



## Women play important role in Kazakh economy, says President



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev sings with Koktem Shuagy (Spring Light) women's community representatives at the Akorda on March 7.

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev met at the Akorda March 7 with Koktem Shuagy (Spring Light) women's community representatives to congratulate the country's female population on the International Women's Day (March 8). He stressed the important role of women in the country's economic development.

potential in business, the creative sphere and sports. For us, for men, it is time to think of how to keep up with you," he said.

"In our dynamic, full of innovations century, you fruitfully live up to your potential and [use your] abilities for the good of the country. You reach new heights and significant results in many areas and directions. In fact, women are the agents of my ideas for modernisation," he added.

Nazarbayev also spoke about the role of women in educating future generations of Kazakh citizens.

"It is a woman who presents the most important [thing] – the miracle of birth – to the world. Cur-

rently, on average we have three children in one family and approximately 400,000 babies are born in a year. Children are the wealth and pride not only of a family, but a valuable capital of the country. Therefore, our mothers, and especially those with many children, deserve deep respect and gratitude. They are making a real feat of motherhood, multiplying the benefits of the nation," he said.

The President also stressed the importance of new large-scale social projects to support mothers with many children, noting the amount of assistance will consistently increase.

"They are aimed at enhancing

social support for large families with low incomes. Social payments and benefits, wages of low-paid public sector workers will be raised, housing will be built. There are the Baqytty Otbasy (Happy Family), Qutty Meken (Blessed Home) and Auy! – El Besigi (Village is the birthplace of a nation) projects that are aimed at systematic support [of the families]," he said.

Every year on the eve of International Women's Day, the President meets with women from various fields to congratulate them and discuss ways to expand their active participation in the country's economy.

## EBRD predicts 3.5-percent GDP growth for Kazakhstan in 2019

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Transition Report forecasts steady growth for the Kazakh economy, as major structural reforms are expected to improve the situation further.

"Kazakhstan's real GDP grew 4 percent in 2017 and a little bit more in 2018. This has been driven since 2017 primarily by exports and a recovery in private consumption has started to be a driver of GDP growth since 2018," said EBRD Associate Director and Lead Regional Economist Hans Holzhaecker at the Feb. 27 presentation.

"Oil is a large part of exports," he added. "Roughly 65 percent of exports in dollar terms are oil exports. There has been a significant increase since 2016. This peaked in the third quarter of 2018, mostly because prices have come down. There was also an increase in production, like a 5 percent increase in 2018 over 2017, as Kashagan started to produce more."

Private consumption has been a growth driver largely because real incomes finally started to improve last year. The solid growth, however, was neither driven nor accompanied by credit expansion, credit growth or the banking system as a whole.

Continued on Page A4

## EU-Kazakhstan relations evolving cooperatively, providing a model for region, says EU envoy

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The European Union is Kazakhstan's biggest foreign investor, and Kazakhstan is the EU's closest political and economic partner among the countries of Central Asia while EU-Kazakhstan cooperation is expanding in education, research, trade, transport, agriculture and environmental work, among many areas, the European envoy in Astana said.

Official diplomatic relations between the EU and Kazakhstan were established in 1993, and since then, the EU has provided official development assistance to the country.

"Over 350 projects amounting to 180 million euros [US\$204.12 million] have been funded by the EU, notably focusing on strengthening the capacity of regional and local government, justice sector reform and human rights," the Ambassador, Sven-Olov Carlsson, an experienced Swedish and European diplomat, said in an interview for this story. "Nowadays Kazakhstan is defined as an 'upper mid-income' country and does not qualify anymore for our bilateral

aid, so our focus is shifting from earlier bilateral programmes to capacity-building ones with a regional dimension."

The EU and Kazakhstan signed their Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) in December 2015. The agreement is now the main document framing EU-Kazakhstan relations and provides the legal framework for developing bilateral relations in 29 key policy areas, such as political dialogue, human rights, energy, transport, the environment and climate change, employment and social affairs, culture, education and research.

"The EPCA is a so-called new-generation agreement, which also serves as a model of future cooperation for other countries. It is not by chance that Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan would like to follow the Kazakh example and sign a similar framework agreement with the EU. The EPCA with Kazakhstan has been provisionally implemented for almost three years [since May 2016] and provides a significant boost to economic and political ties between the EU and Kazakhstan," said Carlsson.

Continued on Page A3

## Nazarbayev urges measures to improve living standards



By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined at the Feb. 27 18th Congress of Nur Otan Party efforts to improve social supports and living standards in Kazakhstan. According to the instructions from the head of state, the government will allocate two trillion tenge (US\$5.3 billion) from the country's budget for social projects over the next three years.

The congress approved the party's agenda until 2030.

"Nur Otan promotes the adoption of necessary state decisions. New time dictates new challenges. The main thing is to work out the right direction of development and to mobilise the society... Today, the congress is considering a party programme until 2030. Ten goals in the next ten years are developed on my instructions," said the President.

Nazarbayev said social assistance should be directed towards low-income citizens and large families.

"I instruct the government to increase the criterion for providing targeted social assistance for people in need, especially large families, to 70 percent of the subsistence minimum (29,698 tenge (US\$78.8))... To establish a minimum [monthly] payment of approximately 21,000 tenge (US\$55.7) for each child in a large family... I also instruct to increase allowance for parents, guardians and families raising children with disabilities by 30 percent," said the President.

The social assistance should reach 830,000 people, including 550,000 children.

He also spoke about the need to create more flexible employment opportunities for parents of large families, including opportunities to work from home. He also said microcredits should be made available to rural residents.

"The basic principle of social assistance is a social contract and the mandatory participation of able-bodied people in employment measures. Akims (mayors and re-

gional governors), the government, the party and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs should jointly help people with these issues. The akims should review the regional assistance programmes for families in need," he said.

The President also set goals to increase the salaries of public sector workers in healthcare, education, social care, culture and sports.

"I instruct from July 1 to increase wages for low-paid public sector employees and to grass-roots workers of executive bodies who work with citizens at the regional level and in the villages by 30 and 25 percent respectively," said the President.

"There is a serious disproportion between the centre and the regions, we need to support regions. Additionally, 980 billion tenge (US\$2.6 billion) will be allocated for these purposes," he added.

The President spoke about housing issues, especially the availability of housing for large families

and families with children with disabilities.

"It is necessary to intensify work on construction of housing. I instruct to build more than 40,000 rental apartments for large and low-income families as a part of the Nurly Zher programme. In the next seven years, 50 billion tenge (US\$132.6 million) will be allocated for this purpose annually," said Nazarbayev.

The healthcare system is also slated for a funding increase. High-quality healthcare services should be available in any part of the country, said the President, calling for an increase in healthcare spending.

"For development of this task, additionally, I instruct to allocate approximately 120 billion tenge (US\$318.24 million). As a result, the quality and availability of inpatient medical care in seven regions will increase covering approximately 100,000 families," said Nazarbayev.

Continued on Page A2

## California native preserves Soviet monumental art

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – California native and Kazakh TV's Discovering Kazakhstan host Dennis Keen has lived in Almaty for six years. It was in his adopted city that Soviet monumental art first caught his eye.

Keen, who spoke about the country and its art in an interview with The Astana Times, was just three years old when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

"People notice things that are new to them and, growing up in the United States, we never had art like this in our public spaces," he said. "There are many murals in Los Angeles, where I grew up,

but mosaics especially have such a physicality to them that they made a strong impression on me."

Socialist realism was the Soviet Union's official art style from 1932-1988, but he sees Soviet monumental art as more stylised than realistic.

"Because monumental art was considered decorative art rather than fine art, monumental artists were often given more stylistic freedom than their colleagues who were easel painters – that may be one aspect that is leading to a reappraisal of Soviet monumental art," he noted. "Perception of this kind of art is also changing with time, as the Soviet era recedes into the past and people can more neutrally evaluate its legacy."

Continued on Page A2

### INSIDE

**NATION**  
Kazakhstan, Vietnam to provide mutual legal assistance on criminal cases **A2**  
Expert Council on Digitisation discusses e-government, developing startup culture **A2**

**ECONOMY**  
The country plans to export nine million tonnes of grain and flour **A4**  
Nazarbayev urges measures to improve living standards **A4**

**EDITORIAL**  
Kazakhstan proud of gender equality efforts, continues to seek more equitable society **A6**

**BUSINESS**  
Central Asia's largest tin deposit expected to spur Kazakhstan's non-ferrous metal industry **A7**  
Rakhat Confectionery shows stable growth, leads in chocolate market **A8**

**NATION&CAPITAL**  
Norwegian embarks on solo crossing of Balkhash Lake for first time in Kazakh history **B1**  
Kazakhstan, Tajikistan to increase airline flight frequency **B6**

## NATION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Solid waste recycling may partially meet energy needs, say NU researchers



By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Thirty percent of municipal solid waste in the capital has the potential to be recycled and another 10 percent has the potential to be sorted to derive solid fuel for the city's energy needs, reports the Nazarbayev University press service.

Researchers at Nazarbayev University's School of Engineering and National Laboratory Astana's Laboratory of Green Energy and the Environment studied Astana's landfills to identify ways to obtain fuel from municipal solid waste.

"A lot of solid waste is disposed of on a daily basis," said Nazarbayev University's School of Engineering Postdoctoral Scholar Yerbol Sarbasov. "We wanted to explore if some of this waste could be processed as fuel to meet the municipal needs of the city – specifically, we were interested in the production of heat during the winter season."

In their experiment, the researchers studied the combustion parameters with and without coal by co-firing samples of treated fuel in a fluidised bed unit. They concluded that the dry combustible

residue from solid waste could be disposed of in two ways, by pyrolysis to produce syngas and by co-firing in fluidised beds. The latter method is more effective for use in Astana's small boiler houses.

The researchers emphasise that utilising municipal solid waste in Astana will positively impact the city's environment and increase the service life of its sanitary landfills.

State policy on waste management and a green economy transition aims toward increasing the recycling share to at least 40 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050.

Kazakhstan produced 4.3 million tonnes of municipal solid waste in 2018, approximately 100,000 fewer tonnes than in 2017. Its share of municipal solid waste recycling was 11.5 percent in 2018 and nine percent in 2017. This amount is expected to increase with the ban on dumping paper, plastics, cardboard and glass waste into landfill that came into force Jan. 1 and the ban on construction and food waste scheduled for 2021. Since 2016, the government has also prohibited disposing scrap metal, mercury lamps and batteries, waste oils and liquids and electronic product waste in landfill.

## Kazakhstan, Vietnam to provide mutual legal assistance on criminal cases

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Vietnam will provide mutual legal assistance on criminal cases, following the Kazakh Mazhilis' (lower house of Parliament) approval of a bill on the ratification of a treaty regulating assistance and investigative actions between the two countries at a late February plenary session.

The treaty was signed in Hanoi, Vietnam in June 2017. Kazakhstan has signed and ratified similar treaties with 27 other countries and is developing similar agreements with Cuba, Greece and North Macedonia.

"The treaty governs the provision of legal assistance in criminal cases and provides for the investigative actions necessary to establish the accused's guilt of a crime. This is a standard treaty, providing for the delivery and transfer of documents and confiscation

of property and proceeds from criminal activity. The agreement regulates the conditions and procedure for the provision of legal assistance, as well as circumstances precluding the possibility of its provision," said Kazakh Deputy Prosecutor General Andrey Lukin in the Mazhilis while presenting the bill on the ratification.

Provision of assistance may be fully or partially withheld when executing a request that is contrary to legislation or international treaties or may damage the sovereignty, security and public order of the requested party and if there is reason to believe that a person is subject to criminal prosecution because of his or her race, gender, religion, nationality or political beliefs.

Lukin noted Kazakh-Vietnamese cooperation has continuously developed since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Vietnam is a key trade partner for Kazakhstan in Southeast Asia, with

the Kazakh-Vietnamese Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic and Scientific-technical Cooperation operating since 1997. Trade turnover between the two countries was \$233.2 million in 2013, \$271.9 million in 2014, \$205.8 million in 2015, \$392.5 million in 2016, \$542.7 million in 2017 and more than \$500 million in 2018.

Vietnam exports telephones, computers, electronic components and agricultural products to Kazakhstan, mostly importing chemicals, ores, minerals and wheat from its Central Asian partner. Cooperation between the two countries in transport and logistics has particularly great potential, noted Kazakh Ambassador to Vietnam Beketzhan Zhumakhanov at an Oct. 24 press briefing in Hanoi.

The treaty will need to be approved by the Senate and signed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev before it is fully ratified by the country.

## Nazarbayev urges measures to improve living standards

Continued from Page A1

The President emphasised the importance of developing rural areas and instructed the government, akims and maslikhats (local assemblies) to select villages for social development. Among the issues to be addressed are clean drinking water and gas supply. During the next three years, the government will allocate 10 billion tenge (US\$26.52 million) for development of small and single-industry towns.

"This will allow us to solve the issues for 2.2 million citizens," said Nazarbayev.

The President also discussed road conditions in Kazakhstan.

"In recent years, huge work has been done on the construction of the state road network. More than 14,000 kilometres of roads were built. This

has never happened in Kazakhstan. This is our pride. Our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will drive along these roads," he said.

For the improvement of the road conditions, the President instructed to allocate 350 billion tenge (US\$928.2 million). This fund should improve 95 percent of main roads of regions and districts.

The President also spoke about the recent change in the government's structure and results expected from its work in the future.

"The government changed and its composition was updated by 70 percent. The new cabinet and all akims need to start implementing the tasks... We need to raise the status of the party. Everything I said here formed the basis of the economic section of the new party programme. Each member of the government

will be personally liable and responsible for that," said Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev also stressed the importance of communication between the government and citizens to get their feedback about issues in society.

"We have created a special monitoring committee in the President's office. Now we are starting the Khalyqqa Komek (Assistance to the People) project. We will respond to urgent demands of the society, focusing the attention of state bodies on them. Party members must do this," he said.

"For this, it is necessary to form a powerful feedback system with the population and to strengthen public reception of the party. They should work according to the here and now principle," concluded the President.

## NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Russian company 2GIS has launched a city information centre application for Atyrau, reports Kazinform. More than 9,000 social, cultural, residential and business facilities are included in the free mobile app. "The city is growing, developing. We will add new facilities each month. All information is entered free of charge. It also has information about the urban public transport in 23 route directions. The app works offline. We now have 10 people in our team and it took four months to study the city," Timur Faizulin, commercial director of the 2GIS information centre, said at a briefing on the launch.

Olshem.kz, a website measuring key indicators of leading information portals, has been launched. Twenty-five websites are participating in the project. Olshem displays data analytics on five key indicators in real time: information about visitors, the number of unique users, users' geodata, traffic sources, and the best publications in the last 24 hours, seven days and 30 days. Olshem visitors can access a comparative analysis between the participating websites and download analytics for the month. "Olshem.kz is a new resource for the domestic market, developed jointly with the Chartbeat advanced data analytics company whose services are used by 75 percent of the U.S. media market. It aims to create an open, transparent and professional media market and to use the best international standards. The website will help obtain information about the readership of portals participating in the project and increase the focus of publications in the media," reads a release by Olshem on the launch.

The Bakytty Otbasy ("Happy Family") housing programme will start accepting documents in Almaty from March 11, the city administration has announced. The down payment will be 10 percent of the apartment price with an interest rate of 2 percent. The government will allocate certificates of 1 million tenge (US\$2,700) since out of 1,276 large and incomplete families in queues, many do not have the opportunity to pay the down payment. "The special action plan was adopted including the housing programme. It has preferential housing mortgages, scholarships for schoolchildren and students, social and benefit payments and employment opportunities. Overall, more than 5.5 billion tenge (US\$14.5 million) was allocated from the local budget to support socially vulnerable groups and large families," said Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek March 7.

The number of women entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan increased to 581,000 by the end of January 2019, 3.6 percent more compared to last year, reports Ranking.kz. Their share of the total number of individual entrepreneurs rose from 47 to 47.2 percent. "There are 485,200 companies, which is 10.7 percent more than last year. The share of existing private entrepreneurs with women managers also increased from 46.5 to 46.8 percent. The top three regions with the highest proportion of women-led small and medium-sized enterprises include the Kostanai region with 30,400 companies, the Karaganda region with 46,600 companies and the East Kazakhstan region with 50,600 companies," said the report.

Kostanai authorities will allocate 10 billion tenge (US\$26 million) to 2021 to develop mono-towns, according to the regional press service. This year, 500 million tenge (US\$1.3 million) will be provided for the reconstruction of thermal and trunk networks in Lisakovsk and Rudny. More than 20,000 people will receive benefits, as criteria for providing social assistance have changed. On average, the amount of benefits per child will more than quadruple from 4,706 tenge to 20,789 tenge (US\$12 to US\$54) per month. More than 15,000 healthcare workers will receive a salary increase. "The local executive authorities are responsible for this initiative. They should support the business projects, build new enterprises and create new workplaces," said member of the Nur Otan party's regional political council Gulmira Kapenova.

## California native preserves Soviet monumental art through research, advocacy

Continued from Page A1

Since 2017, the Stanford graduate has systematically and digitally documented Almaty's mosaics, sgraffito, murals, relief sculptures and stained glass through Monumental Almaty (<http://www.monumentalalmaty.com>). He and his team of volunteers have brought the country's only large-scale pietra dura mosaic, a pedestrian tunnel bas-relief and mosaic in the village Terekty, back to life.

"Seeing all the artwork in one place allows people to realise just how much monumental art there really is and just how beautiful some of it is and gaining that understanding and appreciation is the first step toward preserving it," said Keen.

Monumental Almaty and Archcode Almaty researchers, who have a shared approach towards advocacy, recently mapped and documented the city's unique mosaic bus stops to convince local authorities to stop demolishing the architectural landmarks and work towards their preservation.

"Popularisation and education are important in order to effect change," said Keen. "The public needs to understand the subject, such as the history and importance of these bus stops, before we can ever expect them to want to do anything about it."

Accordingly, discovering monu-

mental art in Almaty is merely the first step. He also researches who made the art, how and why. Monumentalists (mural artists) came from all corners of the Soviet Union in the 1960s-1980s to create monumental art in Kazakhstan and after decades of anonymity, are given credit on the website.

"The journalist Svetlana Romashkina first gave us the contacts for Vladimir Tverdokhlebov, the artist of the famous Zodiac Fountain, who has been our biggest supporter," he said on tracking down artists through Tverdokhlebov and Almaty's Union of Artists. "It's always gratifying for artists to see that people are interested in their work because they often feel that the greater public has forgotten about them and left them behind. During the Soviet Union, the government supported monumental artists quite well and now, many of them struggle to get work."

Keen invites town and city residents to contribute to a digital map of Kazakhstan's monumental art on the website and Instagram (@monumentalalmaty).

"In March, I'll be traveling to Astana, Pavlodar, Semey, Oske-men, Kokshetau, Petropavlovsk, Kostanai and Karaganda to document monumental art there for a new project," he said. "There are many bas-reliefs and mosaics, for example, in lobbies, auditoriums and factories that I will never find

unless someone tips me off. People can also stay vigilant and keep an eye on their favourite artworks to warn us of any possible renovations or demolitions and they can join us in petitioning the authorities to protect more works of art."

Since 2013, Keen has also docu-

mented Almaty's architecture and urban landscape through his Walking Almaty project ([www.walkingalmaty.com](http://www.walkingalmaty.com)), Facebook and Instagram (@walkingalmaty). He was featured in The Astana Times in 2016.

"People have mostly respond-

ed to the effect of 'I never realised what beauty we have!' Cultivating this kind of appreciation is really important to me and I hope that it leads people to be more engaged in their environments," he said.



Dennis Keen (L) and Vladimir Tverdokhlebov.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan and Austria agreed to strengthen cooperation in energy efficiency and the green economy as part of broader efforts to boost bilateral trade during the recent visit of an Austrian delegation, including Secretary General for Foreign Affairs in the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs Johannes Peterlik, to Astana. Austrian investment in Kazakhstan has exceeded \$5.7 billion since 2005, and more than 50 companies backed by Austrian capital operate in the country. Kazakhstan expressed interest in projects in agriculture, the green and digital economies, industry and infrastructure development. The visit also covered regional and international issues. The sides also emphasised the significance of the upcoming adoption of the new European Union strategy for relations with Central Asia.

Kazakhstan invited Japan to join the fourth Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments, entitled "Greater Eurasia: Dialogue, Trust, Partnership," Sept. 23 and 24 in Astana. Kazakh Ambassador to Japan Erlan Baudarbek-Kozhatayev handed the invitation to the Speaker of the Japanese House of Representatives Tadamori Oshime. Oshime recalled the visit of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Japan in November 2016, which was followed by the signing of an expanded partnership agreement.

Tourism opportunities in the Turkestan region, named for an ancient city in southern Kazakhstan that boasts more than 1,500 years of history, were recently presented in Indonesia. Many historic and sacred sites, including the Khoja Ahmed Yassawi mausoleum and the Arys-tan Baba mausoleum, generated interest among Indonesians, who frequently make pilgrimages to Mecca and to some sites in Central Asia. "The Central Asian route includes ancient cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand in Uzbekistan, the rock city Petra in Jordan and other countries as well. The geography is also expanding, incorporating sacred sites in the Turkestan region," said Turkistan Invest External Relations Managing Director Bayan Kayupova. The Indonesian side suggested launching direct flights between Almaty and Jakarta; the countries are currently linked via Kuala Lumpur. "The launch of a direct flight will stimulate the flow of tourists, including pilgrimages in your region. The current population of Indonesia is around 270 million people and 90 percent of them are Muslims. I think many will be interested in Turkestan," said special representative of the Indonesian President Aditya Perdana.

Kazakhstan's Embassy in Vietnam marked the launch of the first rail transit and transport corridor on the Vietnam-China-Kazakhstan-Europe route, with Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, the country's national rail operator. Goods in the amount of 1,686 TEUs [20-foot equivalent units] were for the first time shipped from Hanoi via the Vietnamese border railway terminal Dong Dang and then through China and Kazakhstan to Duisburg in Germany. The rail shipment of LG and Samsung goods from Hanoi to Duisburg took 22 days, including two days for the transportation of goods from Vietnam to China. The shipping time is expected to decrease to 19 days. The project, which kicked off in 2016, is part of Kazakhstan's efforts to integrate into a global transport system and explore its transport potential, in particular through Kazakhstan's Nuryl Zhol programme and China's Belt and Road Initiative. It is also expected to boost trade between Kazakhstan and Vietnam, which last year reached \$467.2 million.

Kazakhstan's Nomad Club has opened its doors at New York University, welcoming visitors to learn about Kazakh culture, history and traditions, reports Kazakh TV. The centre will also organise Kazakh language courses. "We set up the Nomad Club for Kazakh students to feel at home while they are far away. This also enables them to share their culture and traditions with foreign students, so that perhaps they visit Kazakhstan," said Nomad Club President Darkhan Munaitbasov.

## Kazakhstan achieves its UN Security Council membership goals, says foreign minister

By Elya Altynsarina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has completed the tasks set out by President Nursultan Nazarbayev for the country's two-year, non-permanent 2017-2018 United Nations Security Council membership, Foreign Minister Beibut Atamkulov told the Mazhilis (lower house of the parliament) March 4.

The President laid out the country's goals at the start of its membership in an address to the council titled "Conceptual Vision of Kazakhstan on enhancing global partnership to build a secure, just and prosperous world."

Kazakhstan chose nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament as its top priority and marked its one-month January 2018 Council presidency with Nazarbayev chairing a meeting titled "Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD): Confidence Building Measures."

The UNSC president's statement was adopted by the council following the meeting, which resulted in weapons of mass destruction being included in the UN conflict prevention and resolution toolkit.

Kazakhstan's UNSC membership took place during a time of

tensions between major powers in the council over crises in Middle East, war in Syria, the situation in North Korea, Ukraine and sanctions against Iran, among other global issues.

During its membership, Kazakhstan hosted a series of talks known as the Astana Process to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria. The talks led to the creation of de-escalation zones provided by guarantor states and the cessation of fire to secure the release of refugees.

Kazakh security forces also ran a rescue operation of Kazakh citizens and kids trapped in Syria after being part of terrorist cells, said the foreign minister.

Kazakhstan also contributed to the council's tabling of issues related to Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan convened a visit by council members to Kabul to help members learn about the situation on the ground and to meet the Afghan leadership, local business and community representatives.

Following the mission, Central Asian foreign ministers participated in the high-level debate on "Building Regional Partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia, to Link Security and Development." The ministers discussed regional

development and addressing the repercussions of the situation in Afghanistan over Central Asia's security and social stability.

Kazakhstan also worked to raise awareness on the council of Central Asia's development. Kazakhstan consulted with its neighbours to create a vision for Central Asian cooperation and the creation of a regional peace zone.

"The focus on economic development in international stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan, with the active role of Central Asian states in this process has become an innovative approach proposed by Kazakhstan," said the foreign minister.

Regional officials have said they believe the region's landlocked geography and history of interdependent development make cooperation and integration necessary to achieve economic progress.

"We believe that our approach helped the rapprochement between brotherly countries, deepening the mutual understanding and respect. We consider it an honourable achievement of our council membership," the minister said.

Kazakhstan also focused during its UNSC membership on countering international terrorism and has initiated and secured the signing of the Code of Conduct to achieve a

terrorism-free world by 2045. The code was drafted by Kazakhstan on President Nazarbayev's initiative and has now been signed by 80 countries.

Also while on the council, Kazakhstan was a president of ISIL/Da'esh, Al-Qaida and the Taliban Sanctions Committees of the council.

"Kazakhstan is also part of all nineteen universal legal instruments and additional amendments dealing with terrorism, which became possible after parliament's accelerated review and ratification," Atamkulov said.

The country also recently joined UN peacekeepers in Lebanon. The Kazakh Ministry of Defence obtained a United Nations certification for the Kazakhstan Peace Training Centre (KAZCENT) in Almaty. It is planned, in the future, to develop it into a regional peace-keeping hub.

Seventy percent of the council agenda is dedicated to issues on the African continent and Kazakhstan chaired the sanctions committee on Somalia and Eritrea. On the committee, Kazakh diplomats gained experience in coordinating international efforts to minimize the terrorist activities and run procedures reviewing sanctions. By

the end of Kazakhstan's presidency, the council lifted the sanctions against Eritrea, marking tangible changes in the Horn of Africa.

To organise the potential of Kazakh foreign office in delivering common goals of the UN, as well as aiming at centralising the UN agencies located in Kazakhstan, a UN hub for Central Asia was launched this year in Almaty.

The hub in Almaty works in unison with efforts to reform the UN and its development systems, at the national, regional and inter-regional levels, solving common development problems in the region. The centre's work will cover sustainable development, humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction.

"The membership... gave a new impetus to the development in Central Asia and brought Kazakh diplomacy to a new level of professional expertise, as well as gave us important insight into international issues," said Atamkulov. "In achieving the seven goals outlined in the [President's] address as a vision of upcoming membership, we relied on support of our colleagues in all government offices as well as the deputies of the parliament... I thank you for your support and cooperation."

## EU-Kazakhstan relations evolving cooperatively...

Continued from Page A1

The document has now been ratified by Kazakhstan, 25 out of 28 EU member states and has also been approved by the European Parliament. It will enter into force fully once all EU member states ratify it.

As a part of the agreement, trade between European countries and Kazakhstan increased from \$2.2 billion in 1999 to more than \$29.48 billion in 2018.

"It is a notable and common achievement that today the EU is Kazakhstan's biggest foreign investor and that Kazakhstan is the closest economic and political partner in the region for the EU," he said.

The EU is actively investing into projects for youth, particularly in education, scientific research and civil society development.

"One of the most popular EU programmes, Erasmus+, has already offered nearly 2,000 scholarships for Kazakh students and staff to come to study in Europe, and approximately 800 scholarships for European students to study in Kazakhstan. We have other research programmes with Nazarbayev University and other institutions as a part of Horizon

2020, which is also very promising," said the ambassador.

According to Carlsson, one of the areas of cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan with the largest potential is transport and logistics.

"There is a growth prospect in those sectors of Kazakhstan's



Sven-Olov Carlsson

economy where the EU can offer advanced technologies and standards. We are already seeing this, for example, in the development of railways and this is in line with the new Europe-Asia Connectivity Strategy and Kazakhstan's own ambitious plans as a 'land bridge' in Asia," he said.

"In the perspective of economic diversification and its high potential, I would also mention the

agricultural sector, particularly agro-food processing, and the possibilities to better take advantage of Kazakhstan's vicinity to the large markets of its neighbours," he added.

Another area relates to women's empowerment, particularly a programme that will bring Afghan women to study at Kazakh and Uzbek higher education institutions and get professional training beginning this year. The programme's first phase will cost approximately 2 million euros (US\$2.27 million).

"Kazakhstan has approached the EU with a request to contribute to the continuation of a \$50 million higher education programme for 1,000 Afghan students at Kazakh higher education institutions. The EU responded by preparing a regional programme taking inspiration from the Kazakh programme. The intention is to work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement a project, which will provide professional training to Afghan women at both Kazakh and Uzbek higher education institutions," explained Carlsson.

From 2015 to 2018, the EU launched two programmes to contribute to sustainable economic

development and improvement of the judicial system in Kazakhstan. The first was a programme for 7.1 million euros (US\$8.05 million) on a Green Economy Model implemented by the UNDP. The latter was a programme for 5.5 million euros (US\$6.23 million) to reform Kazakhstan's judicial system.

Currently, the EU is focusing on helping diversify Kazakhstan's economy and supporting new opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in innovations. In the future, the EU's cooperation with Kazakhstan will home in more on investments and private sector development.

"The country will continue to benefit from regional programmes such as Central Asia Invest, SWITCH Asia and the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) contributions to investments and technical assistance co-funded by loans from European Financial Institutions. Global EU programmes in support of human rights promotion (EIDHR), civil society organisations and Erasmus+ will also continue to be available for Kazakhstan," said Carlsson.

The EU supports cooperation among Central Asian countries implementing regional programmes

and sharing EU experience in regional joint action. Recently, the European Commission adopted regional programmes for 90 million euros (US\$102.05 million) to support sustainable development in Central Asia, said the ambassador. In the summer, the EU will announce the renewed EU Strategy on Central Asia at the annual EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting in Bishkek, said Carlsson.

"In addition to promoting trade and investment we need to work together to support inclusive and sustainable development in the regional context. Many of the common challenges, such as the environment, climate change and water management require wider approaches and closer cooperation between all countries of Central Asia. The EU is a strong supporter and ready to promote such cooperation," he said.

"The EU appreciates Kazakhstan's active role and support for a strengthened cooperation in Central Asia. Through the new strategies on Central Asia and Europe-Asia connectivity the EU is further committed to share its achievements and values with countries and peoples in the region," concluded the ambassador.

## FM urges diplomatic solutions to global conflicts, highlights Kazakh initiatives at OIC meeting

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Beibut Atamkulov stressed the need to find comprehensive solutions to the Palestinian problem, promote the Middle East peace process and stabilise Afghanistan during the March 1-2 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Abu Dhabi.

Foreign ministers and top officials from fifty-six member states attended the meeting and discussed issues facing the Islamic world, international relations, and economic and humanitarian cooperation. The participants also discussed ways to resolve military, political and humanitarian crises.

Atamkulov noted Kazakhstan's contribution to seeking peace in Syria through Kazakhstan's Astana Process peace talks, the 12th round of which is now scheduled for April in the Kazakh capital.

The minister also urged the international community to continue efforts to seek peace in Syria.

Atamkulov also urged India and Pakistan to exercise restraint and adhere to international law to prevent an escalation of tensions following the recent heightening of tensions between the two countries.

The head of the Kazakh delegation also urged the OIC to implement initiatives proposed by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, including the Islamic Rapprochement Initiative to address challenges in the OIC area of responsibility.

The minister also thanked OIC countries for joining Kazakhstan's initiative to adopt a Code of Conduct towards Achieving a World Free from Terrorism.

The foreign minister also called on the OIC to participate in the work of the Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS), which was initiated by Kazakhstan. The IOFS General Assembly is expected to hold its second session later this year in Kazakhstan.

Atamkulov also noted Kazakhstan's contribution to global interfaith harmony through the hosting of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana every three years.

The event also discussed Kazakhstan's vision to develop science and technology in the Muslim world, including Kazakh initiatives following the First OIC Summit on Science and Technology in Astana in September 2017. Kazakhstan plans to work with 15 leading Islamic countries to develop additional dialogue platforms on science and technology.

Atamkulov expressed appreciation to Uzbekistan for the continuation of President Nazarbayev's initiative and for the organisation of the upcoming second OIC Summit on Science and Technology in 2020 in Tashkent.

The ministers adopted more than 130 resolutions during the meeting that included all of Kazakhstan's initiatives.

Atamkulov also met on the side-

lines of the event with the foreign ministers of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Indonesia.

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah thanked Kazakhstan for its work as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and for cooperating with Kuwait within the UNSC.

The sides also discussed cooperation in trade, economic and investment relations. Kuwait also offered to launch direct flights between Kazakhstan and Kuwait.

Atamkulov and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia Adel Al-Jubeir discussed trade and economic collaboration. Atamkulov expressed support for the Saudi proposal to establish the Kazakh-Saudi Coordination Council to boost economic dialogue with Kazakhstan.

"We regard Saudi Arabia as an important partner in international and regional political and economic processes. The positions of our

countries on international issues are similar in many ways, and mutually beneficial cooperation continues within the UN, the OIC and other international organisations," the Kazakh foreign minister noted.

During talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the sides agreed to expand trade and economic engagement and noted projects underway in Kazakhstan to attract capital from the UAE. They also discussed upcoming bilateral visits.

The UAE is Kazakhstan's largest Gulf Arab nation trading partner, with trade reaching \$486.9 million in 2018. Over the first six months of last year, investments from the UAE in Kazakhstan totaled \$257.9 million.

Atamkulov also highlighted the potential for bilateral cooperation with the UAE in the space industry. This year, the UAE is preparing to send an astronaut from Kazakhstan's Baikounur Cosmodrome to the International Space Station.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Country plans to export nine million tonnes of grain and flour



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan expects to export nine million tonnes of grain and flour this year, including increased shipments of domestic wheat to China, one of the world's largest markets. The country delivered 307,000 tonnes of wheat to China in 2017 and almost two times more – 560,000 tonnes – last year. Experts believe that in 2020, the amount will increase to one million tonnes.

“Kazakh wheat is in great demand in China and it goes to different provinces of the country, but most Kazakh products remain in northwestern China,” said Food and Agreement Corporation representative Timur Mendigaliev, reported Kazakh TV.

“Export of Kazakh flour to China is increasing, as Kazakh flour

is a natural product. Meanwhile, Georgia is among those who want to get Kazakhstan's wheat. The country intends to purchase a fairly large amount of domestic grain,” he added.

China imports products from many countries and those grown in Kazakhstan are among the favourites, said Chinese People's University expert Bian Yunzhu.

“Your grain is better both in quality and taste. Today, the Ak-mola, Kostanai and North Kazakhstan regions export wheat to China. In addition, this year barley and maize are among the exported crops to the country,” he noted.

Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, which buy more than 50 percent of the exported volume, are the main importers of Kazakh wheat, according to Agriculture Management Senior Specialist Nursultan Kadelov. Kazakhstan is opening new

markets, such as Bangladesh, Finland and Israel, and exported grain for the first time last year to countries such as Egypt, Latvia, Norway, Spain, Tunisia and Ukraine.

“Kazakh wheat is freely transported to the countries of the Southeast Asian region. For example, last year 30,000 tonnes of grain were delivered to Vietnam and today, the relevant departments are actively working to increase the volume of quotas for Kazakh wheat,” said Mendigaliev.

“We have good relations with Kazakhstan and we are actively negotiating to increase supplies of Kazakh wheat. Over the past three months, 40,000 tonnes have been delivered. This is minuscule and it would be very good for us to increase the figures,” said Levon Silagava, head of the Georgian Association of Grain and Bakery Producers.

## NB recommends social benefit recipients open accounts to protect benefits payments

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh National Bank is encouraging citizens who receive social benefits to open accounts to help them continue to receive benefits in case of overdue debt.

Kazakh legislation bans banks from writing off money from accounts intended for crediting benefits, social payments, alimony and other similar payments. This applies, even if a borrower fails to fulfill obligations under a bank loan agreement, and a bank has the right to recourse to the borrower's money on the current accounts. This recovery right, however, is

also limited to 50 percent of the amount of money on a borrower's current account.

During the period from the second half of 2017 and the first half of 2018, banks allowed a violation of this legal requirement. At the same time, some banks collected money of overdue debt without the borrower's consent ignoring the 50 percent limit on writing off money from an account. The National Bank found that the borrowers do not always indicate that the money is in one of the social benefit categories. Thus, the bank recommends opening a special account. The new legislation now defines procedures for opening such accounts.

“It is important. If you are a recipient of benefits and social benefits, alimony for the maintenance of minor and disabled adult children, in this case you need to open a special account from which third parties cannot transact a write off,” the National Bank said in a statement.

The government will enforce additional new norms to the laws on banks and banking activities and on payments and payment systems from Sept. 24. The new norms will ban collecting overdue loans from accounts if it leaves money that is less than the size of the subsistence minimum established for the corresponding fiscal year by the law on the national budget.

## Kazakhstan has 2.5 million hectares of unused agricultural land

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan, the ninth largest country by area in the world, has two and a half million hectares of unused land. Measures taken recently by the Ministry of Agriculture found 388,000 hectares in use and 804,000 returned to the state. The remaining 1.4 million hectares will be returned to the country through legal proceedings.

Representatives of non-government organisations (NGOs) who gathered recently for the Mazhilis (lower house of the Parliament) agricultural land use roundtable noted the lack of a process to enable rational land use.

Approximately 272 million hectares, or 74 percent of Kazakhstan's land, is devoted to agriculture. The figure includes 167.7 million hectares of pastures, 30 million of tilled and lea land and more than four million of hay.

Despite being surrounded by huge areas of idle land, farmers in many regions still cannot obtain a plot for their business.

During the past three years, the ministry found nine million hectares not in use. In 2018 alone, 2.57 million hectares were not used or used with land code violations. Space monitoring and digital agricultural maps could help make land use more efficient.

Civil activist Mukhtar Taizhan emphasised the need to boost the land lease market while maintaining land as a state property. Land lease, he noted, should remain solely between Kazakh citizens and legal entities with 100 percent Kazakh capital.

Taizhan also suggested introducing a single agriculture tax that would amalgamate the eight existing taxes currently paid by agricultural producers. The revised system would encourage

companies to use land efficiently, rather than leave it idle, a frequent situation.

“Their payment entails a very difficult process. At the same time, there is a problem that a low level of such direct tax as land tax does not stimulate rational use of agricultural lands. Therefore, it is important to improve the tax policy in agriculture. This could serve as leverage for land users to take measures to engage more unused

Approximately 272 million hectares, or 74 percent of Kazakhstan's land, is devoted to agriculture. The figure includes 167.7 million hectares of pastures, 30 million of tilled and lea land and more than four million of hay.

land in their activities or voluntarily return land to the state,” according to a ministry statement.

“As part of the discussion, we received suggestions from civil activists and NGOs. The Mazhilis has always worked openly. Therefore, all of them will be considered. I would like to note that the land code has no changes related to cancellation of ban to sell or lease land to foreign citizens, stateless persons and companies with foreign capital,” said Mazhilis Agriculture Committee Chair Saparkhan Omarov, who has subsequently been appointed Minister of Agriculture by a Feb. 25 presidential decree.



## EBRD predicts 3.5-percent GDP growth for Kazakhstan in 2019

Continued from Page A1

“There are several social initiatives starting from affordable housing initiatives to a recent announcement by the finance minister that there will be more money for new families. This applies even to industrial policy. An announcement noted that 500 billion tenge (US\$1.3 billion) will be dedicated to export support and 600 billion tenge (US\$1.6 billion) to industry support. The Kazakh President said that there will be money from the National Fund to finance social projects. I think the focus will have to shift to structural reforms to achieve higher growth and the focus will shift on modernisation and structural change,” said Holzhaecker.

The Strategic Plan 2025 includes reforms in the key areas – human capital, technological innovation, promoting competitiveness, strengthening the rule of law,



regional development and urbanisation and increased efficiency in public administration.

“According to the EBRD assessment on the transition towards a developed market economy, Kazakhstan scores pretty well in comparison to all countries of the operation of the EBRD. However, there is still more that can be done

in integrated connectivity, as well as in green economy. The EBRD is supporting a lot in this direction of the activities of Kazakhstan,” he added.

EBRD Associate Economist Francesca Dalla Pozza spoke about the transition report, which focuses on work transformation. It includes issues of demographic

change, job automation and work-migration across and within national borders; looking at how the interplay between demographic shifts, technology and migration can help to shape economic growth and the future of work, both across the EBRD regions and around the world.

In the young economies of Azer-

baijan, Turkey, Central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean, the report indicates the main challenge is to create a continuous stream of high-quality jobs for the many new entrants into the labour market.

Investing in transport infrastructure has the potential to deliver long-term benefits, said Dalla Pozza.

“We chose the Belt and Road Initiative as an example. The Belt and Road projects comprise a set of additional investments across Europe and Asia that may or may not take place. If the ambitious programme is completed, a lot of countries that are affected by the programme will actually stand to benefit in terms of real GDP per capita and well-being. Kazakhstan is also on the list. The real GDP per capita will increase by 4.5 percent by 2040. This is a sizeable effect,” she noted.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Investments in education increased 36.9 percent to 2.8 billion tenge (US\$7.41 million) in January. Their share of total investments in equity was 0.4 percent. In 2018, against the general background of a decrease in state budget expenditures, investments in education also decreased 22.7 percent year on year and totalled to 204.9 billion tenge (US\$542.01 million). This was the first decline in the last five years. The funding of advanced training and retraining for schools decreased as well: 53 billion tenge (US\$140.19 million) was spent on the construction of new schools and another 33 billion tenge (US\$87.29 million) spent on training gifted children. In the next five years, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has called for spending on education and health-care to be increased from 7.4 percent to 10 percent of gross domestic product.

In February, the subsistence minimum in Kazakhstan was calculated to be 27,100 tenge or US\$71.70, an increase of 4.2 percent year on year, while prices for goods and services increased 4.8 percent year on year, reports finprom.kz. The highest subsistence minimum, 33,400 tenge or US\$88.40, at 23.3 percent more than the national average, was established in the oil-rich Mangystau region. Bigger cities followed, with Astana's subsistence minimum set at 30,800 tenge or US\$81.50 and Almaty's at 30,200 tenge or US\$79.90, 13.5 percent and 11.4 percent higher than the average, respectively. The lowest subsistence minimum is in the Pavlodar region, which at 23,900 tenge (US\$63.20), is 11.7 percent less than the national average.

Output of nonferrous metals increased 25.2 percent and reached 107 billion tenge (US\$283.04 million) in January as compared to the same period last year. This is the maximum rate in recent years. In 2018, the production volume totalled 85.5 billion tenge (US\$226.17 million), with an annual growth of 33.2 percent. In the 12 months of 2018, copper ore production reached 103.2 million tonnes, which is 8.2 percent more than in the same period in 2017. The main consumers of Kazakh copper are the countries of Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Total exports of refined copper and unprocessed copper alloys amounted to \$2.4 billion in 2018. One of the bigger companies that extracts and processes copper is KAZ Minerals, which produced 294,700 tonnes in 2018, 14 percent more than in 2017. In 2018, the company's net income reached \$510 million, an increase of 14.1 percent year on year.

Kazakh florists collected 2.2 percent fewer flowers in 2018 as compared to the previous year. The gross yield was 23.8 million flowers. The main reason is the decline in the share of individual entrepreneurs, peasant and private farms from 5.3 percent to 1.6 percent over the year, reports energyprom.kz. Despite the lower yields, the country's biggest flower supplying regions collected more flowers than in 2017. The Pavlodar region, for example, collected 7.6 million flowers, a 22.4 percent increase; the Akmola region collected 7.1 million flowers, a 16 percent increase. The biggest greenhouse complexes are Green House KZ in Pavlodar, the Kunarly greenhouse in Akmola and Ecoculture in Almaty. Agricultural enterprises supplied approximately 68 percent of the total, while households supplied 30.4 percent.

The number of new small companies in the information technologies field is growing every year. By the end of January, their number reached almost 1,365, which is 3.6 percent more than a year earlier. The number of operating IT companies in the small business sector grew by 21.2 percent over 2018. The most popular IT start-ups in the Astana Hub are the Clockster group (a biometric time tracking system project), naimi.kz (a free service for finding specialists) and Kompra (a service that instantly provides information on the reliability of counterparties for 40 legal and financial indicators). This year, the technology park plans to attract 4.8 billion tenge (US\$12.69 million), said Minister of Information and Public Development Dauran Abayev.

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan's first national low-cost airline, Fly Arystan, will launch in the first half of the year, Kazakh Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar told a March government meeting. Fly Arystan will operate similarly to low-cost airlines easyJet, Indigo, Cebu Pacific and AirAsia and, in its first year of operation, will transport up to 1 million passengers at prices half the cost of Air Astana flights. It will operate a fleet of Airbus A320 aircraft configured to an all-economy class of 180 seats. Sklyar also noted that the ministry and Air Astana will begin the accreditation procedure for flights to the United States this year, with the intergovernmental agreement on Kazakh-U.S. air communication to be signed in March.

A wind farm with a 100-megawatt capacity is under construction in the Akmol Region, said Central Asian Fuel and Energy Company Green Energy Director Yedil Saryev at a Feb. 27-28 summit on renewable energy among Central Asian countries. The wind farm's first station, with a 50-megawatt capacity and employing approximately 300 people and more than 130 units of heavy machinery, will launch in the middle of the year. The second station will launch in 2020. The wind farm will provide electricity to more than 10,000 households and will be equipped with 30 wind turbines. It will contribute to Kazakhstan's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with an expected reduction equivalent to emissions from more than 113,000 cars per year.

Kazakhstan's food prices in February 2019 are 6.6 percent higher than in February 2018, reports the Kazakh Ministry of National Economy's Committee on Statistics. Within this time period, prices for baked goods, cereals, meat, fish, dairy products, sugar, confectionery, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages and oils and fats increased, while fruits and vegetables became cheaper. The average price for granulated sugar was 236 tenge (US\$0.62) per kilogramme in February and 195 tenge (US\$0.52) in February last year, and the average price for cottage cheese was 1,570 tenge (US\$4.15) per kilogramme in February and 1,511 tenge (US\$4) in February last year.

Kazakhstan's passenger train speed increased by 585 kilometres per day, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy's (KTZ) Backbone Network Chief Engineer Kaiyrbay Urynbayev told a February briefing, reports Inform.kz. In 2018, KTZ improved the quality of 1,015 kilometres of tracks and overhauled 867 kilometres of tracks, he said. KTZ is Kazakhstan's national railway company, and develops, operates and maintains railway transportation in the country and internationally.

Abylai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Omirkhan Baikonurov University of Zhezkazgan, the Kazakh Leading Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering and Almaty University of Energy and Communications were auctioned March 7 by the Kazakh Ministry of Finance, reports the ministry's press service. Bidding began at 1.71 billion tenge (US\$4.52 million) for Abylai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, at 336.4 million tenge (US\$889,778) for Omirkhan Baikonurov University of Zhezkazgan, at 2.52 billion tenge (US\$6.67 million) for the Kazakh Leading Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering and at 1.4 billion tenge (US\$3.7 million) for Almaty University of Energy and Communications.

Development Bank of Kazakhstan Chair Bolat Zhamishev and First Heartland Bank Board Chair Yerbol Orynbayev were recently appointed to Tsesnabank's board of directors, reports the bank's press service. They join Shigeo Katsu, Yevgeniy Pan, Bolat Zhamishev and Daulat Kabybayev in managing the bank. Tsesnabank was founded in 1992 and provides corporate, small-to-medium enterprise, insurance and retail banking products.

## Forbes Club second business breakfast focuses on oil and gas industry

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan will fully supply its oil and gas market in 2019 and export surplus oil products, said Kazenergy General Director Asset Magauov at the Feb. 28 Forbes Club business breakfast. The club, whose members represent the nation's business community, organised its second in a series of morning meetings at the capital's Talan Towers complex.

The event, moderated by Forbes Kazakhstan Publisher Armanzhan Baitasov, opened with Magauov briefly describing the condition of the country's oil and gas industry.

"Compared with previous years, oil production in Kazakhstan has increased. In 2016, the production level was 77.8 million tonnes. In 2018, we reached 90 million tonnes. This is because of the level of production at large oil and gas projects such as Kashagan and Tengizchevroil. Major projects account for approximately 60 percent of Kazakhstan's oil production," he said.

Small oil and gas projects, which supply 40 percent of production, are expected to decrease, an issue of concern to the government and subsoil users, he noted.

Kazakhstan's three oil refineries in Atyrau, Pavlodar and Shymkent finished their modernisation processes in 2018. This year, the demand for oil products in the Kazakh market should be fully covered.

"In 2018, the supply of basic petroleum products was 93 percent; diesel fuel, 91 percent and kerosene, 60 percent. In 2019, a gasoline and kerosene surplus is predicted and the domestic market for diesel fuel should be fully provided. We can see that the Kazakh market is fully supplied. The issue of the export of oil products surplus is on the agenda," he added.

The Kazakh Ministry of Energy, in conjunction with Kazenergy, introduced changes in subsoil use legislation including simplifying methods to obtain subsoil use rights and cancelling social load obligations, employee training



Forbes Kazakhstan Publisher Armanzhan Baitasov.

and the exploration period for new subsoil users.

"We see that it is necessary to attract investors in subsoil use, in exploration and high-risk projects," said Magauov.

In addition to the changes, they introduced benefits for offshore projects such as abolishing mineral extraction and rental and excess profit taxes.

Kazakhstan is also planning to amend the ecology code. Kazenergy, with the support of partners, is working with Ernst & Young to research international practices in ecology legislation.

Representatives from large oil and gas companies such as Total and Shell shared their views about the Kazakh industry and made recommendations to improve conditions for investors.

"We have been in the country for 25 years now. We are a proud member of Kashagan consortium and operator of Dunga field in the Mangystau region. We are also in the marketing and services business in the south of the country and started to build the first solar plant in the Kyzylorda region at the end

of last year," said Total in Kazakhstan head Pascal Breant.

He stressed the importance of digitisation and reducing service company costs to create more convenient conditions for investors.

"We need to control the cost, execution of the projects and contracting strategy and competition in the oil and gas sector among service companies... We want to renegotiate the contracts and simplify the processes. Another thing that I believe is going to contribute to the bright future in the oil and gas sector in Kazakhstan is digitisation," he added.

Shell Kazakhstan Chair Olivier Lazare spoke about creating the oil and gas project hubs necessary to develop the industry in the country.

"In Kazakhstan, there are three giant fields. Shell is part of two of them, which are Karachaganak and Kashagan. These fields constituted major anchors from which continues further development," he said. "We need to create hubs and start a virtual circle of development of new fields from them tying satellites around these hubs."

To support the hubs, Shell and other eight partners are developing the Khazar-Kalamkas project.

"We will give it our best to make it happen, but we need help from Kazakhstan for commercial and legal issues and from suppliers and the contractor community," he added.

Kazpetrodrilling General Director Askhat Duisaliyev and Kazturboremont Operations Director Nurlan Ibragimov provided the perspective of domestic companies and suppliers regarding localising domestic production and manufacturing. Both companies focus on training staff locally and internationally in countries such as the Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Kazturboremont also implements the Kaizen management approach.

Baitasov noted the meetings are inspiring, as they allow him "to immerse myself in the subject matter and study current issues."

"The previous meeting with (Astana International Financial Centre Governor) Kairat Kelimbetov was interesting. The topic of the future of the oil and gas in-

dustry is very interesting as well, because oil is the foundation of our economy; more than 30 percent of the budget and more than half of the National Fund comes from oil revenues," he said.

Talan Towers hosted the inaugural meeting in November. In the intervening months, the owners have enriched the offer by additional solutions of the ready fitted-out offices.

"The previous event was in November and new companies have appeared in the building. We have recently added the opportunity of renting out office premises for a company with a small number of employees, which is from six-15 people. We analysed the Astana market and realised that many companies prefer to have small offices (90-150 square metres) with further expansion to large areas (or there are small branches of multinational companies that have their Kazakhstan headquarters in Almaty). We have already signed lease agreements. These offices will be ready in March," said leasing manager Almas Nyssanbayev.

The complex has two 30-storey and 25-storey buildings with The Ritz Carlton and international A-class Talan Towers Offices connected by a luxury gallery which will open in September 2019. A Starbucks Reserve bar, featuring a unique brewing technique, operates near the gallery space.

The complex was built according to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) gold certificate international standards for eco-friendly buildings. American firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and London-based Richmond Architects and Perkins+Will Architects developed the design.

"These are the architects who designed Burj Khalifa, Freedom Tower and the Empire State Building, which is in New York, and they entered Astana with the Talan Towers project. All of this was coordinated by American company Turner International. More than 100 international companies took part in the construction of Talan Towers. The owner of the complex is our company, Astana Property Management," said Nyssanbayev.

## Paramount Group provides UAE with next generation of armoured vehicles

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced the acquisition of Paramount Group's armoured personnel carrier, the Mbombe 4x4, Feb. 17 at the International Defence Exhibition in Abu Dhabi. The Mbombe 4x4 draws on the heritage of the Mbombe 6x6 and 8x8, which are tested and produced by the company's joint venture

Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering (KPE).

"The United Arab Emirates is one of the most sophisticated procurement markets of defence equipment in the world... We are dedicated to developing advanced defence capabilities and next generation technologies which will support our regional partners," said Paramount Group's Founder and Executive Chairperson Ivor Ichikowitz, reported paramountgroup.com.

Production of the Mbombe 6x6 mine-protected vehicle, currently manufactured and in service in Kazakhstan, started in 2011. KPE produces the model under the name Barys 6x6. The Barys 8x8 (Mbombé 8x8), the next generation of armoured vehicles also made in the country, was launched in 2016. The Mbombe 4x4 completes the Mbombe family of combat vehicles.

More than 70 percent of the vehicles' components are shared among

the three models, ensuring efficient training and logistics and saving expenses on maintenance and operational support. The carriers can be manufactured in customer countries according to Paramount Group's proven portable manufacturing model used in Azerbaijan, Jordan and Kazakhstan.

"Mbombé 4x4 was designed and developed specifically for local manufacturing in customer countries in response to specific market requirements. Paramount spe-

cialises in the creation of portable manufacturing facilities through technology and skills transfer, resulting in new local capabilities and sustainable jobs proven to not only benefit local defence industrial capabilities, but economic diversification and growth," said Ichikowitz, reported defenceweb.co.za.

The Mbombe 4x4 offers high levels of ballistic (up to level four), mine protection (crew compartment STANAG 4569 – Level 3, blast protection STANAG 4569 – Level 4a and 4b) and protection against a 50-kilogramme trinitrotoluene (TNT) side blast or improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The vehicle has a burst speed of 140 kilometres per hour and can operate in winter conditions of -20 Celsius to desert conditions of +55 Celsius. The carrier's 16-tonne payload is approximately three tonnes, encapsulating weapon systems, ammunition, crew and supplies.

The Mbombe 4x4 is designed for protection in conventional and asymmetric warfare, counterterrorism and peacekeeping missions. It accommodates a wide range of payloads and turrets. The on-board mission computer and interface system can integrate with both Western and Eastern-made weapon systems.

The Paramount Group is a global defence and aerospace company based in South Africa since 1994. The company has more than 3,000 employees working with governments across the world and manufacturing in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.



Mbombé 4x4

Photo credit: paramountgroup.com

# EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Kazakhstan proud of gender equality efforts, continues to seek more equitable society

It is now well over four decades since the United Nations officially recognised March 8 as International Women's Day. The annual event, which is marked around the world, has helped draw attention to the contribution of women to our societies which was over-looked for so long. It is a chance to celebrate the indispensable role of women in our families, in communities and in a country as a whole.

But as well as a celebration – something which surely has taken place in families across Kazakhstan last weekend – International Women's Day is also a call to action. It should remind us of the barriers women still face and how leaving them in place makes us all, male and female, poorer in every way.

The evidence is already overwhelming that gender inequality undermines the strength of our economies and the health of our communities. And in an era where success more than ever depends upon the ability to harness the talents and potential of each individual, the damage it causes to prosperity and stability will only increase. Gender equality is not just a goal in itself, but essential if we are to tackle poverty, raise living standards, increase opportunity and drive wider development.

**Women already account for more than half of those engaged in small and medium sized enterprises and two-thirds of individual entrepreneurs. These are the areas of the economy which will create the high-paid jobs of the future.**

As we have said before, no country has yet closed the gender gap. Women everywhere still face conscious and unconscious barriers and bias, which their male counterparts do not. This certainly remains the case in Kazakhstan, as the Government has itself recognised.

But independent studies have also found real improvements in recent years. A comprehensive report, for example, from the Asian Development Bank on gender equality and female empowerment published late last year found that Kazakhstan's overall performance had improved so strongly since 2000 that it was now better than aver-

age for Europe and Central Asia as a whole.

Kazakhstan's scores particularly high on gender equality in health and education, where its performance is outstanding and holds great hope for the future. Where the performance is weaker, such as on female political representation, the Government has put in place policies and targets to close the gap. We need more women's voices shaping decisions.

This is also the case in the economic sphere where the strong progress of the past on labour participation and earnings is showing signs of stalling. The Government recognises that removing obstacles to equality in the labour market is simply essential if the country is to achieve its aim of joining the ranks of the top 30 developed nations.

In some cases, this requires action to break down educational and occupational stereotypes, so women are not restricted to certain types of careers or find progress harder. There are many sectors where women leaders are common-place. But there are others, such as the extractive industries and transport, where the culture needs to be changed.

Women in work in our cities are also likely to find the route up the career ladder easier than in more rural communities. It is culture as well as laws, which need to be changed. Wherever women work – and, of course, in their homes and communities – they have a right to feel safe and respected.

There is recognition, too, that there is huge potential in helping even more women set up and grow their own businesses. Women already account for more than half of those engaged in small and medium sized enterprises and two-thirds of individual entrepreneurs. These are the areas of the economy which will create the high-paid jobs of the future.

The Government is working on its own, and with partners, to give these businesses the help they need. Financial institutions have been encouraged to remove unfair barriers to credit which can hamper growth. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has just announced the female-led businesses across Kazakhstan it will support through its fast-track programme.

There is more to do but, as the Asian Development Bank reported, the right policy framework backed by real commitment from the top is in place to drive forward progress on gender equality. Delivering on this goal is in everyone's interest, whether male or female and requires everyone's involvement.

## Kostanai Region seeks major industrial investments while focusing on recreational and hunting tourism, akim says

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – As the series of exclusive interviews with the regional governors in Kazakhstan continues, Akim (Governor) of Kostanai Region Arkhimed Mukhambetov describes the efforts of his administration aimed at attracting major investments thanks to the specially created industrial zone, while its abundant recreational resources provide ample opportunities for developing tourism of various sorts.

**What socio-economic development issues are on the agenda? What work is planned to improve indicators in the coming years?**

As the head of state noted, income and quality of life are the main criteria for the effectiveness of our work.

At the end of last year, there were many positive results:

- average monthly salary increased by 7.2 percent to 139,370 tenge (US\$364.46) and the real wage index by 1.7 percent;

- cash income of the population (nominal per capita) increased by 8 percent; real cash income, by 2 percent;
- the life expectancy of the population increased from 71.5 to 72.2 years;
- unemployment rate (Q3 2018) stood at 4.8 percent, which was a consequence of successful implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Promotion Plan, under which 30,600 people were involved in employment activities, while the plan had called for only 22,400 people.

According to the implementation of the second initiative of the head of state to reduce the tax burden in order to increase the wages of low-paid workers, starting from Jan. 1, 2019, the tax burden for 57,200 people with a salary of 63,125 tenge (US\$165.08) and less (totalling more than 1.6 billion tenge (US\$4.2 million)) was reduced in the region.

The minimum wage was increased 1.5 times for about 37,000 people at enterprises and organisations of all forms of ownership.

The initiative to increase wages was supported by more than 2,000 companies in the region, which have increased the wages of more than 58,000 employees since Jan. 1.

A great deal of work has been done to reduce the maximum tariffs for public utilities and today, the tariffs for heat have already been reduced to 14 percent; for water, sewerage and municipal solid waste removal to 10 percent and for electricity transportation and services of consumer co-operatives to 8 percent.

In addition, since the beginning of this year the cost of maintenance of elevators and coal suppliers to the region has been reduced to 5 percent.

The work on reduction of prices and tariffs will be continued in the current year.

The real growth of the economy contributes to the improvement of the quality of life of the population.

Thus, the growth in industry amounted to 8.3 percent; construction works, 22.3 percent.

A total of 299,300 square metres of housing were commissioned, or 113.1 percent, compared to 2017.

The main issue of the next stage of the agro-industrial complex digitisation for 2019 is the scaling up of these projects to other regions and the strengthening of awareness among agricultural enterprises and the establishment of competence centres for training farmers (training centres) on the basis of pilot farms.

In the area of business support and development, joint



Arkhimed Mukhambetov

The region's economy received 245.3 billion tenge (US\$641.5 million) in investments with growth of 13.3 percent, while external investments were 38.6 percent higher than in 2017.

Gross output of agricultural products increased by 10.2 billion tenge (US\$26.7 million) to 378.3 billion tenge (US\$989.3 million).

According to the results of the year, we forecast the growth of gross regional product of more than 5.0 percent; that is, the President's order to ensure the growth of the economy is fulfilled.

We associate further development of the region with the implementation of investment projects in the basic industries.

Currently, we are actively working on 40 projects worth 2.2 trillion tenge (US\$5.8 billion), including 20 projects with foreign participation (1.7 trillion tenge (US\$4.4 billion)), with the creation of 6,000 jobs.

In industry, we are focusing on the introduction of elements of Industry 4.0. In 2017, Sokolov-Sarbai Mining Production Association (SSMPA) introduced the smart quarry system at one of the fields and this year, there are plans to introduce a similar system at other fields as well.

In addition, SSMPA has created a fifth-generation smart factory in the Kachary quarry. Thanks to the automated system with elements of artificial intelligence, the productivity of the equipment will be increased four times and the volume of finished products (concentrate and pellets) will be increased up to 23 million tonnes in five years.

In agriculture, we are organising an agricultural processing cluster in Arkalyk, which is directly connected to Astana.

We are focusing on the meat processing complex with the capacity of 1,000 tonnes, which was commissioned as part of the traditional teleconference bridge.

We are also implementing a project to build a livestock breeding complex in Arkalyk.

In addition, the region is a pilot region for the introduction of digitisation in the agricultural sector.

We are implementing a smart dairy farm (Olzha Sadchikovskoye LLP), smart meat farm (Terra LLP) and smart poultry farm (Zhas-Kanat 2006 LLP) and introducing precision farming technologies.

The main issue of the next stage of the agro-industrial complex digitisation for 2019 is the scaling up of these projects to other regions and the strengthening of awareness among agricultural enterprises and the establishment of competence centres for training farmers (training centres) on the basis of pilot farms.

In the area of business support and development, joint

work with the Asian Development Bank will be continued to develop an action plan for entrepreneurship development in the Kostanai region for 2019-2022.

Systematic work will also continue to increase the share of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the economy from 25.5 percent to 28.2 percent.

The work on gasification of settlements will be continued. In order to continue gasification of the region, 2.3 billion tenge (US\$6 million) will be allocated for implementation of four projects.

During the implementation of the memorandum with KazTransGas, the gasified population of Kostanai region increased from 471,900 people to 482,900 people. The implementation of four projects will allow increasing access of the population of the region to natural gas up to 500,000 people.

Within the framework of the social initiative to expand microcrediting, 3.3 billion tenge (US\$8.6 million) is envisaged for 2019, of which 3.1 billion tenge (US\$8.1 million) will be allocated for crediting in rural areas and 237.1 million tenge (US\$620,032) in cities.

The Year of Youth, announced by the head of state, sets ambitious goals for us. To achieve them, we have developed a road map with 79 events.

For example, our region is one of the first in Kazakhstan to open the Youth Palace and hold an international forum of Kazakhstan-Russia youth cooperation, which will give new impetus to the development of the youth policy in the region.

In addition, we will carry out:

- The Koktem korki qyzgaldaq rural youth forum;
- Qosta Youth information meeting and
- Deni sau urpaq – Ult Bolashagy health and sports festival.

This year, we are completing the construction of the Youth Palace. A concert hall with 1,000 seats and an orchestra pit, modern sound and lighting equipment will be provided for youth creative groups.

**How many foreign investments were attracted to Kostanai region in 2017-2018? Please tell us about the most significant projects in the construction, manufacturing and agro-industrial sectors.**

Work on attracting investments, including foreign investments, is one of the most important strategic tasks of the Kostanai region Akimat (government). At the same time, there is steady growth in attracting foreign investment in the capital of the region. In 2017 and 2018, 22.8 and 31.6 billion tenge (US\$59.6 million and US\$82.6 million) were attracted, respectively. According to static data, the volume of foreign investments in 2018 was three times higher than in 2015 (10 billion tenge (US\$26.2 million)).

The undoubted success of the last two years is the attraction of several large foreign investors.

The abundance of natural resources and availability of raw material base in our region encourages investors to create

new production facilities both in the agro-industrial complex and manufacturing.

Investors are very interested in processing grain crops, which is conditioned by the existing raw material potential of the region.

For example, in 2017 the Kostanai region exported about one million tonnes of wheat grain, which could be processed producing high value added products.

In December 2018 in Kostanai, Best Kostanai LLP launched a mill complex with a capacity of 700 tonnes of flour per day. A similar mill with an even higher capacity (1,000 tonnes of flour per day) will be launched in 2019 on the basis of Salamat Company LLP.

Both projects are implemented with the participation of Turkish investments.

The machine-building industry is developing at a good pace and in 2017-2018, fruitful work in this industry was carried out. In 2017, jointly with the multinational company CMC (China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation), a part of the Genertec conglomerate (China General Technology Group) and on the basis of Saryarka AutoProm LLP (a part of the domestic machine builder Allur Group), a project was implemented to produce JAC S3 automobiles by the small-knot assembly method (CKD (complete knocked down)).

The cost of the project amounted to 5.6 billion tenge (US\$14.6 million). The project works stably; about 700 cars have already been produced since the beginning of implementation.

To the present day, in December 2018, while continuing cooperation with CMC, an agreement was signed on the investor's entry into the capital of Allur Group. The signed agreement implies the acquisition by CMC of 51 percent of shares from a domestic automotive company and the attraction of about \$1.1 billion. This will help expand the range of manufactured cars, increase the localisation level up to 50 percent and enter foreign markets.

In September 2018, the company launched a project worth over two billion tenge (US\$5.2 million) to produce tractors of the Belarus brand. The investor was Composite Group holding (, based in Russia's Sverdlovsk region, which also has a branch in Kyrgyzstan. It should be noted that the holding is working on the certification of OAO MTZ.

Implementation of the project became possible due to close cooperation between the state and business. On the territory of the industrial zone in Kostanai, the investor was provided with a brownfield site, i.e. a land plot with a ready-made production facility and an existing engineering infrastructure built at the expense of budget funds and leased to the enterprise for long-term rent. Thanks to this, the production of tractors was established in the shortest possible time.

In addition, negotiations with Petersburg Tractor Plant on the assembly of Kirovets tractors series K-744 on the territory of Agromashholding is being conducted now.

The industrial zone being created is a strong argument for direct negotiations with investors. The total area of the industrial zone is 400 hectares, of which about 40 percent of the territory is already being developed.

At the moment, 11 projects are being developed at this site (two of them were launched in 2018) for the amount of more than 300 billion tenge (US\$783.8 million). In 2019, two projects involving foreign investment are planned to be implemented in the industrial zone.

In the first half of 2019, construction of a modern crop processing complex worth \$300 million will begin on an area of 140 hectares. The investor is Bio Grain LLP together with China CAMC Engineering. Under the project, there are plans to process 600,000 tonnes of grains and 200,000 tonnes of oilseeds, as well as to produce one million tonnes of mixed fodder. This year, we plan to start construction of the complex.

Summing up the above, I would like to note that work in this area is ongoing. Currently, 23 potential investment projects with the participation of foreign investments are under consideration. This list of projects is constantly being updated and work is being done to support investors at all stages of production launch.

**Please tell us about the work and projects in the field of public-private partnership (PPP).**

As of today, 67 projects are being implemented in the region within the framework of PPP in various spheres of the economy – education, health-care, housing and communal services, internal affairs, housing construction, culture and sports for the total amount of 26.6 billion tenge (US\$69.5 million).

Forty-four PPP contracts were concluded for 16.6 billion tenge (US\$43.4 million), which is third place in the ranking among the regions of the country:

- in the field of education, 21 contracts for the construction and reconstruction of five kindergartens, the installation of block-module boiler houses in secondary schools and the rental of premises for pre-school institutions;
- in the area of health care, 12 contracts have been concluded for the construction of a medical and obstetric station, the lease of a family medical outpatient clinic and premises for medical institutions;
- in the sphere of physical culture and sports, six agreements on construction of a football arena, a sports and entertainment complex, a 50-metre swimming pool, an ice palace in the city of Kostanai and a sports hall in the cities of Kostanai and Rudny;
- in the sphere of housing and communal services, four agreements on leasing of specialised equipment for municipal solid waste (MSW) removal and
- in the sphere of housing construction, one contract for reconstruction of a building for a rental house in Lisakovsk.

The full version of the interview is available online.

THE ASTANA TIMES

Editor-in-Chief: Roman Vassilenko  
13 Dostyk Street, Office 427  
Astana, 010000

Telephone/Facsimile: +7 7172 78 00 08

Publisher: Svezhaya Pressa LLP

News and Editorial: yuatkhanov@astanatimes.com

Advertising: +7 727 252 08 82

Inquiries: info@astanatimes.com

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: 343

PRINT RUN: 6,000

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Central Asia's largest tin deposit expected to spur Kazakhstan's non-ferrous metal industry



### Staff Report

ASTANA – Tin stripping operations will begin in May at Syrymbet, Central Asia's largest and Kazakhstan's only tin deposit with

an annual capacity of two million tonnes of ore, said North Kazakhstan Region Akim (Governor) Kumar Aksalakov at a late February meeting.

The facility is expected to help develop a domestic technologi-

cally advanced non-ferrous metal industry. Tin deposit reserves are currently estimated at 99.2 million tonnes, of which metal tin reserves are 484,940 tonnes, reports Skinvest.kz. Extraction of tungsten, copper and fluorite is also planned.

Development of the tin deposit began in 2013 and will be completed in 2021 at a cost of 100 billion tenge (US\$264.7 million). This year, four billion tenge (US\$10.59 million) has been invested.

In 2018, investment in the re-

gion increased 8.1 percent, reaching 212 billion tenge (US\$561.16 million). There, Chinese company Tielin Logistics Invest Co. is implementing projects on feed and woodworking, and construction began on the wheat processing

plant KAZMEAL. An inactive plant will also be transformed into a modern data centre.

"We allocate funds for the restoration of idle industrial facilities, which are then offered to investors on terms that are favourable," the akim said. "Today, seven large investment projects are under development, which will attract more than 80 billion tenge (US\$211.76 million) to the regional economy and create more than 1,500 new jobs."

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev tasked the new government, appointed Feb. 25, to "take effective steps in improving living standards, stimulating the economy and implementing strategic objectives."

Funds from the state budget and the National Fund will be allocated to improve regional development policy, social welfare for citizens of low socioeconomic status and housing options for socially vulnerable groups. As a result, akimats (administrations) are expected to play a greater role in advancing these socially-oriented measures.

"Akims, the government, the party and Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs should help people with social assistance," said Nazarbayev Feb. 27 at the 18th Nur Otan Party Congress.

## AIFC court launches eJustice, first electronic legal management system in Central Asia

### By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and the International Arbitration Centre have officially launched the eJustice system in Astana's financial hub. The system allows lawsuits to be filed from anywhere in the world, and will help manage the legal and electronic processing of all legal documents.

"The AIFC Court and the International Arbitration Centre strive to be innovative and technologically advanced. One of the most important tasks for us was to develop the eJustice system that could overcome geographical barriers and maximise access to justice. Implementing the eJustice system is a significant achievement for the AIFC Court and the International Arbitration Centre and will serve

our clients for many years," said Chair of the AIFC Court Lord Wolf, according to an AIFC press release.

According to the AIFC release, eJustice is the first electronic court system to be used in Central Asia. It was developed by the AIFC Court and the International Arbitration Centre in cooperation with Singapore-based company CrimsonLogic.

According to CrimsonLogic CEO Saw Ken Wye, the eJustice system was built using the world-class legal product Chrysalis, a proven application with functionality and features used by the most developed countries.

The system is a completely online service that allows parties to file claims to the AIFC Court and the International Arbitration Centre in electronic formats from anywhere in the world without the need for a physical presence in Astana and to process them within the AIFC.

The AIFC wants to make the services of the court and the International Arbitration Centre convenient and accessible for legal professionals and business people. The system also provides support to judges and arbitrators, helps in resolving procedural issues, and supports the prompt and cost-effective resolution of commercial disputes in accordance with the highest international standards.

The eJustice system project was completed with the involvement of lawyers from Kazakhstan and throughout the Central Asian region, as well as international legal and business circles, who tested the system and sent comments as potential future users.

From Feb. 18 to Feb. 22, more than 35 Kazakh lawyers in Astana and Almaty underwent in-depth training in the eJustice system. Further training will be conducted in the future.

## Finnish companies to build waste recycling plants

### By Zhanat Tukpiyev

ASTANA – Finnish companies are interested in constructing waste treatment plants in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Ministry of Energy plans to increase the waste recycling rate from the current 11.5 percent to 50 percent using Finnish technologies and investments.

The sides spoke about the issue in the capital March 1 during the 11th meeting of the Kazakh-Finnish intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation.

"Today, we discussed all areas of relations between our countries – education, healthcare, digital technologies, energy, digital security and green energy. We will sign relevant documents in the near future – this will be the basis for cooperation between our countries," said Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev.

Approximately 97 percent of all waste in Finland is recycled compared to only 11.5 percent of solid waste and 32 percent of industrial waste in Kazakhstan, he noted.

"This is not enough. In the coming years, we set ourselves a task to reach 50 percent of recycling. Here, we don't need to reinvent the wheel; we need to attract green technologies, attract Finnish business, know-how and capital. If now the legislation doesn't allow us to do this, then we need to change it," he added.

Bozumbayev indicated relevant work is underway to amend the new environmental code.

"Due to the new environmental code, we will make necessary changes to other laws. We will also try to make changes to the tax code to achieve tax preferences for the industry, which practically does not exist now. We need to create it and get energy from waste. The

industry will be developed and then it will be possible to impose taxes," he said.

Finnish Foreign Trade and Development Minister Anne-Marie Virolainen noted Kazakhstan has extensive potential to generate electricity from waste.

"This is what Finland wants to offer to Kazakhstan today. A vivid example is the production of bioenergy in Almaty at the city water channel. There, Finnish entrepreneurs supplied the equipment that produces biogas. Then they asked for help, as there are inconsistencies in the legislation," she said.

Trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Finland in 2018 reached \$265.8 million. The gross inflow of Finnish direct investments to Kazakhstan from 2005-2017 was \$329 million. The gross outflow of Kazakh direct investments to Finland was \$0.5 million.

## Number of mortgage loans increased 19 percent in 2018

### Staff Report

ASTANA – The number of home loans issued in Kazakhstan grew 18.9 percent in 2018 over 2017. The total portfolio of loans issued grew by 3 percent in the same time period.

The mortgage loans grew 1.8 percent and reached 1.3 trillion tenge (US\$3.44 billion) in just December 2018, according to a report by ranking.kz. In December 2018, Astana and Almaty saw 25.5 percent and 26 percent growth respectively. More rural areas saw growth of approximately 3 percent. The Kostanai Region had a 5.8 percent increase (40.6 billion tenge or US\$107.31 million), the Aktobe Region had 3.3 percent (to 73.7 billion tenge or US \$194.8 million) and the West Kazakhstan Region had 3 percent (44.9 billion tenge or US\$118.68 million).

The Zhilstroysberbank (House

Construction Savings Bank) of Kazakhstan (HCSBK) remains the biggest issuer of the loans for the purchase of housing in the system of housing savings.

**In response to a high demand for bank services in the West Kazakhstan Region, the HCSBK opened a new branch in Uralsk in December.**

The share of financial institution loans from the country's mortgage portfolio was 51.4 percent in 2018 against 42.4 percent in 2017.

In response to a high demand for bank services in the West Kazakhstan Region, the HCSBK opened a new branch in Uralsk in

December. To date, 68,600 residents of the region, that is, every tenth citizen, are saving up for future housing. The amount of savings has already reached 34.6 billion tenge (US\$91.45 million). The branch issued 11,700 loans (59 billion tenge or 155.94 million).

Since the launch of Nurly Zher state programme in the end of 2016, in the West Kazakhstan Region, 1,200 apartments were sold for approximately 10 billion tenge (US\$26.43 million). In 2018, 480 apartments for 3.7 billion tenge (US\$9.78 million) were sold. This year, the state programme plans to commission another 1,100 apartments with a total area of 62,400 square metres.

In addition, the commissioned volume of housing in square metres has been growing steadily year by year and reached 12.5 million square metres in 2018, against 11.2 million square metres in 2017.



# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Pavlodar to open Investor's House to boost regional economy



By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The regional administration of Pavlodar will open an “Investor’s House” to operate as a one-stop shop for potential investors by the end of the year, Pavlodar Region Akim (Governor) Bulat Bakauov announced at a Feb. 15 meeting with regional residents.

The Investor’s House will provide potential investors with the full range of project support and services, all accessible in one location. Services will be facilitated through the 10 government agencies that will also set up offices in the building.

Regional authorities looked to the examples of South Korea, Japan and Georgia in developing Pavlodar’s Investor’s House.

The Investor’s House will “improve the availability and openness of government agencies, as

The region has approximately 44,000 operating businesses that employ more than 131,000 people or 32 percent of the economically active population.

well as the development of a system for obtaining public services in one place,” Bakauov said.

The house will be located at 5B Victory Square in the building that once held KazTransOil’s branch office.

Investment in the region’s fixed assets exceeded 473 billion

tenge (US\$1.25 billion) at the end of 2018.

“The fact that about 100 billion tenge (US\$265.20 million) is an investment of small and medium-sized enterprises brings special satisfaction,” Bakauov said.

The region has approximately 44,000 operating businesses that employ more than 131,000 people or 32 percent of the economically active population. These businesses generate tax revenue of nearly 63 billion tenge (US\$167.2 million) per year.

“Investments are the blood vessels of the economy. By attracting them, we support dynamic development,” said the akim. “In general, the region keeps its bar [high enough] in terms of the volume of attracted investments.”

State programmes also support business development. Last year, the Business Roadmap programme provided 2.6 billion tenge (US\$6.89 million) in support for 450 regional business entities. Another social initiative and productive employment programme increased funding of the state microcredit system by 1.5 times. This gave 450 start-ups opportunities to realise their ideas. The vast majority – 91 percent of the businesses – are operated by rural residents.

The regional economy should also improve with the new tax amnesty for small and medium-sized businesses that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, in his state-of-the-nation address, suggested launching this year. Being able to write off their debt interest will help more than 3,000 entrepreneurs in the Pavlodar region get a fresh start. To date, their collective debt to the budget totals 18.4 billion tenge (US\$48.8 million).

## Rakhat Confectionery shows stable growth, leads in chocolate market

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Rakhat Confectionery recorded positive growth in all key indicators last year, increasing revenue, profitability and market share, according to the company’s Feb. 26 press release.

Income grew by 4.8 percent compared to 2017, with revenue of 59.171 million tenge (US\$158 million). Market share grew 2 percent and reached 20.5 percent in the main categories.

Profitability also increased, as the 8.758-million tenge (US\$23 million) operating profit grew 9.1 percent compared to the previous year. The average price for chocolate increased 3 percent in tenge and fell 4.3 percent in dollars.

“The last year was important for the company because we managed to maintain a stable growth phase due to our traditional quality in all categories. We launched a new chocolate production line and made changes in approaches to work with retail. We monitor market trends and analyse the activities of other players in the market. We aim to maintain growth trends and increase competitive advantages in 2019,” said Rakhat Chairperson of the Board Konstantin Fedorets.

The Almaty-based plant produced a new chocolate line last year which allowed Rakhat to meet increased demand by the

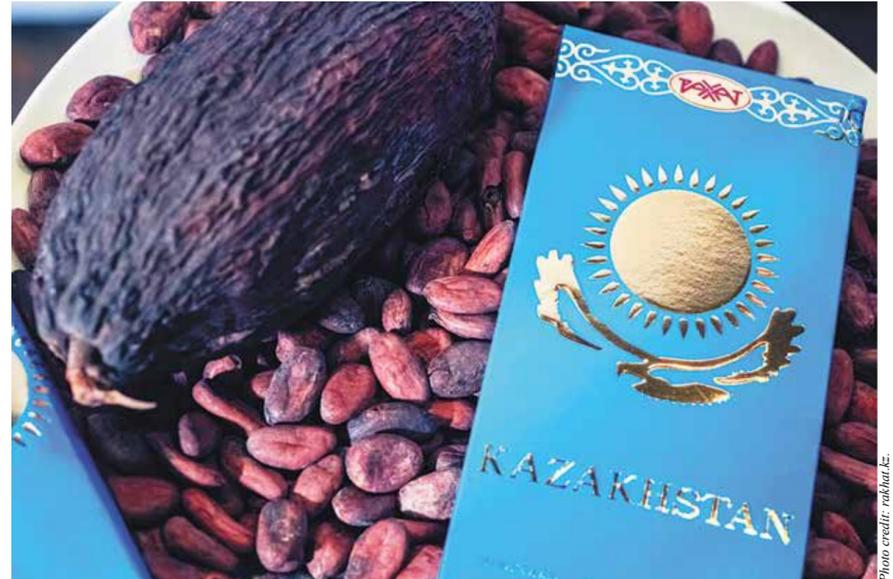


Photo credit: rakhat.kz

start of the season. The company also launched new products in the Pepero line from South Korea. The imported products demonstrated double growth last year.

Rakhat has expanded its retail presence by opening five new stores in the capital, Almaty and Shymkent. Export growth was 4.5 percent among countries beyond the Customs Union compared to a 2.2-percent decrease in member countries.

“We are proud that our chocolate brand is popular. The annual increase in market share is 6 percent despite a decrease in this category as a whole. Kazakh consumers choose quality and prefer to buy our chocolate, bringing us closer to market leadership in this category,” noted the release.

Rakhat, with a 75-year history, is one of Kazakhstan’s largest manufacturers of confectionery products. The company, which also has

production facilities in Shymkent, has 4,500 employees.

Its portfolio includes more than 400 confectionery products of 14 different groups. Rakhat manufactures diabetes care products including chocolate, candy, cookies and waffles with reduced calorie content and sugar alternative.

Lotte Confectionery acquired the majority stake of the company in 2013, increasing its share to 92.44 percent in 2015.

## EBRD launches Fast Track programme to boost women’s economic empowerment

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in cooperation with the Ernst & Young company announced the 15 women-led enterprises that will participate in their Fast Track accelerated programme targeting businesses with growth potential, the EBRD press service reported Feb. 27.

The project was launched as part of the EBRD’s Women in Business programme, which promotes gender equality and the sustainable development of women’s entrepreneurship in the country.

“Women’s entrepreneurship plays a key role in job creation and in stimulating Kazakhstan’s economic growth... The

Fast Track targeted support programme aims to bring enterprises with growth potential to a new level. The selected companies represent various sectors of the economy, including light industry, medicine, education and tourism. The companies are located in Almaty, Astana, Kokshetau, Kostanai, Shymkent and Semei,” reads the release.

Participants in the new project include Dulatov Kostanai Engineering and Economic University, Vienna, Actual Optic, Ecomed, KazSPO-n, Happy Cake, Smart Imperium, AGF Group, Touroperator Kompas, Mimioriki, Arsha, Top Cleaning Service, Doctor Dent, Stone House companies and the Georgievsky pump equipment plant.

Fast Track will provide partici-

pants with the opportunity over nine months starting from March to share experiences, to learn the world’s best practices for promoting women’s entrepreneurship, to choose from different types of consulting services and business coaching and to expand their business contacts.

The entrepreneurs will take part in group trainings and individual coaching sessions in financial and personnel management, marketing and sales, strategic and operational planning, organisational development, risk management and other areas.

During the individual sessions, Ernst & Young will help the enterprises identify the challenges in developing a roadmap of initiatives to increase growth areas. The company will monitor the en-

terprises to further increase their potential.

Enterprises with an annual turnover of between \$567,012 to \$56 million, with up to 250 employees and that had been operating for two years in Kazakhstan were eligible for the project. Excluded from eligibility were companies in the tobacco and alcohol industries, financial and insurance institutions and gambling business; all others were welcome to apply.

Overall, the bank has provided \$92 million in equivalent local currency and five lines of credit of \$64.6 million. More than \$2.7 million was allocated for nonfinancial services including consulting, business coaching, mentoring and market development activities as part of the Women in Business programme in 2018.

## Kyzylorda region sees industrial production and export growth

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Approximately 1.7 trillion tenge (US\$4.5 billion) was invested in the Kyzylorda region in 2013-2018, the regional press service reported March 3. Investments increased last year by 25.5 percent, mainly due to the growth of the investments provided by the enterprises. Investments in fixed assets were 325.5 billion tenge (US\$865 million).

Fixed asset investment in the manufacturing industry increased by 2.3 times during the past three years, gross value added by more than 12 percent and export of non-primary products by 22.7 percent.

“The region’s policy is aimed at diversifying the economy through industrialisation. As a result, the region observed a positive trend in terms of the gross regional product in 2017 for the first time in the last four years,” reads the release.

More than 70 production facilities have been put into operation since 2013, with industrial labour productivity increasing by 25 percent. Production in the manufacturing sector increased by 31.6 percent in 2018 compared to 2013, as industrial enterprises manufactured items worth



Photo credit: primeminister.kz

930.4 billion tenge (US\$2.4 billion).

The region launched an oil well cement plant with a capacity of one million tonnes per year and lime production plant with a capacity of 75,000

tonnes per year. The projects, worth 64.1 billion tenge (US\$170 million), have created 286 jobs.

“The gross agricultural output was 97.7 billion tenge (US\$260 million)

or 101.6 percent over 2017. The export of agricultural products increased by 27 percent and 97 percent of these are the share of processed products. The local authorities set the

task of ensuring the processing of raw materials and entering the foreign markets with high-quality products,” according to the press service.

The region started exporting

melons again in 2016. Vegetables and livestock are shipped to Iran, Mongolia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Uzbekistan and safflower oil to China.

Despite the lack of water, local farmers produced 473,000 tonnes of rice and plan to export their produce to Afghanistan, Mongolia and Turkey. They also started producing Iranian varieties of rice for further export to that country.

This year, there are plans to build a meat packing plant with a slaughtering capacity up to 200 head of large and 1,000 head of small cattle per day.

The region also introduced high-yielding crops such as soybeans and forage crops, including Sudan grass and sugar sorghum. Plans are underway to reduce rice crops by 2,171 hectares and increase forage crops by 4,068 hectares.

The first phase of regulating the Syrdarya riverbed and preserving the northern part of the Aral Sea was launched to revive fisheries on the Small Aral. Eight processing plants operate in the region and export to countries near and far. The catch in the Aral Sea region was more than 8,000 tonnes last year including such varieties as pikeperch and plaice.

# Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

**PEOPLE**

Peaceful sky, respect for each other unite us, says Bulgarian community leader

B2

**CULTURE**

"The Kazakh Khanate. The Golden Throne" premieres in Astana

B3

**SPORTS**

Galysheva wins gold in moguls at Freestyle Ski World Cup

B7

## Norwegian embarks on solo crossing of Balkhash Lake for first time in Kazakh history



William Byholt before the start of the expedition.

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Using skis and ice skates, Norwegian William Byholt is in the midst of crossing Balkhash Lake in central Kazakhstan for the first time in the nation's history. The solo expedition, supported by the Kazakh Geographic Society, started Feb. 20 and is expected to take 20-23 days, said Kazakh Geographic Society project manager Magzhan Sagimbayev.

Byholt, 27, is an explorer and traveller. He has summited such peaks as Mont Blanc (4,810 metres) and Huyana Potosi (6,088 metres) in addition to mountains in Armenia, Georgia, India, Nepal, Peru and Venezuela.

He is also the first Norwegian to complete the Indonesian seven summits. His most recent achievement is his January ascent of Aconcagua (6,962 metres), the highest peak in South America.

Byholt began preparations for

the trip six months ago. His research eventually led him to Magzhan Sagimbayev, an experienced mountaineer and traveller well-known in Kazakhstan and beyond, who is also working for the Kazakh Geographic Society.

"I then contacted him on Facebook and at first suggested doing it together, but he said he wanted to do it solo, without assistance. I agreed. I decided to help him in organising it. There were many questions regarding wild animals, fuel, route, drinking water. I contacted our society and suggested this project. They approved," Sagimbayev told The Astana Times.

Byholt spoke about his previous travelling experience during a presentation in Almaty preceding the expedition.

"As he said during the lecture, he was once just sitting and saw Kazakhstan and Balkhash on the map. He became interested in it due to its interesting composition," said Sagimbayev.

The lake, located amidst diverse landscapes bordering the Almaty, Karaganda and Zhambyl regions, is known for the unique chemical composition of its waters. A narrow strait, 3.5 kilometres wide and six metres deep, divides the lake into fresh and salty sections.

Byholt will cover 570 kilometres on his east-west route, trekking approximately 25 kilometres per day. As of March, he has crossed 230 kilometres, almost half of the distance, and plans to finish the expedition by March 14. He was motivated by the feats of fellow countrypersons such as Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian explorer who led the first expedition to the South Pole in 1911 and flew over the North Pole in 1926.

"He said that such people inspire him and make him achieve something new, tap into something unexplored. His friend also crossed Baikal Lake [in Russia], but many know about Baikal," said Sagimbayev.

"When we just arrived, the temperature was around ten degrees below Celsius. We were glad to see snow covering Balkhash, because there was a problem with water. He now melts ice and cooks using this snow. We were worried about wild animals and I still worry about this. This is quite a huge habitat for animals, particularly wolves," he noted.

The rising temperature makes the route more difficult and decreases the pace.

"He wrote a message to me just a few days ago that he started going at night, as the weather is colder and it is more comfortable," said Sagimbayev.

"We communicate via SMS. He has a tracker, inReach Explorer [Garmin] and also a portable satellite phone. I monitor his route through this tracker, his pace and his coordinates. We agreed on the coordinates where I will be taking him from. He has texted me once in four days," said Sagimbayev.

## Dimash, Daneliya advance to next stage of CBS' 'The World's Best'

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's rising singing stars Dimash Kudaibergen and Daneliya Tuleshova advanced to the next round in the latest episode of "The World's Best," the global talent competition show that premiered Feb. 3 on CBS.

Kudaibergen and Tuleshova are among 24 contestants. The latest episode, which aired Feb. 20, saw them compete in the first round of battles that will eventually weed out all but a winning five for the final stage.

The show brings international performers onstage to be evaluated by three judges, Drew Barrymore, Ru

Paul and Faith Hill, as well as an international panel of 50 experts from around the globe in various fields of entertainment. Known as the "wall of the world," this international panel helps the judges make their decisions.

For both Kudaibergen and Tuleshova, "The World's Best" is not their first international competition.

Kudaibergen, 24, is known for his impressive vocal range of six octaves and two semitones.

He was the Grand Prix winner of the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk, Belarus, in 2015. His popularity and fan base, however, rose tremendously after his participation in Hunan TV's "I Am the Singer" show in 2017.

Continued on Page B3

## Bublik wins fifth ATP Challenger Series tournament

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh professional tennis player Alexander Bublik won March 3 the inaugural Teréga Open Pau-Pyrénées in the singles final in the city of Pau, France. This is his second trophy of 2019 season and the fifth in his career on the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Challenger Tours.

In the final match, Bublik beat Norbert Gombos from Slovakia 5-7, 6-3, 6-3, reports sports.kz. During the one hour and 44 minutes match, Bublik fired 13 aces, winning 77

percent of his first service points. He won his first trophy of the season Feb. 10 at Hungarian Challenger Open in Budapest. The second ATP Challenger trophy brings Bublik 90 ATP Ranking points and a cash prize of \$10,431.5. The tournament's prize fund is \$78,548.7.

Earlier the same day, British Scott Clayton and Canadian Adil Shamasdin won the doubles final of the tournament. The unseeded duo fought past No. 4 seeds Sander Arends from the Netherlands and Tristan-Samuel Weissborn of Austria with scores 7-6(4), 5-7, 10-8.

Continued on Page B7

## Nomad Fortress serves as filming location, unique tourist attraction

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Nomad Fortress, a medieval-looking site built on the Ili River bank for the 2005 Kazakh historical epic film "Koshpendiler" (Nomad: The Warrior), indulges tourists' imaginations of a bygone era of steppe warriors.

The fortress, located approximately 30 kilometres from Kapchagai city, is not a historic site

but, walking through it, visitors feel as if they have stepped back in time. That is, until further inspection reveals that its buildings are composed of wood and styrofoam. These buildings are reminiscent of the 18th century, featuring towers, fortress walls, residential quarters and a mosque with minarets. And standing on a rampart will reveal the best view of the site's surrounding scenery.

Continued on Page B6

## Foreign Ministry presents book about young diplomats, supports their professional growth

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a book called "New Faces of Kazakh Diplomacy" at the March 5 meeting with its contributors and the Institute of Diplomacy of the Public Administration Academy under the President.

Presented as a part of events during the Kazakh Year of Youth, the book collects 26 interviews of young diplomats who share their experiences and visions of Kazakhstan's diplomatic future.

"Our youth, the Independence Era generation, is well represented at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And their stories, their worldview are vividly presented in the book," said Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko at the event.

The professional development of the younger generation is a Kazakh government priority. The young diplomats periodically receive qualification trainings at the academy and are able to receive Masters and PhD degrees from the Institute of Diplomacy.

"We try to transform their

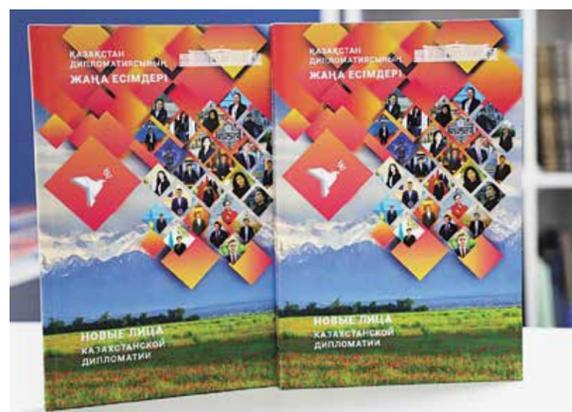


Photo credit: info.kz

minds, teach them new disciplines and to give them new knowledge. For example, the students of the Institute of Diplomacy are taking a very interesting course that is not commonly lectured. It is a Big Data analysis," said Academy Vice President Aigul Kosherbayeva.

This year, the foreign ministry plans more activities to facilitate the professional growth of more young people interested in careers in diplomacy. The ministry will

form a council of young diplomats that should work to provide more opportunities for them.

The agenda for this year also includes sending Kazakh youth to London's Young Diplomats Forum in July. In addition to this, 10 best students will be offered sponsored internships in Germany, Japan, Egypt, China, France, Romania, Singapore, Indonesia, Chili and the Netherlands.

"The idea of conducting the Year of Youth is, first of all, a

call to youth to show themselves more actively for the benefit of the motherland," said Vassilenko.

In a few decades, Kazakh diplomacy has made great strides, said the country's foreign minister in 1991-1994 who was present at the event, Tuleitai Suleimenov.

It "had gone through the hardest times in the first years of independence. We had one computer for the entire ministry and now everyone has their own," said Suleimenov as he extolled the youth to be proud of their country and its foreign policy.

The meeting participants stressed the increasing importance of developing digital diplomacy. The promotion of the state bodies at the social media became a vital part of communication.

"In a rapidly changing world, where digital diplomacy, the struggle for technology, investment and markets and, yes, public opinion come to the forefront, a young Kazakh diplomat must combine the already established traditions of our diplomacy and new trends, to which we need to adapt quickly to stay ahead of events and trends," said the deputy foreign minister.

**THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO**

**BARYS ARENA**

**March 14 at 7.30 p.m.** HC Barys – HC Avangard Omsk,  
**March 16 at 5 p.m.** 2019 Gagarin Cup play offs

**ASTANA OPERA**

**March 16, 17 at 6 p.m.** Turandot, opera  
**March 22, 23 at 6 p.m.** Kyz Zhibek, opera

**SARYARKA VELODROME**

**March 17 at 8 p.m.** BC Astana - BC Tsmoki-Minsk

**ASTANA BALLET**

**March 20 at 7.30 p.m.** Legacy of the Great Steppe

**ASTANA ARENA**

**March 21 at 9 p.m.** Kazakhstan – Scotland, 2020 UEFA Cup Qualifier  
**March 24 at 8 p.m.** Kazakhstan – Russia, 2020 UEFA Cup Qualifier

## PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Best university teacher is one of 100 New Faces



Zhanar Baiseitova

By Anzhela Kaliyeva

ASTANA – Zhanar Baiseitova, winner of the best university teacher, has also been selected as one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces. The teacher from Pavlodar never

Baiseitova is constantly working to improve her personal, scientific and educational level. She has participated in scientific seminars, training courses and internships in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Israel, Italy, Russia and Turkey.

ceases to improve, both personally and professionally.

Baiseitova, who participates in scientific conferences at various levels, has published more than 120 articles. Four were included in magazines with non-zero impact factor in the Scopus database, which means the magazines are in good standing. The East West Association published two of her six teaching manuals, including the Association for Advocations and Higher Education, and her monograph "Deviant Behaviour: Theory and Practice" was released according to the results of scientific research conducted in 2015.

All of Baiseitova's studies have been introduced into the educational and methodological process

in Pavlodar's schools and universities and are used to prepare students in pedagogical specialties for professional activities. She is also the winner of the state scientific scholarship for talented young Kazakh scientists.

"I was born in the Mayskoye village in the Pavlodar region. My college entrance after grade nine is largely due to my father. He was always [encouraging] me to develop, to study, to broaden my horizons and to see the world," she said.

Baiseitova is constantly working to improve her personal, scientific and educational level. She has participated in scientific seminars, training courses and internships in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Israel, Italy, Russia and Turkey.

"She is a person who passionately loves her profession. She is a talented teacher. Calmness, kindness and gentleness in communication easily help her to find a common language with any person. It is characterised by demanding self, integrity, diligence and accuracy in all that relates to the case. Her studies are emotional and unexpected. She conducts them at a high professional level, thanks to her pedagogical skills, and engages students in the wonderful world of self-knowledge and self-development. All her activities are like an interesting world filled with stories, life stories, parables and tasks that make you think and understand your feelings and actions," said one of her students.

"For me as a teacher, the biggest reward is when students excel beyond me. This is an indicator of my work. I also want to note that after I became the winner of the 100 New Faces project, the sense of responsibility increased several times. Now, I have to be a real example. For me, this is an incentive to work even more and more efficiently," said Baiseitova.

## Peaceful sky, respect for each other unite us, says Bulgarian community leader

By Saltanat Botev

ASTANA – Olga Andriyevskaya, founder and chair of the Bulgarian Zlata Cultural Centre in the capital, represents the fourth generation of Bulgarians living in Kazakhstan. She feels mutual respect is the basis for the friendship and understanding among those living in the country.

"We are united by our peaceful sky. The credit for the fact that people of 130 ethnicities live peacefully in one country should go to our President... These are not timid words; I witness what I say. In my childhood, all children played together and did not divide into ethnicities. Now I work at school, where 1,300 students study. No one is divided into ethnicities; on the contrary, we unite into one... Respect unites all ethnicities living in our beautiful state," she said in an interview with assembly.kz.

Andriyevskaya's ancestors, who settled nearby Pavlodar in 1910, founded two villages. The settlers made friends with the locals and exchanged traditions and customs while mastering the Kazakh language. Kazakhs taught Bulgarians cattle breeding in local climatic conditions; in turn, Bulgarians taught them to grow vegetables.

"My ancestors are voluntary settlers from Bessarabia. During the Stolypin reform, two settlements migrated towards Kazakhstan to look for empty land. In 1910, they settled 30 kilometres from Pavlodar's Irtysh Land and founded the Andrianovka and Razumovka villages," she said.

"I already represent the fourth generation of Bulgarians who live in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is our homeland which we love and appreciate and we try to pay tribute to our ancestors and the local people for sheltering us," she added.

Andriyevskaya's family is multinational and she calls her family the Small Assembly, referring



Olga Andriyevskaya

to the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

"My father is a Bulgarian, my mother is Ukrainian and my husband is Russian according to his passport, but he has Ukrainian, Polish and Czech blood flowing in his veins. My daughter-in-law is Tatar; therefore, our family is the Small Assembly," she said.

Andriyevskaya has lived in the capital since 2000, teaching biology for the last 19 years at School – Gymnasium No. 6. Her late father, Oleg Dymov, has worked at the assembly since it was formed.

"When our President founded this unique structure, my father began working in the Secretariat of the Assembly and devoted his whole life to it. Everyone in our family was aware of events that took place at the assembly," she said.

In 2011, they founded the Zlata Cultural Centre in the capital with 20 people; it currently has approximately 40 Bulgarians. The centre welcomes people of any ethnicity; its vocal and dancing groups have participants of different backgrounds.

"We have two groups – vocal and choreographic. The Tsvetanka vocal group works with the support of the School – Gymnasium No. 6. The adult Zlata vocal group performs Bulgarian songs. The Izvor dance and choreographic group is for children who share an interest and love for choreographic folk art," she noted.

The centre currently faces two issues – difficulty in finding a choreographer proficient in the basics of Bulgarian folk dancing and organising Bulgarian language courses.

"When I am in Bulgaria, I need three-four days [to get used to language.] understand and speak [it]. My father spoke Bulgarian, but, unfortunately, he did not teach me," said Andriyevskaya. "There is a Sunday school in Pavlodar where volunteers teach Bulgarian. In the Aktobe Region, there is the Bulgarka village that has a Bulgarian school."

The centre actively participates in city events showing Bulgarian culture, songs and dances. It also works closely with the Bulgarian Embassy, participating in its

events and inviting the embassy to festivals and holidays it organises.

"Last year, we held the Memorable Evening of the Holocaust at Gymnasium No. 6 attended by the Ambassadors of Bulgaria and Israel. Very often, the Bulgarian Embassy provides us with information about competitions that take place in Bulgaria," she said.

"This summer a woman, Gulmira, who has been living in Bulgaria for 11 years, came to Kazakhstan. She is a Kazakh woman, married to a Bulgarian man. She has a great desire and interest for Kazakhstan and Bulgaria to closely cooperate and exchange culture. She provides great assistance and support to the centre in organisational matters," she noted.

Bulgarians celebrate March 1 as Baba Marta national holiday that indicates the beginning of spring. The holiday is similar to Nauryz (Traditional New Year celebrated in Kazakhstan and numerous other countries in the region and beyond). People prepare treats, play games, sing songs, arrange ring dances and exchange martenichki (red and white tassels worn on the wrist), which symbolise health, cleanliness and well-being.

"Many legends are associated with the holiday. One of the most popular is about the founder of the Bulgarian state, Asparuh Khan... One day, being away from home, the khan decided to send a message to his sister about his health state by a pigeon. After receiving the news from her brother, she was delighted and tied the paw of the pigeon with white threads. On the way, the pigeon injured the paw and one thread turned red. After the pigeon delivered the news about the sister's well-being, the khan ordered making a celebration of that day," explained Andriyevskaya.



Ambassador of Bulgaria to Kazakhstan Vasil Petkov (C) and his wife meet with members of the Bulgarian community in Kazakhstan.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

# “The Kazakh Khanate. The Golden Throne” premieres in Astana

By Yekaterina Yelisseyeva

ASTANA – “The Kazakh Khanate. The Golden Throne” premiered Feb. 26 in the capital. The series, based on Ilyas Esenberlin’s novel “Diamond Sword,” retells the story of the struggle for the great steppe and Kazakh statehood from 1470-1485.

“The first season was popular and the creators received many positive reviews on social media.”

“This is one of the most difficult periods in the history of the Kazakh Khanate. The film tells about the battle of the khans Zhanibek and Kerei against the descendants of Abulkhair Shaibani for power and for Syganak. The second season has more drama and action. We believe the audience will be excited. We have added more events to the script, but we are close to histori-

cal data,” said executive producer Arman Asenov.

The first season was popular and the creators received many positive reviews on social media, said director Rustem Abdrashov.

“There were a lot of discussions and disputes. We see that people are interested; they want and they are waiting for the continuation of the series, which is important for us. Our film shows not only historical events, but also shows the life and rich culture of the nomadic people,” he added.

Actor Niyazbek Shaisultanov, who plays Abulkhair Khan’s grandson, noted the historical event was the focus of the first season.

“We made the film for almost half a year and we faced a lot of difficulties. Film production is challenging work. For the battle scenes, we trained for about three-four months. There were different situations. As a result, the film is good and exciting,” he said.

The first season’s TV premiere in March 2017 was devoted to the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate. The film has now been released in theatres nationwide.



# Astana Opera presents classical masterpieces

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Soprano Maria Mudryak and tenor Medet Chotabaev presented “Masterpieces of Musical Art” March 2 at the Astana Opera House in the capital. The Astana Opera Symphony Orchestra performed for the first time with maestro Ilya Mashkevich.

The programme included Symphony No. 9 by Czech composer Antonin Dvořák.

“I perform this music quite often. In my opinion, this magical composition is full of energy and beautiful melodies. Dvořák was passionate about Czech traditional music, but there is also an atmosphere of Native America in the symphony, especially in the second part,” said Mashkevich.

The musician has a busy tour schedule as a guest conductor in France, Germany, Japan, Russia and many other countries. He gives master classes and writes music for theatre and films.

“I feel respect for every musician I work with. They perform and I just show the direction. During the first minutes of rehearsal, I try to assess the professional level of the orchestra and each musician. Then, I offer my own vision of the music. Orchestras are different, but the principle remains,” he said.

The vocal music was featured in the second part of the concert.

“I will perform on the eve of my 25th anniversary, April 6, at the Astana Opera. My concert is dedicated to my Kazakh fans. I invite everyone to the concert and the premiere of Giacomo Puccini’s opera ‘La Bohème’ April 19. I will also perform this part at the Bolshoi Theatre and in ‘La Traviata’ opera in Beirut. But most of all, I want to meet with the audience in one of the best theatres in the world, Astana Opera. The reper-

toire includes my past, present and future roles,” Mudryak said.

She performed Norina’s aria from Gaetano Donizetti’s “Don Pasquale,” the solo she sang when she started her career. This year, she will debut as Margarita in David McVicar’s production of “Faust” with Albanian tenor Saimir Pirgu at the Melbourne Opera House.

“I will sing the aria of Leonora from ‘The Troubadour’ opera. We will also present the most beautiful duets from Verdi and Puccini’s operas at the concert,” she added.

Chotabaev noted it is a great pleasure to sing a duet with Mudryak.

“I will perform new arias in this concert. I will present together with the orchestra the aria of Loris from Umberto Giordano’s opera ‘Fedora.’ It is an amazing composition. I will sing Agustin Lara’s aria ‘Granada’ and Kavaradossi’s aria from ‘Tosca’ opera,” he said prior to the concert.

The theatre will stage “Kyz Zhibek” national opera (March 22 and 23).



Maria Mudryak

# Dimash, Daneliya advance to next stage of CBS’ ‘The World’s Best

Continued from Page B1

For his audition stage, Kudaibergen performed his famous renditions of “S.O.S d’un Terrien en Détresse,” a popular French opera song, receiving an almost perfect score of 98 points out of 100.

In the first battle round, he moved past Sister Cristina’s version of Madonna’s “Like a Vir-

gin” with his performance of Eric Carmen’s “All By Myself,” which showcased his unique vocal range. “If I closed my eyes, I would have thought there were at least eight to 10 people singing. It is like one minute you are Queen and the next minute you are Pavarotti, and I’m like, ‘How is this all happening out of one person?’” Barrymore said of Kudaibergen.

Tuleshova is a rising star not only on the stage of her home country, but also beyond.

She became popular after winning “The Voice Kids” in Ukraine in 2016. Following her win, Tuleshova went on to represent Kazakhstan at the Junior Eurovision Song Contest last year, where she performed an original song called “Ozine

Sen” (“Believe in Yourself” in Kazakh) that placed her sixth in the competition with a total of 171 points.

Tuleshova gave a powerful performance in the audition stage, singing Andra Ray’s “Rise Up.” Her performance earned her 96 points out of 100.

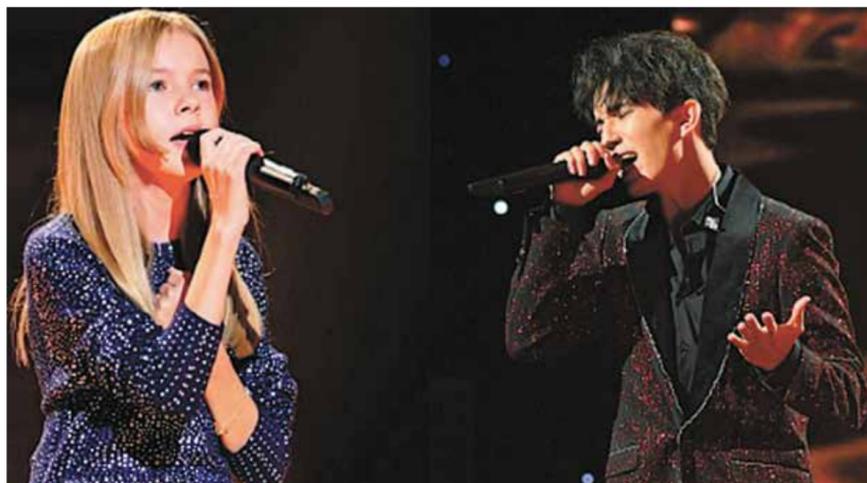
“I like you very much. We hope for these moments on the show. And you moved me to tears,” Barrymore told Tuleshova.

Tuleshova went on to perform a rendition of Demi Lovato’s “Stone Cold” in her battle round victory over Manami from Japan.

Ru Paul described the performance as the “birth of a child superstar.”

“I was so excited because I’ve always dreamed about America! When I arrived in America I was so, so happy and I’ve met so many great people. The producers and other participants are so kind and very welcoming,” Tuleshova told CBS in an interview.

The show will continue with six more episodes. The next episode aired Feb. 27 with another battle round stage, yet the Kazakh singers were not meant to take part in that.



# Japanese spring festival celebrates Japanese, Kazakh culture

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Capital residents had a chance to get acquainted with Japanese traditional music and classics, as the Japanese Spring Festival came to the city Feb. 27 for its eleventh edition this year.

The Organ Hall of the Kazakh National University of Arts hosted the concert.

The concert featured the performance of Toshiko Yonekawa the Second, playing koto and sungen, a three-stringed instrument. She is one of the leading koto masters for over 80 years in Japan and has been awarded a living national treasure title in 1996.

Her student Tosisato Kamikawa playing samisen and Kazakh musicians Venera Tabys, Sanzhar Almishev and Marina Pak also performed for the audience.

The festival has been open to the public and has been organised twice a year in spring in Astana and in fall in Almaty since 2011 by the Degdar humanitarian fund with the support of the Japanese embassy in Kazakhstan.

In different years, Kazakhstan

welcomed many famous figures from Japan.

Among them were Japanese jazz virtuoso Akikazu Nakamura, Toshiko Kuto playing traditional Japanese string music instrument koto, world renowned violinist Ken Aiso, jazz trio of Kishi Mitsuki, jazz trio of Ayako Shirasaki, famous drummer troupe Yamato and famous musician Yasuo Kinohata, a master of playing the Japanese bamboo flute shakuhachi.

The goal of the festival is to provide an opportunity to people to get acquainted with best pieces of Japanese music, gear cultural exchange and reveal parallels between the cultures of the two countries.

Organisers note the project has a significant education purpose. As part of their visit to Kazakhstan, Japanese performers also meet Kazakh students, conduct master classes and art meetings narrating for the young people the Japanese music history and the peculiarities of Japanese traditional music instruments.

The concert programme also features performers telling Japanese haiku and tanka as well as poems of the classic Kazakh poetry.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## More than 100 clinics and hospitals offer free healthcare in Almaty

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Approximately 104 private organisations and 81 government organisations provide free government-sponsored healthcare to Almaty residents, said Social Health Insurance Fund director Tleukhan Abildayev at a March 5 press conference.

“The number of private healthcare providers working with government has doubled over the past two years. Also, 77 clinics including 38 private offer services,” he said.

The residents should choose the hospital close to their place of residence taking into account other preventive services.

“If a person chooses the hospital, which is located in another district or located far from his or her home, free services are not available,” he said.

Some 88 hospitals will be opened this year to reduce the burden on primary care physicians.



“We need to ensure that the doctor can fulfil duties and is able to improve the level of qualification,” said Deputy Head of Almaty Healthcare Department Assel Bisenbayeva.

“The digitisation programme is being implemented. Some 79 medical organisations launched the paperless medical documentation. More than 1.5 million people have electronic passports. The work in this direction continues,” she said.

The mobile apps were developed based on the Damumed medical information system to make an appointment, call a doctor at home or get the laboratory results.

The total contracts of the Social Health Insurance Fund with Almaty medical organisations are worth 105.2 billion tenge (US\$278 million).

Overall, 149.2 billion tenge (US\$400 million) were allocated by employers and individual en-

trepreneurs for compulsory social health insurance in the period from July 1, 2017 to Feb. 28. In terms of regions, the largest amounts were allocated in the Almaty, Astana and the Karaganda regions.

Children under 18 years old, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and retired people with acute dental pain receive free dental care as part of the guaranteed free healthcare policy.

Recently, the Ministry of Healthcare reported that public health expenditures will increase by two-fold due to the expansion of the vaccination programme, screening of major diseases, raising awareness of healthy lifestyles. The spending will be about 74 billion tenge (US\$195 million) by 2022.

Kazakh healthcare officials also hope to strengthen the role of primary care physicians, reduce hospitalisations and improve early detection of oncological diseases. They also hope to decrease the number of vaccine-preventable infections.

## Government implements Economy of Simple Things



Kazakh Minister of Agriculture Saparkhan Omarov.

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development has implemented an Economy of Simple Things, a new programme focused on developing light manufacturing and the construction and furniture industries. The ministry plans to create 16,000 new jobs by 2025 and reduce imports from 59 to 37 percent.

Approximately 400 billion tenge (US\$1 billion) will be allocated to support manufacturing, said Prime Minister Askar Mamin on March 5. Developing and supporting business projects under the programme will bring 1.1 trillion tenge (US\$2.9 billion) in taxes to the budget.

“Roadmaps for the development of these industries have been developed to solve these problems. They envisage measures to develop the resource base, protect the domestic market by improving the measures of customs administration and technical regulation and create national standards aimed at improving the quality of goods and services,” said Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar.

The government is planning a 20-percent annual increase in the share of purchases from domestic producers. The manufacturers will be required to confirm their production capacity through a special industrial certificate.

In addition, the government will take corresponding measures to improve representing domestic goods in retail chains, provide enterprises with highly qualified personnel and attract investments in the three industries to implement advanced technology projects.

The roadmap will organise more than 150 events, which in the medium term will increase the share

of local manufactured goods up to 50 percent. The quality of products will increase, while decreasing the volume of counterfeit products.

The government is planning a 20-percent annual increase in the share of purchases from domestic producers. The manufacturers will be required to confirm their production capacity through a special industrial certificate.

“The implementation of the proposed measures will allow increasing the production of construction materials and products of the light and furniture industries by 73 billion tenge (US\$190.7 million) annually,” said Sklyar.

Similar funding will be provided for the country’s agricultural and industrial complex, where the main task is to ensure food security and the most important component is the food industry, noted Minister of Agriculture Saparkhan Omarov. To that end, the ministry has allocated 200 billion tenge (US\$529 million) to lend to the complex. The funds will be provided to produce approximately 118 priority types of processed agricultural products. The money will be divided evenly between loans for agricultural product processing and producing raw materials for the food and manufacturing industries.

## Inbound tourism increased 10 percent in 2018 over previous year

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Approximately 8.49 million people visited Kazakhstan in 2018, which is 10.2 percent more than in the previous year, said Kazakh Tourism national company chairman Rashid Kuzembayev in a Feb. 22 interview with Primeminister.kz.

The country experienced 50 percent growth in tourism from the United Arab Emirates, 49 percent growth in tourism from India, 44 percent growth in tourism from Malaysia, 22 percent growth in tourism from Hong Kong, 16 percent growth in tourism from Poland, 15 percent growth in tourism from South Korea and 5.8 percent growth in tourism from the United States.

In an Oct. 5 state-of-the-nation address, Growing Welfare of the Kazakh Citizens: Increase in Income and Quality of Life, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev tasked the government with developing a state programme on tourism development. Kazakh Tourism’s programme will begin operating in three to four months, and the draft law on tourism will be submitted for review by the Kazakh Parliament within six months.

“The adoption (of the draft law) will enable the systematic promotion of Kazakhstan as a new tourist destination on the world tourism map,” said Kuzembayev on plans to increase inbound tourism.

Kazakh Tourism seeks to become the country’s brand manager and hopes to involve the public, local executive bodies, businesses, Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the Kazakh ministries of culture and sports,



Rashid Kuzembayev

foreign affairs and information and communications in tourism development.

Promotion will primarily target the demographic cohorts Generation Y and Z, who often shape today’s trends in travel, on digital

platforms, he said.

“At the second stage (of the promotion strategy), the focus will be on advertising key tourism products,” the chairman added. “The third stage involves working with high-potential markets and target countries.”

Tourist areas prioritised for promotion include the lakes Alakol and Balkhash, the Almaty mountains, the resort zones of Bayanaul, Imantau-Shalkar and

Shchuchinsk-Borovoe as well as the Mangystau and Turkestan regions.

“In 2018, we organised a visit from popular Chinese bloggers with more than 100 million followers,” said Kuzembayev on re-

cent Kazakh Tourism initiatives. “The bloggers visited tourist destinations in Astana, Shchuchinsk-Borovoe resort zone, Almaty and the Almaty, East Kazakhstan and Turkestan regions. Their posts were read by more than 150 million readers.”

Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen is the national company’s first tourism ambassador and was recently joined by former cosmonauts Anatoly Artsebarsky, Yuri Baturin, Yuri Malenchenko and Talgat Mussabayev in promotional activities. In a July visit to Alakol Lake, the former cosmonauts recalled their time spent undergoing post-spaceflight rehabilitation at the resort zone.

“Dimash performed concerts in Kazakhstan, which his fans [from Kazakhstan and overseas] planned to attend in advance, and tourists were able to visit Kazakhstan’s cities as part of his promotional tour,” noted Kuzembayev.

Additional Kazakh Tourism initiatives include producing the Tourist Map of Kazakhstan with the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports and regional akimats (administrations), supporting Kazakh business participation in international tourism exhibitions and conducting expeditions across the country.



# THE ASTANA TIMES

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

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## National Security Committee to protect from information leaks

By Laura Tussupbekova

ASTANA – The National Security Committee will be equipping government agencies with systems to prevent information leaks. The Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry scientific and technical council has selected the specific IT security projects.

“At present, the projects are being examined by the Ministry of Education and Science. All of them are related to IT security in one way or another. The budget is providing funding worth 2.7 billion tenge (US\$7.2 million) for 2019-2021. One of the defence plants is currently working on a protected computer,” said Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry committee on information security Chairperson Dmitry Goloburda at a Senate meeting on developing public-private partnerships.

He added the National Security Committee plans to outfit government agencies with the necessary

hardware and software starting this year.

The work will be a complete Kazakh product, as the nation has several competent centres in cryptographic information protection.

“They are really capable of producing software and the implementation of very serious, persistent crypto algorithms for embedding into mobile communication systems, information transfer systems or data archiving. Solutions of such a domestic developer are available in the country. It is also available for the civil sector. By the way, it is for the civil sector and more in demand, because we are still looking for ways to encourage government agencies to acquire domestic products. We are trying to change the situation in this sense,” said Goloburda.

Information leaks are not only embarrassing, but also extremely dangerous for any government. Preventing them – whether from accidents or intentional attacks – remains a top priority for the National Security Committee.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Mama Pro empowers socially-vulnerable women, presents first trainees' results



U.S. Embassy Attaché for Culture and Education Ann Perrelli (L) and members of the Mama Pro project.

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – In conjunction with the International Women's Day, capital-based Mama Pro public fund presented the results March 1 of its inaugural one-month intensive training course launched in January for socially-vulnerable women.

Mama Pro is a small centre that makes big efforts to support

the professional growth of women who are stay-at-home mothers, have had employment difficulties due to the special needs of their children with disabilities or are victims of domestic violence.

Co-founder Aizhan Alzhanova, a U.S. State Department graduate, applied last year for funding to realise the project. Mama Pro was chosen among 1,000 ideas worldwide. The U.S. Embassy in

Kazakhstan and Soros Foundation also support the project.

Approximately 120 women applied to be part of the pilot programme, but because of limited funds, only 40 were selected. Ten women came to the capital from other cities in Kazakhstan.

Mama Pro trained them in computer literacy, copywriting and entrepreneurial activity and the women presented the business ideas developed during the train-

ing. The courses inspired them to open support centres similar to Mama Pro, reinforcing its importance. The participants shared their ideas for centres with more specified direction such as psychological support for women and special schools for children with Down Syndrome.

"They have wonderful projects and now go back to their communities and make a difference. I think it is especially important during International Women's Day to celebrate the accomplishments of women, because they really provide for their families and support communities. This was an important project for us to support," said U.S. Embassy Attaché for Culture and Education Ann Perrelli.

In just six months, Mama Pro's organisers developed the programme; prepared the equipment, workspace and materials and found coaches such as social activist Emin Askerov and other U.S. government programme alumni. As a result, the fund managed to form a small community of women inspired to change their own lives, as well as bring positive change in their neighbourhoods.

"A lot of work has been done from creation to implementation of the project. Today was such a day, which showed what results we have as women were inspired by this project and what prospects we have," said Alzhanova.

## Documentary commemorates Nevada-Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement anniversary



Karipbek Kuyukov (R) and his sister Zaura Kuyukova at the Feb. 26 event.

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Achieving the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a global priority 22 years after its introduction, said speakers at the Feb. 26 film screening and discussion of André Singer's documentary "Where the Wind Blew" that commemorated the Feb. 28 anniversary of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk International Anti-Nuclear Movement.

"Where the Wind Blew" draws on archival footage and interviews with Kazakh and U.S. anti-nuclear activists and nuclear weapons testing survivors and participants to show how citizens were subjected to great danger in the name of national security and, importantly, how they courageously advanced a global ban on nuclear testing.

"Let this movie remind us of what is at stake," said Swiss Ambassador to Kazakhstan Urs Schmid at the event organised by the Centre for International Security and Policy and the Swiss Embassy in Astana and hosted by KAZGUU University. "It is about the survival of mankind. It is about the prevention of unacceptable and catastrophic humanitarian consequences."

Following the screening, the audience reflected on the legacy of nuclear testing with The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov, who was featured in the documentary. Through his moving speeches and paintings, which he creates holding a brush with his feet and mouth having been born without arms, he hopes to ensure that such nuclear testing and its consequences are never repeated. The activist delivered a powerful plea on banning nuclear testing at a special Sept. 6 session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) devoted to the International Day against Nuclear Tests and received Oct. 24 the Nuclear-Free Future Award by an organisation in Austria.

"It really was an honour to participate in the anti-nuclear movement, having been born in the village called Yegindibulak, located 100 kilometres from the Semipalatinsk Test Site," he said on the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement's 30th anniversary. "I remember seeing students going around with plain A4 papers collecting people's signatures to demand the closure of the test site and, when visiting the movement's

offices, seeing these stacked papers with signatures reaching the office ceiling."

Kazakhstan's anti-nuclear movement, led by Olzhas Suleimenov and formed in 1989, served as a major popular support for President Nursultan Nazarbayev to shut down the nuclear test site in 1991, four months before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"For the people of Kazakhstan, having felt the horrific consequences of nuclear tests, the prohibition of nuclear testing has been vital. During 40 years, 456 nuclear tests were conducted at the Semipalatinsk Test Site. One and a half million people suffered as a result, and many are still affected. A vast territory of approximately 300,000 square kilometres was contaminated with radiation in one degree or another, comparable to the size of some European states. It is deeply symbolic that the date of the closure of the test site, Aug. 29, was declared the International Day against Nuclear Tests by the UNGA," said Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko prior to the screening.

"With the closure of the Semipalatinsk Test Site, a new stage in the global process of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament began," he added. "It was possible to adopt a document of historic importance – the CTBT."

In addition to signing and ratifying the CTBT, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's anti-nuclear initiatives include launching The ATOM Project and producing the anti-nuclear manifesto "The World. The 21st Century." In June, Kazakhstan will assume the Chairmanship of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, a multilateral export control regime, Schmid noted.

"We urge everyone to join Kazakhstan in saving humanity from the nuclear danger that still threatens the peace and prosperity of our shared planet. In this regard, we are closely watching the upcoming second summit of U.S. and North Korean leaders in Hanoi in the coming days, which we hope will consolidate positive trends in reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula and lead to its eventual de-nuclearisation," said Vassilenko on the 2019 North Korea-United States Hanoi Summit Vietnam.

"Where the Wind Blew" is a Spring Films production, and its trailer may be viewed at [www.springfilms.tv](http://www.springfilms.tv).

## Kazakh musicians release songs in French

Staff Report

ASTANA – Almas Duo, composed of Asem Abdykasymova and Polina Tyrina, released Français À La Kazakh March 9 in the capital.

The 15-track album includes five Kazakh folk songs, five others translated into French and five French songs. The tunes feature traditional Kazakh instruments – dombra (akin to lute), zhetygen (zither), sybyzgy (flute) – and cello, violin and guitar.

"Katrina Viloria performed a percussion part. She is from the Philippines and she often laughs that she is the first Filipina who participated in the recording of Kazakh folk songs in French. She teaches English at the Miras International School," said Tyrina.

The duet won the grand prix at a festival in the capital performing Anna Herman's "Echo of Love."

"The musicians are able to sing in the original language

with the same accent. We cannot define our singing genre. We play and sing Kazakh folk songs, jazz, world classical songs,

interpretation, trying to preserve authenticity and adding our own musical vision," she added.

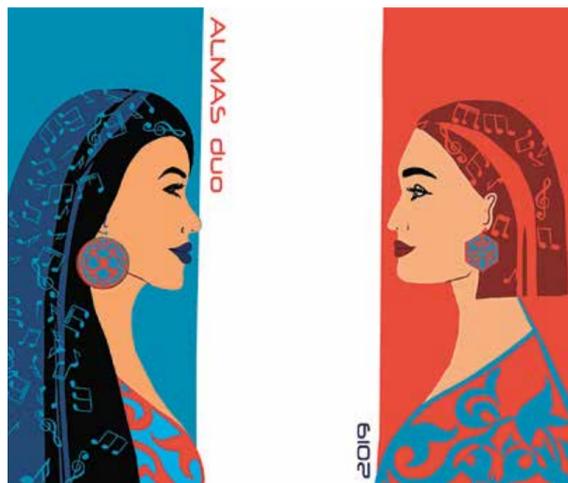
An engineer by occupation,

degree as part of the Erasmus Mundus programme. She also participated in the Copernicus programme at the French Embassy in Kazakhstan. She currently works at the France-Kazakhstan Chamber of Commerce.

"I [have been] writing music since my teens and I play the guitar and the ukulele," she said. Tyrina graduated from Astana Polytechnic College, then became a reporter after studying at Omsk State University.

"I managed a music studio for three years. Unfortunately, difficult financial conditions forced me to leave this business, but I continue to conduct guitar lessons. I have been practicing music since I was seven years old, but I don't have a professional music education. When I was 12, I started playing the guitar in the bard band," she said.

The duet was founded in 2016. Its repertoire consists of songs in English, French, Italian, Kazakh, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Ukrainian.



songs from Soviet films and pop songs. But we have more Kazakh songs. We perform them in an acoustic version in our in-

Abdykasymova studied ecology and urban planning in Nantes (France) and received a business and management post-master's



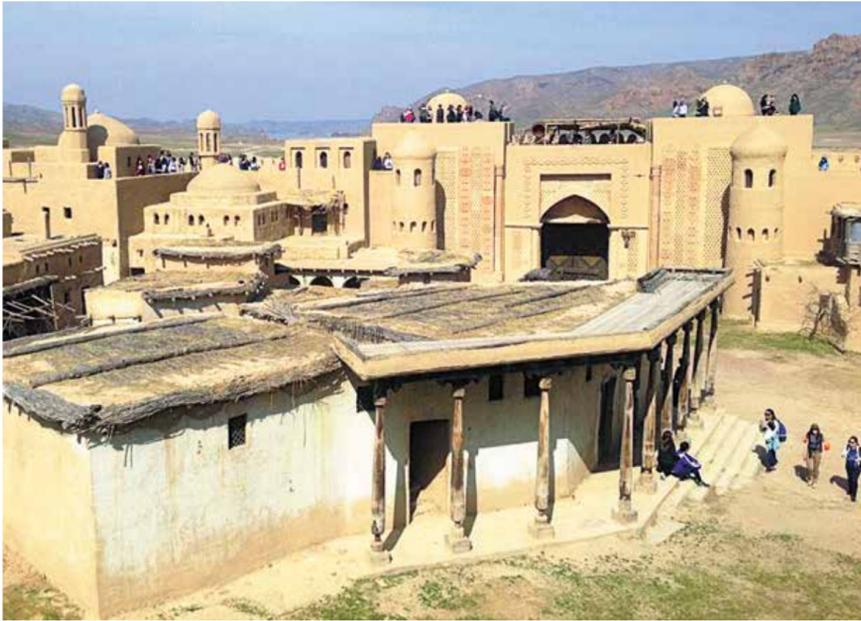
The members of the Almas Duo project.



NATION&CAPITAL  
**TOURISM**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Nomad Fortress serves as filming location, unique tourist attraction



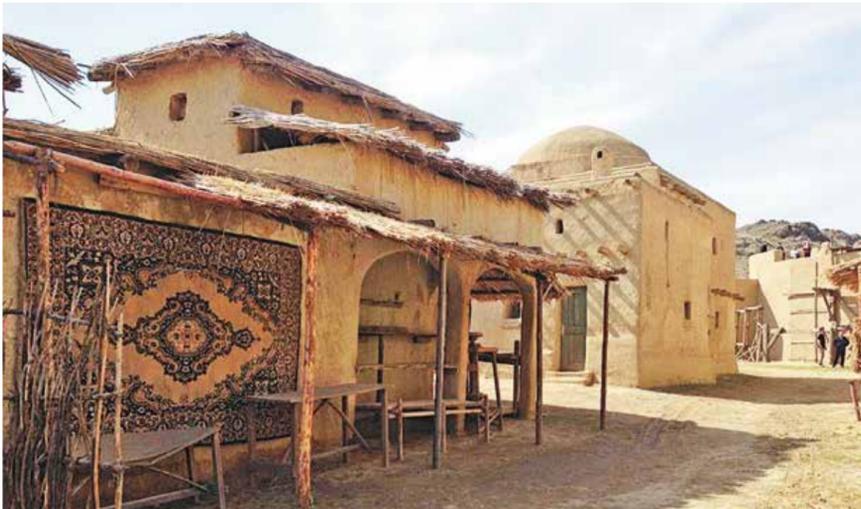
Continued from Page B1

Koshpendiler was the most expensive Kazakh film ever made, with the Kazakh government investing \$40 million in its production. The massive scale of Kazakhstan's official entry for Best Foreign Language Film for the 79th Academy Awards can be felt in observing the sheer size of Nomad Fortress. It is no wonder the enormous site has been used as a set for Timur Bekmambetov's 2006 fantasy film Day

Watch, Rustem Abdrashev's 2017 historical series Kazakh Khanate and Aisultan Seitov's 2018 music video for Jah Khalib's song Medina after Koshpendiler filming wrapped up.

Make a day trip to Nomad Fortress by car, taxi or on a group tour with a local tour operator for up to 8,000 tenge (US\$21.26), and bring a bathing suit for a swim in the Ili River after a day under the sun in the summer. While you're there, take a scenic boat ride across the river to the Buddhist sanctuary

Tamgaly Tas (Stones with Signs) for rock carvings of Buddha and bodhisattvas (beings dedicated to achieving Buddhahood) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's World Cultural Heritage Site Tamgaly for more than 5,000 petroglyphs of the Middle Bronze Age. Catch a glimpse of locals fishing, picnicking and camping along the river, as well as the occasional yurt, and stay to watch the sun setting across the Zhetysay (Seven Rivers) landscape.



## Shabanbai Bi village offers traditional cuisine, tours to Uplands' highest point

By Saltanat Botuev

ASTANA – The Kyzylarai mountainous forestland in the Karaganda Region is a combination of untouched nature and ancient historical monuments. Nearby Shabanbai Bi village is an ecotourism destination famous for its traditional Kazakh cuisine and hospitality.

In 2014, the forestland and village entered the top 100 sustainable tourism destinations of the world, according to the Avalon Historical and Geographical Society ranking.

"If you are in Karaganda or Astana... where late March is not winter, but also far from spring, then a trip to Kyzylarai will be a good option for a weekend. The typical Kyzylarai tour in the cold season includes accommodations in guest houses of the Shabanbai Bi village, short walks in the mountains around the village, sleigh rides or horseback riding, and... participation in the preparation of dishes of [Kazakh] traditional cuisine," society founder Vitaly Shuptar told tengrinews.kz.

Located at the foot of Aksoran Mountain, the highest point of the Kyzylarai Mountains and Kazakh Uplands, Shabanbai Bi is developing ecotourism based on local communities. Travellers are offered stays in residents' homes, giving them an opportunity to become acquainted with the simple rural life and taste dishes of traditional Kazakh cuisine. Villagers also create various felt products both as household items and souvenirs.

From the village, tourists can travel to diverse historical sites within the Kyzylarai forestland, including the Begazy monumental tombs, stone sculptures of the Turkic period and Kazakh-Jungar Wars' mausoleums. The Begazy granite tombs, cultural monuments of the Bronze Age, are one of the most mysterious archaeological discoveries in the region, reported karaganda-region.gov.kz.

For those interested in nature, the area provides diverse flora and fauna among forest, mountain and desert landscapes. Kyzylarai's pine forest on granite rocks is of interest to scientists as the south-

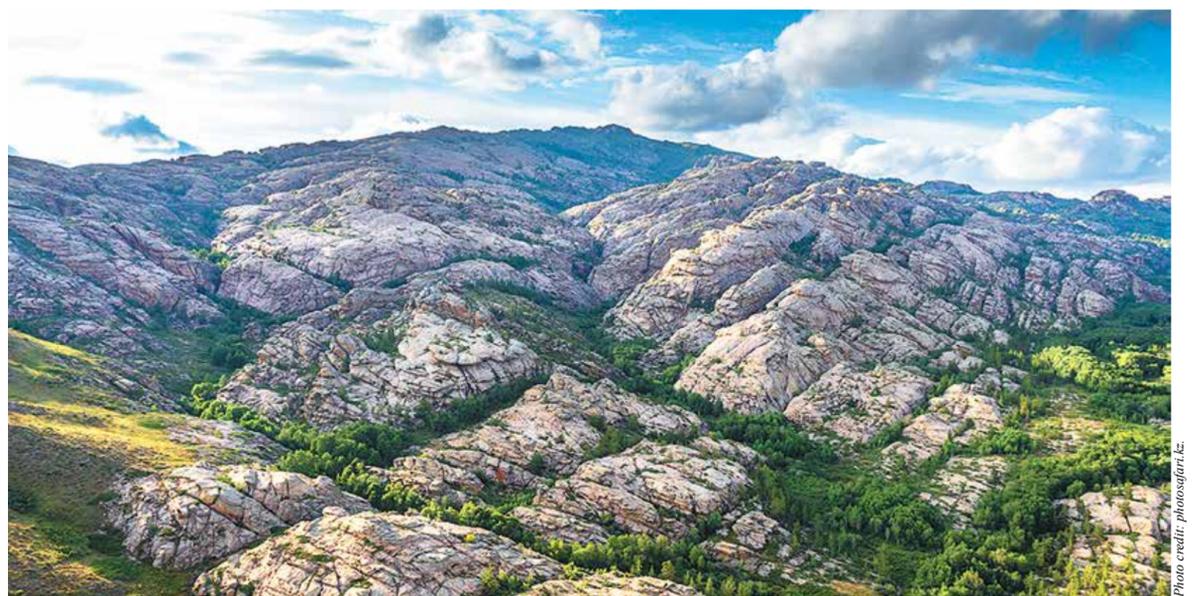
ernmost pine-growing area in the region's ecosystem. Juniper and birch also grow in the forest and flora include wild rose, hawthorn,

raspberry, honeysuckle, meadow-sweet and currants.

The 1,565-metre Aksoran Mountain, or Roof of the Steppes,

is a habitat for roe deer, saiga (antelope), wild boar, wolf, fox, hare, ermine, corsac (fox), badger, polecat, marmot and muskrat. The

Kyzylarai forestland, measuring 15-25 kilometres, is recognised as the nation's only large habitat of argali (mountain sheep).



## Museum collections to digitise by 2025

By Saltanat Botuev

ASTANA – The first results of digitising collections in Kazakh museums will be seen in 2025, said Library of the First President of Kazakhstan Deputy Director Kulyash Aktayeva at the forum titled Kazakh Museums: Ideas and Realities in the Epoch of Globalisation and Information.

"The most important thing is to start this process and make it systematic and consistent and then we will get the result – the digital format of our heritage. I think it will happen closer to 2025... The year 2025 is a kind of milestone that will show the first results," she said.

In addition to digitising museum collections, creating a database for the digitised funds is also on the agenda, she noted.

"First of all, there is a need to raise the issue of creating electronic databases. To do this, we need to introduce automated accounting



Photo credit: akorda.kz

systems. If automated accounting systems and equipment that turns the exhibits into digital images exist, then we can say that the era of digitisation has achieved its results," she added.

Museums in many regions are ready for the digital format transition.

"I think that they are ready, because the fact of their participation in this session suggests that these issues are the most urgent now," said Aktayeva.

The Feb. 25 forum, held for the first time in the library, gathered more than 120 participants including cultural department employees; heads of regional, city, district and rural museums; restorers; custodians and other museum workers. The open space format allowed them to become acquainted with innovative technologies, exchange professional views and discuss current issues.

## Kazakhstan, Tajikistan to increase airline flight frequency

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The number of flights between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan will increase from 18 to 32 per week this year, reports the Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development's Civil Aviation Committee press service.

The countries' aviation authorities and representatives from airlines Air Astana, SCAT Airlines, Tajik Air and Somon Air recently signed a protocol and determined flight frequency, which will increase to six flights per week on the Astana-Dushanbe route, 12 flights per week on the Almaty-Dushanbe route and 14 flights per week on other routes between Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Taraz and Dushanbe, Khujand, Bokhtar and Kulob.

Air Astana is Kazakhstan's flag carrier and operates scheduled domestic and international services on 64 routes from Almaty International Airport and Astana International Airport. SCAT Airlines, headquartered in Shymkent, caters to 33 destinations with a fleet size of 18 planes. Tajikistan's Somon Air is the country's first private airline headquartered in Dushanbe, while Tajik Air

ceased operations in January as the world's then eighth-oldest airline.

Airline representatives also discussed commercial agreements on code sharing and seat provision among Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and third-party airlines.

"To develop transit passenger traffic in Kazakhstan, the launch of direct flights between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan's regional airports is being worked out," a Civil Aviation Committee representative noted.

Kazakhstan will also expand its air services in the first half of the year by launching its first national low-cost airline Fly Arystan, said Kazakh Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Ro-

man Sklyar at a March government meeting. Fly Arystan will operate similarly to low-cost airlines easyJet, Indigo, Cebu Pacific and AirAsia and, in its first year of operation, will transport up to one million passengers at prices that are twice as low as Air Astana flights. It will operate a fleet of Airbus A320 aircraft configured to an all-economy class of 180 seats.

Sklyar also noted that the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development and Air Astana will begin the accreditation procedure for flights to the United States this year, with the intergovernmental agreement on Kazakh-U.S. air communication to be signed this month.



## SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

## Galysheva wins gold in moguls at Freestyle Ski World Cup

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – Kazakh professional freestyle skier Yulia Galysheva won a gold medal March 2 in moguls at the 2018-2019 International Ski Federation (FIS, Fédération Internationale de Ski) Freestyle Ski World Cup stage in Almaty, reports the National Olympic Committee press service.

She earned first place in the moguls final stage with 79.69 points, followed by French skier Perrine Laffont with 79.11 points and Canadian skier Justine Dufour-Lapointe with 76.64 points.

"I could have performed better – I made a mistake on my jump," said Galysheva, who competed with a shoulder injury, to the press service. "All top three athletes made mistakes, I just had the fewest."

Previously, this World Cup season, Galysheva won a silver medal Dec. 7 in moguls in Finland, a bronze medal Dec. 16 in dual mo-



Yulia Galysheva

guls in China, a gold medal Jan. 12 in moguls in Canada and a bronze medal Feb. 23 in moguls in Japan. She also won a gold medal Feb. 9 with 79.14 points at the 2019 FIS Ladies' Moguls World Championship in the United States, ahead of Australian skier Jakara Anthony with 78.99 points and Laffont with 78.70 points.

She now ranks fourth in moguls with 533 points. Ahead of her in

the World Cup rankings are Anthony with 545 points, American skier Jaelin Kauf with 570 points and Laffont with 780 points.

The 2018-2019 FIS Freestyle Ski World Cup is the 40th World Cup season in freestyle skiing organised by FIS since 1980, featuring the disciplines such as moguls, aerials, ski cross, halfpipe, slopestyle and big air. The season began Sept. 7 and ends March 30.

World Cup competitions have been hosted in Australia, Austria, Belarus, Canada, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States. This March, Kazakhstan hosted the cup for the first time.

"It is not my first time competing in Almaty so I am used to it," said Galysheva on the Shymbulak ski facilities. "You can hear fans, which doesn't happen abroad. They really live up the place."

## Football player is among 100 New Faces

By Anzhela Kaliyeva

ASTANA – The Union of European Football Associations' player of the season Bauyrzhan Islamkhan has been named one of Kazakhstan's 100 New Faces.

Islamkhan has been playing sports since childhood. Initially, however, he was attracted to martial arts, especially taekwondo. Islamkhan came to football by chance after being injured during a training fight. He began playing for the Taraz club in 2011. Within a few months, he became a captain. The footballer took part in the 2014 Commonwealth Cup tournament as part of that club. Kazakhstan took the fifth place in the Commonwealth Cup. The native of Taraz showed outstanding leadership qualities.

That performance attracted the attention of several international teams. Nikolai Pisarev, who trained the Russian national team at that tournament, said he was very impressed with Islamkhan: "He sees development of attack two or three steps ahead. Just awesome! Such players make the game so exciting."

In 2013, Islamkhan signed a contract with the Kuban team of the Russian Premier League. The



Photo credit: ITO/esim.e.k.

transfer fee was \$200,000. However, the team began to change coaches.

The Kairat football club concluded a transfer agreement with the Kuban Club at the end of winter 2014. Islamkhan scored his first goal in his native Taraz. Kairat won bronze medals and won the Kazakhstan Cup in 2014. Islamkhan was recognised as the best player in this country's Premier League for 2014.

From the 2015 season, Islamkhan became the captain of his team. At the same time, Kairat won silver medals and the Ka-

zakhstan Cup for the second time. His career successfully developed in 2016, too. In particular, according to BT Sport (British television channel), the goal of Islamkhan became the most spectacular in the UEFA Europa League. It scored 86 percent of the vote on the channel official website.

"He has qualities that many top players in Europe do not have," said the then head coach of Kazakhstan's national team, Stanimir Stoilov, answering the question whether Bauyrzhan is good enough to become the leader of national team.

## Barys beats Torpedo to reach KHL semifinals

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – The Astana's Barys Hockey Club beat Nizhny Novgorod's Torpedo Hockey Club March 10 with a 3:2 score in the seventh game in a series of quarterfinals of the Continental Hockey League's playoff in Astana and made it to KHL playoff semifinals for the third time.

Astana defenceman Darren Dietz scored in the first minute, but Torpedo's defenceman Anton Volchenkov equalised it with a goal. Later, Barys' Matt Frattin recaptured the lead but again Torpedo's Dmitry Semin levelled the score.

The final twenty minutes decided the outcome of the game. Dietz brought his team the victory, scoring a double eight minutes before the final whistle. The Barys Club goes to the next playoff round of the Gagarin Cup.

"First of all, I want to thank the fans. Such energetic support. Congratulations to Astana and the fans of Barys that we continue the playoff. Thanks to the team for their (strong will), the game and the series were not easy, but we managed to move it in our favour. Thank you for this victory. I would also like to thank the rivals. The series was combative, no one wanted to give in," said Barys Hockey Club's Head Coach Andrey Skabelka at the press conference after the game, reported hcbarys.kz.

"Our team does not have much

experience in the playoffs yet. Many (players) are just taking the first steps on this path. Any game, especially in the playoff, is important. Important for experience and formation of the team. Everyone understood what playoff is and that nothing will be reached without efforts," he added.

Although the series of games with the Torpedo was tough, it was a good experience and test of the team's abilities, said some of Astana's players.

"It's hard to describe this series. From the very first match, we believed in ourselves. That was not easy. The rival was very good, played tough... I am proud of our team. We won a big match. We played for our fans. I want to thank them for their incredible support. I want to enjoy this moment a little and then we will prepare for the game against Avangard," said Dietz.

"We got a good lesson. Yes, we won the first two games at home [in Astana], but then it was not easy. We did not think it would be easy. Both teams fought. The Torpedo was a good test for us," he added.

"We laid out in each game to move on... We fought. This is an interesting series. We have proved that we are ready to fight to the end, and we deserve to go further," said Barys defenceman Victor Svedberg.

Frattin expressed his fascination with Dietz's determination and

dedication during the last match.

"During the break, he (Dietz) said that he will make a goal and he did it. We need to pay tribute to this hockey player. He sat quietly in the locker room, got up and said: 'I will do it,'" said Frattin.

The players also stressed the importance of fans' support and their gratitude for them.

"The fans were the best. They supported us and helped us to win. I am happy that we managed to give them this victory," said Barys player Dustin Boyd.

"It was an incredible atmosphere. We gave much energy, I hope they [fans] will come to the next games and create the same noise. It is great, we felt like the whole city is here. Thank you all!" said Barys goaltender Henrik Karlsson.

The team will play the next series against the Avangard Hockey Club from Omsk. The first game will be March 14 at Barys Arena in Astana. Tickets can be purchased online at hcbarys.kz.

"It is no secret that they have a strong team. We met with Omsk's team in the regular season, and each game was hard. We will have a day to rest, and we need to go ahead working hard," said Boyd.

"This is an important part of the tournament, and there are no weak teams. Therefore, we must work even harder to prove our worth in each match. We will stick to our system and play to win," said Svedberg.

## Bublik wins fifth ATP Challenger Series tournament

Continued from Page B1

In his previous matches in the tournament, Bublik encountered Javier Barranco Cosano of Spain and beat him 6-4, 6-4. Also, he beat Jan Choinski from the United Kingdom (6-4, 6-2) and two players from France, Maxime Janvier (6-1, 7-5) and Grégoire Barrère (7-6, 7-5).

At the age of 21, Bublik is 153rd in singles, 300th in doubles in the world ranking. He is seven-time winner of tournaments of the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Futures series, the lowest ladder in world professional tennis tournaments, in years 2014, 2015 and 2016. Bublik won silver at the Asian Games in 2018.

Pau is the cultural and sports capital of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region in France located at the northern edge of the Pyrénées Mountains.

The ATP Challenger Tour winners can advance to play for the main draw or qualifying draw entry at ATP World Tour tournaments.



Photo credit: lanepublicitepyrenees.fr

## Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan form Central Asian Triathlon Association to engage more people in region

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

ASTANA – Swim, bike, run. The national Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan triathlon federations joined to form the Central Asian Triathlon Association (CATA) at the March 3 meeting in the capital chaired by Kazakh Triathlon Federation President Karim Massimov.

The parties signed a memorandum of cooperation and mutual understanding to develop and popularise the multi-race sport in the region, reported the National Olympic Committee press service. The association will ease communication between Central Asian athletes and organisers in sharing their experiences.

CATA members also agreed to combine their efforts to combat the use of substances and procedures



Photo credit: hip.triathlon.org.kz

prohibited by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Triathlon Union (ITU).

The members elected an executive committee, unanimously choosing Galymzhan Yessenov, vice president of the Kazakhstan Triathlon Federation and head of the Almaty Triathlon Federation, to lead the association.

In the last few years, the popularity of triathlon sports has been gaining momentum in the region, especially in Kazakhstan. The first amateur triathlon championship in the country was held in Almaty in 2015. In 2018, the country hosted world races such as Ironman 70.3 and ITU World Cup for the first time.

This year, amateur athletes can participate in 16 starts at Ironman 70.3 Astana, Temiradam Challenge and Almaty Open Championships. The first start of the season and

first run of the Temiradam Challenge series (at distances of five and 10 kilometres) were held Feb. 24 in the capital's triathlon park.

In February, Kazakh Women Tri Club Almaty launched its first free-of-charge classes with a professional coach to prepare women of all ages and training levels to participate in a triathlon.

"It is a sport for those who can dream and believe in themselves or they dream to believe in themselves," says Elena Kun, project organiser and an athlete who has completed more than one Ironman distance, as quoted by tengrinews.kz.

Ironman 70.3 (also known as Half Ironman) is a triathlon race with an overall distance of 70.3 miles (113 kilometres). It is divided into swimming (1.9 kilometres), cycling (90 kilometres) and running (21 kilometres).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

# City administration launches integrated approach to the capital's governance

By Dilshat Zhussupova

ASTANA – The new Kazakh government's measures to improve living standards requires a new, integrated approach by the capital's akimat (administration) toward governance, said Astana Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov at a Feb. 26 city akimat meeting, reports its press service.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev tasked the new government, appointed Feb. 25, to "take effective steps in improving living standards, stimulating the economy and implementing strategic objectives." The new government will allocate two trillion tenge (US\$5.3 billion) from the state budget to social support over the next three years, and Sultanov sees a role for a restructured city akimat in advancing these socially-oriented measures.



"Akims, the government, the party and Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs should help people with social assistance," said Nazarbayev Feb. 27 at the 18th Nur Otan Party Congress. "Akims should review their assistance programmes for families in need."

Former Astana Akim Asset Issekeshiev began transforming the city akimat in 2017, saving it 27.6 billion tenge (US\$73.14 million) since then. As part of the second stage of transformation, led by Sultanov, the departments of finance and strategic and budget planning will focus on developing the priority sectors of the economy. Departments on digitisation, public service and urban environment renovation will also be formed.

"It is necessary to change our approach to greening urban areas and to develop new regulations that meet current trends in urban

landscape design," said Sultanov on the latter department, which will unite efforts on urban regeneration, environmental protection and management and construction and housing policy management. "Environmental safety and conservation approaches should be based on project management methods and long-term forecasting."

The Department of Social Development will now combine the functions of the departments of culture and sports, language development and archival affairs. This new social unit, to be overseen by Astana Deputy Akim Nurlan Nurkenov, will seek to contribute to the modernisation of Astana residents' public awareness and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, said Sultanov.

At the meeting's conclusion, the akim tasked deputy akims with conducting analyses of administrative bodies' activities and proposing optimisation strategies.

## PM examines infrastructure improvements



Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin reviewed March 2 improvements made to housing, education, medicine, transport, provision of power and water supply and street lighting on the outskirts of Astana.

The inspection follows a directive from Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev for local officials to improve citizens' quality of life.

During the inspection of the Prigorodnyi residential area, Astana Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov briefed the prime minister on progress made according to the Comprehensive Development Plan of the capital until 2023. They discussed the construction of light rail transport, which will connect certain areas of the city with its centre allowing passengers to get to destinations faster.

The city also converted plots that had been intended for weekend homes to land that will be used to provide municipal housing for families.

The officials also discussed the expansion of the city's central road, Kabanbai Batyr Avenue.

At the Ilyinka residential area, Mamin visited a medical ambulance station and School No. 6, examining the quality of education and healthcare in the area.

Akmola Region Akim (Governor)

Malik Murzalin reported on the process of transferring the village of Karaotkel to within Astana's border, the implementation of the Comprehensive Social and Economic Development Plan for the Tselinograd District and the development of the Koyandy village. They also discussed the construction of a dam to protect the population from flooding and supply utility networks to the houses located in the east of the village

One of the major projects on the agenda was the construction of Astana's South-West bypass road, which will round up the ring road around the city. This will provide an opportunity to direct the flow of vehicles traveling through the city bypassing the capital. According to the information of KazAvtoZhol, the bypass road will be a free highway.

During the visit of the Ondiris residential area of the Baikonyr District, the prime minister examined the kindergarten of the primary School No. 12 that has 120 students. Mamin discussed the prospects of road and transport infrastructure development, increasing the number of streets and improving mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems.

Mamin also visited Koyandy village where a government health centre is able to serve 2,500 people and where the government is building a high school for 1,200 students.



## SABIS to build school in Astana

By Saltanat Boteu

ASTANA – SABIS, a global educational network spanning five continents, is making its initial foray into Kazakhstan. The international school, the educational investment project in Kazakhstan fully funded by local and foreign investors, will be built in the capital by 2023. Funding for the inaugural construction phase is \$15.5 million and the city akimat (administration) will provide the land.

The school will help manage the student population in the capital system, which has 1,000 school and 250 kindergarten places. It will also create 200 jobs.

"This is a 100-percent private investment. We have provided a land plot... free of charge as part of an investment contract. In education, this is the first contract in the country to provide a full-scale grant for the construction of a school," said Deputy Akim (Mayor) Malika Bekturova, reported astana.gov.kz.

The contract was signed Feb. 28 during the akimat roundtable with the participation of Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov, Vice Minister of Education and Science Rustem Bigari and United Arab Emirates' Ambassador in Kazakhstan Mohammed Ahmad Al-Jaber.

SABIS, with 132 schools and 70,000 students, operates in 20 countries around the world.



"This is a historic moment for SABIS and Astana. We will bring our 130 years of experience to the city and become a part of your 2050 Strategy," said SABIS Group Vice President Victor Saad.

Representatives of the Foreign Ministry's Committee for Investment and Astana Invest, who also attended the event, signed agreements with five local investors to construct private schools in the capital. The investment exceeds 17.4 billion tenge (US\$46.5 million), according to the Kazakh Invest national company.

In an effort to improve the edu-

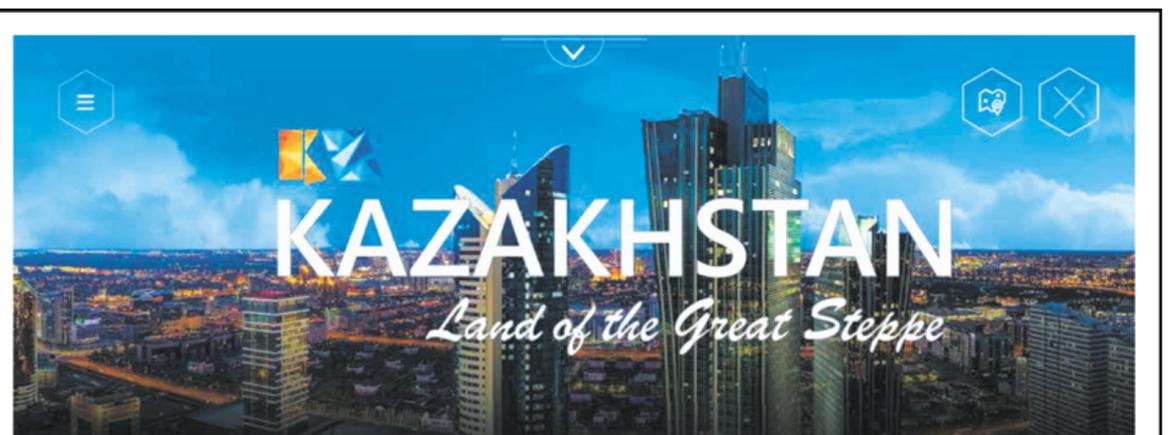
cational process, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated measures to develop schools by introducing per capita funding in a number of regions, including the capital, said Sultanov. The funding system includes special components that allow increasing private investment in education.

"We set the task in the next five years to ensure the creation of 120,000 school places, which is almost two times more than today. Among them, 20,000 places will be created by building private schools involving domestic and foreign investors. We are pleased and grate-

ful to private initiatives by virtue of whom such important projects will be implemented in Astana," he added.

Per capita funding allows private schools to work fully or partially on state orders.

"These private schools that are being built today rely on this state funding. Some schools will be completely free. It depends on the level of the school and from the chosen strategy for returning their investments. We provide the opportunity for [both schools] because there is a demand for both models," said Bekturova.



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