programmes seeks to increase the capacity of healthcare organisations and services to attract foreign patients. The centre expects the project to attract about 32,000 foreign tourists and bring more than 1 billion tenge (US\$2.6 million) from inbound medical tourism.

The centre studied the experience in medical tourism development in five countries including India, Turkey, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia. The development strategy will adopt the best practices in methodology of statistical accounting, internet marketing, insurance and other aspects.

The centre will cooperate with tour operators, national and international associations to identify and overcome barriers in medical tourism. To date, 16 memorandums have been signed with domestic and foreign travel companies.

The medicaltourism.kz website provides information about medical services in the country. It offers information about medical organisations, their equipment, services offered and prices, as well as specialists and their qualifications. A call centre is also planned.

“The National Centre for Health Development joined the Global Healthcare Travel Council (GHTC) last year. Its members are representatives of national health councils, associations and national organisations that regulate the tourism industry and support the medical tourism. GHTC provides guidance for the global medical tourism market, sets norms, standards and ethics, provides recommendations on adjustments to the international legal framework for medical tourism and supports the countries in monitoring and evaluating new trends in medical tourism,” Iskakova explained.

Aktobe archaeological sites can be housed in open air museums, parks, says research centre director



By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Aktobe has many archaeological sites to be discovered, said Director of the Research Centre of the region's Department of Culture, Archives and Documentation Aslan Mamedov. Once excavated, parks and open air museums can be created to attract visitors and introduce the region's history.

“After studying the sites, we can create open air museums or parks in the Aktobe city boundaries, where residents and tourists could get acquainted with the rich history and culture of the ancient people of Kazakhstan,” he said in an interview with kazinform.kz.

Excavations started in the 20th century.

“The archaeological research in the Aktobe region has a century of history. The earliest exca-

vations in the region were carried out on monuments located in the north of the city at the beginning of the 20th century by the initiative of Joseph-Antoine Castagné,” he noted referring to the French ethnographer and expert on Central Asia.

Although the research started early in the region, there is space for growth.

“The objects of the Martuk, Alga and Khobda districts have been well studied during the archaeological excavations; the rest of the region, which is nine more districts, has not been studied. Archaeological reconnaissance was carried out in the whole region, but a case study is also needed,” he said.

Similarly, ethnography monuments (mosques, mausoleums and kulpytas (stone sculptures)) in the south are well studied, while the rest of the region requires more research.

“Under the leadership of Serik Azhigali and Rakhim Beknazarov, ethnographic monuments in the south of the region have been investigated. The Uil, Temir, Khobda, Martuk and Kargaly areas have been poorly studied,” he added.

The archaeological excavations are important for expanding the population's knowledge about its ancestors and origins.

“I believe our people need to know their history because a large part of the population has no idea how the nomadic culture originated, how the Kazakh ethnos appeared and that we have more ancient roots than we think,” he said.

The absence of written sources can be compensated by the information from the excavations.

“Few written sources have been preserved about the peoples and tribes who lived in the territory of Kazakhstan in the early

Iron Age, but there are many archaeological sites that can tell who lived in this territory, where these tribes came from,” he noted.

“During archaeological excavations, we find evidence for our hypotheses. Thus, it was previously believed that the early nomadic culture of the Western Kazakhstan population dates back to the Bronze Age. However, the excavations of our time carried out in the 1980-1990s show that at the end of the sixth-fifth centuries BC nomadic populations came to the Aktobe region, mainly from the Aral Sea region,” he added.

Although Eurasian nomadic cultures have many commonalities in arms, horse accessory items and animal style, the Aktobe region excavations show that burial rites and objects of material culture differ, said Mamedov.

Public, private Alakol Lake investment drives tourist boom

Staff Report

ASTANA – Alakol Lake tourists will have an opportunity to enjoy a more comfortable stay in a four-star hotel and new entertainment centre this year. Construction on a hotel worth over half a billion tenge (US\$1.32 million) and an entertainment centre worth 230 million tenge (US\$607,533.5) is underway.

Almost 700,000 tourists visited Alakol from the side of the East Kazakhstan region last year. Experts estimate that that number will exceed 1 million this year, 24.kz reports.

“Now we are considering land plots on which it would be possible to build four- and five-star hotels and restaurants. All communications need to be brought to these sites, design and estimate documentation is already being prepared,” said Akim (Mayor) of Urjar District Serik Zainuldin.

In addition to this, nearly 50 en-

trepreneurs are preparing to build their own modern recreation areas and develop infrastructure on the coasts of the lake.

Projects that improve the area can be partially funded by the state budget as well as private investment.

“In the future, [the Alakol shoreline] will become the largest business centre,” he added.

Starting in February, it will also be easier to get to Alakol Lake, as two new L-410 aircraft of Zhetysay Airlines will operate flights there from three directions – Semey, Taldykorgan and Almaty – the regional akim's press service reported.

The L-410 is a modern turbo-prop aircraft manufactured by Aircraft Industries, designed for 19 passengers. It can land on ground or snow and can also be used as an air ambulance.

The government allocated approximately \$4 million over the last two years to develop Alakol shoreline infrastructure and built 180 recreational centres.

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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Boxer Gennady Golovkin splits with his promoter

Staff Report

ASTANA – Former world middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin (38-1-1, 34 KOs) has parted ways with his promoter, Tom Loeffler. Now the Kazakh fighter is a free agent and is negotiating with promoter Eddie Hearn and the DAZN streaming service.

The split was announced on Twitter by ESPN television channel insider and expert Dan Rafael. Golovkin had not decided on a new tele-partner by the end of the year, it was announced earlier.

“He obviously did not do that. And it was Loeffler who said that he would choose a tele-partner before the end of the year, and Golovkin would no longer work with him,” Rafael said.

The Los Angeles Times wrote in December that Golovkin might leave Loeffler, though the news wasn't confirmed until now.

It was also reported that in the beginning of December, Golovkin met with promoter Eddie Hearn of Matchroom Boxing and John Skipper, a representative of



Tom Loeffler (L) and Gennady Golovkin.

DAZN, in Los Angeles. At this meeting, which lasted four hours, Golovkin was given their proposal for a streaming service and promotional deal. It was also reported that Loeffler wasn't at the meeting.

Golovkin and Loeffler began their partnership in 2011, when the American promoter was able to

get a court to terminate Golovkin's contract with Universum from Germany. Another contender for Golovkin was Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions company. At the end of last year, Loeffler launched his own promotional company.

Since 2012, he spoke on HBO,

which next year decided to leave boxing. Golovkin's last match in his contract with HBO was a rematch with Mexico's Saul Canelo Alvarez (50-1-2, 34 KOs), in which the Kazakh lost by decision. This was the first loss of his career, and with it went his WBC, WBA (Super) and IBO titles.

FIDE admits first Kazakh representatives

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Six Kazakh representatives recently gained membership in the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) Commission for the first time, reports the Kazakhstan Chess Federation (KCF) press service.

Traditionally, prominent chess players who have made a significant contribution to the game's development in their country receive membership, which is determined once every three years.

“The decision of the FIDE Presidential Council in favour of six representatives from Kazakhstan at once is an indicator of our great appreciation of KCF's work under the leadership of Galimzhan Yessenov,” said KCF Executive Director Irina Grishchenko, who was elected to oversee FIDE's social affairs. “Throughout our time operating (in the country), our team has achieved immense success in promoting chess here and we are not going to stop there.”

Grandmaster Darnen Sadvakasov will oversee the commission's global strategy, International Master and Woman Grandmaster Dinara Saduakassova will oversee rules and tournament regulations, Woman International Master Gulmira Dauletova will oversee systems of pairings and programmes, Grandmaster Yevgeny Vladimirov

will oversee chess in education and KCF Vice President Zhandos Abishev will oversee events. Additionally, KCF Vice President Berik Balgabayev will advise FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich.

Overall, the commission includes 224 people from more than 130 countries. Earlier, Kazakhstan was not represented in the commission and now has the greatest number of representatives after Russia and the United States.

“Following this year, even more opportunities are open to Kazakhstan. This not only concerns the game's development in the country,” said Abishev. “We are now part of the federation, influencing decision making in the FIDE on key areas. This is a serious step forward, indicative of our country's immense potential in the global chess arena.”

FIDE, founded in France in 1924, is an international organisation connecting national chess federations and governing international chess competitions. Its close work with KCF has resulted in several achievements. Now, Kazakh chess players may meet FIDE Master, International Master and Grandmaster standards at national tournaments, without going abroad. KCF also hosts international tournaments, such as the Astana Open international chess festival, and regularly sends its national chess team to compete at official FIDE tournaments.

Tennis player Putintseva ranks 44th in the world

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh professional tennis player Yulia Putintseva was recently ranked the 44th best player in the world and the highest ranked

player in Kazakhstan by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA).

The ranking followed wins at an international tennis tournament in Sydney, Australia that began Jan. 6 against Australian and 34th ranked player in the world Daria

Gavrilova. Putintseva beat her 6:1, 7:6. The victory was the fourth for Putintseva in four matches against Gavrilova.

The win put Putintseva in the tournament's main draw, which has a prize purse of \$823,000. Her next

opponent is American Sloane Stephens who defeated Jan. 8 Russian player Yekaterina Alexandrova.

Another Kazakh player in the TOP 100 is Zarina Diyas who is ranked 98th.

Putintseva easily defeated Diyas in two sets, 6:2, 6:2, Jan. 6 in the final qualification. This is the first victory for Putintseva over Diyas. Diyas won the matches against Putintseva in Tokyo in 2017 and in New Haven last year.

Sunday morning was a competitive day for both players. The same day Diyas beat Czech Barbora Strýcová in an intense match with three sets 7:5, 1:6, 6:4, while Putintseva defeated local player Destani Aiava 6:0, 6:2.

Other top Kazakh women's players are Yelena Rybakina, Anna Danilina and Gozal Aimitdinova who are ranked 86th, 344th and 508th in the world respectively.

Simona Halep from Romania still leads the world rankings. The top three also include German Angelique Kerber and Danish Caroline Wozniacki. The list is followed by Japanese player Naomi Osaka, Stephens who moved up one position, and Ukrainian Elina Svitolina.

The Sydney International ended Jan. 12. The tournaments in Sydney and Hobart are the final WTA events before the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the year which began Jan. 14.



Euro 2020 bid will kick off against Scotland, Russia

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The Kazakh national football team will begin its Euro 2020 qualifying campaign with home matches at Astana Arena against Scotland and Russia March 21 and March 24, respectively, reported UEFA.com.

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Euro 2020 qualifying tournament will determine the 24 UEFA-member men's national teams advancing to the finals. According to the new qualification system, 20 teams will progress to the finals via the traditional group method and the remaining places will be decided through the 2018-2019 UEFA Nations League.

The qualifying draw was broadcast live to a global audience from Dublin's Convention Centre Dec. 2, when Kazakhstan discovered its opponents. Fifty-five national teams were split into ten groups, with the country landing in Group I with Belgium, Cyprus, Russia, San Marino and Scotland. Qualifying games will take place from March-November, with the top two teams from each group progressing to the finals.

Kazakhstan, ranked 120th, is coached by Stanimir Stoilov and features top players centre-half Yuriy Logvinenko, goalkeeper

Dmytro Nepohodov and midfielder Georgy Zhukov. Following the first round, the team will again meet Russia (Sept. 9) and Scotland (Nov. 19) at the end of the campaign.

Kazakhstan will also face Belgium on June 8 and Oct. 13, San Marino (June 11 and Nov. 16) and Cyprus (Sept. 6 and Oct. 10). Its toughest competition will be Belgium, which ranks first and is coached by Roberto Martínez. Top players feature winger Eden Hazard, midfielder Kevin De Bruyne and defender Dedryck Boyata.

Euro 2020 will be hosted in 12 cities in a dozen European countries to mark the competition's 60th anniversary. The UEFA Executive Committee decision to host the championship across the continent for the first time will alleviate investment costs for host cities and make celebrating the sport more inclusive.

Euro 2020 venues include Amsterdam's Johan Cruyff Arena, Baku's Olympic Stadium, Bilbao's San Mames, Bucharest's Arena Natională, Budapest's Puskás Aréna, Copenhagen's Parken Stadium, Dublin's Aviva Stadium, Glasgow's Hampden Park, London's Wembley Stadium, Munich's Allianz Arena, Rome's Stadio Olimpico and Saint Petersburg's Krestovsky Stadium. The final will be held at Wembley Stadium, known as “the home of football,” which last hosted the event in 1996.

Junior hockey team wins hearts at World Juniors, retains spot in top division

Continued from Page A1

The Kazakhs also beat the Danes 4-3 in the first relegation round game after Oleg Boiko, Daniyar and Yernar Musabayev scored.

Retaining a spot in the top division is an important achievement for the team. Kazakhstan last played in the top division at the World Championship in Ottawa in 2009, then was knocked down a rank to the first division.

Kazakhstan managed to return to the top group last year for the first time in a decade when its team claimed a 5-2 win in its final match against France at the latter's Courchevel Ski Resort.

Despite losing round-robin preliminary round games in Victoria to Sweden (4-1), Finland (5-0), the United States (8-2) and Slo-

vakia (11-2), Kazakhstan enjoyed tremendous support from the Canadian fans. Jerseys and scarves of the favourite underdog flew off the shelves.

The following started after team goalie Demid Yermeyev's 51-save effort in a Dec. 27 game against Finland that ended with the latter's 5-0 win. The crowd chanted “Kazakhstan” and gave him a standing ovation throughout the game at the Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre.

Neil Diamond's classic “Sweet Caroline” played as the team's official goal song.

“For a lot of the guys on this team, it was their first time ever at the World Juniors, but when they come back next year, it will be their second time so they will approach the task a lot differ-

ently,” said Daniyar, as quoted by IHF.

“They will have confidence in the team; they will not just think about not being eliminated. They will think about going forward and getting higher spots and moving past the group stage,” he added.

Barys team defender Darren Dietz, who will play for Kazakhstan at the 2019 World Championships, said the World Juniors showed the international community that Kazakh hockey is gaining momentum.

“This was fantastic. We were truly proud of them. I think they showed the entire world that Kazakh hockey is rising. We face many of them on the ice every day. I think Kazakh hockey and Barys, in particular, have a future,” he said.



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019

Astana Invest contributes to foreign investment growth, focuses on PPP projects

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Fixed investment in the capital reached 854 billion tenge (US\$2 billion) in an 11-month period in 2018, reported the Astana Invest press service. Foreign investments represented 23 percent, or 197 billion tenge (US\$530 million). The city is demonstrating steady growth in all major indicators of socio-economic development.

The investment structure is changing. The share of budget investments decreased from 42 to 24 percent compared to 2016, while the share of investments for the specified period decreased two-fold from 23 to 12 percent compared to last year. This reduces the burden on the city budget.

“We have set an ambitious task to improve the investment climate. Last year, we developed a regional investment strategy, which became part of the Astana Develop-

ment Programme. It focused on improving the business climate, organising work with investors and marketing,” said Head of the Investments and Development of Entrepreneurship Division of the city akimat (administration) Alisher Abdykadyrov.

Foreign investments show steady growth, with their share increasing from 15 to 23 percent compared to last year. Small businesses received 70 percent of the total investment, creating an economic structure in the city that leans on small and medium businesses. The number of foreign companies has grown almost three times in the last five years.

“We help investors at every stage, starting from obtaining an investor visa to the conclusion and signing of a contract. Our help includes support for investors in public services, consultation on the possibilities of locating the proposed investment project and the use of state investment support

tools. Astana Invest cooperates with government agencies, development institutions and other investment institutions on support of investment projects and is also looking for partners for the joint implementation of investment projects,” said Deputy Chair of Astana Invest Muhamed Kabuldinov.

The company provides information support, accompanies projects and monitors investment activities. The investastana.kz website includes all necessary information for investors and describes the city’s investment climate.

“We have more than 190 projects worth about 2.9 trillion tenge (US\$7 billion). They include 44 projects with foreign participation and transnational companies from China, Japan, the UAE, Turkey and European countries,” said head of Astana Invest Investor’s Support Department Aidan Ramazan.

The list of major investors over



Astana meat-processing plant design.

the past year includes the French multinational company Alstom, which invested 330 million tenge (US\$887,188) in a locomotive manufacturing and maintenance plant, creating 10 jobs. Kazakhstan Gharysh Sapary and Airbus Defence and Space launched a 72.6 billion tenge (US\$195 million) project resulting in 80 new jobs.

The incentives provision for investment projects has continued. Eleven projects were launched in 2018 this year, including those with the participation of foreign companies. The 95 billion tenge (US\$255 million) investment will create 800 jobs.

Construction of the Abu Dhabi Plaza multifunctional complex and a light rail system are underway.

“We provide full support for six potential investors in signing

investment contracts with a total investment of more than \$200 million and creating 1,500 jobs. We also concluded the first investment contract for a state in-kind grant to construct the high-tech meat-processing complex in Astana. It will strengthen the ‘food belt’ of Astana, increase the production and processing of meat products in the region and expand the export potential of the livestock industry. The production capacity will be 24,000 tonnes of meat products per year,” Ramazan noted.

Plans for 2019 include inaugurating 10 projects with foreign companies worth 50 billion tenge (US\$134 million) and resulting in more than 500 jobs.

Public-private partnership (PPP) agreements were concluded relating to seven facilities in 2017 to improve administrative regulation, including an educational

agreement with Poland’s Thermo Clima MK and two local companies to build six kindergartens, each accommodating 360 children. Private partners will invest about three billion tenge (US\$8 million).

A private partner also invested more than eight billion tenge (US\$21 million) in the Sergek video surveillance system. Approximately 13,000 cameras were installed, including 6,000 on roads, 4,000 in crowded places and 3,000 at entertainment and business centres. Traffic police officers were also provided with tablet devices and mobile thermal printers.

Nearly 20 PPP projects are under consideration.

“All these measures allow Astana to improve and strengthen its position in the Eurasian macro-region as the most attractive location for investors,” added Ramazan.



QR codes offer instant information about street vendors

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Four-hundred Quick Response (QR) codes have been assigned to street vendors of food, beverage, flowers and souvenirs as part of Social Entrepreneurship Corporation Astana’s programme “1000 Places – Street Trade.”

The programme “1000 places – street trade” has facilitated small and medium-sized business development and streamlined street trading in the capital since 2016. To participate, entrepreneurs may submit a land plot application and, upon permission, rent small plots of land for 20,000 tenge (US\$53.96) per square metre an-

nually for a period of seven years. Now, these businesses will additionally be assigned QR codes.

QR codes are readable by machines, usually storing information accessible by a smartphone camera scan. These codes will allow any inspector, police officer or city resident to view and verify Astana street traders’ information, such as their legal entity name, lease agreement number and land plot location and purpose, using a smartphone or tablet. A special near-field communication tag will prevent fraudulent QR codes, and code violations may be reported to Social Entrepreneurship Corporation Astana through the mobile application Smart Astana.

This initiative is a step toward the capital’s effort to enter the world’s top 50 smart communities, a task set by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2013. Additional city initiatives include the Smart Astana project, which incorporates technology-driven solutions at schools, hospitals and street lighting. Astana residents and guests have been using its mobile application for everything from making a doctor’s appointment to ordering a taxi since 2016.

Here, smart technology use will prevent illegal street trading in the capital.

“The absence of a QR code at a facility means that the trade facil-

ity has not been installed as part of our programme. That is, it was either installed illegally or on private property,” explained a Social Entrepreneurship Corporation Astana representative, reports the Astana Akimat (city administration) press service.

Social Entrepreneurship Corporation Astana, “not being a state body, regularly informs the authorised state bodies on illegal street trading as part of its land plot monitoring,” noted the company’s representative. Concrete measures on trading activity are conducted exclusively by authorised state bodies, including the city akimat and department of urban environment control and quality.

Smart locks to be installed at residential complexes

Staff Report

ASTANA – Smart locks will be introduced in the capital’s residential complexes, reports 24.kz.

A new mobile application will allow users to access courtyards, parking and apartments with a single electronic key. Access may be extended to guests via e-mail or short message services (SMS). The app is suitable for all types of premises, including offices and residential apartments, said Yerlan Khassenbekov, the chairperson of one of the capital’s house maintenance firms (KSK).

“Residents who drive usually have a separate device for the parking lot and building entrances. With the mobile app, users will have a single electronic key to enter and exit spaces. This is highly convenient for residents in particular, which is of the greatest importance,” he added.

“You can apply the single electronic key to wherever you want to digitise access and remain aware of the people who have passed through, which will be very clearly visible. This provides us with safety and security, which is very applicable to KSK... and may re-

duce the number of thefts in apartments,” said Daniyar Tipeyev, the project’s co-founder who developed the app within a matter of months.

Smart locks from August, Friday, Kwikset, Nest, Nuki, Schlage and Yale have become increasingly popular abroad. Still, competition from more than 100 international manufacturers of smart locks does not faze the Astana project team.

“How are we different? Other manufacturers of smart locks often have their own app and key for each lock. Our application is universal. We connect to any lock and system, and all locks may be managed through one application,” he noted.

The app developers are currently forging e-KSK partnerships and negotiating with the capital’s construction companies before the official launch.

Residential safety is one of the many areas in Kazakhstan undergoing digital transformation. Within five years, the Digital Kazakhstan state programme aims to digitise parts of the economy, government and human capital development and implement a Digital Silk Road and innovative ecosystem.

Clinics introduce health bracelets with patients’ medical records

Staff Report

ASTANA – A pilot project involving health bracelets with QR codes has been introduced at capital clinics Nos. 4, 9 and 10. The bracelets provide information about a patient’s medical records and contacts for relatives. The device should help chronically ill individuals during emergency hospitalisation.

The project is part of the Management for Chronic Non-communicable Diseases programme. Two hundred people were given complimentary bracelets to participate in the project, which will continue through March.

Individuals suffering from chronic diseases such as chronic heart failure, diabetes or hypertension and those who have a high risk of losing consciousness are involved, said Astana Public Health



Administration head Kamalzhon Nadirov.

Several hours to several days are presently needed to collect information about the current state of the person’s health.

“According to statistics, every year about 500 patients enter our emergency rooms in an unconscious state. At this point, you need

to know as much as possible about the patient: what kind of illnesses, allergic reactions and contraindications the person has or had. This information is vital to make the right decision in the shortest time and save lives,” he noted.

Similarly, if the person lacks national ID, his or her relatives and friends cannot be found quickly in

an emergency. Contact information is embedded in the bracelets and they will receive an alert message when the QR code is scanned.

“There are such cases when patients come to intensive care; we don’t know whom to call. Sometimes, it lasts seven-ten days in intensive care until relatives are found,” said Nadirov.

Emergency doctors receive QR code information on their tablets, said ambulance station head physician Timur Muratov.

“All the information needed to provide assistance will appear on the tablet in a split second. The patient will immediately receive first aid. We will know about his or her allergic status, chronic diseases and parameters such as height and weight, which will help to determine the dosage of drugs. This is all very important at the stage of emergency medical care,” he added.

