



Adopting children should be norm, says Mothers House Fund Director



By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Ana Uii (Mothers' House) Public Fund has helped approximately 3,500 women keep their children in their birth families and more than 900 youngsters find adoptive families. The experience shows it is possible to reduce social orphanhood with effort and a desire to resolve the issue, said Ana Uii Executive Director Bibigul Makhmetova in an interview with The Astana Times.

The fund has two state-scale projects and several in the capital and the Akmola region aimed at helping mothers facing challenges to keep their children and supporting adoptive families and youngsters from boarding-style institutions to find each other. All are sponsored by philanthropists. "Since 2013, we have implemented the Ana Uii project that is a network of crisis centres for women who are in difficult life situations and at risk of abandoning a child. When their families cannot accept them, a woman is faced with the choice of keeping the child or abandoning it. We are doing everything possible to help women avoid such thoughts and save the child," she said.

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Kuryk seaport to boost shipment capacity

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Approximately 2.5 million tonnes of freight will be shipped through Kuryk seaport in 2019, one million tonnes more than last year.

The port, on the Caspian Sea in the Mangystau region, was put into service in December 2016 and began operating the following March. Kuryk has subsequently become a key component in the country's transformation into a Eurasian continental transport and logistics hub, reported kazakh-tv.kz.

"2018 was favourable for Kuryk seaport. A car ferry terminal was opened in the port with the participation of the President [of Kazakhstan]. At the end of last year, the shipment of cargo

via Kuryk was 10 percent more compared to 2017 and amounted to 1.61 million tonnes. There were 70 percent more vessel calls; their number reached 453," said Kuryk seaport's Deputy Head Talgat Ospanov.

The terminal is capable of serving up to 20,000 cars a year. It also has two berths for rail transport, each of which can serve and send four ships per day. In 2018, 210 barges were placed in the terminal; each barge has the capacity for 50 freight cars.

Port managers intend to expand cooperation with other countries; this year, shipments will be launched to Iran and Turkmenistan. Kuryk seaport's ferry handling capacity will reach six million tonnes, with a plan of 10 million tonnes by 2030.

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Almaty region, bordering China, eyes expanding industry, trade and tourism

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – In an exclusive interview with this newspaper, Akim (Governor) of Almaty oblast Amandyk Batalov shares his views on the region's transformation from a formerly agrarian to a combined agrarian and industrial one, its efforts to attract tourists to its diverse destinations as well as its growing role as a key entry point into Kazakhstan from China as it implements its famed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

What socio-economic development issues are on the agenda? Are there plans to improve performance in the coming years? How much foreign investment did Almaty oblast attract in 2018 and

could you tell us about the most significant projects?

This year, we are planning to maintain the momentum of the socio-economic development of the oblast.

As the state-of-the-nation address of the head of state says, "Export-oriented industrialisation should be a central element of economic policy." We are now working hard in this direction. Whereas in the past our oblast was considered exclusively agrarian, it is now safe to say that Zhetysu (Seven Rivers, the region's informal name) is an agrarian and industrial region.

It is also worth emphasising that our oblast is implementing nine projects involving large multinational companies; two of them have already been launched. They include a pump production plant of the

German company Wilo, which has already produced 44 units of equipment, and there are plans to produce more than 300 units in 2019. A Mareven food plant for the production of products under the brands BIGBON and Rolton with its own logistic and warehouse infrastructure launched on Industrialisation Day last December. Annual production will amount to 24 billion tenge (US\$62.8 million); up to 80 percent of the products will be exported to Central Asian countries under the brand Made in Kazakhstan.

This year, three more large export-oriented facilities are being introduced.

Lukoil, one of the world's largest producers of oil-refining and petrochemical products, has begun the pre-commissioning of a lubricant plant; 21,000 tonnes of prod-

ucts will be exported to Central Asia, China, Iran and Siberian regions of Russia under the internationally-recognised Lukoil brand marked Made in Kazakhstan.

The Khorgos-Eastern Gate SEZ (special economic zone), a major transport and logistics hub at the crossroads of commodity flows between China, Central Asia and the Eurasian Union, provides a powerful impetus to the economic development of the oblast. Phoenix, a company from the United Arab Emirates, will open a feed mill with a capacity of 60,000 tonnes per year at the SEZ dry port; it will be the only enterprise that produces extruded feed for all types of farm animals, birds and fish and 50 percent of the products will be exported to China.

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British expert says AIFC ready to provide Islamic finance-related arbitration

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Born and raised in the U.K., British lawyer and arbitrator, Freeman of the City of London, Shariah scholar and Islamic finance expert Sheikh Bilal Khan wanted to excel professionally while maintaining a link with his family's traditional roots in South East Asia. He has achieved both goals by contributing his unique proficiency to the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

"After developing expertise in Islamic finance, I studied [for a] LL.B law degree and then the legal practice in banking and finance and an MBA in various British universities. Prior to joining the AIFC, I served on numerous high-profile boards including being Vice Chairman of the Mosaic International Leadership Programme of the U.K. Prince's Trust; as Senior Adviser to the British All-Party Parliamentary

Groups, which are composed of Parliamentarians from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and other important positions. I have been working on legal cases from different jurisdictions across the globe either related to Islamic finance or general commercial disputes," he said in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

AIFC has benefitted by attracting Khan, as he is both an English qualified lawyer from one of the leading Magic Circle law firms and an international Shariah scholar. It is extremely rare to find an experienced specialist in both fields.

Khan is a member of the AIFC Advisory Council on Islamic Finance (ACIF) and AIFC International Arbitration Centre (IAC) panel of arbitrators. IAC provides an independent and expeditious alternative to court litigation and operates at the highest international standards to resolve AIFC civil and commercial disputes.

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Kazakh, international health experts present cutting-edge heart surgery technology

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Leading Kazakh and international experts presented a fully implanted ventricular assist device (FiVAD) at a Feb. 6 press conference in Astana titled Groundbreaking System for Patients with Failing Heart.

The first human use of a wireless coplanar energy transfer with a continuous-flow left ventricular assist device (LVAD) was carried out in the capital's National Research Cardiac Surgery Centre last month, said its Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Yuriy Pya.

The centre offers cardiology, interventional cardiology, cardiac surgery, intervention arrhythmology, rehabilitation, radiodiagnosis and laboratory diagnosis, treating both children and adults. Its scientific progress has contributed to Kazakhstan entering the top 30 leading countries in cardiac surgery complexity.

Eight years ago, LVAD implantation had never been carried out in



Kazakhstan, despite great demand among patients with end-stage heart failure. Now, the procedure is routine at the centre. Twenty-four-year-old Ismayil Tursunov is the first patient to have undergone a new procedure with Leviticus Cardio's FiVAD, and international experts made the trip to Kazakhstan to see his transformation in person.

"More than 25 million people in the world have heart failure, and the majority will die [from this illness]. Heart transplants are an option that

will, eventually, treat only 4,000 people," said University of Chicago Professor of Medicine Nir Uriel on the prognosis for most advanced-stage heart failure patients. "In Astana, you are taking technology a step up and producing a solution for those patients that, without this technology, would not be alive."

Kazakhstan's newest contribution to LVAD implantation was recorded in an academic article in the Journal of Heart and Lung Transplantation and not lost on the journal's

Editor-in-chief and Harvard Medical School Professor of Medicine Mandeep Mehra.

"While we can sustain life with [left ventricular assist] devices, which have become better, these devices were not fully internalised – not contained within the body and connected to a battery outside it, a big problem in the field," he noted. "The scientists before you, through their sheer hard work, have been able to move the field toward convenient LVAD implantation. This is a critical advent in our field and should not be taken lightly."

The FiVAD removes the risk of infection often caused by the transcatheter drive line, which protrudes from the abdomen in standard ventricular assist devices. Patients can also walk without external equipment up to 8 hours a day.

"[The new technology] is a potential game changer for patients' quality of life. It restores patients to a life that they want to lead, in which they can swim, take showers and engage in normal life activities," he added.

KazISS among world's top think tanks for fourth consecutive year

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President (KazISS) was ranked among the world's top think tanks for the fourth consecutive year, the institute's press service reported Feb. 4.

KazISS was ranked 142th among 8,162 think tanks and the second among those in Central Asia in the 2018 Global To Go Think Tank Index Rankings.

The University of Pennsylvania analysed the activities of 31 Kazakh institutions.

"KazISS was included in the global ranking only for certain categories and areas until 2016. According to the results of 2015, the institute entered the world's

top 150 think tanks for the first time, taking 147th place among 6,846 global think tanks. Over the past three years, the number of think tanks participating in the ranking increased by 1,316. The number of Kazakh analytical centres in the report is growing every year," according to the press service.

Asia has experienced a dramatic growth in think tanks since the mid-2000s.

"Many think tanks in these regions continue to be dependent on government funding along with gifts, grants and contracts from international public and private donors. University, government affiliated or funded think tanks remain the dominate model for think tanks in these regions."

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Ministry of Healthcare attracts investments, as medical coverage doubles

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Ministry of Healthcare intends to attract 1.3 trillion tenge (US\$3.4 billion) in investments, bringing private investment in healthcare to 60 percent by 2025, reported Vice Minister of Healthcare Alexey Tsoy at the Feb. 5 meeting.

The ministry and regional administrations are implementing a project to develop health infrastructure as part of the Den-saulyk (Health) state programme for 2016-2019. It includes infrastructure planning, changing the network configuration of health organisations to improve primary healthcare and patient-oriented medical care and infrastructure modernisation through investment attraction.

The project is prepared to develop the infrastructure plans based on 17 regional plans by April, reduce practice workload and create large medical clusters with an average capacity of more than 500 beds.

“The workload averaged 1,773 people or 85 percent of the plan at the end of 2018. The planned rate of reducing the workload was reached in 10 regions due to the commissioning of 165 facilities,” he said.

The ministry is also working to improve the material and technical base of outpatient organisations, ambulance stations, emergency services and rural hospitals.

Eighty-one percent of mono-specialised hospitals were integrated into regional multidisciplinary hospitals. Thirty-five multidisciplinary clusters with an average capacity of 415 beds were created by optimising 94 hospitals.

Healthcare investments reached 119 billion tenge (US\$311 million), according to the statistics committee. Private investment grew by 7.8 billion tenge (US\$20 million).

By 2025, the regions plan to build 201 facilities worth one tril-



Vice Minister of Healthcare Alexey Tsoy.

lion tenge (US\$2.6 billion), including 17 multi-profile hospitals to replace 61 hospitals.

Work is underway to implement the Compulsory Social Health Insurance system, which will come into force in 2020. It is expected to offer favourable conditions for providing high-quality medical services.

Maintenance and construction of primary healthcare facilities in rural areas are also a priority. Small facilities near population centres will be opened in accordance with regional long-term plans.

The minister also spoke about epidemiological outbreaks of the measles virus in the country. Additional vaccination is possible.

“Currently, 1,876 confirmed measles cases, including 1,426 children under 14, were registered. The disease is recorded mainly among unvaccinated children, which is 64 percent of all cases. Some of them didn’t reach the vaccination age and some cases are related to refusals from vaccination,” said Tsoy.

He noted 105 patients are currently receiving treatment and 1,771 have completed the regimen.

The ministry will launch the medical train campaign to double population coverage in remote areas.

“We use helicopters of the committee for emergency situations. We have a single operator of helicopter services,” he said.

Expert Council on Digitisation discusses e-government, developing startup culture



Staff Report

ASTANA – The International Expert Council on Digitisation discussed at its Jan. 31 meeting international practices in digital development, the role of e-government as well as how to nurture young talent and develop a startup culture.

The gathering also discussed economic sustainability in developing technology and the impact of innovation ecosystems on education and employment.

The goal of the discussions was to address challenges to digitisation development and examine the outcomes of the Digital Kazakhstan state programme.

Kazakhstan hopes to digitise parts of the economy, government and human capital development and implement a Digital Silk Road and innovative ecosystem within five years.

Kazakh Prime Minister Bakyrtan Sagintayev told the council that digitisation should, above all, improve citizens’ lives.

Council attendees from national universities included Kazakh British Technical University President Kenzhebek Ibrashev, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University President Galimkair Mutanov, International Information Technology University President Damir Shynybekov, Satpayev University Vice President for Corporate Development Bakhytzhan Barmagambetov, Nazarbayev University (NU) Vice President for Innovation Yerdin Kussain and NU Vice Dean for Academic Affairs Michael Lewis.

International experts included United Nations E-government Branch Chief Vincenzo Aquaro, Big Innovation Centre Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Birgitte

Andersen, 01 Booster Inc. Co-founder George Goda, Astana Hub CEO Joseph Ziegler, former Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation CEO Yasmin Mahmood, International Data Corporation Vice President and Regional Managing Director in the Commonwealth of Independent States Robert Farish, Singularity University Faculty Chair of Finance and Economics Amin Toufani and World Economic Forum Head of the Internet of Things, Robotics and Smart Cities Jeff Merritt.

Many of the attendees also participated in the Feb. 1 annual Digital Agenda in the Era of Globalisation 2.0 Forum on the Eurasian Innovation Ecosystem in Almaty. Attendees discussed the Eurasian Economic Union digital agenda, Industry 4.0, Sustainable Development Goals and the digitisation of small and medium-sized businesses.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

A 60-hectare wholesale distribution centre for agricultural trade will be built in Karaganda, connecting the northern and southern parts of the country, reports the regional press service. The construction of the first stage will cost 10.5 billion tenge (US\$27 million). Covered pavilions with heating ventilation and air conditioning will accommodate up to 164 trucks at the same time. Storage terminals, climate and dry warehouses and chambers with different temperature controls have already been built. A customs zone and hotel will also be located in the area. “We are using the latest technologies of warehouse logistics and online operations. The initial stage will be completed this summer. The second stage will be the processing of agricultural products,” said Deputy Akim (Governor) of Karaganda Region Almas Aidarov.

The Turkestan region’s maternal mortality rate decreased by 35.9 percent compared with 2017. The mortality rate has decreased by 4.3 percent. Some 8.1 billion tenge (US\$21 million) was allocated for the material and technical equipment of medical organisations. The equipment index increased 1.5 times compared to last year and reached 65.75 percent. It is planned to build a regional multi-field hospital accommodating 610 patients, a tuberculosis centre and an oncological centre, among other medical facilities, in Turkestan. “Approximately 2 million e-health passports were created, 19,220 healthcare workers took part in training on medical information systems and 441,717 people use mobile apps. Twenty digital emergency offices were opened at hospitals,” said head of the regional healthcare department Mukan Yegizbayev.

Kazhydromet reports that the country observed the coldest winter in the last seven years. “The cold anomalies reached almost all regions. The temperature dropped to minus 45 degrees Celsius at night in the eastern, central and northern regions starting from Feb. 4. The temperature reached minus 30 in the south. The cyclone also brought snowfall, blizzards, fog and ice. Taking into account the increase in wind and humidity, the temperature seemed much lower. Last year, January, with a minus 38 degrees was the coldest month,” said Kazhydromet expert Laura Sailybaeva.

Kazakhstan will produce 250 imported industrial goods, according to Kazinform. “The government has allocated 600 billion tenge (US\$1.5 billion) and 400 billion tenge (US\$1 billion) of these will be directed to the manufacturing industry to produce about 250 industrial goods that are used daily nationwide. The financing will reduce the share of imports up to 50 percent in the coming years. It is planned to stimulate the production of fabrics, shoes, fertilisers, paints, windows, doors and other furniture,” said Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Zhenis Kassymbek.

Twenty-five industrial-innovative projects are being implemented in the Kyzylorda region, Kazinform reports. “Seven projects have already been completed, including the Shapagat house-building plant, a feed factory, two AralTuz Spanish workshops, and facing brick and asphalt concrete plants in the Aral district. Last year, a lime plant with a capacity of 75,000 tonnes per year started production in the Zhanakorgan district. The first cement plant in the region also produces 11,000 tonnes of clinker, the main component of cement. The goods of the plant are widely used not only in construction, but also in the oil and gas and nuclear industries,” said head of the regional Department for Industrial and Innovative Development Rinat Sultangereyev.

This year, 13.5 million tonnes of oil will be produced at the Kashagan field, Vlast.kz reported. “Kashagan reached stable production of 330,000 barrels per day. Mining expansion projects are continuing. We expect that the operator will continue project optimisation to increase the gas injection for a production level of 450,000 barrels per day,” Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev said on the issue. Three major fields – Kashagan, Tengiz and Karachaganak – are expected to be overhauled this spring.

2.4 million Kazakhs living in rural areas will have high quality internet by 2020

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Construction has begun on a 20,000-kilometre optical fibre network that will supply high-speed internet to approximately 2.4 million citizens living in rural Kazakhstan by 2020, said Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev in a recent yearly report video posted on Facebook.

Approximately 1,200 villages including 3,500 schools, hospitals and akimats (administrations), will receive the service. The ministry chose Kazakhtelecom national telecommunication company to run the project.

The villages will be connected gradually in stages. According to estimates, more than 1.29 million people will have high-speed internet near the end of 2019. The rest should get the internet by 2020, said Vice Minister of Information and Communications Daryn Tuyakov.

Also according to the year-end video report, the ministry also started in 2018 the Digital Kazakhstan state programme’s large-scale implementation including through the opening of the Astana Hub Technology Park. The hub now manages 140 projects involving 1,200 participants and attracted 42 investors.

“There are all conditions for

the development of the digital potential of our youth. The Digital Bridge international innovation forum was held, which designated and approved Kazakhstan as a regional IT hub,” the minister said.

The ministry has been developing infrastructure in bigger cities, such as Astana, Almaty and Shymkent as well as Karaganda and Aktobe to be labelled “smart.” Work is continuing to improve public services. Previously, citizens would wait for up to five working days to get a single verification document. Today, they can get the same document in a few clicks at home. There are 634 varieties of electronic services available, which is almost 60 percent of the total. Recently Public Service Centres (PSCs) began providing services using biometric data. In addition to digital PSCs such as in Astana, now operate in Almaty, Shymkent and Kostanai as well.

Seven big cities also opened migration service centres with a window for non-residents.

“In the year of the 60th anniversary of the Kazakh Television, a gradual transition of the regions to digital on-air television and radio broadcasting with the disconnection of the analogue has begun. Work continued on the development of the state broadcasting network in the border areas,” he said.

KazISS among world’s top think tanks for fourth consecutive year

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There is increasing diversity among think tanks in these regions with independent, political party affiliated and corporate/business sector think tanks that are being created with greater frequency. In an effort to diversify their funding base, think tanks have targeted businesses and wealthy individuals to support their core operations and programmes,” according to the report.

The rating includes 55 different nominations combined into four groups. KazISS ranked second after Azerbaijan’s Centre for Economic and Social Development in

the leading think tanks in the Central Asia group. Kazakhstan has the largest number of analytical centres in the group.

Experts feel “the think tanks can provide a range of strategies and best practices for transforming public policy and institutions in an era of digital and political disruptions, as well as increased social and economic turbulence,” noted the document.

The report, traditionally presented by the University of Pennsylvania, is composed as part of the Analytical Centres and Civil Society programme under the leadership of Professor James G. McGann. The Caucasus countries – Armenia,

Azerbaijan and Georgia – as well as Afghanistan are included in the group of Central Asian countries in the classification ranking.

The rating is compiled on the survey results of the centres assessed and more than 4,000 journalists, politicians and experts in the field of economic and political research.

More than 30 different criteria are used for the rating including geographical location, functional and organisational orientation, quality and reputation of scientific and analytical work, recognition, the number of briefings and official meetings and the number of nominations for special achievements.

Kazakhstan to present its first report to UN on SDG progress

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will report to the United Nations (UN) in New York this year on its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the first time, said Kazakh Vice Minister of National Economy Madina Zhunisbekova at a January meeting in the capital.

In September 2015, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a document on the adoption of the 2015-2030 Development Agenda at the 70th UN General Assembly. SDGs are 17 global goals on socioeconomic development, including poverty, hunger, health, education, global warming, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanisation, environment and social justice.

“We have made voluntary commitments, and our country strives to fulfill those goals,” said Zhunis-

bekova on the country’s SDG implementation.

The 2030 Agenda is consistent with Kazakhstan’s development efforts. The energy-oriented aspect of the agenda was most acutely reflected throughout Astana EXPO 2017 international exhibition on Future Energy. Goal implementation is expected to yield positive multiplier effects for the country, facilitating its progress on becoming the top 30 most competitive countries by 2050 and attracting greater foreign investments.

Monitoring national achievements on SDGs is just as important as their implementation. Participating countries are responsible for undertaking follow-up activities and reviewing implementation progress, thus requiring high quality and accessible data collection and analysis.

“The Ministry of National Economy began this work,” said the vice minister. “All initiatives voiced by the President are aimed

at SDG implementation. Now, our goal is to identify the areas where we need to move further and take additional measures for greater progress by the country on SDGs.”

SDG monitoring is led by the Ministry of National Economy’s Committee on Statistics, which established interagency working groups on People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership, collected and processed UN agencies’ data and organised national meetings on SDG statistics.

The UN, established in 1945, is an intergovernmental organisation tasked with maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and achieving international cooperation. Kazakhstan recently completed its 2017-2018 term at the UN Security Council, having focused on global non-proliferation efforts as well as on ensuring sustainable development in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh and German business representatives gathered in Hamburg Feb. 4 to explore the role of Kazakhstan as an economic and logistics hub in Eurasia and beyond. The forum was organised and supported by the Federal Association of German Silk Road Initiative, the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and the Kazakh Embassy in Germany. The agenda included prospects for expanding economic, investment, transport and logistics cooperation between Kazakhstan and other countries along the Silk Road and ways to boost cooperation with the European Union. Kazakh Ambassador to Germany Bolat Nussupov also met with Aurubis AG Executive Chair Jürgen Schachler and Aurubis Senior Vice President Christophe Koening and the top management of logistics company BUSS Group; the world's second largest transport company, Deutsche Bahn; and members of small and medium-sized German businesses.

Sarsen Amanzholov East Kazakhstan State University opened an Abai Kazakh Youth Centre in the Polish city of Świecie. The centre will facilitate cultural exchange, education programmes and international projects between Kazakhstan and Poland. The sides also expect the new facility will support academic mobility and dual education between Kazakh and Polish universities. "It is symbolic that we are opening the new centre in the Year of Youth in Kazakhstan. I would like to note that Abai is a significant symbol of Kazakh culture and a genius born and raised in our East Kazakhstan region. We embrace Abai's rich traditions in our university and we organise big conferences, publish monographs and scientific articles about him. This means that our professors and students can tell a lot about Abai and his poetry," said Amanzholov University Dean Mukhtar Tolegen.

Kazakh flagship air carrier Air Astana will launch direct flights to New York and Shanghai, Kazakh Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Zhenis Kassymbek recently announced. The launch follows the instruction of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to open direct route to the United States and Japan. "This year, the ministry and Air Astana will be working to launch flights to Japan, the United States and China and to other big cities around the world," said Kassymbek. The accreditation procedure that will allow the Kazakh airline to fly to the United States has begun and the signing of the relevant inter-governmental aviation agreement is slated for March.

The Kazakh documentary "Heritage of Ancestors" will compete within the programme of the London International Filmmaker Festival that will take place in the British capital Feb. 16 to Feb. 23 and which draws international emerging artists and experienced filmmakers. The Kazakh feature is nominated in two categories, Best Short Documentary and Best Editing of a Short Documentary. The documentary is a part of a broader series of documentaries, "Turkic Nations in Kazakhstan," that tells the story of Turkic groups living in Kazakhstan, exploring their traditions and culture. "Heritage of Ancestors" depicts the life of the Uzbek diaspora in Kazakhstan through the lens of 47-year-old Abdimanop Zupparov, who lives in southern Kazakhstan and who has continued his grandfather's tradition of making the baby cradles known as besiks among locals.

Global Finance Magazine ranked Kazakhstan 44th out of 128 countries in its recent World's Safest Countries ranking, which took a comprehensive view of safety for each country. The methodology incorporated three factors to evaluate safety: war and peace, personal security and natural disaster risk. Kazakhstan was ranked ahead of Russia (108th), China (81st), Azerbaijan (71st), Armenia (62nd) and its Central Asian neighbours Kyrgyzstan (89th) and Tajikistan (68th). European countries with developed economies and healthcare systems topped the list. The United States ranked 65th, while Iceland, Finland and Switzerland made up the top three.

Inclusive global dialogue is Kazakh foreign policy priority, FM tells diplomatic corps in annual briefing

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – One of Kazakhstan's foreign policy priorities is to pursue inclusive dialogue between leading powers to overcome "bloc thinking" and reach consensus on key global issues, new Kazakh Foreign Minister Beibut Atamkulov told ambassadors and envoys during his first meeting with the diplomatic corps in Astana Feb. 7, according to the ministry's press service.

The meeting is an annual ritual to brief the diplomatic corps on foreign policy goals. "The main task of (the government) is to enhance the welfare and quality of life of citizens, as it has been defined by the President Nursultan Nazarbayev,

and the responsibility of the Ministry is to ensure favourable external conditions for the sustainable socio-economic development of the country by political and diplomatic means," the minister said.

He also told the corps that developing multilateral and multi-level diplomacy is a strategic foreign policy resource. He said Kazakhstan continues to advocate for diplomatic solutions to conflicts and increased collective responsibility.

Atamkulov noted Kazakhstan will continue to push for the meeting between global powers, such as the United States, Russia, China and European Union. He also reminded the diplomatic corps of Kazakhstan's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and plans

to open a United Nations Regional Hub in Almaty. He also noted Kazakhstan will continue to seek a resolution to the Syrian crisis through the Astana Process peace talks.

The minister also noted that high-level events involving the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation and other major international organisations are planned for 2019.

Kazakhstan will host in 2019 the First World Congress of Turkologists, the 12th Astana Economic Forum and the Fourth Meeting of Speakers of Parliaments in Eurasia, he said.

The foreign minister also briefed the gathering on Kazakhstan's pri-

orities for interaction between Kazakhstan and individual nations around the world.

The ministry, said Atamkulov, seeks to improve the investment climate in accordance with Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) standards. Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the World Bank, has also adopted a National Investment Strategy. The country also plans to use its Astana International Financial Centre, International Centre for the Development of Green Technologies, Astana Hub and other entities to expand economic relations in the innovation and service sectors.

The country will also continue to codify its historical and cultural heritage through the Ruhani Janghyru

(Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) Programme and promote that heritage internationally.

"We expect that cultural and humanitarian cooperation will become a significant factor in external relations," he said.

The minister also noted that Kazakhstan recently reached agreements with 20 countries on visa exemptions for general passport holders. These agreements are in addition to existing agreements with 45 countries allowing visa-free entry into Kazakhstan for up to 30 days, including all member states of the OECD and the European Union. Kazakhstan also launched Jan. 1 a pilot project to issue single entry visas electronically.

Norwegian seed vault preserves seeds for global food security and diversity

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Svalbard is home to approximately 2,500 people and one million types of seeds in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a secure bank preserving copies of plant seeds held in gene banks in Central Asia and worldwide. In an interview with The Astana Times, seed vault coordinator Åsmund Asdal explained why a vault on the side of a mountain between Norway and the North Pole is the world's most important insurance policy.

Constructed in 2008, the seed vault is managed under the Norwegian government, Global Crop Diversity Trust and Nordic Genetic Resource Centre. The hope is society will never have to use it, much like home insurance holders hope to never use their policy. Lebanese scientist Mahmoud Solh's seed-collecting journey throughout Central Asia, for example, developed into Syria's International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) seed collection. Following the 2011 Syrian civil war, some of the seeds were stored in Svalbard for safety until ICARDA was re-established elsewhere and requested to withdraw its 90,000 seeds.

"The ICARDA case really



showed the importance and usefulness of the seed vault," said Asdal on Svalbard's first withdrawal. "The fact that ICARDA had copies in the vault made them able to restore gene banks in Morocco and Lebanon and to continue their important work in plant breeding and research for improving food production."

The vault's egalitarian design and free-of-charge storage policy has also created a unique world peace zone where rival nations' seeds sit beside one another. After all, food supply protection concerns everyone.

"Conservation of plant genetic resources is needed for future food production," he noted. "All coun-

tries need food and are concerned about food supplies for their populations... No countries are self-sufficient in genetic resources, so all governments understand that international cooperation is needed."

Still, Asdal finds the greatest threat to all seed banks is a lack of funds, followed closely by war and natural disasters. Many politicians in both developing and developed countries have yet to act on genetic resource conservation and availability for plant breeding and future food production, he said. The team behind the vault has launched public awareness campaigns to convince governments and gene banks to make vault deposits, with 76 depositor institutes

having made theirs, and he hopes to see deposits from Kazakhstan's gene banks in the future.

"The best way for citizens to encourage the conservation of genetic resources in their countries is by urging governments to allocate resources, by donating seeds of old varieties and landraces to national gene banks who can then deposit copies in the vault and, as consumers, by requesting food products from a diversity of plants," he said.

At Svalbard, 1.64 million seeds originate from Tajikistan, 1.13 million from Kazakhstan, one million from Uzbekistan, 345,024 from Kyrgyzstan and 308,232 from Turkmenistan. Seed preservation, however, is not a numbers game; instead, it is a diversity one. A 2009 conservationist report "The Red List of Trees of Central Asia" found that Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have more than 300 wild fruit and nut trees, 44 of which are critically endangered, threatened or vulnerable due to climate change, timber felling, overgrazing, pests and diseases.

"Your region is extremely rich in genetic resources and it is important that these resources are conserved for the future," said Asdal on Central Asia's contribution to agricultural

diversity. "As of today, there are deposits in the vault from Uzbekistan comprising barley, sorghum, wheat and maize and from Tajikistan comprising barley and wheat."

The idea behind every gene bank, that seed collection and a greater understanding of crop diversity could prevent famines, was born in the Soviet Union. Raised during severe famines, Soviet scientist Nikolay Vavilov dedicated his life to ending famine in Russia and the world, a pursuit that resonates in Kazakhstan given its 1930-1933 famine that claimed 1.5 million lives. On his visit to Kazakhstan, he identified the wild apple *Malus sieversii* as the ancestor of all cultivated apples grown and eaten worldwide and added its seed to St. Petersburg's Vavilov Institute Gene Bank, one of the first in the world.

"Vavilov's efforts and achievements have been crucial for the development of gene banking and for the conservation of plant genetic resources around the world. He was the pioneer and we are proud to have the seed vault as a facility following his ideas," said Asdal.

To learn more about the vault, one can visit www.seedvault.no and explore its seed portal at www.nordgen.org/en/global-seed-vault/search-seed-vault.

Israel and Kazakhstan have close ties in education, medicine, agriculture and technology, says envoy

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Israel and Kazakhstan have been developing close ties in different spheres and on various levels, exchanging experience and knowledge in education, medicine, agriculture and technology, said Israeli Ambassador Liat Wexelman in an interview with The Astana Times.

"We have very close relations between Israel and Kazakhstan. It can be seen from the active work of embassies in both Kazakhstan and Israel that indicate the importance of the relations between the countries," Wexelman, who arrived to Astana last autumn, noted.

"Our Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, chose to make his first visit to Central Asia to Kazakhstan in December 2016. From all the countries in the region, our Prime Minister came here. For us, Kazakhstan is the most important and valuable partner in this region," she added.

Kazakhstan and Israel cooperate in different areas and on different stages including government, ministry, spiritual organisations, educational institutions and the business community.

"We cooperate on many levels and fields including academia, cultural exchange, political consultation, economic and business ties, intercivilisational dialogue



Israeli Ambassador Liat Wexelman

between heads of religions and confessions," said Wexelman. "Recently, two Chief Rabbis of Israel participated in the intercivilisational dialogue within the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which is an initiative of President Nazarbayev."

Top Israeli universities cooperate with universities in Kazakhstan.

"The faculty of law of Tel Aviv University has ties with the faculty of law of Kazakh State Law University. Almaty Management University has ties with Hebrew University, Tehnion University and Tel Aviv University. It is on the provosts' and faculty levels," she said.

Nazarbayev has proclaimed 2019 the Year of Youth in Kazakhstan. In support of the celebration, the embassy is offering study opportunities for young Kazakhs.

"From the next academic year, students from Kazakhstan will be able to study in our leading universities. This is an initiative of our embassy. Recently, the president of the Bolashak Center of International Programmes Zhanbolat Meldeshov was on a working tour to leading Israeli universities and he signed the agreement of cooperation. This agreement enables students from Kazakhstan to study in Israel on the funding of the Kazakh government," said Wexelman.

"Moreover, taking into consideration the activities of our embassy, Israeli universities offered full scholarships from the Israeli side," she added.

Priority is also given to the countries' economic ties, especially relating to innovations. According to the 2019 Bloomberg Innovation Index, Israel was ranked as the fifth most innovative country. It is known worldwide for cybersecurity, smart cities and smart building technologies.

"We specifically emphasise development of innovative ecosystem and entrepreneurship. Israel is a start-up nation. These make up the main part of our exports and it is the subject of collaboration with Kazakhstan as well," noted Wexelman. "Our Knesset (unicameral state legislature) is called green Knesset, because it's energy efficient."

"Many Israeli companies are interested in establishing businesses

in Kazakhstan. They apply for assistance from the Israeli Embassy in Kazakhstan to find partners in the country," she added.

The two countries also cooperate in medicine and healthcare.

"Doctors from Kazakhstan visit Israel for training. Sometimes, Kazakhstan invites Israeli doctors to hold trainings or to do complicated surgeries. Also, patients go to Israel for medical treatment and surgeries," she said.

Innovation systems, known as Big Data or Digitisation in Healthcare, have also been implemented in the healthcare system as part of the Digital Kazakhstan programme.

"We don't use hard copies in our system; it's all digitised. Private and governmental hospitals as well as pharmacies are connected to the system. Prescriptions can be seen in the system at the pharmacies and patients can get medication without hard copies of prescriptions. All medical examinations can be accessed from mobile phones. Appointments to a doctor can also be done through the phone," she said.

The embassy has numerous plans for the future.

"We are planning a study tour for a delegation from Kazakhstan to observe and adopt similar modus operandi in innovations as in Israel. For example, in our country we established the Innovation Authority. It is a

governmental institution for promoting innovation," noted Wexelman.

Innovation Authority of Israel and Kazakhstan currently has a bilateral agreement to cooperate in applied research. A company, young researcher or businessperson can develop a product with a Kazakh and/or Israeli partner and receive grants from both governments.

For the last six years, the embassy has had a common project with the Aktobe regional akimat (administration) where residents have attended trainings on women's entrepreneurship, social activities and education for children with special needs. The embassy continued the training due the high level of interest and in February, a group of regional entrepreneurs participated in Tailor Made, a social entrepreneurship training held in Haifa, Israel.

In March, the embassy is working to establish SportTech accelerator in Almaty aimed at developing sports technology solutions. The Med in Israel conference on digital healthcare will be held during the same frame.

In May, the embassy will organise a road show on water technologies featuring Israeli companies.

"Many Israeli companies will come, because we want to take part in developing water technologies in Kazakhstan," said Wexelman. "Many Israeli companies have already built drip irrigation and watering systems in South Kazakhstan."

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Akmola region achieves positive results in industry, exports; puts social sector in focus



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Akmola region received a positive assessment at the Feb. 2 government meeting for industrial growth and the amount of housing commissioned as part of the 7-20-25 programme.

Regional Akim (Governor) Malik Murzalin set the goal of increasing target indicators in the agriculture, entrepreneurship and social sectors.

“The Ministry of Agriculture noted the projects on agricultural processing at the Makinski poultry farm and digitisation of land at the Barayev Institute. Last year, the area of irrigated land was 65,000 hectares, 18,000 of which is the share of our region. We need to increase the area of oilseeds taking into account economic profits and climatic conditions,” he said.

The region, in cooperation with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, will devise a plan to develop small and medium-sized businesses and provide new jobs. Improving the quality of life and constructing local roads are also necessary.

Akmola showed a positive trend in all key economic areas last year. The average monthly nominal wage increased 8.8 percent in the third quarter compared to the same period in 2017, according to the regional press service. Approximately 102.2 billion tenge (US\$266 million) was allocated to the social sector.

Developing industry and agriculture is a priority. Akmola is one of the country’s main grain-growing regions and agricultural production increased 0.8 percent to 397 billion tenge (US\$1 billion).

The government allocated 28.7 billion tenge (US\$74 million), including 9.9 billion tenge (US\$25 million) for crop production and 6.4 billion tenge (US\$16 million) each for animal husbandry and increasing animal product productivity and quality. Beef exports were 712 tonnes with an annual plan of 500 tonnes.

Agricultural labour productivity increased 13.1 percent in nine months of 2018.

Industrial production was 645.6 billion tenge (US\$1.6 billion). Manufacturing investments grew to 44.6 billion tenge (US\$116 million) or 135.1 percent over the corresponding period of 2017. Processing industry exports reached \$83.8 million with an increase of 25.1 percent in eight months of 2018.

Thirty projects with an investment of 132.7 billion tenge (US\$346 million) were implemented in 2015-2017. Four projects for 52.3 billion tenge (US\$136 million) were launched and 1,146 jobs created as part of the industrialisation programme.

Thirteen projects were implemented for 26 billion tenge (US\$67 million) to ensure domestic food supply for the capital.

Last year, 12,727 jobs including 8,035 permanent positions were created in the region. Approximately 3,000 people were engaged in public works and social benefits were provided for 15,288 low-income citizens.

More than 2,000 people took part in trainings and 923 microloans worth 3.7 billion tenge (US\$9 million) were issued as part of the mass entrepreneurship initiative.

Economy has stabilised, says Deputy PM in 2018 year-end summary

By Malika Orzagaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh economy has reached the point of stability, Deputy Prime Minister Yerbolat Dossayev said Jan. 31 during an extended government meeting in which government officials reported 2018 performance outcomes to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

“GDP [gross domestic product] grew four percent, and 70 percent of growth was provided by the manufacturing sectors. The assets of the National Fund at the beginning of 2019 amounted to \$61.6 billion. The unemployment rate is at a safe level of 4.9 percent,” Dossayev reported.

Nazarbayev noted the positive 2018 outcomes and said they re-

sulted from good work by the government, the National Bank and regional akims.

“The newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atankulov was given the authority to synchronise the work of all levels, beginning from the Kazakh representations abroad to local administrations (akims). This is a common task of the entire government,” the President said.

Nazarbayev also said large companies from Japan, the United States and Germany sometimes leave Kazakhstan because the country lacks government systems to support those companies. He urged all branches of government to work together to retain foreign investment.

“Each branch ministry, local administrations and national compa-

nies must appoint specific deputies personally responsible for the investment work. Therefore, [First Deputy Prime Minister Askar] Mamin, Atankulov and [Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Zhenis] Kassymbek, you need to create a good interaction in order to hold a planned and coordinated work,” Nazarbayev said.

Other government officials reporting on 2018 outcomes at the meeting included Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Chairman of the National Bank Daniyar Akishev, Kassymbek, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture Umirzak Shukejev, Akim (Governor) of the Zhambyl Region Askar Myrzakhmetov and Akim (Governor) of the West-Kazakhstan Region Altai Kulginov.

Kazakhstan ratifies Caspian Sea convention

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the law “On the Ratification of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea” Feb. 8, establishing the principles for peaceful use of the body.

“I would like to congratulate all of you on the signing of the Convention. Today, my counterparts and I summarised the work on the Caspian Sea. We also have signed a series of agreements,” the Kazakh President told his counterparts during the signing of the document in Aktau last August.

The Convention reflects all the legal aspects of the Caspian littoral states’ relations in the Caspian Sea. The provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 and the principles applied to transboundary lakes are not applicable to it. The sea will have its own legal status. The states will delineate the seabed into sectors as in a sea principle. The sovereignty rights to the water columns will be regarded as in a lake principle.

The main provisions are the basic principles of relations of coastal states at sea, delimitation of national zones, jurisdiction and sovereignty, procedure for implementing subsoil

use, navigation, fishing, marine research, safety cooperation, rational use of biological resources and protecting the marine environment, said Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atankulov as he presented the bill.

Resolving any issues relating to the Caspian Sea is within the exclusive purview of the Caspian states.

“The presence in the Caspian of ships under the flags of states not belonging to the Caspian five, as well as armed forces not belonging to the Caspian states, is not allowed,” he noted.

According to the convention, the water surface will be delimited into a zone of 15 miles of territorial waters of each of the five states as well as 10 nautical miles of fishing zones. The rest of the surface will be in common use.

Each party has the exclusive right to fish for aquatic biological resources in its fishing zone in accordance with the convention based on separate agreements between the parties and their own national legislations.

Each party also has the exclusive right to regulate, authorise and conduct scientific marine research in its territorial waters. Ships with the parties’ flags may conduct research within the territorial waters of another party only with its written permission and under its established conditions.

Each state shall exercise sovereign rights to subsoil use within the boundaries of its seabed sector of the Caspian Sea.

It is also possible to lay trunk submarine pipelines and cables on the bed of the Caspian Sea, on the condition that the projects comply with environmental requirements. An important condition is also the need to coordinate the route for pipelines only with the party whose sector will host the pipeline.

The presidents of the Caspian states signed the convention on the sea’s legal status at the Aug. 12 summit in Aktau.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs held negotiations for 20 years and finally, five states came to a positive decision. Therefore, it can be said with confidence that the signing of the convention is a historic event,” said Kazakh Senate Chair Kassym-Jomart Tokayev when the convention was presented for ratification in the Senate on Jan. 31.

To ensure effective implementation of the Convention, the states established a special mechanism of regular five-party consultations - High-Level Working Group on the Caspian Sea at the level of deputy foreign ministers/plenipotentiaries of the coastal states. The Group will hold its first meeting this month in Baku, Azerbaijan.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The tax burden for Kazakhs earning less than 63,100 tenge (US\$167) a month has been reduced by 90 percent as of this January. According to the Statistics Committee, every fifth citizen falls into the category. The highest share of low wages earners exists in the education and industry sectors and reaches 37.2 percent and 23.1 percent, respectively. Tax revenues to the state budget increased by 15.8 percent over a year and totalled 7.9 trillion tenge (US\$20.91 billion). The value added tax constituted 37.1 percent – 2 trillion tenge or US\$5.29 billion – of all tax revenues.

Kazakhstan’s domestic copper ore production volumes reached a record high of 103.2 million tonnes, an 8.2 percent increase compared to 2017. The key event in the industry was the incorporation of BlackRock Inc, the world’s largest hedge fund, into KAZ Minerals’ shareholders, reports finprom.kz. At the end of 2018, the assets managed by the hedge fund amounted to \$6 trillion. Copper concentrates production increased by 15.7 percent over a year to 12.9 million tonnes. Copper-zinc ore mining totalled 4.8 million tonnes, which is 4.2 percent less than in the same period last year.

The trading volume on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (KASE) decreased by 15.6 percent to 127.8 trillion tenge (US\$338.25 billion) in 2018, the most significant decline since the KASE’s launch. The influence of the stock market in the economy decreased from 32.2 percent to 29.2 percent. The maximum trading volume in 2018 was recorded in January (12.4 trillion tenge or US\$32.82 billion), the minimum in December (9.5 trillion tenge or US\$25.14 billion). The capitalisation of the stock market decreased by 10.5 percent to 15.5 trillion tenge (US\$41.02 billion) and its share of gross domestic product (GDP) is now 29.2 percent, compared to 32.2 percent in 2017. The money market decreased by 19.3 percent a year, but still constituted 85.7 percent share. The reason for the money market’s decrease was a 45.6 percent drop in trading volume on currency swap transactions, down to 33.7 trillion tenge (US\$89.19 billion).

The securities market showed a positive trend for 2018. Trading volumes grew 41.2 percent over the year, totalling 4.9 trillion tenge (US\$12.97 billion). Its proportion of the total trading volume remained at 3.8 percent. The corporate bonds sector concentrated 1.8 percent (2.3 trillion tenge or US\$6.09 billion) of the total trading volume, the sector of shares 0.4 percent (539.8 billion tenge or US\$1.43 billion). The number of shares listed on the KASE and the number of their issuers increased to a record-setting 130 and 113, respectively. Twenty new issuers passed the listing, of which 13 were in the equity sector, six in the corporate bond sector and one in the central bank of exchange-traded funds. Among the liquid shares, KEGOC national transmission grid operator and KazTransOil national company had the largest trading volumes of 9.4 billion tenge (US\$24.88 million) and 9.3 trillion tenge (US\$24.61 billion), respectively.

Domestic funds are interested in Kazakhstan’s transition to a green economy. The Akmola region is building a wind farm worth more than \$130 million. The preliminary results of 2018 shows that investments in environmental protection increased 2.5 times year on year and amounted to 80.2 billion tenge (US\$22.3 million). This is a record value in Kazakhstan’s history of investment in this area. The competitiveness of green technologies in the national economy is increasing. There are 65 renewable energy facilities, including 12 wind, 19 solar, 33 hydroelectric power plants and one biogas plant. The three leading regions are Akmola (25.7 billion tenge or US\$68.02 million), Zhambyl (12.7 billion tenge or US\$33.61 million) and Atyrau (9.1 billion tenge or US\$24.08 million). Kazyna Capital Management holds a 23.55 percent share in the authorised capital of the project and is involved in the construction of wind power stations.

Kostanai region economy grows, expands export geography

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Kostanai region’s economy continues to grow, reported Kostanai Region Akim (Governor) Arkhmed Mukhambetov during his Jan. 29 meeting with President Nursultan Nazarbayev at Akorda.

The manufacturing industry in-

creased 8.3 percent compared with 2017 and construction increased 22.3 percent. More than 300,000 square metres of housing were commissioned.

“We are working with 11 projects at the industrial zone. The largest project is related to the creation of the agricultural hub that includes a workshop producing flour with a capacity of 600,000

tonnes, a workshop for animal feed with a capacity of one million tonnes per year and a workshop for gluten and the processing of oil crops,” he said.

According to the regional press service, 245.3 billion tenge (US\$644 million) was invested in the region in 2018, which is 43 billion tenge (US\$112) more than in 2017. External investments in

fixed assets were 31.6 billion tenge (US\$82 million) with an increase of 38.6 percent. Seven investment projects worth 25.2 billion tenge (US\$66 million) were launched and 700 workplaces were created in 2018.

Also, the region launched projects related to agricultural machinery production, building material production and the meat-processing facility in Arkalyk and measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises.

The average monthly nominal salary for the third quarter of last year increased 8.5 percent and 98.5 billion tenge (US\$258 million) was allocated to the social sector.

The gross regional product with a growth of 10.3 percent is 1.3 billion tenge (US\$3.4 billion).

As one of the largest mining regions of Kazakhstan, the regional enterprises produce 100 percent of the iron ore pellets and more than 60 percent of iron ore.

More than 700 industrial enterprises with 43,000 employees operate in the region.

The enterprises implemented six projects worth more than 800 million tenge (US\$2 billion) in 2017-2018. The expected production volume will be 165 million tenge (US\$433,290) per year at the Kostanai Minerals company. Ten pro-

jects worth more than 100 billion tenge (US\$262 million) are under consideration.

The region leads in production of flour, vegetable oil, dairy products and confectionery.

The machine construction totalled 113.4 billion tenge (US\$297 million) and increased 13 percent. The AgromashHolding enterprise assembled more than 4,000 grain combines since 2005. Some 240 combines were produced last year.

The local enterprises produced more than 12,000 cars. Forty-six cars were produced as part of the Made in Kazakhstan initiative.

Export is one of the priority tasks of foreign economic and trade activities of the region. The region exports to 75 countries.

The turnover of the region was more than \$2,670.3 million with an increase of 45.5 percent in January – November. Exports totalled \$1.5 billion and imports \$1.15 billion.

Iron ore products are exported to China and Russia. Cars are exported to Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Confectionery products go to China, Germany, Mongolia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Dairy products are exported to Russia, flour and pasta to Afghanistan, Iran and the CIS. Last year, the region started to export copper concentrate to China.



BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan is the world's largest flax producer with domestic producers collecting a record harvest of 700,000 tonnes this year, reports Abctv.kz. It surpassed flax export leader Canada with its harvests in Northern Kazakhstan and the Akmola and Kostanai regions. Zernovye & Maslichnye Research Bureau Head Viktor Arslanov noted flax production is not subsidised by the state. According to Kazakh First Vice Minister of Agriculture Arman Yevniyev, 22.8 million tonnes of different types of grain were also harvested this year. A total of 11.7 million tonnes were exported, which is 32.4 percent more than in 2017.

Five-hundred-and-twenty-seven family-owned dairy farms and 139 industrial ones will open in Kazakhstan by 2027, said First Vice Minister of Agriculture Arman Yevniyev. In this way, milk production is set to increase over 10 years by one million tonnes. In 2018, 25 dairy farms were opened, seven of which were industrial and 18 were family-owned. Overall, the volume of milk production was 1.5 million tonnes, which is 7.6 percent more than in 2017.

Kazakh businesses will receive Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund subsidies of 30 billion tenge (US\$79.26 million) for credit mechanism implementation under the Business Roadmap 2020 state programme. Subsidies will be allocated toward businesses in manufacturing and agricultural product processing. Conditions are that the nominal interest rate on borrowers' loans is up to 15 percent per annum, the subsidy size is seven percent of the nominal interest rate and the subsidy term is up to seven years. Damu Fund Board Chairman Abai Sarkulov noted that affordable lending terms will contribute to the development of entrepreneurship in the priority sectors of the economy. Damu Fund is a financial agent implementing and monitoring financial support to small and medium-sized enterprises and providing guarantees to banks on entrepreneurs' loans as part of Business Roadmap 2020.

With February temperatures down at -40 degrees Celsius, Astana Taxi and Astana Akimat (city administration) conducted the Feb. 7 campaign Warm Trip in the capital, reports the city akimat. Astana Taxi cars made rounds along bus routes to provide free-of-charge transport to city residents in the cold weather. Commuters were also able to get rides after 10 p.m., when buses cease to operate. Further good deeds carried out by Astana businesses and residents during the city's severe cold may be found on social media hashtags #ЖаксылыкЖаса and #ДелайДобро.

First Heartland Securities (FHS), an investment division of the financial holding company under the group of autonomous education organisations Nazarbayev University (NU), Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and Nazarbayev Fund, acquired Tsesnabank under an agreement between the Kazakh government, the Kazakh National Bank and FHS, reports NU. According to the university press service, Tsesnabank will continue its efforts in developing services and products to meet the financial needs of Kazakh citizens and small and medium-sized businesses. Its activities will be instrumental in implementing economic diversification initiatives and promoting sustainable economic development. The acquisition of Tsesnabank will enhance opportunities in financing educational and scientific programmes and improving the general financial conditions of the group of autonomous education organisations. A new institutional model that fosters collaboration in education, research and business will now emerge because the group has acquired a powerful tool to pursue its human-capacity building and social development mandates.

Alstom strengthens its positions in Central Asia, focuses on localising technology in Kazakhstan

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Alstom, the French multinational rail transport company, started delivering Kazakh-produced Prima T8 electric locomotives to Azerbaijan in late December. Capital-based Electric Locomotives Assembly Factory (EKZ) plans to produce 40 freight locomotives for the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars regional railway link operated by Azerbaijan Railways.

Launched in 2012, the EKZ plant is the result of a strategic partnership among Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), Alstom and Transmashholding, the Russian engineering and train manufacturer, Julien Naudy, Alstom General Director for the EKZ factory said in an interview for this story. The plant is located on 8.7 hectares in the Astana Industrial Park.

Alstom's projects include supplying 295 locomotives to KTZ – 200 freight and 95 passenger. It is also providing 40 freight and 10 passenger locomotives to Azerbaijan.

"The main objective of the company is to execute the contract that we have. The first priority of our activity is to provide good quality products in due time for our customers," said Naudy.

Last year, Alstom launched additional production of on-board transformers for electric locomotives at the EKZ plant. The production capacity of the line is expected to be 300 transformers per year, with 100 employees working



Alstom General Director for the EKZ factory Julien Naudy.

at full capacity. The plant is one of the main economic drivers and a hub for producing and exporting locomotives to the region.

"The start of this new production line demonstrates our solid and long-term partnership with Kazakhstan. We are proud to contribute to Kazakhstan's machinery-building industry through localisation of technology and production, creation of new working places and training for local personnel," he said.

EKZ plans to reach 50 percent of local content by the end of 2025.

"There are two ways to localise production. The first way is to work with Kazakh industrial partners and the second way is to develop in-house activities. In this way, we inaugurated our own workshop to assemble the on-board transformers last year. It is a new activity in Kazakhstan, because it is a high-technological product. We are proud to bring this technology to Kazakhstan. As for industrial partners,

we already work with several Kazakh partners to develop the activity. That is one of the main challenges that will come in the next two or three years – how to develop the local industrial competencies to be part of the game," he added.

Naudy emphasised customer satisfaction is essential.

"Alstom has an ambitious goal

to be part of the development of the new Silk Road. The first step was to have an industrial base, based in Kazakhstan, in Central Asia and assemble locomotives for the country. The second step was to supply locomotives to Azerbaijan. With the support of our customers in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, the next steps will be to provide transportation solutions to other neigh-

bouring countries like Georgia, Ukraine, Iraq and Uzbekistan," he said.

Alstom has more than 600 employees in Kazakhstan with two joint ventures and two facilities including the EKZ plant for locomotive manufacturing and maintenance in the capital and a point machine manufacturing plant in Almaty.



Almaty aquarists create professional-grade underwater worlds

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The market for professional aquarists is expanding in Almaty, as their services are in great demand. The experts not only preserve life in aquariums, but help those who enjoy the underwater worlds. Large pet stores also hire such specialists.

"This is a very serious profession. It's a pity that universities do not teach such specialists. The aquarium at home or in an office is a part of nature and it needs to be properly organised – water flow, good filtration, right balance of bacteria and microflora. You cannot even pour water into an aquarium from a tap. The fish need not only feed, but also treatment, adaptation after transportation and many other things," said professional aquarist Alexander Stroganov, reported Kapital.kz.

He noted Kazakh aquarists are self-taught amateurs who are interested in the business. They are usually trained by more experienced aquarists, then use the Internet and textbooks.

"There is a widespread belief that fish have a memory of only three seconds, but you can't say this about all of them. Many fish understand you very well. For example, some species of fish recognise their owner – they know who feeds them," he noted.

"If a stranger enters the room, they will not show any emotion. But if they see the owner, they immediately begin to indulge – they swim up, play, will attract his attention and play with him," he added.

Many companies are interested in the services of professional aquarists.

"I create a design. I choose the colour of the soil – dark or light. Fish can live in an empty aquarium, so we start from the tastes



Alexander Stroganov

of the client. Sometimes the soil which makes the water is hard or soft. It is a nourishing soil for living plants," said Stroganov.

"If a client wants to plant more exotic plants in an aquarium, then another system of care is needed there – you need to supply carbon dioxide and add nutrients and micro and macro elements every day. The more exotic plants and fish, the harder it is to care for them," he noted.

Fish are not the only aquarium inhabitants, as some also accommodate snails.

"Among them there are useful types; now, in our market there is a useful snail eating algae that appear on plants. Plants in the aquarium and algae are not the same thing. Algae attack the plants and appear in the form of plaque on the leaves and trunks," said Stroganov.

Owners may spend as little as 30,000 tenge (US\$79) for a good aquarium. The investment provides the client with an aquarium made in Germany with very good glass and a cleaner. Stroganov then adds pebbles, a beautiful plant, fish and nutritious food.

"My most expensive aquarium cost one million tenge (US\$2,630). It was large with expensive gregarious fish and the aravana (an Asian fish, very much appreciated in China)," he noted.

Producing block containers is complicated, but worthwhile business

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazkont produces mobile homes primarily for field workers and oil and gas and construction companies. Considering Kazakhstan's vast territory and severe climate, such products are in great demand.

Kazkont founder Raimbek Sagadinov decided to start producing modular homes after working with them for a number of years. On average, the 10-year-old company manufactures 360 homes each year and is planning to automate production.

"There was no money and no machine tools for the production, too. At first, we got 70 percent prepayment and bought materials and we got the remaining 30 percent after a modular home was ready. I made my very first home with a friend at a country house," he said.

"As demand began to grow, I realised that I needed a separate workshop with an adjacent territory. We rented a building and this was our first large workshop. Our company developed gradually and in five years we were able to purchase a land plot where our workshop was built and we purchased the necessary equipment," he added, reported Kapital.kz.



Raimbek Sagadinov

The company uses block containers, structures popular as offices, showers, toilets and even homes.

"We often have orders for modular homes for shift workers in the Atyrau and Mangystau regions. In addition, they can be used as commercial premises or temporary structures. People also like to use them as small houses where a land lot is small and they don't want to construct a house. Of course, a modular home can't be compared with a real house, but its advantage is that it can be quickly transported and you can live in it," said Sagadinov.

"The demand for products is high, although our production ca-

capacity is not so great. Our main customers are different companies. Every month we produce approximately 50 homes and sell approximately 30. In general, we sell approximately 360 homes per year," he noted.

Sagadinov has competitors, but doesn't pay attention to them.

"I believe if there is competition, then the market becomes more alive and production grows. I think that every product has a consumer," he said.

"Kazakhstan is a large country and a significant part of the costs is spent on logistics. Disassembled mobile homes' transportation allows transporting eight modules, rather than three as it was before, and you can collect them on the site. We produce different sizes – six, eight, nine and 12-metre modular homes, depending on customers' needs," he added.

Sagadinov recently trained in Germany, where he learned ways to standardise production.

"It is unprofitable when each client dictates [his or her] own needs. We continue to stand on our own, offering standardised dimensions. I understand that with the new approach I have lost some clients, but this will help the production to reach a new level and hone workers in a certain skill," he said.



EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Year of Youth harnesses one of Kazakhstan's most valuable assets

Kazakhstan, as we are all aware, has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources under our soil and seas. The growth of our economy and the transformation of living standards since independence have been built on the harnessing of our oil and gas reserves and other natural resources as well, of course, as the hard work and good sense of our citizens and strong, stable leadership.

But while these industries will continue to be very important to our future, Kazakhstan has already recognised that they can't carry our country to the next stage of development and prosperity. This will only be achieved, as President Nursultan Nazarbayev has said, through the talents and drive of our country's young people.

Here, too, Kazakhstan has been fortunate. While many countries are seeing their populations stagnate or even shrink, our demographic trends are much more positive. We are a young country not just in the years as a modern independent nation but also in the make-up of our population.

Around four out of ten Kazakhs are now under 24. Well over 25 percent are millennials, born this century. It is an advantage many other countries which are facing the financial and social pressures that an ageing and shrinking population can bring look at with envy.

As these talented young people enter the labour market in ever increasing numbers, they should provide the engine needed to drive our economy and country to the next level.

What, of course, makes this demographic dividend more beneficial is that young Kazakhs are far better educated and prepared than any previous generation for the opportunities and challenges ahead. Over one in three of our young people have gone through higher education.

As these talented young people enter the labour market in ever increasing numbers, they should provide the engine needed to drive our economy and country to the next level. If we are to

achieve the over-arching ambition of Kazakhstan joining the ranks of the world's top 30 developed nations by 2050, we need them to provide the skills, make the breakthroughs and build the pioneering companies.

Their critical importance to Kazakhstan's future is one of the reasons why 2019 has been declared the Year of Youth. It is a chance to celebrate and showcase – as President Nazarbayev did last month in Astana – the already major contribution to our economy and national life of our younger generation. By drawing attention to these achievements over the next 12 months, we will encourage more young people to follow their lead whether in business, science, the arts or in administration.

But the Year of Youth is not, as President Nazarbayev has made clear, just a celebration. It is also intended to focus on where improvements are needed in policy and attitudes to ensure we make the most of the demographic trends. It is a recognition that there remain barriers which prevent too many of our young people from making the most of their potential.

Youth unemployment may have fallen but still remains too high. With an estimated 250,000 young people expected to join the labour market every year, this could be a recipe for frustration and anger unless action is taken. The investment and priority given to education has pushed up standards but there is more to do. We see, too, gaps in the provision in youth services.

These are all areas where action has been signalled over the next 12 months. In particular, measures and additional funds are to be put in place to extend educational opportunities particularly in rural areas and to provide more financial support for young people to continue in college.

More help will be provided for young people to set up their own businesses and learn skills through new and extended programmes. Young people in Kazakhstan, as they do in many other countries, have also drawn attention to the lack of affordable homes. The announcement that 1,000 new apartments are to be built every year to meet this need is a step in the right direction to help young people move to where the opportunities are.

It is a comprehensive package aimed at ensuring all our young people have the skills and support needed for them to make their contribution to Kazakhstan's future. The Year of Youth is much-needed public recognition that the key to our country's continued success lies in removing the barriers which might prevent this from happening.

THE ASTANA TIMES

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Sincerely,
Roman Vassilenko
Editor-in-Chief
The Astana Times

THE ASTANATIMES
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Almaty region, bordering China, eyes expanding industry, trade and tourism

Continued from Page A1

An Alacem cement plant with a capacity of 1.2 million tonnes per year is being launched in May; it will export its products to China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

As a result of the measures taken, in 2018 non-primary exports grew by 15 percent (\$298.3 million).

Agribusiness shows qualitative progress. Thus, 440,000 tonnes of sugar beets have been harvested out of 11,200 hectares of the crop. Two plants in the Aksu and Koku districts have produced 42,000 tonnes of their own white sugar.

There are plans to modernise the Alakol and Karabulak sugar factories and relevant talks were held with investors. Moreover, building of a new factory in Kapshagai is being negotiated together with Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs.

Thanks to the introduction of advanced technology in corn production, a record crop of 532,000 tonnes has been harvested for the last 27 years. Thus, farmers of Panfilov district, who use drip irrigation, receive up to 120 centners from one hectare, which is two times more than the average yield in the oblast.

The oblast started to develop a new direction – industrial potato growing. Kegen and Raiymbek districts sowed 100 hectares with elite potato varieties, received 300 centners from one hectare (with an average across the oblast standing at 187 centners per hectares), created two service and storage facilities and purchased 21 units of equipment.

Overall, we plan to increase the gross harvest of potatoes from 722,000 to 800,000 tonnes, which will ensure stock for a soon-to-be-launched Farm Frites potato plant with a production capacity of 70,000 tonnes per year.

In livestock breeding, beef production grew by 9 percent; we exported one million tonnes of meat. We have 97 feedlots for the development of export potential; the construction of five meatpacking plants with a total capacity of 91,000 tonnes is underway.

Thanks to the automated production of large milk plants and the creation of 70 family dairy farms, milk production in farms increased by 21 percent and the workload of milk plants reached 89 percent. By 2021, due to the creation of family-based dairy farms, there are plans to ensure a full load of milk plants with high-quality milk.

As a result of the measures taken, last year agribusiness raised 82 billion tenge (US\$214.5 million) of investments with a growth of 22 percent, labour productivity increased by 10 percent and exports of processed agricultural products by 28 percent.

We pay great attention to the development of entrepreneurship. Today, small and medium-sized enterprises employ one in four residents of the oblast. They produce almost a third of the gross regional product and tax revenues increased by 1.5 times, from 75 billion tenge (US\$196.2 million) to 108 billion tenge (US\$282.6 million).

Could you tell us about public-private partnership activity and projects?

From 2016-2018, Almaty oblast signed 22 public-private partnership (PPP) agreements worth 33 billion tenge (\$86.3 million) and generated 12 billion tenge (US\$31.4 million) of private investment, as well as created more than 400 new jobs.

I will give some examples from each area.

In the agricultural sector, we opened seven service and storage facilities (in Aksu, Eskeldi, Karatal (2), Koku, Panfilov and Sarkan districts) by leasing 114 units of agricultural equipment to private partners, which helped to increase the acreage of sugar beet up to 1,500 hectares; rice, 1,000 and corn, 500.

In education, we commissioned kindergartens for 320 children in Taldykorgan, for 150 children in



Amandyk Batalov

Kaskelen and for 100 children in the village of Kyrgauyldy of Karasai district, which increased the coverage of children with preschool education in the oblast. Overall, we managed to bring the availability of kindergartens up to 98 percent by the end of the year.

As for healthcare, we opened a modern medical laboratory in Karasai district that conducts laboratory research of biomaterials in the shortest possible time and runs tests using modern high-tech equipment. A complex of medical information systems was introduced in 12 medical institutions of Almaty oblast, which helps to quickly and accurately diagnose and treat patients. Furthermore, the computed tomography department of Alakol Central Regional Hospital is equipped with a computer tomograph and an effective diagnostic process has been organised.

With regards to social protection, a daycare centre was built in Talgar district for 25 children with disabilities providing specialised social assistance in a semi-hospital setting for children under 18 with disabilities.

As for sports, two sports centres were leased in Tekeli, which will facilitate the promotion of popular sports in the city by increasing the number of people involved.

This year, we are working on 26 PPP projects totalling 78.1 billion tenge (US\$204.3 million), including four in education, five in health, seven in energy and utilities, four in sports, agriculture, industry, tourism and culture and one in transport and security.

Other projects include a school for 1,200 students in the village of Aitei of Karasai district, operation of a positron emission tomography centre in the village of Otegen Batyr of Ili district, an outpatient clinic for 250 people in the village of Uzynagash of Zhambyl district, a cultural centre in Kapshagai, an indoor track facility and a swimming pool in Taldykorgan, fitness and health centres in Kapshagai, Shamalan village and in Raiymbek rural area of Karasai district and a 110/10 kV substation in Karasai district.

PPP projects help to unburden the budget and build socially important facilities, modernise infrastructure and create jobs thanks to private investment. Generally speaking, this mechanism gives a tangible positive effect.

What is being done to attract tourists? How many tourists visited the oblast in 2018?

The tourist potential of Almaty oblast is rich and diverse. The oblast has unique opportunities for the development of all types of tourism, starting from an educational one related to visits to cultural and historical sites and ecotourism including the observation of rare species of flora and fauna to adventure tourism, wellness tourism and others. In order to develop all these areas, we adopted the Tourism Roadmap for Almaty oblast for 2018-2020 taking into account the priority development of domestic and inbound tourism.

To attract tourists, every year Almaty oblast presents its opportunities at tourist exhibitions in Almaty and Astana, this year presenting itself at the largest tourist sites in Berlin, Hong Kong, London, Moscow and Tokyo. In 2018, apart from Aktau, Almaty, Astana and Shymkent, workshops were held in Chengdu and Shaanxi (China) and Novosibirsk (Russia). Memorandums of cooperation were signed with the

tourism departments of Chengdu and Xi'an (China) and the Ministry of Economic Development of Novosibirsk Region of the Russian Federation.

Information tours are conducted for foreign and domestic tour operators along the most attractive routes and new facilities to increase the tourist flow through direct sales. In 2018, five information tours were held, including for international exhibitors of the Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair (KITF) exhibition and as part of the opening of the tourist season at Lake Alakol. We are working with the international Internet platforms Profi. Travel and TripAdvisor. The output of this work will be a micro website presenting the accommodation sites and tourist facilities of Almaty oblast.

The well-known television and radio broadcasting company BBC filmed two beautiful videos about the nature and tourist destinations of Almaty oblast and they were seen by a huge number of viewers around the world.

Tourism monitoring data show a steady increase. Thus, in 2018 compared with 2017, the tourist flow grew by 22.2 percent and amounted to 1.9 million people. Services rendered increased by 54.9 percent and amounted to 12.9 billion tenge (US\$33.7 million). The oblast has 729 accommodation sites, an increase from last year's level by 7.2 percent with 9,607 rooms, and the one-time capacity is 25,929 beds.

Lake Alakol is the gem of Zhetysay. In order to implement the instructions of the head of state given during his working visit to Almaty oblast on May 9, we are developing tourism and all the necessary adjacent infrastructure.

In 2018, an investment of 2.5 billion tenge (US\$6.5 million) allowed us to commission 33 facilities on the lake shore and create 216 new jobs. The construction of a multifunctional five-star, 400-bed Koktem Grand Resort has been completed. Its investor is Falcon Petroleum LLC; the hotel resort is officially open.

The seasonal railway service Zhetysay-Dostyk-Zhetysay (Almaty 1-RZD 13 (Akshi)-Dostyk) has been subsidised since 2015. We allocated 36.8 million tenge (US\$96.276) from the local budget in 2015, 65.6 million tenge (US\$171.623) in 2016, 85 million tenge (US\$222.378) in 2017 and 85 million tenge (US\$222.378) in 2018. In 2018, we subsidised air flights amounting to 579 million tenge (US\$1.5 million) in the following directions: Astana-Usharal-Astana, Almaty-Usharal-Almaty, Taldykorgan-Usharal-Taldykorgan and Taldykorgan-Astana-Taldykorgan. In 2018, we completed the construction of the railway station in Akshi village.

The work carried out in 2018 showed that the tourist flow to Lake Alakol grew by 35.4 percent compared with 2017 and amounted to over one million people. We rendered tourist and recreational services amounting to 5.9 billion tenge (US\$15.4 million), 1.7 times more compared with 2017 (3.5 billion tenge or US\$9.2 million).

We are actively developing mountain tourism. To this end, we signed a memorandum with Kazakh Tourism and Almaty-Tau Association of the Tourism Cluster of Almaty oblast on joint development of the mountain cluster. The first stage provides for the development of five mountain gorges. To date, the capacity of the ski resorts is 7,500 people per day, 45 km of tracks and 670 beds. By 2025, the projected flow of tourists will reach 65,000 people per day and 320 km of tracks and 4,000 beds will be created. In general, the tourist flow to Almaty oblast will reach 4.165 million people.

The opening of Oi-Qaragai Lesnaya Skazka mountain skiing park in early January was a striking start to the development of the mountain cluster. The investment amounted to 15.5 billion tenge (US\$40.6 million). We continue to develop Les-

naya Skazka-Aport-Aktas ski resort in Talgar district and plan to invest 16.5 billion tenge (US\$4.3 million); the number of visitors is 724,000 people.

Thus, thanks to the work done in 2018, the tourist flow to Almaty oblast grew by 22.2 percent and amounted to almost two million tourists.

Could you tell us about the measures being taken to improve the transport system in Almaty oblast?

State infrastructure development programmes are of great help in improving the oblast's transport system. As part of the Nurly Zhol programme, we built roads in the oblast meeting world standards. They include the section of the Western Europe-Western China (304 km) and the Almaty-Taldykorgan road (260 km). The total length of the roads in Almaty oblast is 6,138.6 km. Up to 30 billion tenge (US\$78.5 million) is allocated annually for the construction and repair of local roads. As of Jan. 1, 78.1 percent of oblast autoroads are in good or satisfactory condition and by the end of this year, this figure will reach 78.5 percent.

As I have already said, a developed transport infrastructure is one of the mandatory criteria for the successful development of tourism. Thus, the Taldykorgan-Usharal-Taldykorgan air route is subsidised; for this purpose, we allocated 46.2 million tenge (US\$120.869) in 2018 and will allocate 107.8 million tenge (US\$282.028) in 2019 from the budget of the oblast. Flights operate three times a week; last year, they operated from July-October. The aircraft is Yak-40; the airline is Airline Zhetysay. This year, we plan to increase the frequency from three-six months. Currently, the Usharal Airport cannot receive large aircraft, which limits the flow of tourists. In this regard, for the repair work and to increase the capacity of the runway of the airport so it could receive aircraft such as Airbus, IL-76 and Boeing, we allocated funds from the oblast budget to develop, design and estimate documentation. Construction and installation work is scheduled for the beginning of the second quarter of this year.

Following an official instruction of the Minister for Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the development of regional aviation of Dec. 13, 2017, Zhetysay Airline was named the main operator for the purchase of aircraft for regional airlines. To this end, as part of the Nurly Zhol state infrastructural development programme, the akimat of the oblast together with BRK-Leasing purchased two Czech-made L-410 aircraft. One of the aircraft has sanitary equipment that will allow rendering qualified medical assistance to the population outside the oblast centre.

Indeed, the fact that the Nurly Zher and Nurly Zhol state programmes are extended until 2025 will help us to increase the percentage of roads in good condition from 77 percent to 90 percent.

Any additional information about the region that would be interesting to our readers?

Our gross regional product for 2018 is estimated at 2.7 trillion tenge (US\$7.1 billion), with an increase of 3.5 percent. Industrial output was 884 billion tenge (US\$2.3 billion); the quantum index is 101.1 percent. Gross agricultural output reached 703.3 billion tenge (US\$1.8 billion) with a growth of 103.6 percent. Construction amounted to 276.6 billion tenge (US\$723.6 million) or 101.6 percent by 2017. A total of 713,200 square metres of housing (110.4 percent) were commissioned. The oblast's economy attracted 574.3 billion tenge (US\$1.5 billion) of investment; the quantum index is 103 percent. Retail turnover exceeded 500 billion tenge (US\$1.3 billion) with an increase of 7.2 percent. We created 31,295 jobs in all sectors of the economy; the unemployment rate decreased to 4.6 percent.

THE ASTANA TIMES

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KazPost Subscription index: 64572

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The Astana Times is printed at "Media Holding "ERNUR" LLP, 30 Sileti Street, Astana.

The Astana Times is published since November 2010. The Astana Times is re-registered by the Ministry of Communications and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan under the registration No. 14037-G of 20 December 2013. The newspaper is typed and made into pages at the computer centre of "Kazakhstanskaya Pravda". Published biweekly, the size of 8 pages.

ORDER: 183

PRINT RUN: 6,000

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Akmola region to produce country's own oatmeal corns



Zarechnyi Director Ualikhan Aripov.

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan must still rely on many imported goods. Zarechnyi, the country's largest agricultural product supplier, is intending to change this by launching the nation's first oatmeal corn producing plant near Pokrovka village in the Akmola region.

"Today, as a rule, Russia supplies oatmeal to our stores, but now Kazakhs will have their own oatmeal, high quality and ecologically clean," said Zarechnyi Director Ualikhan Aripov, as quoted by inform.kz.

The plant will use the latest technologies to automate nearly all stages and ensure deep processing. The company estimates the new equipment should allow it to process two tonnes of oats per hour. To accommodate the volume, the facility will employ 20 people working in two seven-hour shifts.

Aripov believes once the plant begins operating at full force, it should help to significantly cut imports, as well as replenish the number of Kazakh goods containing oatmeal under the brand name Bakha-Söhne exported to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

"We chose oats, as they are in high demand on the market today. Moreover, we have acreage and

oats are an unfussy herb in our conditions," he added.

The company will complete plant construction in a year or two. Excavation work has already begun.

A feeding platform with a capacity for 1,000 cattle will be built on the side of the facility to accommodate the deep processing technique. Without it, 40 percent of the oats would be wasted.

"If we process 10,000 tonnes of oats per year, we will have 4,000 tonnes of waste. We will use them on the feeding platform. Near Pokrovka there are two villages, Borisovka and Poltavka; more than 1,000 people live in each. We are planning to buy young stock from the population and put it for fattening. This is for the beginning and in the future, perhaps, we will breed Simmentals (Swiss Fleckvieh cow breeds) or Angus (Scottish cow breeds) there. To do this, we will need a food supply, which we have not yet developed," said Aripov.

Aripov is among the Nation's 100 New Faces and known for his constant support of social causes and charities. Zarechnyi, his family business, has extensive experience in the agricultural field. The company has elite seed farming status for producing grain, perennial grass seeds and cereals and signs 10-15 memorandums on social responsibility every year.

Kazakhstan to expand types of goods exported

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will expand the types of products it exports this year, said Kazakh Vice Minister for Industry and Infrastructure Development Arystan Kabykenov at a January press conference.

"Sodium cyanide will be shipped to Russia; semolina to China, Europe, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Russia and Uzbekistan; bags to Russia and Tajikistan; ammonium sulfate to Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan; chromium products and non-alcoholic beverages to Afghanistan, Belarus, Japan, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Turkmenistan;

construction services, buses and synthetic, microfiber and cast iron products to neighbouring countries," he said.

The ministry also plans to expand the export of railway products to Azerbaijan, Egypt and Uzbekistan; yellow phosphorus and potassium fertiliser to the United States, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland; water, milk and meat to Afghanistan, China and Singapore; cars to Kyrgyzstan; armature to Tajikistan; cereals to Russia's Tatarstan; safflower oil to Japan; ammonium nitrate to Georgia; ice cream to Mongolia.

Kazakhstan currently offers more than 800 manufactured goods in

113 countries and added 46 new products to its list of exported goods over the past few years.

"Kazakhstan increases its output to the external market by eight to 10 product types annually – if not new ones, then existing ones enter production on an industrial scale," said the vice minister.

Last year, the country commissioned more than 30 export-oriented projects. Over the next three years, it plans to increase the export potential of the non-primary sector of the economy 1.5 times, said Vice Minister for Industry and Infrastructure Development Kairbek Uskenbayev. Within this time period, approximately 500 billion

tenge (US\$1.32 million) will be allocated toward concessional lending, pre-export financing and state guarantee provisions.

This year, export promotion and efforts to attract investment, tourism, transport and logistics opportunities will also be supported by Kazakhstan's new trade offices. The Kazakh Chamber of Commerce is expected to open offices in Belarus (Minsk), Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek), the Russian Federation (Kazan, Moscow and Yekaterinburg), the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan (Tashkent). Additional offices are planned within the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union.

Cargo transportation between Kazakhstan and China increased 38 percent in 2018

Staff Report

ASTANA – The volume of transportation between Kazakhstan and China was 13,979 tonnes and increased 38 percent in 2018 compared with 2017, according to an announcement at the Jan. 28 meeting of the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) delegation and Urumqi Railway company in Urumqi.

Some 8,500 tonnes of cargoes were transported from Kazakhstan to China, which is 54 percent more than in 2017.

"The representatives of Kazakh

and Chinese railway administrations approved the projected traffic volumes of more than 15,700 tonnes of cargo in 2019 during the meeting. It was agreed to transport grain cargo in the big bags and specialised wagon trucks with rearrangement of wheel sets and containers to/through the Alashankou and Khorgos stations and vegetable oil in tank cars of up to 500,000 tonnes from Kazakhstan and Russia to China through the Alashankou-Dostyk border crossings with rearrangement of carriages at the Dostyk station," reported the press service of KTZ.

The 280,000 tonnes of gas pipes

will be transported from China to Kazakhstan starting from February.

"Joint measures help to increase the volume of cargo transportation by rail through our border crossings with China. It also creates opportunities for the effective functioning of a single railway space in the Eurasian region," said First Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy Kanat Almagambetov.

Earlier, the company reported that more than 400 trains were shipped from the Bolashak, a border station with Turkmenistan, in the Mangystau region, which is two times more than in 2017. The goods

including wheat, flour, barley, oats and lentils are exported to Afghanistan, Iran and Turkmenistan

Freight traffic runs through the Bolashak-Serhetyaka sections, which is part of the transnational railway corridor connecting Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran. This route provides access to the sea routes in the Gulf region.

The transit container trains on the Altyntol-Bolashak-Serkhetyaka-Akyaila route also run through the Bolashak border station. Motor vehicle parts, electronic equipment and household goods are transported along the route.

AFSA, global regulators launch Global Financial Innovation Network

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Financial Services Authority along with a newly-formed alliance of 28 financial regulators and organisations, including Financial Conduct Authority (from the U.K.), International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group established Jan. 31 the Global Financial Innovation Network (GFIN).

"We are pleased to be part of this initiative. The GFIN will facilitate greater regulatory cooperation between the like-minded authorities to foster a sustainable global financial ecosystem. This network is an extension of Astana

International Financial Centre's (AIFC) commitment to further facilitate cross-border financial activities in a fair, transparent and efficient manner," AFSA Chief FinTech Officer Assylbek Davletov said Feb. 1, according to the press service of the AFSA.

The network will help the organisations to collaborate and exchange knowledge on innovations and lessons learned in Regulatory Technology (RegTech) related matters as well as provide companies with an environment to test cross-border solutions.

The GFIN initiative on cross-border testing would allow companies to simultaneously test innovative products, services or business

models in multiple jurisdictions, including Kazakhstan, the U.K., Singapore and other jurisdictions.

Companies which want to take part in the testing must meet the application requirements of all the jurisdictions in which they would like to test. For example, a company wishing to test in Kazakhstan, Australia and Hong Kong must independently meet the eligibility criteria, and/or other relevant standards of the regulators of those jurisdictions.

Companies interested in applying to take part in the pilot cross-border tests should review the list of participating regulators and submit an application before Feb. 28.

The network has also published the Terms of Reference for the

group and is encouraging other regulators and international organisations to join.

The GFIN seeks to provide a more efficient way for innovative companies to interact with regulators and navigate between countries as they look to scale new ideas.

The network was proposed in a consultation paper in August. The GFIN received 99 responses from 26 jurisdictions. The response from industry and other international regulators was overwhelmingly positive in favour of establishing the network to facilitate a new practical method of regulatory collaboration on innovation and creating an environment for cross-border testing.

Government envisions consolidating local exporters through engaging foreign buyers and state service support

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development has prepared a three-year comprehensive plan to assist export-oriented domestic enterprises in entering foreign markets.

The ministry surveyed more than 300 local non-oil exporting companies and identified nearly 60 percent need financial support in terms of concessional lending, refinancing, subsidies, tax preferences and transportation cost reimbursement and speeding up the value-added tax (VAT) refund process, as well as removing trade barriers abroad.

Authorities will allocate 500 billion tenge (US\$1.31 billion) from the state budget, said Vice Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Arystan Kabykenov at a Jan. 28 press conference.

The ministry sees a number of opportunities for local companies to invite inspection commissions from China, Iran and the United

Arab Emirates (UAE) to certify their products, which it feels should "simplify access to [foreign] markets." In the same vein, it suggests organising meetings this year between Kazakh producers and large foreign buyers such

as Auchan (the European Union, Russia), Metro (China, Middle East, Russia), Migros (Turkey), Vanguard, Wumart (China) and Yonghui (China).

The 2019 agenda includes 15 trade missions and seven trade-

mark-promoting events to enhance service support for exporters. Authorities will ensure the participation of at least 50 enterprises in foreign specialised exhibitions and organise six national stands carrying enterprise diagnostics, in-

cluding business process analysis, products and product demand, as well as marketing and promoting products abroad, said Kabykenov.

The newly updated export.gov.kz should also ease many time-consuming procedures.

"Every entrepreneur will be able to receive services related to exports, as well as submit an application for participation in trade and economic missions. In addition, there are plans to integrate the portal with leading market places, logistics service dispatchers and an electronic customs declaration system," he added.

Local businesses should worry less about the language barrier in exporting their products, as foreign technical regulations will be translated into Kazakh and Russian.

Ten additional trade mission centres in Central Asian countries, China, Turkey and the UAE will facilitate the work.

"Today we have only one, while Russia has 57, Belarus has 40 and Uzbekistan has 12. As the experi-

ence of these countries shows, after opening in the traditional markets of trade missions, exports have grown three times already in one year. The purpose of these representations is to manually escort Kazakh exporters abroad," said Kabykenov.

The ministry estimates export earnings will reach 725 billion tenge (US\$1.9 billion) by 2021. The main goods should potentially be machine-building industry, food, dairy and construction materials products.

The chief Kazakh manufacturing exporters currently produce steel alloy rods, shaped and special profiles, pipes and seamless profiles and other metallurgy products. Non-oil exports represent 19.6 percent of finished goods, he noted.

Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs certified more than 1,400 domestic producers, including 368 export-oriented enterprises.

Total exports grew by 26.4 percent last year. Exports in the non-primary sector increased by 3 percent to nearly \$14.5 billion.



Photo credit: kapital.kz

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

From pipelines to apple orchards: Kazakh enterprise sees opportunity in managing diverse businesses

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – San Mir Astana represents a group of companies that at first glance have little in common. While one deals with repairing and rehabilitating oil and gas pipelines, another is in agroindustry producing organic crops and products, particularly Aport apples.

“The ideas we use in one field, we can apply [to another] and create a synergy,” company chairperson Yermek Beisembayev explained the unusual combination in an exclusive interview for this story.

San Mir Astana began its business as a commercial construction company in 2005. A little later, the company drastically changed its direction to what it represents today due to a severe economic decline during those years. Since then, it has been positioning itself as a reliable firm by using the most modern technologies offered by leading engineers in Australia, Germany and Japan.

“What we achieved in repairing and restoration (rehabilitation) of pipelines is installing a new tube inside the old tube and, thereby, the old tube is restored (rehabilitated) without changing the external infrastructure. That is ‘no dig’ technology. We have mastered horizontal directional drilling and tunnelling; that is, laying all types of underground communications,” he noted.

When one wants to introduce new technology, merely transferring tools, machines and engines is not enough. Transferring knowledge, experience and skills



along with the tools is far more important. To achieve the smooth transfer of such technologies, one would need a minimum of three-five years and “invest a lot into people,” he added.

In its early years, San Mir Astana used 3,000-5,000 working hours of foreign engineers per year to educate local ones. Learning the technique of using underground robots to inspect pipelines, for example, is an approach that justified the expense.

In the last few years, periods of sharp tenge devaluation pushed the company to cut the number of foreign workers, as their input increased the cost to customers. San Mir Astana needed to rely on the newly trained engineers to work with the robots, which lowered costs while maintaining high quality service.

“We understand that we took a risk, [but] we analysed the risk thoroughly and minimised it... Before, if we were afraid of touching that kind of robot, we

invited only German and Japanese engineers to deal with them and for the engineers to repair them for us. Then, devaluation helped us to do them ourselves, as we had no other choice,” said Beisembayev.

Human capital is the main link between San Mir Astana’s businesses.

“Business is an art in its own way. We have several directions. It is kind of a diversification because the relevance of one business has a certain cycle and any direction that you develop is connected with personnel, i.e. with people. In other words, it is you who trains one set of staff. During a certain time period when you don’t have orders, you have to tell them ‘That’s it, guys. Now, we don’t work. Goodbye! We are waiting for new projects. When we have projects, then we will meet with you.’ But these are living humans and we can’t tell them that, so we do this diversification,” he added.

Responding to current market demands, San Mir Astana’s next plan is to develop a service centre that will essentially be a pipe rehabilitation ambulance. The first such centre should launch in Atyrau this year and the company has ambitions to repair pumps on the entire Caspian region. To develop the centres, it plans to cooperate with Hydro, the U.S.-based firm and leader in the centrifugal engine and pump repair field. The relevant agreement was signed in 2014.

In a desire to make its business as ecologically friendly as possible, the company has started developing a low-energy gas engine that is also a cheaper alternative to the traditional model. Since the engines generate heat as a by-product, the solution was to set greenhouses next to them and create a win-win deal with local entrepreneurs.

San Mir Astana’s first foray into organic crop production includes a desire to revive the past glory of Almaty’s Apport apples, famously known for their large size and rich taste. One of the biggest Apport apples measured 1.9 kilogrammes.

“We have a modern apple orchard. The level of automatization of the orchard is approximately 70 percent. In an entire orchard, on 20-30 hectares, there are only four people working... We try to automate the processes to the maximum and we use engineers for that... With the population number, Kazakhstan is destined for automation,” said Beisembayev.

Under the brand name Almaty Bio Garden, the company collected 30 tonnes of apples last year in its first harvest. The apples did not make it to the Kazakh market, however, as they were used to introduce Apports to potential clients in other trading centres.

San Mir Astana expects to increase next year’s harvest to 150 tonnes.

“The harvest will increase in the first five years with geometrical progression. According to our estimates, we should reach our first 1,000 tonnes by 2023,” he added.

The business will not limit itself to generating bigger volumes, as the company will soon produce apple jams, chips and fresh juices.



Kuryk seaport to boost shipment capacity

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The seaport is located on the east coast of the Caspian Sea. It is in a natural bay south of Aktau port which provides favourable weather conditions for loading and unloading, particularly rail cars’ rolling in and out operations. Kuryk focuses on shipment of grain, oil

products, fertilisers, chemicals and other types of cargo.

The seaport is included in the international transport corridors network. It handles freight coming from China and passing through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine on the way to Europe.

It includes several transloading

terminals such as a ferry complex, universal reloading terminal, liquid cargo terminal, transport and logistics centre and production complex.

The universal reloading terminal will be able to process about three million tonnes of container, general and bulk cargos. The liquid cargo terminal capacity will be 2.9

million tonnes. Both are expected to be in service in 2022.

Kuryk seaport was created as part of the New Silk Road project and President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s 2014 Nurly Zhol – Path to the Future state-of-the-nation address, which aim to make Kazakhstan a broad business transit regional hub.



British expert says AIFC ready to provide Islamic finance-related arbitration



Shariah scholar and Islamic finance expert Sheikh Bilal Khan (R).

Continued from Page A1

“First, the process of taking a matter to a court is called litigation. Every other dispute resolution mechanism except for litigation is referred to as alternative dispute resolution (ADR), which includes arbitration, and some of the other types are mediation and negotiation,” he said.

He compared the formality of litigation, which is generally held in a courtroom and must follow precise rules and requirements, to the less strict setting for arbitration.

“If you consider, for instance, an Islamic finance dispute, then the parties can even choose Islamic law, Kazakh national law or any other framework which is mutually agreed.”

“Arbitration proceedings can be conducted without any pre-set strictures and can be convened wherever the parties mutually agree, which can be in an office, in a meeting room or in a private room of a hotel,” he added.

Courts are required to follow particular rules of legal jurisdiction, while arbitration does not have such pre-requisites.

“If you consider, for instance, an Islamic finance dispute, then the parties can even choose Islamic law, Kazakh national law or any other framework which is mutually agreed,” said Kahn.

“In almost all instances of litigation with some rare exceptions, the parties have to meet in person with other officers of the court and lay personnel while arbitration can be held via video or audio conference technology,” he added.

The methods also differ regarding who will represent the parties and preside over the proceedings.

“Litigation requires a duly appointed judge and advocacy by certified lawyers with proper higher rights of court audience. In contrast, in an arbitration, the parties can appoint on an ad hoc basis a mutually agreed person and there is no requirement for representation by advocates albeit in complex, cutting-edge and cross-border matters, [where] there are experienced adjudicating arbitrators, and parties can have representation,” said Kahn.

In an arbitration, the parties may choose any language or medium of communication and instruction; litigation proceedings are conducted in the national language where the court is based or in English.

Courts also have strict timelines and dates for submissions and hearings.

“If any of the parties fail to file their papers, there can be a summary judgement against them, the case can be struck out or costs can be awarded against them, whereas arbitration does not have any such deadlines unless mutually agreed by the parties,” he noted.

Resolving disputes in court can be extremely costly and time consuming, while arbitration is far more cost effective and time efficient. Court proceedings can be broadcast in the media and are mostly open to the public; one of the main benefits of arbitration is that it is private, confidential and never published.

“Finally, the outcome of arbitration, known as an arbitral award, is enforceable in similar fashion to a court judgement. Thus, the winning party can enforce the arbitral award in the courts of all signatory countries of the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (New York Convention) of 1958. The list of the countries is very extensive, as it includes most countries,” he added.

Kahn noted he is quite satisfied with the development of the IAC and growth of AIFC. None of the major arbitration centres have arbitrators who are both Shariah scholars and internationally qualified English lawyers.

He added IAC is unique. It is the only such centre in the Central Asian region and an integral part of AIFC jurisdiction with all of its advantages and attractions for its participants.

In an arbitration, the parties may choose any language or medium of communication and instruction; litigation proceedings are conducted in the national language where the court is based or in English.

Starting the arbitration process is very simple. The procedure begins by contacting the IAC Registrar, who forwards all the required information and documents. In conjunction with his team, the registrar guides the individual through the necessary procedures. In case of queries or potential matters for arbitration, important information and contacts are available at www.aifc-iac.kz.

Nation&Capital

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PEOPLE

First virtual museum of Kazakh women's history educates and empowers

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CULTURE

Astana Ballet develops youth involvement in art

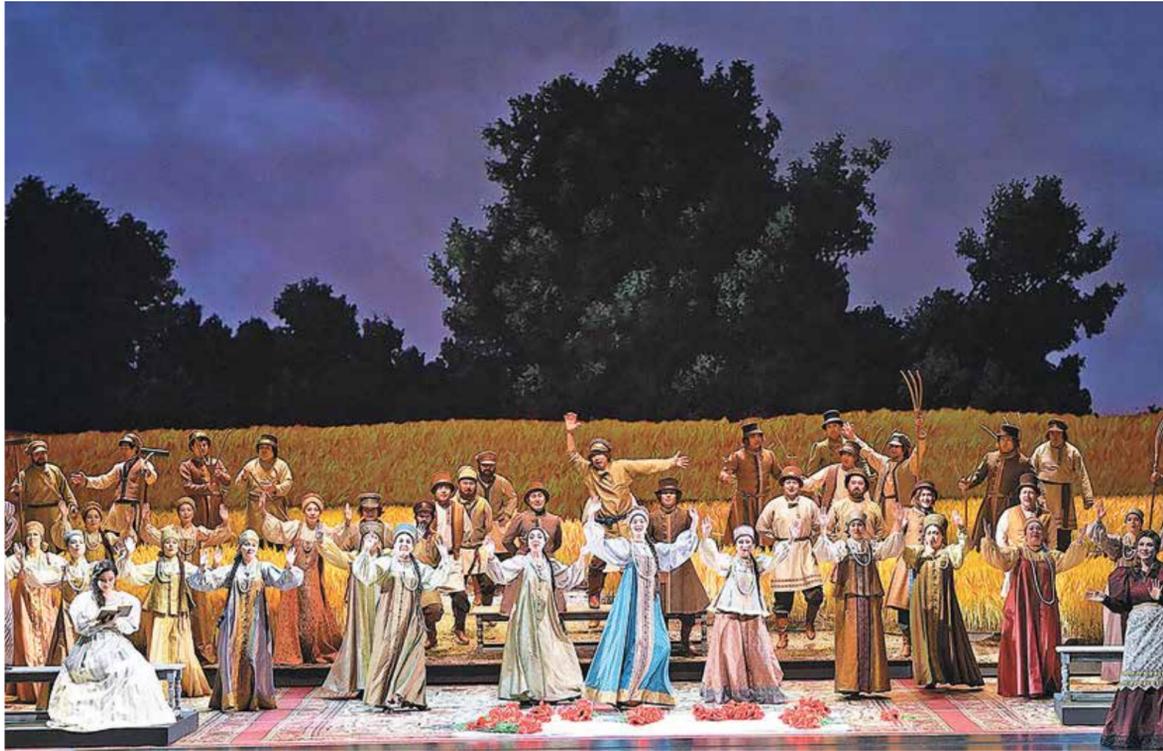
B3

SPORTS

IPC President makes first visit to Kazakhstan

B7

Astana Opera premieres "Eugene Onegin"



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Astana Opera House presented Pyotr Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin" staged by Italian director Davide Livermore Feb. 8-9 in the capital.

Russian baritone Alexey Isaev and Talgat Mussabayev performed the part of Eugene Onegin, Galina Cheplakova and Aigul Niyazova portrayed the leading role of Tatyana and Medet Chotabayev and Zhan Tapin played Vladimir Lensky.

"This work was created by two geniuses – Alexander Pushkin and Pyotr Tchaikovsky. It is a classical masterpiece... Tatyana, who has the most complex character in the story, is undergoing a transformation from a young girl to a

high society lady with the one and only love of her life throughout the opera. Despite her feelings, she accepts her fate and stays loyal. I believe that this opera can touch the hearts of the audience," said Niyazova.

Livermore believes the opera is an integral part of emotional education for many generations.

"After watching the performance, I would like for the viewers to say that this story is relevant today and that it resonates with them and touches their emotions. In this production, we will see Tatyana's inner world. We will learn how a young girl discovers her womanhood, perfectly aware of what she has lost, what she has gained and discovered in life. All of this happens with a feeling of deep maturity. I would also like the audience's

attention to be focused precisely on the depiction of Tatyana's inner world," he said.

The director was a jury member of Placido Domingo's Operalia, the world opera competition, and staged Puccini's "Turandot" at the Astana Opera last year.

"At the Astana Opera, superb working conditions are created. It is gratifying that each cultural event is treated here with great reverence. For example, we repeatedly met with Minister Arystanbek Mukhamediuly throughout the staging works and he took an active part in the creative process of preparing the opera "Eugene Onegin." Moreover, we had wonderful time making music together; the minister is an excellent musician," he said prior to the premiere.

Costume designers Pavel Dragu-

nov and Sofya Tasmagambetova, who worked on the production for the first time, made approximately 250 costumes.

Preparing the stage setting took six months. The performance includes video projections, and LED screens with colourful images will be used instead of windows. Animals are also involved in the production.

"The effects created by the light designer will be interesting for the audience. The interior is decorated with a huge chandelier and a large, rotating circle with a couple of young people dancing and a large mirror will amaze the viewers. This production differs from many previous ones in that it has many moving decorations," said design and production department head Victor Carare.

Two Kazakhfilm productions win honours at Dhaka Film Festival

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Two Kazakhfilm productions were honoured at the 17th Dhaka (Bangladesh) International Film Festival (DIFF) held Jan. 10-18. "Little Prince of Our City" received the Best Children's Film Badal Rahman award, while "Shynyrau" (Deep Well) was awarded Best Cinematography (Asian Competition Section).

"Little Prince of Our City" tells the story of the friendship between

two solitary people, 6-year-old orphan Bibol and veteran musician and nursing home resident Kassymkhan. Communicating with Kassymkhan, Bibol realises a person's spiritual and moral qualities can truly help one achieve happiness.

The film was directed by Talgat Temenov, known for works such as "Love Station," "Running Target" and "Teen Wolf among People." Kazakhfilm shot the film with Adigul Productions.

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Almaty to host first marathon of 2019

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Almaty Marathon, which gathered 14,000 participants last year, will take place April 21. Funds raised from the charitable event will be used to build sports facilities. The 1,200-person preparatory race, the season's first, will be held Feb. 23 in the city's First President's Park.

The 10-kilometre main distance will be divided into three age categories (15-34, 35-49 and over 50). The children's distance (three kilometres) is available to those 10-14.

The starting time for adults is 9.30 a.m.; for children, 9.00 a.m.

The winners will be designated by age for both distances. Every participant will receive a finisher's medal.

Registration is open through Feb. 17 at www.almaty-marathon.kz.

The marathon is organised by the Courage to Be the First corporate fund, World Class Almaty fitness club and Shakhmardan Yesenov research and educational foundation with the support of the Almaty Akimat (administration).

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Writers captivate audience with real-life stories, use social media for promotion

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – What challenges do young writers face? What are their sources of inspiration? How can social media increase book sales? The Astana Times spoke with young Kazakh female writers to learn about their stories and ambitions.

Meruyert Alonso

Karaganda native Meruyert Alonso released her first book, "The short summer of Chanteclaire," in 2018. A reporter by occupation, she is residing in Lima, the capital of Peru.

The work centres on the life of people in small towns, those who "live in the towns and villages in the middle of nowhere away from the neon lights of shopping malls." It sounds like a sleepy kingdom, but "we lived our small and inconspicuous lives in these godforsaken towns."

"Former editor of 'Cosmopolitan [Kazakhstan]' magazine Maya Akisheva was the first person to read my book. In fact, one hour before the official book presentation she arrived at the store, approached me and said 'Do not be afraid. It is such a good book. A writer has been born.' Those words made me feel really calm," said Alonso.

The book was self-published, as she did not have an agreement with a publisher.

"It allowed me to personally direct the whole process. On the other hand, many magazines such as 'Esquire,' among others, gave publicity without any settlement

involved. It was the printed media community having my back. I would say 50/50. The creative process of writing is a solo part and eventually it arrives to its end," she noted.

"Contrary to the writing process, the release and publishing part is teamwork; everyone has an opinion, a perspective, but at the end all the people involved in the project have to agree, despite the

clear idea you have in your mind for your book as a writer," she added.

Alonso has also finished two children's books.

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Changing reality through "green" art

By Ayim Ismailova

"Green" thinking is a new model of human behaviour. Due to the new paradigm, we can maintain perfect ecological balance on Earth in the new age. The shift of thinking towards "green" technologies is brightly represented in impressive examples, such as the model ecology in Freiburg, the tremendous amount of energy produced by the wind turbine park in Denmark, the restored forests in South Korea.

The main goals of stable development enunciated during the UN Global Assembly and the agreement concluded in Paris in 2015 are events that formed constructive development trends for the whole planet. New eco-solutions could advance

the new age of Homo Ecologicus, an age of a completely new approach to Earth problems aimed at creation.

HSH Albert II, the Prince of Monaco, known worldwide as the Green Prince, proactively participates in the "green" movement and advances the ecological thinking on our planet. Prince Albert II initiated various ecology projects, including the Clean Equity Conference and the Award of the Prince of Monaco. More than 1,800 investors, scientists, diplomats take part in the Clean Equity Conference every year. During conference sessions, more than 380 projects have been initiated. Due to ecological activities of the Prince, Monaco is transforming into one of the world centres for the advancement and support of "green" innovations.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

February 14 at 7 p.m.	Romeo and Juliet, ballet
February 17 at 5 p.m.	Floria Tosca, opera
February 22 at 7 p.m.	La Bayadère, ballet
February 27 at 7 p.m.	La Traviata, opera

BARYS ARENA

February 14 at 7.30 p.m.	HC Barys – HC Kunlun Red Star Beijing
February 16 at 5 p.m.	HC Barys – HC Avangard Omsk

SARYARKA VELODROME

February 21 at 8 p.m.	Kazakhstan – Australia, FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Qualifiers
February 24 at 8.30 p.m.	Kazakhstan – Philippines, FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Qualifiers

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

First virtual museum of Kazakh women's history educates and empowers

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakh women's history museums educate and empower women, providing an awareness-raising platform and tools for overcoming discrimination, said Women of Kazakhstan founder Dinara Assanova in an interview with The Astana Times.

Assanova's family provided her with a keen awareness of women's contributions to society from a young age.

"Motivation to study Kazakh women's history was given to me by my grandfather," she said. "He was the one to initiate his private collection of outstanding women in Kazakhstan that I inherited."

That private collection has since been expanded into a structured and thoroughly researched public one, with followers making their own submissions about their mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers. The non-governmental organisation Women of Kazakhstan runs the country's first virtual museum on its Instagram (@womenofkz), also publishing Kazakh women's photographs, biographies, folklore legends, poems and paintings on Facebook and Twitter (@womenofkz). Museum exhibitions have featured Kazakh names, toponyms, mythology, phaleristics collections, philately and numismatics. Assanova hopes to also develop a physical museum, library, research centre and database.

"We have a great exhibition based on the research of Adrienne Mayor, historian of Stanford University, on the female eagle hunt-



Photograph restorations of Khiuz Dospanova (top right) by Olga Shirnina.

ing traditions in Kazakhstan. Another photography exhibition is based on our unique research on the streets of Almaty named after women," she noted.

Kulyash Baiseitova, the youngest to be awarded a People's Artist of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics title for her opera singing.

"Knowledge of women's contributions is a great tool of inspiration and empowerment," said Assanova. "Legacy matters. For every Manshuk Mametova and Kulyash Baiseitova, there are thousands of women who deserve to be part of the historical narrative of our country... Gaukhar Zakumbayeva developed unique catalysts for oil refining, which allowed for increasing the depth of oil refining from the usual 50-60 percent

to 95 percent; Sofiya Takibayeva restored the most sophisticated bricks, majolica, terracotta and glaze for the Mausoleum of Khoja Akhmed Yassawi; former Minister of Culture Laila Galimzhanova made a huge contribution to the development of cinematography in our country and recently, artists Saule Suleimenova and her daughter Sunbike Suleimenova unveiled the story of Lydia Blinova, artist and wife of the famous painter Rustam Halfin."

Today, there are women's museums on every continent. "There are about 300 women's museums in the world – all of them are united by the desire to build a collective image of women's culture and history, which was never specifically collected, preserved or studied," she noted, adding Women of Kazakhstan joined the International Association of Women's Museums in 2018.

Museums allow visitors to place their identity within historical and cultural contexts, but have not always been socially and economically inclusive spaces. In integrating technology into the exhibitions, the organisation hopes to bring the museum to the people, rather than vice versa.

"There are no [other] virtual museums in Kazakhstan," she said. "When most of the archival material is online, it is easily accessible. One can always find material there to work on an article, post, abstract or research, so [physical] visits to archives and museums can be significantly reduced."

Parts of the country's economy, government and human capital development are undergoing digitisation as part of the Digital Kazakhstan state programme. Assanova hopes to see Kazakhstan's scientific works, archival photographs and audio-visual material in its 234 museums as accessible online as material from the United States Library of Congress and Louvre Museum Internet archives.

"Throughout the world, museums are turning into spaces that are reviving the cult of knowledge; with the help of the internet and good content, this is possible. With the advent of the internet, our life has ceased to be the same, so we need to change the paradigms of museum work in Kazakhstan," she noted, pointing to

Almaty's Abilkhan Kasteyev State Museum of Arts' use of social media in promoting local art.

"The only photographs of Kazakh women that have been professionally restored and coloured in a digital format are three photos of Khiuz Dospanova," she added, referring to photo colourist Olga Shirnina's restorations of the Kazakh pilot. "I am really looking forward to creative enthusiasts in Kazakhstan who will restore photographs of Kazakh history, which would allow us to see the past in a completely different light."

Assanova leads by example in making museums more accessible by allowing visitors to take photographs and videos of the exhibitions. "It will be much easier for people to study history when they can imprint a pattern from a sholpy [Kazakh jewelry] from the 19th century and capture a picture of the only Kazakh nurse to have received the highest international medal, the Florence Nightingale Medal!" she said.

She noted among Kazakhstan's numerous and diverse organisations working on women's rights, many lack historical information to advance their cause.

"I think that what I do serves women's interests, women's history and women's movements," she added. "I want our women to know their history and be proud and inspired by their predecessors. I am confident that the education and professional development of a woman will help all of us grow into a highly intelligent generation that will turn Kazakhstan into a country with a high level of human development."

Adopting children should be norm, says Mothers House Public Fund Director

Continued from Page A1

The fund has 25 crisis centres in 19 Kazakh cities, which provide a transitional home for approximately 300 mothers and 250 children. Every month, the centres accept approximately 60-70 women, including those who are pregnant (in their seventh month or from the 20th week), with newborns from maternity hospitals or children up to 18 months.

Women are offered temporary residence and psychological, medical and legal advisory assistance. Depending on the women's situations, the fund helps them study or find a job and offers parenting, communication and life skills training.

"We are working on case management technology; this is working with each specific case... and [offer] women training on parenting skills so that they know how to take care of a child and then be able to decide how to live and raise a child independently when they leave [the crisis centre]," said Makhmetova.

The fund also seeks to develop healthy surroundings for the women and children.

"We are doing much work with the social environment of a woman. We try to restore all social ties, so that a woman can once again acquire a resourceful state and can confidently return into society with her child and the child would acquire a caring family. In 80 per-

cent of the cases, we succeed," she added.

The centres also accept underage pregnant girls. They are usually directed from guardianship authorities or by the power of their parents' attorney, because families are unable to cope with the situation. Women typically live at the centre for six months; underage girls are permitted to remain for a longer period.

In 2016, the fund started its second large-scale project, the Januia (Family) Adoption Support Centre. The programme, aimed at helping those who want to adopt children, has helped to place 940 children in 640-650 families.

"At that time, there were more than 8,000 children in children's boarding-style institutions including children in Children's Homes (0-4 years), orphanages (4-18) and medical and social institutions (children with disabilities aged 4-18). These three institutions are under the control of three different governmental institutions that are the ministries of healthcare, education and science and labour and social protection, respectively. Everything is very difficult, because they do not interact with each other. There are different statistics, approaches and standards for children's care," said Makhmetova.

The fund offers information and legal advisory assistance for adoptive parent candidates such as adoption forms, required documents and the rules and regulations for adopting.

To ease the process and make it clear and smooth for both adoptive parents and children, the fund also created the Adoptive Parents School, where they can receive psychological counselling to prepare them to become moms and dads.

"The work of a psychologist is vital, because it is very important to clarify motivation. We must see the potential of the family... We believe that if a family's motivation is to solve its own problem, it's wrong... The right motivation, in my opinion, is that a child needs a family and

the family can give the child such a happy, caring, safe environment in which a child can develop. This is an understanding of the responsibility they take," she noted.

The Adoptive Parents School holds classes for groups of 15 every Saturday for three months.

"During the school, we give them an understanding of what the child has experienced, what are one's needs," said Makhmetova.

The fund promotes the idea that any child can find a family and adoption is a normal practice.

"Our task is to coordinate candidates. They all want a little baby; there are few or no such children or they have a disease. We also tell institutions that if a child has a disease, he or she can also be adopted and have a family. We can help the family to treat and heal the child. We also sponsor such expenses," she noted.

The fund has also initiated the Balajan (Child loving soul) pilot project for 2018-2023 with the goal of transforming and reducing seven boarding-style institutions in the Akmola region. The programme seeks to create family-style inclusive groups, with children of different age, with at least two caregivers.

"In developed countries, there are no children's boarding-style institutions. Everything is close to families or transferred to families. In the world, there are two approaches – revolutionary, when countries completely abandoned these institutions, and evolutionary, when these institutions were gradually transformed," said Makhmetova.

"[In family-style institutions] the child's psychological health is saved; it is easier for a child to adapt and he or she has experience in interacting with adults who are in the role of parents. We believe that Kazakhstan should take the second path," she noted.

"These institutions should be family-oriented, supporting and implementing the child's right to live and grow up in a family," she added.

World weightlifting champion is one of 100 New Faces



Vitaly Didenko

By Anzhela Kaliyeva

ASTANA – When Vitaly Didenko came into the sports club as a boy to improve his health, he could not imagine that within a few years he would achieve great success. One of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces, Didenko is a nine-time World Weightlifting Champion, World Absolute Champion and North Kazakhstan region weightlifting record holder.

"Weightlifting is not for the faint of heart. In our sport, it is important to overcome and endure yourself," he said in an interview with The Astana Times.

A native of the region's Akzhan village in Timiryazev District, Didenko came to the sport at age 13 to improve his health. Today, he is an Honoured Master of Sports of Kazakhstan.

Didenko works as a general physical trainer with Kulager professional hockey club in Petropavlovsk. Coaching, however, is his first love, as it brings him great pleasure. He is also continuing his own sports career.

Didenko won his first serious medal in 2003 in Almaty at the National Youth Championship. He has never slowed down and modestly mentions his more than 50

awards, noting behind each high result is regular work and patience.

"In addition to my own effort, this victory has a great contribution from my coaches – the first coach Vladimir Nikitenko and honoured coaches of Kazakhstan Nikolai Lavrentiev and Andrey Gilyvyak. I have already been doing weightlifting for 17 years. Today, I am engaged in my favourite business; it cannot even be called work," he said.

The weightlifter has two idols – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Both are outstanding personalities and ordinary people, he says, who began without special privileges and were able to achieve high results in their field.

Didenko plans to organise his own championship, win several national championships and perform for the first time at the Asian Championships in Korea in the hope of adding the title to his list of achievements.

"I would like to wish for all Kazakhs to always pursue their own if that is what they want and dream of, regardless of their field of activity. Our country does not stand still; it is developing at a frantic pace and we need to manage to grow after it and achieve success," he said.



CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Astana Ballet develops youth involvement in art

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Astana Ballet presented new creative achievements, successful tours and productive cooperation with foreign theatre representatives last year. In 2019, the staff, composed mainly of young people, will expand its repertoire and geographic list of tours.

“I want to note that every year there is a steady and exact growth of interest in high art; our audience is becoming much younger, which means very good involvement of young people in art,” said Astana Ballet Director Valeriy Kuzembayev.

All performances are held before consistently full houses, gen-



Choreographer Ricardo Amarante.

erating interest by the domestic and foreign public.

In 2018, the theatre presented the premiere of “Giselle,” Adolfe Adam’s romantic ballet and the pearl of the world ballet repertoire. The performance, well known not only to ballet fans but also to those far from its world, served as a great experience in studying classical dance canons. Guest choreographer Ricardo Amarante added expression, lightness and naturalness.

The one-act neoclassical ballet “Love’s Lost Idols” was staged Nov. 2-3 for Kazakh viewers. American choreographer, director and innovator Nicolò Fonte authored the performance.

The theatre also toured Kazakh cities including Aktau, Almaty,

Kyzylorda and Taldykorgan as part of the Ruhani Jangyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the ballet presented various genres of choreographic art in Milan (Italy), Monaco and New York (U.S.). The tour programme included the best images in the neoclassical style and a delightful combination of national dances.

The ballet’s possibilities will allow the city to become a platform for large international classical and modern art competitions, said Kuzembayev.

“We can say with confidence that the festival, held as part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Astana as the capital, has become one of the large-scale and sig-

nificant events in the cultural life of the country. The interaction of cultures was clearly manifested in the festival programme in the same year; it was extremely interesting and intense. The full house was guaranteed to all the days of the dance forum, as the tickets were bought in advance,” he noted.

He added this year Astana Ballet will make a significant contribution to implementing the Seven Facets of the Great Steppe programme, which attaches importance to national history and developing the cultural arena. Rehearsals are currently being held on stage to prepare for the premiere of “Beibars,” Kazakhstan’s first historical film-ballet under the direction of the theatre’s chief choreographer Mukaram Avakhri.

Two Kazakhfilm productions win honours at Dhaka Film Festival

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“For me, this was a big surprise. My friend, a famous Serbian art historian who was at this film festival, called me and said that our work was recognised as the best children’s film. Of course, I am very pleased with this. This is a big victory for ‘Little Prince,’” he said.

Kazakh actor Toleubek Aralbay, who played Kassymkhan, won Best Male Role at last summer’s

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Film Festival. The production was also presented in the main competition at the Eurasian Bridge II International Film Festival.

Kazakh cameraman Rivkat Ibragimov was applauded for his work on “Shynyrau.” Director Zhanabek Zhetiruoov personally presented the film to the local public.

“At the festival in Dhaka, there were many experts from different countries who were interested in ‘Shynyrau’

and invited us to festivals in their countries. The festival life of our film is just beginning. I think we have everything ahead,” said Zhetiruoov.

The film is based on the novel of the same name by Kazakh writer and public figure Abish Kekilbayev. It presents the story of Yensep, who has rare knowledge about the difficult work of digging wells.

The film raises themes of rivalry, pride, love, friendship and betrayal. DIFF, held since 1992, is organised

by the Rainbow Film Society. It seeks to introduce Bangladeshis to mainstream films from around the world and help develop the country’s cinema. DIFF has also created space for young, aspiring filmmakers in Bangladesh and throughout South Asia to connect with global artistic trends.

The festival, with the theme “Better Film, Better Audience, Better Society,” attracted representatives from 72 countries and showcased 220 films.

National Museum presents world-famous art masterpieces

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The National Museum of Kazakhstan unveiled the “Old and New, Great and Unique” exhibition, displaying some of the world’s most prominent art pieces. Among 45 exhibits are the works of Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, Albrecht Dürer, Marc Chagall, Joan Miro and Pierre Auguste Renoir.

Work of well-known Kazakh artists is also on display, including works by Abyl Khan Kasteev, Oral Tansykbayev, Zhanatai Shardenov, Shaimarden Sariev, Sakhi Rohmanov, Tokbolat Toguzbayev, Alexei Stepanov and Yevgeniy Sidorkin.

“This is a rare exhibition. The dialogue of geniuses through the prism of centuries and continents. It is a unique opportunity to get to know fine art of old masters through the lens of our time. The view from Astana at ‘Old and New, Great and Unique,’ world art rarities from private collection that was accumulated in the past quarter century with great attention and

love and was handed for the permanent display to the Pygmalion art gallery,” said the organisers.

The items are part of the private collection of Kazakh artist Yerbolat Tolepbai.

“The art in the private collection is a special mystery and secret that one can only get closer to but cannot solve it to the end and tap into its meaning because the collections bring art of different eras and countries together revealing our similarity with artists who lived hundred years before us. This is a spiritual closeness of the common human heritage that is particularly revealed and gets stronger through the prism of national [art],” according to a statement by the organisers.

“I believe many people know Yerbolat Tolepbai. He is not only a wonderful artist, but also an understanding and intelligent person. He wants our visitors to be closer to world art and seeks to bolster interest to real art among our young people and the real art is immortal,” said exhibition curator Olga Baturina.

Astana Circus artists win prize at Monte Carlo Circus Festival

Staff Report

ASTANA – The acrobats of the Astana Circus Yoka Konurbayeva and Nazerke Merekekyzy, won prizes at the 43rd International Circus Festival in Monte Carlo Jan. 17-27.

The artists performed the “Equilibrium on Segway” original performance. It is the first time the circus performers from Astana performed at the festival.

“The performance has very difficult tricks that we perform without (a spotter) hand, and, of course, it was very exciting, but everything went well,” said Konurbayeva, reported astana.gov.kz.

The two performers received an invitation to Monte Carlo during the Echo of Asia Circus Festival in Astana in July. The festival was part of the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the capital.

The creativity of the two per-

formers was noted by President of the European Circus Association and Vice-President of the Circus Festival in Monte Carlo Urs Pils, who was on the jury of the Echo of Asia Circus Festival and invited them to take part in the largest circus event in the world. The “Equilibrium at Segway” performance took the third place at the festival in Astana.

Konurbayeva is an aerial balancing performer, a laureate of interna-

tional festivals of Veo-Veo and Latino, winner of the Grand Prix of the Shabyt International Festival of Creative Youth. She toured in Belarus, Spain, Italy, Monaco, Japan, France and Switzerland. She also toured in Australia for nearly two years.

Konurbayeva and Merekekyzy are the winners of the Grand Prix of the Echo of Asia International Circus Festival in the category of contributing to the development of circus art (2016).

Changing reality through “green” art

Continued from Page B1

Albert II also supports the Festival for Earth, created by artist Maria Rebecca Ballestra as an art project that will contribute to social, scientific and economic transformation through creativity and culture. In 2018, climate change and economic opportunities associated with a sustainable future, accelerating the transition to promoting environmentally friendly culture were the focus of the festival. The Festival for Earth is supported by the Prince Albert II Foundation, the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Climate Change, the Oceanographic Museum of the Principality of Monaco and the Museum of Natural History (Venice).

“The artists are true creative power of a civilisation and society. In his creations, the artist anticipates the changes which would embrace other spheres of social and cultural life after one or two generations,” wrote Mircea Eliade. The new age enriched the art and the creativity with the new spirit of the times, with the “green” art which creates new reality and endeavours to bring the changes into the real life.

Artists, writers, movie directors converge the art and social requirements of the present day and try to transform real life with their creations all over the world. Famous American photographer Ansel Adams wrote in his autobiography: “The quality of the place, the reaction to the direct contact with the Earth and creative objects such as mountains and the sky are crucial for the integrity of our existence on our planet.”

Olafur Eliasson’s installations, architectural performances by Amanda Schachter and Alexander Levis,

virtual forests by Naziha Mestaoui, Davis Maisel’s photographic observations and exhibitions of the French sculptor Paulo Grangeon in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund are just a few examples of “green” art successfully converging art and ecology, creativity and social problems. Interaction between art, ecology and social issues becomes valuable part of cultural policy in many countries.

The “green” art is not only a new trend of modern art creating images and symbols of new age and new reality, but also an art of action spreading new ideas of ecological thinking. The associative method of introduction to ecological ideas may be difficult to initial understanding, but it is able to change thinking drastically.

Famous Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio has recently become one of the most recognisable activists of the American “green” movement. In 2008, he established the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation for the protection of the environment. The main goal of the foundation is to attract public attention to possibilities that would help stopping the global climate warming.

In 2016, DiCaprio shot the “Before the Flood” movie about the global warming. He cooperated with Fisher Stevens, James Packer, Bret Ratner, Trevor Davidoski and Jennifer Davison Killoran. Martin Scorsese was the general producer of the movie. The movie was presented during the Toronto International film festival in September 2016, and later was broadcast worldwide via National Geographic Channel and other TV channels.

The actor noted the movie is the result of three years of travel. The crew visited various corners of the Earth to depict the after-effects of the climate

change. The movie shows the disastrous state of our planet and inspires viewers to find the means to amend it.

Starting from the premiere the creation of DiCaprio has received a wide response. The movie is being discussed worldwide on well-known TV channels, in key universities. Leading scholars, presidents of different countries, key persons of the art are participating in the discussion. To restore the original “Before the Flood” state to the humankind, it is crucial to change the way of thinking by various means including “green” art.

American Actor Richard Gere is also actively involved in the “green” movement. Due to his focus on the problems of ecology, Gere has received the International Green Award. “Green” technologies are changing not only energy markets but also the lifestyle which has demonstrated its deficiency during thousands of years. The new Modus Vivendi of the New Millennium Human is being created. New ecological awareness his beginning to spread worldwide due to “green” persons and creative “green” projects.

Luc Besson produced the “Home” movie and also provided the main idea for it. The movie can be called the culmination of the spatial research of the director. The movie premiered in 87 cities all over the world on June 5, 2009, as part of the International Environment Day. Besson cooperated with famous French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand for the movie. It was based on 15 years of the filming, about 500,000 photographs by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, the “Atlantis” documentary by Luc Besson and also on the philanthropic activities of the director.

The “Home” has become one of

the key eco-projects of the cinema, a manifesto of the “green” generation which can be characterised as non-aggressive, meditative and ecological consideration of the world.

This grandiose mega project was filmed at bird’s eye view using Cineplex high resolution camera. The filming crew visited 53 countries in 18 months and have filmed the places of the Earth, which are in need of urgent help.

The “Home” movie presents effective cinema and new age, when an audience of thousands of spectators are able to see the true state of our planet and try to find a solution worldwide.

The number of “green” art projects is increasing day by day. One could consider installations and architectural performances during Expo 2017 in Astana as another example of “green” art as well. Marc Fornes’s Coral sculpture was acknowledged as one of the key installations. The sculpture had been created to attract spectators’ attention to the problem of disappearing coral reefs.

The International Green Technologies & Investments Centre recently established in Astana under the guidance of former EXPO 2017 Commissioner Rapol Zhoshybayev will also contribute to the creation and development of “green” art projects in Kazakhstan.

New “green” thinking will come into being only when all countries collaborate and influence each other. It is worth repeating the words of the authors of the “Home” movie: “We are capable to continue the history of the Earth together.”

The author is a coordinator of the Art for Sustainable Development project supported by IGTIC.

Kazakhstan launches Qazaq Epos contest to promote folk culture among youth

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will launch the Qazaq Epos project to encourage school students’ spiritual development through the prism of the nation’s rich ethno and philosophical legacy in folk epos.

The competition is open to sixth-grade students throughout the country. Participants must recite “Kobylandy Batyr,” a 107-page epos, by heart; explain the meaning of different archaisms and respond in the Kazakh language to literature questions based on the school programme.

“The focus will be on studying historic epos. This includes learning the work by heart, expressively reading it out loud and being able to explain the meaning. The knowledge of poetic texts will develop the other personal perception of history, its main eras and consequences. The poetic texts will also positively affect speaking manner and writing literacy and will lay a foundation to a more conscious choice of literature. This project will have a big effect on the formation of the nation’s code,” said Minister of Information and

Communication Dauren Abayev at a Feb. 4 conference.

The competition is expected to reach 50,000 school students and 25,000 teachers from 5,000 schools nationwide. It will begin at the district level, followed by regional and national level contests.

Prizes vary by level, with 150,000 tenge (US\$396.25) the main prize at the district level. The regional winner’s presentation will be streamed live on Khabar TV and the individual will receive one million tenge (US\$2,642).

“There are similar competitions organised worldwide. For example, Shakespeare readings in English-speaking countries or Pushkin’s in Russia. Their goal is similar, which is trying to convey the beauty and richness of the mother tongue to the growing generation, the beauty of the poetic heritage of our ancestors,” said Abayev.

A similar competition held in November involved Almaty school children reading the “Alpamys Batyr” epos. The winner was No. 180 school ninth grader Aruzhan Absattar, who received a 1.5 million tenge (US\$3,962) prize.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Zhambyl region reports 4-5 percent growth in almost all economic sectors



Zhambyl region Akim (Governor) Askar Myrzakhetmetov.

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Zhambyl region observed a 4-5 percent increase in all sectors of its economy in 2018, reported the regional akimat (administration) press service based on the information from the Department of Economy and Budget Planning.

The akimat set goals to increase regional socio-economic indicators by 2.8 percent in the beginning of the year. Although there was a risk of non-fulfilment of product volumes and construction and industry investments near the end of the year, the final indicator assessment showed upward trends. The industrial output index was 102.6 percent (reaching 396.2 billion tenge or US\$1.04 billion), construction was 105 percent and

The akimat set goals to increase regional socio-economic indicators by 2.8 percent in the beginning of the year. Although there was a risk of non-fulfilment of product volumes and construction and industry investments near the end of the year, the final indicator assessment showed upward trends.

investment volume in fixed assets was 108.4 percent (more than 2.3 billion tenge or \$6.04 million). Positive dynamics was also maintained in managing state budgets.

The growth was mainly from production volume in the chemical, metallurgy and mechanical engineering industries. The dynamics were associated with improved engagement of small and medium-sized businesses and an increase in enterprise productivity during the year, said Zhambyl region Akim (Governor) Askar Myrzakhetmetov. “We cannot rest on our laurels; in the new year, even larger projects are to be implemented,” he said.

The akimat is now leaning towards a top-down approach of controlling indicators in upcoming reports. It will introduce a new format of final assessment works focusing on current issues and revising their timely solutions. In addition, regional authorities plan to start joint work with 30 territorial departments, inspections and other administrations within the region. The memorandum specifying the requirements among regional, town and village administrations is underway.

Despite the general positive trends, the 80-percent planned export growth target was unfulfilled at only 38.1 percent.

The annual report analysis showed the need to open a support centre for entrepreneurs and investors. The Business Road Map 2020 programme cannot serve its targeted audience, as the analysis showed a low lending rate of financial support for those who want to start a business. In particular, there is no support for those who would like, but cannot get, a 6-percent loan.

This year, the centre plans to implement 13 directions, 16 indicators, 17 projects, 60 initiatives and 313 events.

Kokshetau will start Smart City transition with schools and busses, sees steady economic growth

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kokshetau’s transition to a Smart City will start this year by introducing e-tickets on public transport, the Smart School project in five schools and a pilot project to digitise the housing and utilities sectors. The town of approximately 130,000 is the regional centre of the Akmola region.

The Smart City project is in its initial development phase. The city’s housing maintenance firms (KSKs) connected all houses to the e-KSK online service system and installed cameras at 400 entrances of a planned 800 last year, said Akim (Mayor) Yermek Marzhikpayev at a Feb. 7 annual report meeting with the regional governor. The project has created a sec-

ondary issue, however, as the town must address questions more vital for locals. The lack of seats in Kokshetau’s secondary schools resulted in splitting the school day into three shifts, forcing kids in the third shift to study late in the evening.

To eliminate the third shift, schools Nos. 1, 4, 6 and 13 will build extensions accommodating 1,680 seats. Construction is also planned in the Saryarka microdistrict to provide 280 additional kindergarten seats for children with speech disorders. Twenty-four of 29 public private partnership (PPP) education projects worth 3.8 billion tenge (US\$10.05 million) were started last year.

Food prices were unreasonably high near the end of 2018 and the city akimat (administration) signed

280 memorandums with outlets to prevent future issues. Starting Dec. 1, heat tariffs reduced 36 percent to 2,721 tenge (US\$7.20) per gigacalorie. Beginning Jan. 1, city residents have observed tariff reductions for the sewage system (11 percent), water (6.6 percent) and electricity (6 percent).

The real sector of the economy is developing steadily, said Marzhikpayev. Industrial enterprises have produced goods worth 105.3 billion tenge (US\$ 278.6 million). Fixed asset investments were 38.8 billion tenge (US\$102.66 million), a 10.6-billion tenge (US\$28.04 million) increase compared to the previous year.

Construction of three city highways and a bridge on Gabdullin Street across the Kyshtakty River began last year. The akimat pre-

sented a final detailed plan for a 128.9-hectare plot during a Jan. 24 meeting with the regional akim.

“This is a very important project for the city. In April, the design and estimate documentation for the construction of a bypass road, which is also included in the project, will come from the state examination. It will separate the city from the lake and all the water coming from the streets will pass through the sewage treatment plant,” said Marzhikpayev.

The 7-20-25 state housing mortgage programme approved more than 200 applications. Thirty-one apartment buildings with 1,500 units were built, construction is continuing on 19 buildings and 17 buildings with 600 apartments are expected to be commissioned soon.

Kazakhstan moves annual funding of scientists to earlier in the year

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh scientists implementing research projects and programmes began receiving funding in January for the first time since the country’s independence. Previously they received funding only in the spring.

Corresponding changes and additions have been made to the Budget Code, Rules for budget execution and its cash services.

The Ministry of Education and Science reported that since December 2018, work has been carried out to conclude additional agreements on 50 percent advance

payment. Earlier, the advance payment was 30 percent and the scientists received funding in March-May, while the implementation period of projects and programmes was five to seven months.

The innovation will enable scientists to implement tasks from the beginning of the year, according to the terms of the contract, as well as to receive payment beginning in January. Now it is possible to implement projects and programmes within 10 months.

Speaking at a recent forum in Astana dedicated to the opening of the Year of Youth, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the allocation of funding

for young scientists and instructed the government to increase grant funding for basic and applied research by three billion tenge (US\$ 8 million) annually.

“It is necessary to help young scientists to implement their ideas into real projects. I am personally going to do this,” he said, highlighting the necessity to make science and education accessible to all young people.

“Active assistance to young scientists is of great importance. Time has shown that we made the right decision when we established the Bolashak programme at the most difficult time for our country. We could not pay pensions to old people – there was no money

in the treasury, we could not pay salaries to teachers, doctors and even military people. Despite this, we began to send young people to the best universities of the world and the state paid for each of them \$30,000-50,000,” he said.

“These guys have returned and are working for our economy. After that, Nazarbayev University was established at the level of the best world standards. And now the Bolashak students, each graduation of Nazarbayev University students, KBTU (Kazakh British Technical University) and so on – they are already creating the future elite of our country,” President Nazarbayev said.

Astana to build gas infrastructure on outskirts of capital

Staff Report

ASTANA – The national government plans to build gas infrastructure around the outskirts of the capital to provide blue fuel for urban heat and power plants, Koktal-1 and Koktal-2 residential areas, Zheleznodorozhny and Southeast districts.

The infrastructure will be paid for with local, national and private funds. It will be built in three phases. The first phase will provide gas

to water-heating boilers and fuel-oil boilers, gas distribution networks of Koktal-1, Koktal-2 residential areas, Zheleznodorozhny and Southeast districts.

The second phase will build the infrastructure to supply fuel to the gas distribution networks of Mikhurino, International, Kuygenzhar, Telman, Prigorodny, Garden Village and Family Village residential areas.

The Ilyinka, Shubary and Ondiris districts will be supplied with gas following the third phase.

In the second quarter of this year, it is planned to begin construction of the first phase of the city’s gas distribution networks. Gas infrastructure development of the Koktal-1 and Koktal-2 residential areas, Zheleznodorozhny and Southeast districts is planned from 2019 to 2023 as funding becomes available.

Gas supply to the capital will be through the new Saryarka gas pipeline, which is planned to be built in four stages. At the first stage, the pipeline will be constructed along the Kyzylorda-Zhezkazgan-Kara-

ganda-Astana route with a length of 1,081 kilometres.

At the second stage, it is planned to build the gas pipeline from Astana to Kokshetau. The third phase includes construction of the pipeline to Petropavlovsk. In the fourth stage, the Zhezkazgan and Temirtau compressor stations will be built.

It is expected that about 800 jobs will be created during the construction of the Saryarka gas pipeline, and more than 200 jobs will be created during its operation.

Turkestan region plans development of 188 settlements

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The newly established Turkestan region plans to create 188 development plans for settlements in the region, said Turkestan Region Architecture and Urban Planning Department Head Baktybai Duisebekov.

The Turkestan region is the youngest among the nation’s 14 regions. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev declared the establishment of the new region in June 2018. The region occupies a territory of 11.6 million hectares and is home to nearly three million people.

The decree also declared Shymkent, previously centre of the South Kazakhstan region, a city of national significance putting it in the same group with Astana and Almaty.

Last year, the region finalised development schemes for 77 settlements and construction plans for areas with up to 5,000 residents.

The administration is also working to identify illegal construction sites.

Last year, Turkestan region Architecture and Construction Control Department examined 2,639 objects, including social facilities, residential houses and businesses.

“In general, we found out that 430 objects were built with violation of norms and requirements envisioned in the law. We have taken measures. We complied 724 protocols. Among those, 162 deal with state facilities and 562 are individual construction,” said Department Deputy Chair Muhit Turysbekov.

The inspections imposed fines worth 106.69 million tenge (US\$279,960).

Development of the Turkestan region has been a national priority and the government plans to invest approximately \$2 billion to build infrastructure and facilities, including new housing areas, airport and administrative and business centres.

Agriculture, industry and tour-

ism were named priority areas in this effort.

“We have major tourist destinations. They include health tourism in the Saryagash district, ski tourism in the Tolebi district (Kaskasu), historical and cultural tourism (pilgrimage) in Turkestan. We have unique architectural, historical and archaeological monuments, amazing nature and unique culture. There are over 1,000 historical, cultural and archaeological sites as well as four protected areas (Aksu-Zhabagly, Karatau, Sairam-Ugam and Syr Darya-Turkestan) in the region,” Turkestan region Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimbayev told The Astana Times in November.

The region’s architecture department recently compiled a list of additional 500 monuments in the region and prepared several sketch design projects, including construction of the Ordabasy cultural complex in the Ordabasy district, the House of Friendship and an outdoor museum displaying the region’s key historical sites.



SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Social innovations planned at IT camp for youth with disabilities



By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The World of Equal IT Opportunities, aimed at developing IT skills and competencies for young people with disabilities, will launch in March. The project includes a competition involving socially-conscious IT projects, with the winners receiving 2 million tenge (US\$5,216).

The venture is being implemented by the Samruk Kazyna Trust Social Projects Development Fund, Yerekshe Tandau Shelek Corporate Fund, Chevron Corporation and Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia (EFCA). It has been allocated 7.5 million tenge (US\$19,560) from the Samruk Kazyna Trust Fund and 9.2 million tenge (US\$23,472) from Chevron, a portion of which will be used for the prize money, said EFCA Programme Manager Andrei Bachishe at the Kazakh Central Communication Service press conference.

He noted one of the objectives is to develop independent earning skills, solving the problem of low competitiveness for employment. The main task of the camp is to provide direction.

Various modern technologies will be used such as online tools,

inclusive practices and approaches, a mentoring programme and students' practical involvement in existing projects. Participants will receive a competitive education and independent learning skills.

The youth IT camp will include teams of talented young IT specialists, including individuals with disabilities, said Bachishe. The requirements are the same for all.

"We should not create greenhouse conditions for people with disabilities, because in the future they will come to groups where they will have the same requirements as other employees," he noted.

The first stage is the application and selection process, when 16 participants from all regions will be selected. Particular attention will be given to those from remote regions.

During the four-day camp, participants will gain programming skills, learn to package their own projects, attend a leadership course and receive the basics of entrepreneurship.

The event also includes an IT social project competition, the best of which will receive grant support for necessary technical equipment to launch the venture. Each will be assigned a mentor.

To participate in the competition, applicants must have some IT

background, but are not limited to programming.

"First, the participant must have a background in this area (IT); we cannot teach you this in three months. Secondly, when we speak about the IT sphere, everyone thinks that it is programming. It can be copywriting and proofreading. Even for journalists on freelance sites, there are a lot of orders and good pay for them," said Bachishe.

The project also has a preparatory stage involving a trip to the regions. "We make meet ups and hackathons, which means that we come, talk about this project, show how it is done and launch a hackathon for two days," he added.

Those who wish to participate can learn about the project through social networks, Zhas Otan (the Nur Otan Party youth organisation) distribution and regional akimats (administrations), which have direct access to people with disabilities and the opportunity to organise joint events.

Bachishe noted it is not yet possible to cover all regions. "We will only have Almaty and Astana and the three most active regions that the competition will select. We will drive there for the hackathons and meet ups. The camp itself will be based in Almaty," he said.

Child with autism models children's clothing brands in Astana

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Socialisation is vital for children with disabilities, believes educational psychologist and speech pathologist Zarina Dandybayeva. Her 13-year-old son, Alikhan Dandybayev, who has an autistic spectrum disorder, found his interest in modelling for clothing brands, such as Button Blue and Acoola Kids and continue to develop his skills in other spheres.

Socialisation is vital for developing communication skills, adaptation in society, developing one's skills and expanding knowledge about the world Dandybayeva said in an interview for this story.

"I became interested in a model agency when I realised that we need something to do. The most important thing for our children is socialisation," she said.

Since October, Dandybayev has taken part in five photo shoots of Fashion Baby Kazakhstan and Baby Models KZ children model schools.

"We had photo shoots for children clothes brands such as Button Blue and Acoola Kids. Alikhan's portraits are in Khan Shatyr, Asia Park and Saryarka Shopping Centres and the Kukuruku family cafe in Astana," said Dandybayeva.

Usually the photo shoots are individual, but once Dandybayev attended a group modelling session as well.

"When we go to a photo shoot, no one notices that we have autism. Alikhan does everything according to the photographer's instructions; he understands directions well and stands in certain positions. He likes to communicate with people there. It is a way he socialises. We come in a particular time, but sometimes wait and he observes photo shoots of other children," she said.

In the beginning of December, Dandybayev participated in photo shoot for Fox Kids magazine.

"Once we went to a different model agency. I was afraid that



L-R: Zarina Dandybayeva and Alikhan Dandybayev.

we might get refused, but when I shared our story, they gladly invited us to a photo shoot," noted Dandybayeva.

Before modelling, they tried to attend various leisure activities and sports sections. Dandybayeva believes that every child has his or her own interests, strong sides of the character, therefore, parents, especially of children with special needs, should try attending different leisure activities in sports, arts and other fields.

"A child with autistic spectrum disorder is able to do different activities," she noted.

Dandybayev tried attending drums, dombra (Kazakh musical instrument) classes, karate, hockey and lawn tennis. He has also been attending swimming classes for three years.

"Physically, Alikhan is strong, but he has no sense of rivalry. He swims very well. Without stopping, he can swim 150 metres in a pool back and forth, but he swims at his pleasure (not to compete). We also tried hockey, but you have to overtake hockey puck or push, but Alikhan does not like it. So, we found a suitable creative activity such as modelling for him," she said.

Children usually attend classes in

the correction centres, but parents should not limit themselves to the classes offered in the centres only, said Dandybayeva. Following the example of her son, she suggests to communicate with teachers, coaches and specialists to help a child to try oneself in different fields and develop.

"Right now, we are planning to participate in table tennis classes in the Orda Rehabilitation Centre. This is good for concentration and movement correction. I also want him to participate in choreography and vocal classes, but cannot find a teacher yet," she said. "I'm happy that Alikhan realises his potential in some field. I am not sure whether he will be doing it when he turns 25. We will be searching what to do. I want him to try everything to find what he wants to do."

Dandybayeva noted that not all classes her son attends are free, which is a financial burden for their family, but the results are more important, she said.

"My first education is a lawyer. When Alikhan was born and we diagnosed autism, I learned to be an educational psychologist and a speech pathologist. I work in his correctional school and work with children with the same diagnoses individually," said Dandybayeva.

Writers captivate audience with real-life stories, use social media for promotion

Continued from Page B1

"My children have a different childhood from the one I had; I was born in the U.S.S.R. They will not be able to understand the circumstances of that time; however, I will transmit the remembrance of my first years of life to them," she said.

The author also offered some recommendations for beginning writers.

"Do not be afraid, do not look into your past, do not let what people may say affect your goals. You are not a one hundred dollar bill; not everyone is going to like you," she added.

Alina Mustafina

Initially, Alina Mustafina's book, "How to move to Dubai and to stay there," was journalistic writing about the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a guide for those interested in relocating to its largest city.

But it became more than that, said the author. The work emerged as ethnographic research about natives of other countries currently living in Dubai.

"It is actually not a recipe for how to move to the Arabic wonderland. It's a combination of stories about people searching for happiness in the Arabic sand," she said.

One of the stories is autobiographical, recounting the life of a former young editor at "Cosmopolitan Kazakhstan" who went to conquer the UAE. She sold souvenirs, took part in a film and photographed Tom Cruise, Kim Kardashian and the Sheikh of Dubai.

"I was surprised that the book was popular with a wide range of readers. Of course, immigration is

a popular topic, but people bought the book not because they are interested in Dubai, but simply because they wanted to read the real story of my life and the lives of other people. As a journalist, I usually write articles in local media, plus I like to talk to people through my page in Instagram. Thanks to social media, the audience gets to know you and is eager to read more of your stories if they like the way you write. So, it's actually a great instrument for a young writer – develop your personal brand, as this helps promote the book. However, you should do it from the heart. People feel fake emotions," she noted.

After travelling and living in different places, Mustafina considers herself a true nomad.

"My life in the UAE inspired me to write a book. This world was unusual to me and my friends. I am happy to share these amazing stories with people. My husband and I also lived in Spain and Turkey. We do not live long in one place and it gives impetus for new stories and acquaintances," she said.

The writer was especially pleased to read good reviews from Akisheva, critic Madi Mambetov, blogger Marina Sharipova and journalist Zarina Akhmatova.

"I get a lot of feedback from my followers. Surprisingly, I only received critical reviews from people who have not read the book. They said that they hate the idea of leaving the country. Those who have read it say they didn't actually expect that it was going to be that interesting and impressive," she added.

Mustafina did not face any difficulties in publishing.

"At first, I agreed with a pub-

lisher in 2014-2015, but we didn't print the book because of the crisis. The book was available online for two years; then, I rewrote the book to make it more authorised for publication. The first edition of 500 copies was completely at my expense. The promotion is not an easy process. I paid more attention to my social media accounts to promote the book. It helps me sell the book now," she said.

"I was lucky to have Beibit Alibekov as my second publisher. He is a public figure who has many friends among bloggers. Writing a book is a challenge itself and then you have to promote it. Unfortunately, we do not have book agents who are engaged in promotion in our country," she added.

The work was of great interest in Moscow, where it sold out.

"If bookstores are interested in

your book, they are ready to cooperate with you in Kazakhstan. It is more difficult to enter the Russian market. The store enters into a contract only with the publishing house, which represents the writer, not with a writer herself," she noted.

Mustafina is planning to write a second book about how her husband became a pilot and she became a film director in Spain.

"If a person has the ability to observe, natural curiosity or the gift of journalism, he or she can write a book even without travelling. There are many interesting things around us. It is not about inspiration, but about the ability to see the world around you. I recommend for beginning authors to watch, write down dialogue and how people behave in different situations," she said.



Alina Mustafina



Meruyert Alonso

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Sherkala captivates with ancient history, unearthly landscapes



Photo credit: e-history.kz

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Sherkala (also Shergala), a lone mountain with an unusual shape resembling a

piala (small ceramic bowl) or gigantic yurt, is becoming the main tourist attraction of the Mangystau region. Some even see a sleeping lion who laid its huge head on his paws and the name

means The Lion's Castle in Turkmen. Sherkala's peculiar form is the apparent result of a powerful earthquake that caused the ocean bed to ripple at the site on the Mangy-

shlak peninsula. The retreating waters of the huge Sarmatian Sea washed away soft rock sections creating chalky cuestras, canyons, coombes, basins, sand massifs and bizarre mountains. Hundreds of

years of wind and rain subsequently created the quaint and magnificent rocky formations seen today. Amazing, unearthly views open at every turn.

"Among all these canyons, the feeling that you are on another planet did not leave me. There is no soul around, only the rocks of different shapes and colours and white with limestone earth," said Nurzhan Algashev in a blogpost on travelblog.kz.

Sherkala is located 170 kilometres from Aktau and 22 kilometres northwest of Shetpe town. It is along the ancient Silk Road and has historical references and numerous legends.

The trip to the mountain from Shetpe winds through a road locals often refer to as "the gate of fairy tales" that includes the remains of a medieval caravanserai (a roadside inn where travellers could rest), the Akmysh oasis and a shrine. Among the must-see sites are the remnants of Kyzylkala, a 10th-century Silk Road settlement with fragments of the wall still intact, and the abandoned Shikh Ata necropolis.

Different theories surround Sherkala. Some historians believe Jochi's (Genghis Khan's son) fortress was on top of the mountain at the beginning of the 13th century. Locals believe a wish made while one circles the mountain, with a trip taking longer than an hour, will come true.

"What should be done is to go around the mountain. It will take an hour and a half, but each next turn will open up before you and you will see more and more new beautiful and unusual views of Sherkala," said Algashev.

Visitors will need certain equipment and some experience to climb the approximately 15-metre high chute to the top of the mountain.

"The mountain is gigantic with sheer edges. Therefore, do not even think to climb on it without special equipment. Even with equipment it can be dangerous, because the rocks are destroyed by wind and rain," he said.

The best time to travel is early spring-autumn. Tourists usually rent four wheel drives for up to 55,000 tenge (US\$145.30) per day.

British survivalist races through Altyn-Yemel Park in Discovery Channel series

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – A survivalist's risks are well worth taking if people are encouraged to seek their own adventures, said survival expert Ed Stafford in an interview with The Astana Times.

Bitten by the adventure bug

season, I will do my best to be in better physical shape," he said on competing with others for the first time.

The second episode, featuring Kazakhstan's Altyn-Yemel National Park, aired in the country Feb. 4. In it, Stafford takes on former South Korean Special Forces soldier Rhee in a five-day race.

A 2011 Guinness World Record holder for walking the Amazon River's entire length, he insists that his greatest challenges are psychological, rather than physical.

"After I turned 30, there came a moment in my life when I believed that I had enough experience to tackle a journey on foot along the Amazon. I didn't have a wife or

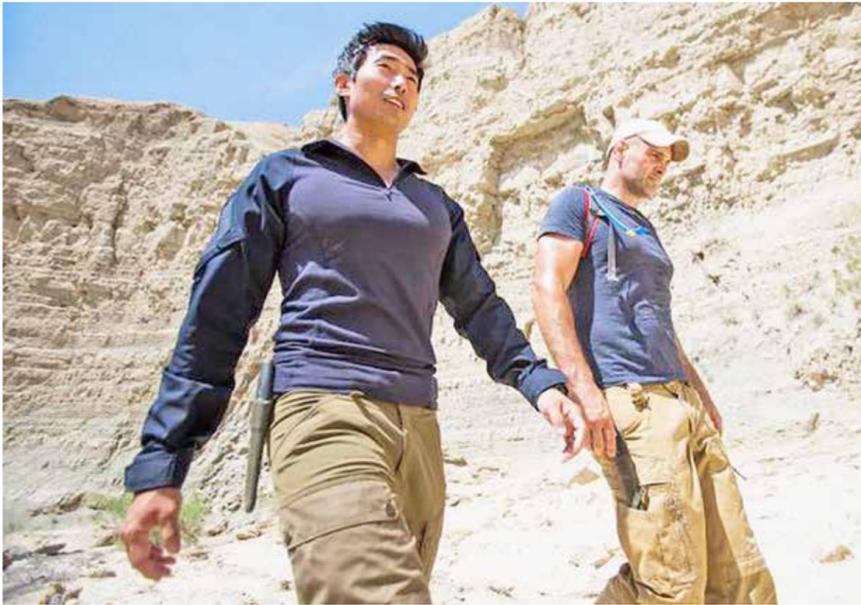


Photo credit: playpilot.com

Ken Rhee and Ed Stafford in Altyn-Yemel National Park.

as a child in the British countryside, Stafford has since pursued extreme tests of endurance and isolation to prove he can single-handedly survive in the harshest environments. Now, he faces the world's toughest survivalists in the new Discovery Channel series "Ed Stafford: First Man Out," racing across Asia to a predetermined extraction point to be the first to complete the test. The six-part series began airing Jan. 28 in Kazakhstan.

"This [series] is a story in which I face a problem and do not have all the answers – you watch how I try to overcome these obstacles, step by step, and find a way out of the situation. I hope that this encourages people to go on trips, challenge themselves and put themselves in an uncomfortable position to develop as individuals," he said in the show's message.

His competitors include survival experts Cat Bigney, Matt Graham, John Hudson, Aldo Kane, Ken Rhee and EJ Snyder.

"Some of my opponents were ultramarathoners, one of them was a former marine and another a paratrooper. If the project is successful and approved for a second

"Kazakhstan is probably the most severe terrain I have ever come across," said Stafford. "There was no water, plants or animals, so getting out of this place to where I could begin to survive was probably the most difficult test. It seems to me that I reached a place with at least some signs of life only on the third day."

"My favourite trip of this series was the one I was most afraid of, the island of Bonaire and its mangroves," he added on his race in the Caribbean Sea. "The idea of a race in the mangroves was foolish and unrealistic to me because it seemed too difficult to survive there even a single day, not to mention race. In the end, it was precisely because I had such low expectations that this episode turned out amazing."

Like most survivalists, Stafford is not one to mindlessly risk his life, rather taking measured chances.

"Behind the scenes, there is a fantastic team that makes sure that if something happens to me, a risk assessment and an evacuation plan are ready," he explained. "Because of this, we can take more risks and produce an exciting programme."

children yet, so I didn't have those obligations that would stop most people and wanted to do something that I could remember with pride... The most difficult part of this whole test was its duration, the fact that it took two and a half years when I did not see my mother, friends or relatives," he said.

In addition to achieving a world record, Stafford took home a valuable life lesson.

"When I was making the walk along the Amazon for two and a half years, I was completely obsessed with the idea of reaching the end," he noted. "I could have made more friends, picked up Portuguese better and learned about all the medicinal plants in Brazil. There were so many things that I could have done that would have made my journey much more enjoyable. Instead, I was completely fixated on reaching the finish line... I think that this is a common mistake in life more generally – the more I want to be in the future, the more I forget about the present and the harder it is to live."

Stafford's next race in Mongolia will premiere this month on Discovery Channel.

UNESCO includes horse breeding spring rites on Intangible Cultural Heritage list

Staff Report

ASTANA – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has included the traditional spring festive rites of Kazakh horse breeders on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity, reported the Ministry of Culture and Sports press service.

"Preceded by year-long preparations, the main constituents of the practice are Biye baylau (literally, tethering mares), the ancient first milking rite encompassing the separation of mares and foals from the herds, milking the mares and celebrating with songs, dances and games; Ayghyr kosu (figuratively, the stallion's marriage), a recent rite for adjoining stallions in herds, and Kymyz muryndyk (metaphorically, the initiation of koumiss), the first koumiss sharing rite, opening the season of its production and sharing," according to the organisation's release.

Kazakh delegates showed the experts the annual rites in the Ulytau District of the Karaganda region.

Horse breeding spring rites have occurred for many years as part of the Terisakkan spring festival. UNESCO experts studied the folk horse breeding traditions and attended the festivals for two years.

A photo album on national horse breeding traditions was published in three languages and a 20-minute documentary was shot at the Kazakhfilm studio.

This year, Kazakhstan participated for the first time as a member of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the ICH.

"According to the research of the Botai culture of the fourth millennium BC, the culture of horse domestication began in Kazakhstan. President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted this marked the beginning of a culture of horsemanship and became a symbol of the era when powerful empires created by no-

madic peoples came to the forefront of history in his recent article "The Seven Facets of the Great Steppe," said Deputy Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to UNESCO Askar Abdrakhmanov.

Including new traditions on the list will serve as a powerful incentive for experts, authorities and the local population to continue their activities and promote the traditions.

The committee also approved the first periodic report on the work to execute the provisions of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kazakhstan since it joined the group in December 2011.



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NATION&CAPITAL
SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

IPC President makes first visit to Kazakhstan

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – International Paralympic Committee (IPC) President Andrew Parsons visited Kazakhstan for the first time Jan. 30-31, reports the Astana Akimat (city administration) press service.

He began his visit at the capital's Paralympic Training Centre, which was opened in July as part of the Tugan Zher (Motherland) state programme and is furnished with special sports equipment and facilities for people with varying degrees of ability.

"I have visited many centres in the world and few places have such beautiful facilities as your training centre for para-athletes and people with disabilities. Here, everything is built according to international standards for accessibility," he said upon inspecting the centre.

Later that day, the IPC head met with Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhame-



Andrew Parsons visiting the Paralympic Training Centre.

diuly, Astana Deputy Akim (Mayor) Yermek Amanshayev, Ministry of Culture and Sport's Committee for Sports and Physical Education Chairman Serik Sapiyev and Paralympians Zulfiya Gabidullina and Alexander Kolyadin.

"In my view, a country succeeds when it pays great attention to protecting the rights of people with disabilities," said Parsons at the Jan. 30 meeting. "This visit is important for us, to support the National Paralympic Committee, parasport, para-athletes and infrastructure development. Kazakhstan is an important partner of the IPC, and it is this kind of support that leads to excellent results for your athletes."

"Paralympic sport is the most striking way to prove to people that, despite the difficulties in life, people can make a significant contribution to their country's development," Astana Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov told Parsons at their Jan. 31 meeting. "There is no

greater pride than when the flag of Kazakhstan is raised at international competitions in which people with disabilities participate."

On the second day of his visit, Parsons and Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev discussed the 2019 World Para Powerlifting Championships, to be hosted by the capital July 12-20, and Paralympic sports development in Kazakhstan more broadly. The former is an event organised by the IPC every four years, in which athletes with physical and intellectual disabilities compete. It will be an important stop for para-athletes' qualification pathway to the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Founded in 1989, the IPC is the global governing body for the Paralympic Movement and organises the Paralympic Games. It seeks to promote Paralympic values and create sports opportunities for people with disabilities, from beginner to elite level.

Almaty to host first marathon of 2019

Continued from Page B1

Beginning Feb. 2, the fund offers a three-month open training with professional trainer Igor Nemovcha. He prepares marathoners and guide them towards successful results without harming their health. After the individual sessions, participants may ask questions about proper nutrition, exercise and running techniques.

"Basic training is required for any race. Even at a distance of 10 kilometres, you need to start training at least three months in

advance," said the organising committee.

Almaty Triathlon Federation Coach Maxim Mzhelsky has prepared a special monthly training plan divided into weekly sessions. It includes individual plans for those aiming to run 10, 21.1 (half marathon) and 42.2 kilometres (marathon). The exercises are designed to improve overall fitness, endurance and speed. The plan also includes recommended dates for passing a medical examination.

The organisers are also providing lectures and master

classes, where participants will be invited to talk about correct running techniques and related topics. The list of master classes and lectures is available on the marathon website.

Several children's institutions will receive charitable assistance from the event. This year, the proceeds will be used to build two sports facilities for Almaty regional boarding school No. 15 for children from low-income families and for a project to provide adaptive skiing and snowboarding for children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental features. In addition, a climbing wall will be built for the Kirov military-patriotic club of young army soldiers.

"We are often asked how we raise funds for charity," said Courage to Be the First Director Saltanat Kazybayeva. "Each participant of the Almaty Marathon contributes to charitable purposes by registering and paying for participation. This is how funds are collected. We do not transfer funds to selected institutions, but on an individual request. We create the necessary sports infrastructure; we build sports fields or climbing walls and we buy sports or medical equipment. In 2018, we collected more than 16 million tenge (US\$42,416) and in 2019, there are plans to allocate 26 million tenge (US\$68,926) for charity."

Courage to Be the First seeks to promote an active lifestyle, involving more people in physical training and sports both as amateurs and professionals, in accordance with the highest international standards. The first Almaty Marathon in 2012 had 2,500 participants, a figure that by last year had increased nearly six-fold.



Ski jumper wins bronze at 2019 Nordic Junior World Ski Championships

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakh ski jumper Sergey Tkachenko won a bronze medal at the recent 2019 Nordic Junior World Ski Championships in Lahti, Finland, reports the Kazakh National Olympic Committee.

On Jan. 19-27, athletes competed in 23 events at what were the 42nd Junior World Championships and the 14th Under-23 World Championships in Nordic skiing.

In the men's junior event for the individual normal hill, Nor-

wegian ski jumper Thomas Markeng earned first place with 252.1 points, German ski jumper Luca Roth earned second place with 250.8 points and Tkachenko earned third place with 248.9 points. Pavel Vasilyev, the Kazakh

national team's head coach, noted the Kazakh athlete's achievement was historic.

"For the first time in the history of independent Kazakhstan, we have a Junior World Championships medal," he said.

"I am very pleased that everything turned out well and that the flag of our country was raised at the Junior World Championships," said the bronze medallist to Olympic.kz on his 96.5 metre and 94.5 metre jumps.

"No jump is the same. I'm still looking for 'my' jump because sometimes there are good executions and

was born in Ridder and began skiing at age twelve. In 2017, Tkachenko was the Asian Winter Games bronze medallist and won silver at the team event. He competed in two events at the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics. In July, he set the summer world record distance at 151 metres at the opening event of Burabai Ski Resort in Shchuchinsk.

Along with Tkachenko, ski jumpers Nikita Devyatkin, Gleb Safonov and Nurshat Tursunzhanov represented Kazakhstan at the sports event. The national team



Sergey Tkachenko (R).

sometimes not. But after completing the first jump, I was sure that I would make the second jump calmly. My jumps were also successful throughout training, and I knew that I could fight for the medal."

Nineteen-year-old Tkachenko

earned an expanded quota this year, with twice as many athletes competing at the championships for the first time. Also, for the first time, Kazakhstan was selected to compete in the team events with 12 other teams.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019

Tomotherapy Centre opens with innovative approaches in cancer treatment

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

ASTANA – The city's Tomotherapy and Nuclear Medicine Centre began receiving and consulting patients this month. The centre uses the most innovative radiation therapy to treat different types of cancer.

"We bought two tomotherapy machines to install in our centre. Both of them are the latest models available on the market. This technology is absolutely new for Kazakhstan. We brought it from the USA, where tomotherapy has been widely used in cancer treatment since 2012. Daniel Fass, the director of New York Tomotherapy centre, is now in Astana. He trains and consults the local staff. We have about 30 people working at the centre. Most of them got training at large tomotherapy centres in the USA, France and



India," said centre General Director Zhanar Nurzhanova in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

"Tomotherapy is a highly effective treatment method which uses photon beams. A photon is started by an engine and its speed reaches the speed of light. The photon beam localises and burns a tumour more precisely. This is the main difference and advantage of tomotherapy over other types of radiation therapy," she added.

The centre has a separate building erected and equipped according to X-ray radiation protection requirements. Construction started in April 2017 and was completed in August 2018.

The tomotherapy centre is a private investment project. Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund subsidised the interest rate on the bank loan for the project and Baiterek National Managing Holding

funded the work to beautify the grounds.

"All Kazakhstan's citizens can get treatment in our centre. Patients must bring the results of previous medical examinations to the centre. Our doctors will conduct an additional examination, if necessary, before making a diagnosis and assigning a therapy. We plan to introduce two ways of financing treatment at our centre – by the patient or the state. A patient will have to apply for public funding to get free treatment in our centre. We submitted all the documents to the Ministry of Healthcare for consideration. The centre provides outpatient treatment. One treatment session lasts up to 15 minutes. It is absolutely painless. After the session, a patient can go home," said Nurzhanova.

Centre professionals receive special training, and managers

are planning to develop the city's medical tourism. The tomotherapy machines are the only ones available in the Central Asian region, as the nearest centres are in Moscow and Kazan (Russia). The managers believe these factors make the capital a major medical destination for cancer patients from neighbouring countries.

"We will start a big PR campaign soon. Our website is almost ready and will be launched [soon]. People will get necessary information from our website. We will also promote our official pages on social media. Our first patient will start getting treatment this month. We will invite the mass media; we want to have nationwide coverage of this event on TV and in newspapers," said Nurzhanova.

Individuals wishing additional information about the Tomotherapy and Nuclear Medicine Centre may call +7 7172 95 44 84.

Akimat urges service organisations to repair problem residential building façades

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Urban Environment Metropolitan Department of Control and Quality recently inspected the façades of 1,265 houses and 486 service organisations, said department head Tolegen Kulushev at a January meeting of the city akimat (administration).

As a result, the department issued 466 prescriptions, 439 of which were executed within the specified time. Twenty-seven were sent to judicial bodies for non-fulfilment, with 19 entered into legal force by court decisions. Only 20 cases passed without a prescription, reported the akimat press service.

"It should be noted that according to the results of the work carried out following the results of 2018, the number of appeals to the management and the Monitoring and Operational Response Centre decreased by 80 percent," said Kulushev.

The department developed an

algorithm for repair. All works will be executed at the expense of service organisations' returnable funds as part of the Regional Development Programme until 2020.

To date, the department has received information on the funds collected from 60 percent of the organisations, while the remaining 40 percent did not provide information. The administration, therefore, has planned on-site meetings with residents and service organisation representatives through Feb. 25.

Should the department not have all the data by the end of the month, it will report the results to the relevant authorities for them to conduct audits of the organisations' financial and economic activities, he added.

The akimat has repaired residential façades at 8 Abai, 19 Baitursynov, 27 Moldagulova, 4 Seifullin, 17 Tashenov (Block 1), 9 Zhanibek and Kerey Khandar and 10 Zhubanov streets and insulated the outer wall at 9 Sembino Street (Khan Tengri building).

Residents, experts seek citizen dialogue to shape city's environment

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Baikunur district Akim (Mayor) Yerlan Kanalimov, Astana Urban Centre and Astana Innovations recently kicked off the second stage of the City on Request project, reports the capital's akimat (city administration).

The project promotes dialogue among citizens as a tool to improve Astana's urban environment.

The first stage of the project involved the distribution of the survey to gather residents' concerns and suggestions. Classes in community dialogue were also offered Nov. 9-11 at Astana Urban Centre's School for Moderators. The free training event centred on the skill of moderating and facilitating dialogue in a fair and impartial way so that participants understand each other's position and work toward a joint solution.

The second stage involved a Jan. 19-20 project seminar for more than 60 residents guided by urbanism expert Svyatoslav Murunov. Discussion centred on identifying challenges faced in the city and areas for improvement. Residents, moderators and akimat representatives then formed project working groups. Group leaders and their teams were

assigned a given courtyard in the city which they could explore and find residents to engage in their projects. Their group output will be a courtyard "passport" detailing the space, its users and their preferred social activities. Working groups and urbanism experts will design projects for courtyards based on these characterisations and launch these projects in the format of city workshops this spring.

Astana Urban Centre was established as part of the research and design institute Astanagenplan in September 2016 on the initiative of the then Astana Akim Asset Issekeshov to comprehensively and systematically transform the capital's urban environment with tools borrowed from urban, sociological and anthropological disciplines. The centre carries out original data collection and research, as well as projects, forums, workshops and round tables. Its objectives are to involve residents in city planning and development, develop new urban planning approaches, collect, produce and disseminate knowledge on the city, develop and improve public spaces, engage experts, promote urban community development and create efficient and flexible platforms for dialogue on city development.

Neighbourhood outpatient clinics in residential houses to help meet demand for health services

Staff Report

ASTANA – Creating multi-profile hospitals and compact outpatient clinics in residential houses should reduce the number of patients visiting traditional clinics, said Astana Public Health Department's Head Kamalzhan Nadyrov at a Jan. 28 meeting in the Astana akimat (city administration).

Astana has a high demand for healthcare with one of the highest birth rates in the country, more than 30,000 children born annually, more than 100,000 surgeries performed annually and more than 4.5 million patient visits per year.

To meet the demand, the city recently approved the Single Perspective Plan for Healthcare Infrastructure Development until 2025. According to Nadyrov, the plan envisages the creation of four multi-profile hospitals and a medical centre for mental health by combining nine hospitals.

"In 2018, through restructuring, the Children's City Hospitals No. 3 and 2 and Perinatal Centre No. 1 were merged into the multi-profile hospital No. 2," said Nadyrov.

To ensure a maximum 20-minute walking distance and reduce the burden on general practitioners, a concept for the development of a clinics' network has been de-

veloped. According to the concept, the opening of compact outpatient clinics replacing expensive clinics is planned. The project is called Doctor at Home.

The project seeks to open a network of compact medical ambulance stations, located on the first floors of residential buildings. The stations' opening is carried out on private investment.

The government guarantees the attachment of the population and per capita funding, in turn, the private investor invests in the construction and equipping of the clinic in accordance with the requirements of the concept.

In 2018, eight such projects

were implemented, which saved the budget approximately 1 billion tenge (US\$2.62 million).

"In this regard, taking into account the social significance of this project, I suggest replacing the planned construction of 11 clinics in the Single Perspective Plan to opening of 51 compact ambulance stations. This will help save a budget of approximately 10 billion tenge (US\$26.16 million)," said Nadyrov.

Astana Akim (Major) Bakhyt Sultanov has directed city officials to focus on the quality of services and the education of the public in the implementation of the Doctor at Home project.

Astana entered IDC's smart cities list

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Market intelligence and advisory firm International Data Corporation (IDC) placed the Kazakh capital among mature smart cities in its recent research analysis.

IDC's analysts evaluate the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in areas such as economic development and civic engagement, urban planning and administration, public safety, transportation and energy and infrastructure.

"Astana has become one of the first cities in Central Asia to be surveyed based on this model and assessed in terms of Smart City Maturity," said Astana Department for Investment and Entrepreneurship Development head Alisher Abdykadyrov.

The corporation rated the Kazakh capital at a 2.48-point maturity level, lagging half a point behind Moscow (3.1), reported elorda.info. Singapore (4.4) stands as one of the highest on the maturities list, followed by New York City (3.7), Dubai (3.6) and Barcelona (3.2).

"Our department together with IDC carried out work to survey the sectoral departments of the Astana Mayor's Office with regard to economy, transport, environment, safety and digitisation. According to the results of the above-mentioned work, Astana has been included in IDC's international rating of smart cities," he added.

The city's development is associated with introducing the Digital Kazakhstan state programme. One of its primary aims is to include Kazakh cities in smart lists of five global ratings. "The platform is a software

system having monitoring and analysis functions, based on which the entire set of services in the field of Smart City and IoT (Internet of Things) can be carried out. In this respect, we have taken into account the experience of Aqkol," said Abdykadyrov.

Aqkol, once a provincial town near the capital, has been modernising its entire infrastructure for the last six months. Tengri

Lab head Alimzhan Yessetov presented the Smart Aqkol project to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev during his Jan. 18 visit to designate it as the first smart town in the country.

Many other projects are also contributing to the city's maturity such as Open Data, Astana SU, Smart Astana, and e-KSK (a smart tool that monitors communal housing sector owners).

Since 1964, IDC has been pro-

viding market intelligence and events advisory services in information technology, telecommunications and consumer technology. It offers global, regional and local expertise in technology and industry opportunities and trends in more than 110 countries. The corporation is a subsidiary of International Data Group (IDG), the world's leading tech media, data and marketing services company.

