



President makes first foreign visit to Moscow, reaffirms priority of relations



Photo credit: Aforoz.kz

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Russian President Vladimir Putin noted the positive state of bilateral relations April 3 in Moscow and agreed to simplify cross-border trade during Tokayev's first foreign visit as the head of state.

of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev and also to continue the work on the comprehensive and active development of Kazakh-Russian cooperation," Tokayev told Putin at the start of their meeting in the Kremlin.

Putin said Tokayev's visit demonstrates a desire to deepen cooperation and ensure the continued friendship between the peoples of both nations.

Following the talks, Tokayev and Putin held a joint press briefing in which President Tokayev briefed the media on recent political changes in Kazakhstan and underlined his intention to develop existing ties with Russia.

"The joint statement reflects a mutual desire to strengthen the comprehensive Russian-Kazakhstan strategic partnership, and sets serious tasks for its further development," said Putin referring to a

joint document adopted by the two heads of state.

The two nations also signed a programme of joint actions in the industrial sector to increase the production of tractors, buses, cars and other vehicles, as well as create jobs in Kazakhstan.

Russia is Kazakhstan's number one foreign trading partner with a 19 percent share of Kazakhstan's commodity turnover.

Continued on Page A3

Early presidential election set for June 9; President Tokayev pledges fair and transparent vote

By George D. Gleboff

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan will hold an early presidential election June 9, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced April 9.

Tokayev called for the early election after assuming the office per Kazakhstan's Constitution March 20 following the surprise resignation of Kazakhstan's first and only President Nursultan Nazarbayev March 19.

Tokayev said he called for the early election because it was "absolutely necessary" to ensure "continuity, predictability and stability" at the time of political transition and "to remove any uncertainty."

In a televised address broadcast on all national television channels on April 9, Tokayev said: "Kazakhstan took a worthy place in the international community... We are living through an historical transition... Following my trips around the country... my conclusion is we are moving in the right direction."

"That is why I firmly believe the early election of the head state is absolutely necessary. In order to ensure social and political har-

mony, firmly move forward, keep on solving the tasks of social and economic development, there is a need to remove any uncertainty," he said.

"Besides, the situation in the world is changing quickly and not in the best possible way for us. We must reconfirm the continuity, predictability and stability of our domestic and foreign policy. We need to continue to work on the effective and successful realisation of the social programmes and the strategy of Elbasy," Tokayev said, referring to former President Nazarbayev who carries the title of the First President of Kazakhstan and Elbasy (Leader of the Nation in Kazakh). "This can only be done through the direct expression of the will of the people through an election."

"Kazakhstan is a democratic state. And the President will be elected according to the will of the people. As the current head of state, I guarantee that the election will be held in a fair and transparent way. This is my principled position," Tokayev stressed.

Tokayev also said he consulted with Nazarbayev on the decision.

Continued on Page A2

Kazakhstan to double domestic vehicle production, build three plants

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan plans to double domestic production of automobiles to meet demand within the Eurasian Economic Union, according to the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development.

The country will open three new vehicle assembling plants jointly with Hyundai, KAMAZ and Kirovets.

"We plan to increase the production of vehicles from 32,000

to 60,000 units. The markets of the Eurasian Economic Union are very important for us. This year, we will begin construction of a Hyundai passenger car assembling plant, a joint venture will be established with KAMAZ, and cooperation with the Kirovets plant will be launched to transfer technologies for the production of agricultural machinery components," said Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar at a recent government meeting.

Continued on Page A7

Kazakh, Chinese foreign ministries sign cooperation agreement through 2022

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atamkulov discussed political, economic and humanitarian cooperation with People's Republic of China Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Council Member Wang Yi during a March 28-29 visit to China.

The ministers also discussed humanitarian cooperation, international issues and signed a cooperation agreement between the two ministries for 2020-2022.

"Relations between Kazakhstan and China are an example of mutually beneficial and effective cooperation," said Atamkulov.

The Kazakh Foreign Minister also assured his counterpart Kazakhstan would continue under its new President the country's current foreign policy and obligations within international organisations, such as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia.

"We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and deepening the relations of a new stage of the



Photo credit: info.kz

comprehensive strategic partnership," Atamkulov said.

The sides also agreed to cooperate on interregional and cross-border issues as well as on industrial investment, digitisation and technology. They also discussed ways to coordinate the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) with the Nuryly Zhol New economic policy of Kazakhstan and the programmes of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Atamkulov also emphasised Kazakhstan's desire to work with China to resolve issues related to ethnic Kazakhs living in China, including through increased contact between foreign ministries and their consular services.

Atamkulov also discussed trade

and economic cooperation with Minister of Commerce of China Zhong Shan.

They proposed creating a roadmap for bilateral trade to expand the trading area, optimise trade structures and increase the bilateral trade of high-tech products. China is one of Kazakhstan's largest trading partners and trade has been on the upswing.

The Chinese side commended first and former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev for establishing the Kazakhstan-China strategic partnership and deepening cooperation on the Belt and Road initiative.

The talks covered visa issues, calendar of interagency consultations and a prospective visit of

the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev to China.

Later on, the Kazakh minister met with Chinese business leaders representing companies such as CITIC Construction, CMC, China Construction Bank, Grand Farm, Huajin Group that are realising joint projects in Kazakhstan.

On March 29, the Chinese companies working in Kazakhstan including Shengyuan Technology Co., Longyuan Technology, Yichang KELISON Industrial, Sheng Xi (Shanghai) Energy Technology, China National Instruments Imp. & Exp. Corp., Foshan Newmay Ceramics, Gezhouba Cement Ltd., Universal Energy, China National Building Material Corp. discussed their projects with the Kazakh delegation at the meeting co-chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Yermek Kosherbayev.

While in China, Minister Atamkulov also laid flowers at the monument of Kazakh writer and philosopher Abai in the central Beijing park and participated in a ceremony awarding Chinese sculptor Yuan Xikun with the medal "25 years of Independence of Kazakhstan."

INSIDE

NATION

Health ministry to increase healthcare industry oversight, increase access to healthcare **A2**
Volunteer programme, eagle hunting centres added to Year of Youth initiatives **A2**

ECONOMY

Migration centres facilitate issuance of 1.5 million work permits over last three years **A4**
Kazakhstan experiences industrial growth, takes efforts to continue growth **A4**

EDITORIAL&OPINION

Naming Kazakh capital after its visionary is right decision **A5**
KAMILLOV: Strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan **A6**

BUSINESS

Petropavlovsk-made socks in demand by domestic market **A7**
Kazakhstan's Customs Single Window facilitates global trade **A8**

NATION&CAPITAL

Professionalism and dedication to work is valued regardless of gender, says Kazakh engineer **B1**
Air Astana to begin flights to Tokyo in second half of 2019 **B6**

NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Early presidential election set for June 9; President Tokayev pledges fair and transparent vote

Continued from Page A1

He had also discussed this decision with Speaker of the Senate of the Parliament Dariga Nazarbayeva and Vice Speaker of the Parliament Vladimir Bozhko, Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Chairman of the Constitutional Council Kairat Mami, as well as heads of the political parties: NurOtan, AkZhol, the Communist People's Party and Auyl Party.

Tokayev, who had served as Speaker of the Senate, became President of Kazakhstan on March 20 following Nazarbayev's resignation after almost 30 years at the helm.

On the same day, the Akorda presidential office announced that Tokayev had signed a decree requesting the Central Election

Commission organise the election and asking akims (governors and mayors) to ensure the timely compilation and veracity of voter lists and to provide comprehensive assistance to the central, territorial and district election commissions in relation to the holding the election.

According to the Constitution of Kazakhstan, the President of the Republic is elected by adult citizens of the Republic on the basis of universal, equal and direct election by a secret ballot for a term of five years.

A citizen of the country by birth who is at least forty years old, fluent in the state language, has lived in Kazakhstan for the last fifteen years and has a higher education, may be elected President of Kazakhstan.

Registration of candidates for

the President is carried out by the Central Election Commission and begins two months before Election Day and ends forty days before election. According to the legislation of Kazakhstan, candidates for the President can be nominated only by political parties and nation-wide public associations and must be supported by at least one per cent of the total number of registered voters, equally representing at least two thirds of regions, cities of national significance and the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

According to the data from the Central Election Commission from 2016, more than 9,700,000 voters were registered so candidates currently are required to provide no less than 97,000 signatures.

Kazakhstan pays \$12,000 since January to those who have reported corruption

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – People in Kazakhstan have been paid 4.5 million tenge (US\$11,857.50) for reporting on corruption cases since the beginning of the year, said Kazakh Agency on Civil Service Affairs and Anti-corruption Department Head of Public Relations Arman Berdalin at a recent briefing of the National Bureau of Anti-corruption.

Since January, 1.1 million tenge (US\$2,898) has been paid to 20 people for reporting corruption of moderate severity and 3.4 million tenge (US\$8,959) has been rewarded to 20 people for reporting corruption of grave severity.

"For confirmed reports of corruption in 2018, 185 people were rewarded with 27.3 million tenge (US\$71,935.50). Among

these, two people were rewarded for reporting corruption of minor severity with 192,400 tenge (US\$506.97), 73 people were rewarded for reporting corruption of moderate severity with 9.04 million tenge (US\$23,820.40) and 106 people were rewarded for reporting corruption of grave severity with 18.1 million tenge (US\$47,693.50)," said Berdalin.

Those who report corruption or assist in the fight against it are exempt from criminal liability and may be incentivised with a lump-sum monetary reward. Assistance involves reporting corruption and submitting information relevant for the detection, disclosure and investigation of a corruption offence.

"An incentive is set according to the category of the offense," said Berdalin. "People are rewarded with up to 30 monthly calculation

indices (MCI) (US\$199.60) for reporting an administrative offense. People are also rewarded with up to 40 MCI (US\$266.14) for reporting corruption of minor severity, 50 MCI for reporting corruption of moderate severity and 70 MCI (US\$465.74) and 100 MCI (US\$665.34) for reporting corruption of grave severity. In the case of a refusal of monetary remuneration, incentives may be established in the form of a certificate or declaration of gratitude."

To report corruption, people can send letter to the Kazakh Agency on Civil Service Affairs and Anti-corruption or the National Bureau of Anti-corruption, make a free call at any time and day to 1424 to reach a call centre or email Kazakh Agency on Civil Service Affairs and Anti-corruption Chairman Ali Shpekbaev at ali.shpekbaev@gmail.com.

Health ministry to increase healthcare industry oversight, increase access to healthcare

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The Ministry of Healthcare plans to establish a committee to better ensure the quality and safety of public health and pharmaceutical related products and services, reported Minister Yelzhan Birtanov at an April 2 press conference in the capital.

"We will collaborate with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs... First of all, we plan to revise all national standards for the provision of services. The standards for the provision of services, technical regulations to the standards of goods not only for food, but also for household, perfumery, toys and other things should comply with international standards," he said.

All related laboratories will be required to receive international certification.

The effort also seeks to provide more information to the public about goods and services.

"We want to switch to a digital notification system so that the market can decide who meets the standards and who does not. Due to lack of transparency, people do not know what violations exist in a particular enterprise or product. We are working in this direction in recent years. Our regional committees publish information in case of detection of violations. Transparency is essential," he said.

The ministry also recently approved a primary health care action plan for 2019-2020.

Last year, 1,315 primary care physicians and 79 paediatric offices were opened. Part of the goal is to provide sufficient access to doctors in the Aktobe, Zhambyl and West Kazakhstan regions.

This year, more than 5,000 doctors, including 1,515 primary care physicians will graduate from medical institutions. This will cover the shortage of primary healthcare personnel.

According to the ministry, 214 facilities were commissioned and 31 percent of these by means of private investment over the past two years. It is planned to open 595 primary healthcare facilities worth more than 120 billion tenge (US\$315 million) in the next three years. More than half of the facilities will be launched as part of a public-private



Yelzhan Birtanov

partnership. Some 228 facilities will be reconstructed and more than 11,000 units of medical equipment will be provided.

The management programme of major chronic diseases has also been expanded.

A staged salary increase by 20 percent for 36,000 medical workers is expected and 5.3 billion tenge (US\$13.9 million) will be provided.

Birtanov spoke about the launch of primary healthcare digitisation.

"All the health organisations in cities and regional centres were provided with access to the internet and medical information systems. Paperless medical records have been introduced in 99 percent of organisations. More than two million people use mobile apps for patients. As a result, visits to hospitals were reduced two-fold and queues decreased by 60 percent," he said.

The ministry set task to reduce meningitis and measles. The trainings were held in the medical institutions. The committee for the protection of public health organises the campaign on prevention and vaccination among the population.

The level of health shows that people do not pay much attention to this issue and expect more from medical workers. Due to this "incentives are aimed at prevention, vaccination."

"We made a decision to expand measles vaccination. In addition to vaccinating children twice, we moved the terms by nine months. We started to get vaccinated earlier as the children are born from unvaccinated mothers without immunity and to reduce the risk. We also started vaccinating young mothers and purchased additional vaccines," the minister noted.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Almaty city administration will reconstruct Baiseitova and Zhibek Zholy Streets and Dostyk Avenue to prioritise pedestrians starting in April, the regional press service has announced. Fences, pedestrian ramps and detour signs will be installed. More than 600 streets and 1,400 old courtyards in the city's historical centre have already been reconstructed, and a third of street lighting transferred to energy-saving lamps. New roads are planned for 12 districts and more than 12,000 trees are to be planted. New LED lamps will be installed on more than 120 streets. "Eco-friendly paving tiles, energy-saving pavement lighting, outdoor furniture, sports grounds and children's playgrounds will be built to create a comfortable urban environment. All entrances to buildings will be made in a single style. It is planned to plant new trees and preserve old ones," a city administration press release explains.

A waste-sorting facility and a plastic-processing workshop will be launched in June in Atyrau, reports Kazinform. The waste-sorting equipment from Belarus is designed to separate up to 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste per year and the plant will create approximately 70 work positions. "The Sifaniya-Ekotekhnika company supplies waste processing equipment to the Commonwealth of Independent States and the European Union. The same facilities operate in Aktau, Kostanai and Zhanaozen. Mangistau and Atyrau have similar climatic conditions and the same salty clay soil – that's why we choose this equipment," said head of the plant Almas Iztelevov.

Kazakhstan will introduce a new environmental code in December, according to Forbes.kz. The Ministry of Energy will include a provision for climate adaptation in the document. "Today, climate change is observed in all sectors of the economy, and our region is one of the most vulnerable. Intensive melting of glaciers, increasing frequency of natural disasters and an increased degree of aridity – the problem of the Aral Sea – can cause damage to the economic stability and food security of the region... The consolidation of joint efforts and the private sector will help find optimal solutions and lead to regional cooperation in climate change," deputy head of the ministry's International Relations Department Kerei Bekbergen told the second Central Asian Climate Change Conference in Tashkent April 3.

The Nur Otan party and the Bolashak corporate foundation will open 20 education inclusion support offices nationwide by the end of the year as part of the Future Without Barriers project. Work is underway to bring inclusive education to all regions. The foundation has opened support offices for 248 children with autism and other mental disorders in nine cities. "According to WHO statistics, the number of children with autism is growing around the world. Children should have the opportunity to go to school. We aim to open inclusion support offices in every city. Some children have attended school for the first time due to the opening of inclusive classrooms in Kyzylorda, Shymkent and the West Kazakhstan region," said Director of the Bolashak Corporate Foundation Dinara Chaizhunusova.

Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU) cracked the top 301+ of the Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings 2019, reports the press service of the university. "This ranking will put all universities on a level playing field and rank them according to the impact they make on society, against their own unique missions. What's really exciting is that we've seen prestigious research universities that perform well in the world rankings take part and we've seen institutions that have never before engaged in global rankings – particularly universities from developing countries that are not research-intensive – participate as well, to demonstrate that they have an impact," said THE Chief Knowledge Officer Phil Baty.

Volunteer programme, eagle hunting centres added to Year of Youth initiatives



Aysholpan Nurgayypkyzy of Mongolia.

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government recently added eagle hunting centres, volunteer coordination and self-defence courses to its Year of Youth initiatives.

The programmes were added to the Year of Youth roadmap during

a March 26 government meeting, which also included the addition of general vocational training and assistance for young journalists seeking to promote Kazakhstan's image.

Former President Nursultan Nazarbayev designated 2019 the Year of Youth and the newly added initiatives join other programmes

to develop the country's next generation.

The Eagle hunting (berkutchi) centres will teach the ancient art and hold competitions to make eagle hunting an important element of ethno-tourism in Kazakhstan, said Minister of Information and Social Development Dauren Abayev.

The new initiatives also include a national student volunteer programme that will coordinate the work of national university and vocational school student volunteers helping those with disabilities, the elderly, orphans and the homeless.

The government will allocate 24.6 billion tenge (US\$64.8 million) from the national budget for the initiatives, said Deputy Prime Minister Gulshara Abdykalikova.

These initiatives join a five-part draft roadmap that includes 89 initiatives.

The first of the five-part roadmap involves providing housing for working youth. The government will build at least 1,000 rental apartments annually in Nur-Sultan, Almaty and Shymkent. They will target young scientists, start-up entrepreneurs and professionals who work in manufacturing, agriculture and in public organisations. Young families with children will have priority in receiving accommodation.

The second part is related to youth employment. The government will support the Zhas Kasipker programme to teach entrepreneurship to 60,000 young people. At the same time, the government plans to issue 15,000 microloans to rural young people and

fund more than 30,000 new business ideas.

The third part is directed toward education and volunteering. This part includes the Zhas Maman project to train youth in the 100 most demanded industrial and service professions. This will involve 20 universities and 180 vocational schools and is expected to reach 200,000 young people in three years.

This part also includes the Open University project, which connects all universities and vocational schools and includes a 3 billion tenge (US\$7.9 million) annual funding increase for applied research. The scholarships for student volunteers will increase 30 percent.

The fourth part of the roadmap is meant to develop the social activity of youth and includes the Green City – Green Village nationwide project. The initiative recognises students working with construction companies. This part also includes the development of a military-patriotic education programme.

The fifth part of the Year of Youth roadmap supports the health and social inclusion of young families. This part of the roadmap will work in such areas as preventing suicide and promoting family values.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Lev Gumilev Eurasian National University (ENU) will set up shop in Brussels. A delegation including senior university officials arrived in Brussels to sign the relevant agreement with the Modern Education & Research Institute (MERI) that will host the office. ENU's representative office is meant to help modernise and internationalise Kazakhstan's education system and create a group of international experts to increase efficiency of university management and search for partners to join European Union science financing consortiums. ENU First Vice Dean Asemgul Moldazhanova called the move a strategic step to integrate Kazakhstan into the international scientific and education community and boost cooperation between the European Union and Kazakhstan. Significant efforts preceded the opening of the representative office, including strengthening the university's position in Central Asia.

One hundred and twenty Kazakh peacekeepers in Lebanon recently received United Nations Peace Medals. The award ceremony was hosted by the UN post in Lebanon and gathered more than 600 people. Attendees were welcomed by UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) Sector East Commander Brigadier General Antonio Romero Losada, who thanked the peacekeepers for their contribution to the peacekeeping mission and their conscientious service. The first troop of Kazakh peacekeepers in Lebanon will complete their mission at the end of April and will be replaced by the second troop, which is currently undergoing intensive training.

Kazakhstan and Spain agreed to launch direct flight between their capital cities during the recent meeting of Kazakh and Spanish government representatives in Madrid. The sides discussed politics, trade and economy, culture and expanding legal agreements and noted the significant progress in bilateral relations reaffirmed by regular high level visits and growing trade turnover. The two countries mark 10 years of strategic partnership this year. Spain is among Kazakhstan's largest trade partners, with trade steadily increasing and reaching \$2 billion. Spanish investments in Kazakhstan have reached \$205.4 million since 2005.

Kazakh businesses will invest \$10 million in Georgia to build an electric bus assembly plant, reported Georgian Parliament Deputy David Chichinadze. "It is useful to do something. When good people join efforts, it is even better, because Georgia has developed very positive relations with Kazakhstan. Its money was invested in the country in significant amounts in different sectors," said Chichinadze, as quoted by Sputnik Georgia. The deal also includes purchasing at least 100 electric buses from Kazakhstan every year.

The Council of Europe will open a regional office in Kazakhstan to help reinforce bilateral cooperation. A Kazakh delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko participated in the meeting of the Rapporteur Group of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on external relations, where it reaffirmed the country's interest in boosting cooperation with the institution to ensure the rule of law, modernise the country's justice system and accede to international conventions. The meeting precedes the launch of the second phase of the organisation's Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities for Kazakhstan programme for 2019 to 2022 as part of the Central Asia-wide Rule of Law regional project.

President makes first foreign visit to Moscow..

Continued from Page A1

More than 9,000 businesses with Russian capital operate in Kazakhstan, approximately one third of the total, and are involved in approximately 100 joint projects in the petro-chemistry industry, light industry, agriculture, the automotive industry and railway engineering.

Tokayev also said the two countries plan to strengthen transport and transit cooperation and improve border checkpoint efficiency to increase interregional trade and facilitate the movement of residents.

Kazakhstan also seeks to utilise the "Western Europe - Western China" highway, which connects the East and West of Eurasia through the two countries, said Tokayev.

The sides also reviewed cooperation in the fuel and energy sector, the military-technical and space fields and signed an agreement for Kazakhstan to provide gas to the Baikonur space complex.

The Kazakh President also noted that improvements to transport and logistics infrastructure and the promotion of local resorts are needed to optimise cross-border tourism.

The two leaders also discussed strengthening cultural and humanitarian cooperation, including the possibility of "training Kazakh artists at the St. Petersburg House of Music and holding the Hermitage Days at the National Museum of Kazakhstan."

Both presidents agreed that the meeting was fruitful and will strengthen relations. Putin also noted that the meeting was also a continuation of the positive relationship established under the first Kazakh President.

"I want to note that the talks were held in a constructive and business environment in full accordance with the traditions that have developed over the years of our fruitful collaboration with the founder of the modern Kazakhstan, the First Presi-

dent of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev," said Putin adding that more than 450 documents create the legal basis for the bilateral relations.

In their joint statement, Tokayev and Putin reiterated their satisfaction with the state of political, trade-economic, defence and military-technical, cultural and humanitarian interaction and reaffirmed adherence to all previous commitments.

"The Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation develop allied relations and integration cooperation as equal and sovereign states on the basis of mutual trust, strategic partnership and all-round cooperation, guided by the principles of mutual respect for state sovereignty and independence, equality and non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force or threat by force, territorial integrity of states, inviolability of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes, diligent implementation of international obligations to protect

human rights and fundamental freedoms," reads the statement.

The statement also notes that the bilateral relationship is based on deep historical and spiritual ties between the peoples of the two countries, meet the national interests of both countries, contribute to solving the problems of improving the well-being and quality of life of their citizens, promote sustainable socio-economic development, enhance the competitiveness of national economies based on the widespread introduction of innovative technologies, rational use of labour resources, and more complete development of human potential.

The document also touches upon cooperation in regional security, holding open political dialogues, supporting cross-border interaction and the 16th Forum of Kazakhstan-Russia Interregional cooperation at the end of 2019.

The statement also noted that the government bodies of both countries will cooperate to create a joint Bai-

erek space rocket complex based on the existing Baikonur Cosmodrome.

The statement also addressed the implementation of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of 2014, as well as the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union, Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. It also stressed the common positions of the two countries in fighting terrorism and extremism.

The April 3 statement also emphasised the importance of protecting the ethnic, cultural and linguistic history shared by the two countries and that "Kazakhstan and Russia do not accept any attempts of falsification, rewriting and denigration of common history, which is the most important basis of our allied relations, above all the history of the Second World War."

While in Moscow, Tokayev also met with Chairwoman of the Federation Council of Russian Federation Valentina Matvienko.

CIS foreign ministers approve 2019 consultation plans, welcome new chair in Moscow

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN - The Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) approved April 5 in Moscow a plan for multi-level consultations between CIS foreign ministries for 2019, drafts of multiple international treaties and an agreement concerning preservation of World War II history.

The consultation plan includes plans to hold meetings on foreign

policy planning, countering threats, disarmament issues, developing economic cooperation, information collaboration, as well as collaboration with international organisations, such as the United Nations, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union.

The draft international treaties approved by Kazakh Foreign Minister Beibut Atankulov and council members address intergovernmental relations across research, cooperation in museum affairs, as well as non-custodial sentencing and en-

forcement. The approved drafts will be submitted to the upcoming meetings of the CIS supreme bodies, the Council of Heads of State and the Council of Heads of Government.

The council also adopted an address on the need to care for war graves and military monuments of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 and approved the draft Statement of the heads of CIS member states on the 80th anniversary of World War II.

The CFM also reviewed the draft Programme of Action to intensify

the partnership between CIS foreign ministries initiated by Turkmenistan.

The council also discussed strengthening economic, cultural, humanitarian, scientific and technical cooperation within the CIS and strengthening coordination to address threats.

Atankulov thanked member states for implementing CIS modernisation initiatives proposed by former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, which have increased the participation of member states.

He added, "Kazakhstan, being a

reliable and active participant in the CIS, aims to keep developing mutually beneficial cooperation between the Commonwealth member states in all spheres."

Atankulov also noted that Tajikistan's 2018 chairing of the organisation came during a busy and productive year. He also congratulated Turkmenistan for accepting the 2019 chair and expressed support for Turkmenistan's Chairmanship Concept.

The council will meet again Oct. 10 in Ashgabat.

FM meets with political, business leaders in Jordan

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN - Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atankulov met with more than a dozen political and business leaders on the sidelines of the April 6 World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa (WEF MENA) at the Dead Sea in the Jordan.

The event in the Jordanian capital attracted more than 1,000 business and political representatives from

more than 50 countries and was organised in partnership with the King Abdullah II Fund for Development.

Participants examined avenues for social and economic progress in the MENA region in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and discussed challenges facing the region. They also called for region-wide collaboration on social, economic and climate issues.

Among Atankulov's meetings was a discussion with King Abdullah II about recent political changes

in Kazakhstan and the continuation of foreign policies established by former President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The Jordanian monarch also praised Nazarbayev's initiative to host the Astana Process peace talks on Syria in the Kazakh capital. Jordan holds observer status to those talks which are hosted by Kazakhstan yet organised by the three so-called guarantor states, Russia, Turkey and Iran.

The sides also agreed to expand

space industry and cyber security cooperation.

Atankulov also discussed the forum's ideas and cooperation between the forum and Kazakhstan with WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Prof. Klaus Schwab.

The Kazakh Foreign Minister also met with EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti to discuss EBRD projects in Kazakhstan and participating in the next Foreign Investors Council under the Kazakh President and Astana Economic Forum. Ap-

proximately 250 EBRD projects worth more than \$8 billion either have been implemented or are underway in Kazakhstan.

Atankulov also met with Armenian President Armen Sarkissian, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and Jordan Edgars Rinkēvičs and Ayman Safadi, as well as representatives of major Middle Eastern companies working in retail, finance, agriculture, IT, mining and metallurgy, logistics and renewable energy.

Deputy FM says country committed to deeper cooperation in Central Asia

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN - Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko briefed professors and students at the March 28 lecture at the Italian Society for International Organisations (SIOI) in Rome on ways Kazakhstan is working on deeper cooperation among Central Asian states.

President of SIOI and the former Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini introduced Vassilenko noting the role Kazakhstan has been playing in the region and beyond by hosting the OSCE summit in Astana and the talks on the Syrian peace settlement under the so-called Astana Process.

Vassilenko's lecture was titled "Central Asia and the Regional Stability: The Strategic Role of Kazakhstan." In it, he noted that as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2017-2018, Kazakhstan promoted the common interests of Central Asian states and advanced issues important to the region.

"As the ninth largest country in the world and the largest economy in Central Asia, we generate 60 percent of the region's GDP. We take great interest in the stable and prosperous development of our nearest neighbours, the strengthening of mutual trust, and recognition of common interests. We firmly believe that regional security

can only be achieved when every country is politically, economically and socially stable and prosperous," Vassilenko said.

He noted the expansion of positive regional relations, including recent multilateral events, such as the first consultative meeting of the leaders of the Central Asian states held in March 2018 in Astana (recently renamed Nur-Sultan), the fifth Summit of the Caspian Littoral States held last summer in Aktau and the Summit of the Heads of Founding States of the International Fund for the Salvation of the Aral Sea (IFAS) last August.

"We are proud of the recent progress which has been made and the significant expansion of cooperation in the areas of trade and commerce as well as greater interactions among citizens," he said.

Vassilenko added that, unlike for many countries in Europe, many forecasts for Central Asia predict rapid population expansion in all five nations.

"The combined population of Central Asia is expected to boom from 60 million people today to 90 million people by 2030," Vassilenko explained as he noted the importance of cooperation with outside partners, such as the European Union, in addressing the challenges associated with such rapid population growth.

"We will not only seek to work together, but we will also work with outside partners, including the E.U. which is set to adopt its new Strategy for Central Asia later this spring," he said. "For almost three decades, the European Union has been one of the key foreign policy, trade, economic and investment partners for the region, a valuable intermediary and an active donor in critical development projects. And that role will be critical going forward."

The European Union is the largest trading partner and the largest investor in Kazakhstan, as well as for several other countries in Central Asia. Its strategy for the region, first adopted in 2007, has served as a wide-ranging platform for cooperation on matters such as the rule of law, education and the environment.

In his remarks, Vassilenko also focused on the fight against terrorism and the commitment of the Central Asian states to combat terrorism nationally, regionally and globally.

"Kazakhstan calls on all countries to adopt within the UN of the Code of Conduct to reinvigorate our collective commitments to end terrorism by 2045, the UN's centenary. We hope we can count on the support of the UN Security Council and all UN member states to advocate for this worthy cause. As of today, 78 countries have signed the Code

of Conduct initiated by Kazakhstan and personally by (former) President Nursultan Nazarbayev," he said.

During Kazakhstan's membership on the UNSC, the country used that platform to promote the interests of Central Asian nations, including Afghanistan. Kazakhstan also organised the first visit in seven years by Security Council members to Afghanistan. This gave UNSC members an opportunity to see the situation on the ground and meet with Afghan leaders, business representatives and NGOs.

Vassilenko also told the students the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and Kazakhstan's accession to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are significant not only for his country, but for the region.

Concluding the lecture, Vassilenko noted the friendly relations between Kazakhstan and Italy.

"We are going to celebrate the 27th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this August. Today, Kazakhstan and Italy continue to develop a robust political dialogue, engage across a range of multifaceted economic and cultural areas, and continue to build contacts at the interregional level. We have established trusting relationships thanks to our joint work across many international organisa-

tions such as the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and others," he stressed.

According to Vassilenko, the two countries share similar positions on key international issues. Italy is also Kazakhstan's second largest trading partner, ranking first among E.U. countries in terms of foreign trade and is one of the largest investors in the Kazakh economy.

"I want to emphasise the positive experience of Italian investments in Kazakhstan. Today, there are 164 joint ventures with Italian participation in Kazakhstan across a range of key sectors. There are successfully implemented investment projects in mechanical engineering, light industry, construction, mining and metallurgy," the diplomat said.

According to the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while in Rome, Vassilenko also met with the Italian lawmakers, including Ettore Rosato, vice chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, and Edmondo Cirielli, quaestor of the Chamber of Deputies. Italian deputies assured of their intention to ensure the speediest ratification of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Kazakhstan and the European Union and its member states, the foreign ministry noted in a press release.

As of today, 27 out of 28 EU member states have ratified the agreement, with only Italy remaining to do so. Once the agreement, which now is in force provisionally and partially, fully enters into force, it will cover 29 areas of cooperation ranging from trade to public procurement to fighting crime to people's mobility.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Kazakhstan experiences industrial growth, takes efforts to continue expansion

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's industrial sector is growing and the government is taking measures to keep that momentum going, according to a recent report.

Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar reported during a recent government meeting chaired by Prime Minister Askar Mamin on the implementation of the second five-year phase of the national 2015-2019 industrial infrastructure development programme. According to the ministry's report, the plan has produced 480 projects worth approximately 4.9 trillion of tenge (US\$12.9 billion)



Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar.

and has created more than 44,000 jobs.

"The manufacturing sector's

share of the overall GDP structure grew from 10.1 to 11.6 percent, the share of self-employment grew from 6.6 percent to 6.9 percent. From 2018, industry grew 4.1 percent. It became possible with the manufacturing sector growing 6 percent faster than expected," said Sklyar during the meeting.

The main sources of growth were mechanical engineering (14.1 percent), chemical industry (8.1 percent), light manufacturing (4.4 percent) and the metallurgy (2.2 percent) sectors. New projects in these sectors are planned to be launched this year, creating 20,000 jobs.

Sklyar, Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev and Min-

ister of Agriculture Saparkhan Omarov paid particular attention in their briefing to projects in metallurgy including ferro-silicon plant in Karaganda and steel spiral pipe manufacturing plant in Almaty, mechanical engineering (increasing output of car production, equipment and machinery for the oil and gas industry, and agroindustry machinery) and light manufacturing.

Approximately 400 billion tenge (US\$1.05 billion) is being allocated on facilitating the launch of production of approximately 250 manufactured daily usage goods. Consequently, about 16,000 jobs will be created, tax revenues are expected to grow to

1.1 trillion tenge (US\$2.9 billion) and the share of imports in the economy is expected to decrease from 59 to 37 percent.

This year 500 billion tenge (US\$1.32 billion) will be allocated to promote exports.

By the end of the year, the state industrialisation programme based on the third five-year period of the industrialisation concept will be developed. The effort will focus on providing support for manufacturers. Direct support will be offered in exchange for businesses making targeted commitments.

The akims (governors) of the Kostanai and the Pavlodar Regions also reported on the manufacturing sectors in their regions.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

In the first two months of 2019, Kazakhstan's crude oil production increased 5.8 percent year on year and totalled 13.2 million tonnes. The Atyrau region accounted for 64 percent of the total oil production and saw an 11 percent year-on-year increase. The region concentrates major oil producers such as the North Caspian Operating Company, Tengizchevroil and Embamunaigas. The Mangistau and Kyzylorda regions, conversely, decreased their oil production by 1.5 percent (to 21.9 million tonnes) and 7.4 percent (to 969,800 tonnes) respectively. Due to repair works in mid-March at Kashagan and Karachaganak oil fields, Kazakhstan will cut oil production by 200,000 barrels per day. This should noticeably decrease production over the spring, which will also fulfill requirements under the OPEC+ pact.

At the end of February, the number of registered small companies in Kazakhstan had increased by 4.3 percent and totalled 426,400 over a year. Among those registered, the number of currently operating companies reached 277,500, increasing 9.1 percent year on year. The majority of active small companies, comprising 23.7 percent of the total, are in trade and car repair. Their numbers increased 16 percent year on year to approximately 37,100 companies. Construction companies make up the second biggest share at about 15,900, up 26.2 percent year on year. Education sector businesses also had a significant increase of 6.1 percent, reaching 15,100 companies.

The Kazakh government made changes April 1 to its mechanism for assigning targeted social assistance (TSA). The criterion for rendering TSA increased from 50 percent to 70 percent of the subsistence minimum, which expanded the coverage to a vulnerable population of more than 800,000 people. The income per capita reached 164,700 tenge (US\$434.5) near the end of 2018, 11.3 percent more than in 2017. Some of the increase in income came from TSA and housing assistance (which grew 33.3 percent year on year) and income from pensions (which increased 25.1 percent). At the same time, per capita income exceeded the population's expenditures only by 1,500 tenge (US\$4). The increase in taxes, payments (up 13.2 percent year on year) and the cost of repaying loans and debts (up 16 percent) increased household spending by 12.1 percent, reaching 163,200 tenge (US\$430.5).

Investments in fixed capital in the arts, entertainment and recreation decreased 14.4 percent year on year to 7.7 billion tenge (US\$20.31 million). Investments at the expense of bank loans that decreased 99.2 percent for the year affected the investments reduction in the sector. At the same time, investments from local budgets increased 5.5 percent and totalled 4.6 billion tenge (US\$12.13 million). Investments from private funds increased 33.6 percent, reaching 2.8 billion tenge (US\$7.38 million). Investments with borrowed funds increased 61.7 percent and totalled 200 million tenge (US\$527,565). The situation may change by the end of the year with the planned Park Canyon to be built in Charyn Canyon. The entire project will cost 1.5 billion tenge (US\$3.96 million); the first stage will cost 700 million tenge (US\$1.85 million).

In the first two months of this year, Kazakhstan extracted 1.1 million tonnes of chrome ores, 6 percent more than in the same period a year earlier. Chrome concentrates production increased 9.7 percent to 743,600 tonnes. Kazchrome, the country's biggest manufacturer, has plans to build a plant for processing stale slags and refined ferrochrome in the Aktobe region by 2020. The company plans to produce 500,000 tonnes of old slags and 10,000 tonnes of refined ferrochrome per year and the new plant will create 50 jobs. The company plans to export 95 percent of its products to China, Japan, the United States, South Korea and the European Union.

NB, government set directions for economic growth

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The National Bank and Government of Kazakhstan signed an agreement to coordinate macroeconomic policy measures.

The agreement will attract investment in fixed assets at a level of 16.8 percent to GDP in 2019 and more than 30 percent to GDP per year by 2025, bringing the share of small and medium-sized businesses to 28.2 percent to GDP in 2019 and 35 percent to GDP by 2025. The share of the shadow economy will be reduced by 40 percent in three years, ensuring sustainable economic growth and maintaining a stable price level.

The document notes "the growth of welfare and living standards of the population is the main objective of the state economic policy."

issues of its securities to build the medium and long-term segments of the yield curve. We will include government securities in the international global indices of developing countries. This will attract the inflow of foreign investments and reduce the cost of borrowing," said National Bank Chairperson Yerbolat Dossayev at the March 26 government meeting.

The bank plays a major role in implementing the state initiatives to develop the economy.

"We will continue financing the 7-20-25 programme on previously-approved conditions. We propose providing borrowers with an initial contribution of more than 20 percent and to expand the number of banks participating in the programme. The bank will take measures to provide banks with long-term liquidity in the amount of 600 billion tenge (US\$1.5 billion) in

Migration centres facilitate issuance of 1.5 million work permits over last three years

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government's creation of migration service centres has allowed the government to issue an additional 1.5 million work permits over the last three years.

"The country's sustainable socio-economic conditions attract a big influx of foreign citizens. Over the last three years, internal affairs agencies issued and extended 1.5 million of Kazakhstan work permits. The amount of work migrants particularly increases in fall-summer period," according to Kazinform news agency.

In comparison, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued 535,000 work permits between 2014-2016, reported by Bnews.kz.

The increased number of permits issued is the result of an increase in applications and the centres' increased processing efficiency. The migration service centres are designed to reduce service turnaround time, remove corruption risks and create a more comfortable environment for foreigners applying for documents.

The permits are issued under the one-window principle. Prior to the centres, migrants often needed to visit multiple agency locations

over the course of a week. Now, the centres can issue permits in a few hours, said Migration Service Committee Chairman Murat Kabdenov.

"In migration services centres, a foreigner having only a passport and a migration card undergoes medical check-up, registers fingerprints, receives insurance, pays national fees, and receives work permit. With Government for Citizens, we have launched migration services centres in 14 regions," Kabdenov told Kazinform.

Migration services centres issue work permits, as well as temporary registration of foreigner services. They were created as a part of a larger initiative of state services automation. According to the numbers presented by Minister of Information and Social Development Dauren Abayev, 80 percent of governmental services will be automated by the end of 2019, and 90 percent of governmental services will be automated by the end of 2020.



Prime Minister Askar Mamin (L) and National Bank Chairperson Yerbolat Dossayev.

"The agreement defines the main tasks including balanced fiscal policy, effective monetary policy and inflation control measures, ensuring the stability of the foreign exchange market, attracting investment and capital availability, development of the government securities market, state programme implementation, improvement of real sector enterprises, stability of the financial system, reducing the shadow economy and development of non-cash payments and consumer protection and improving financial literacy," according to the release.

The bank will continue targeting inflation to maintain low inflation, economic growth sustainability and grow the population's standard of living.

The inflation target is specified. The suggestion is to keep a target corridor of 4-6 percent until 2021, reduce it to 3-5 percent in 2022 and maintain it in the long term.

The bank has set the task to increase the predictability of tenge dynamics. While maintaining the policy of non-interference in currency trading, the bank keeps the right to conduct smooth interventions.

Developing the institutional investor market and time and savings deposits are of special importance. The short-term, risk-free yield curve will be ensured.

"The Ministry of Finance needs to reduce and consolidate the is-

2019-2020 for lending to priority economic projects identified by the government," he said.

As of March 20, 10,576 applications for 120.4 billion tenge (US\$317 million) were received and 6,165 applications for 72 billion tenge (US\$189 million) were approved.

The bank will also allocate up to 100 billion tenge (US\$263 million) over five years to implement the banks' lending programmes to individual buyers of domestic-made cars. Approximately 20 billion tenge (US\$52 million) will be provided this year.

"We will continue to work with judicial authorities in developing bankruptcy law enforcement practices," said Dossayev.

The banking system will be strengthened as part of ensuring financial system stability. Implementing risk-based supervision will depend on the planned assessment of asset quality. The asset quality review will help identify underfunded banks and carry out preventive measures at an early stage.

"We will consider proposals on regulating non-bank loan organisations, online lending companies and pawn shops to prevent risks in the field of consumer lending. The requirements on the transparency of the terms of contracts and protection of the rights of consumers, especially socially vulnerable groups, will be strengthened," he added.

Kazakhstan simplifies import, export procedures

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan recently introduced two changes to simplify import/export procedures, with major documentation now available in postal offices or online.

The first change, introduced March 19, involves export procedures for Kazakh entrepreneurs.

"I think that 2019 should be memorable for Kazakh entrepreneurs as the year when online export of goods became simplified. Soon, we are expecting a

legislation amendment concerning World Post Union documents usage as a declaration of goods. It will allow implementing simplified export of goods service for legal entities. Thus, the entire dialogue of a client while undergoing the export clearance procedure will begin and end in the postal office and will only take a few minutes. Export clearance during customs work will not require the presence of our clients," said Kazpost Board Chairperson Saken Sarsenov at the Samruk Kazyna press conference.

Sarsenov also talked about Ka-

zpost's plans to launch a new transit fulfilment centre in the Turkestan Region to ease operations involving Uzbekistan. Currently, 57 Kazakh online stores work with fulfilment centres and 80 more are scheduled to be added. Fulfilment centres provide a number of services to online stores, including receiving, storing and delivering goods, as well as promotion.

The other change, the Single Window website, was introduced by the State Revenue Committee on March 27. Using the website, those involved in foreign economic activity will be able to provide the information necessary for export and import procedures. The website will also serve as a resource for the preliminary information required.

The portal will provide online access for receiving electronic permits and licences, checking legal entities on customs service status, declaring goods, receiving electronically issued preliminary customs decisions services, referring to reference books and document registers and searching and reviewing regulatory documentation.

Kazakh goods were exported to 119 countries in 2018.



BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The Kazakh Ministry of Finance has proposed a phased introduction for the universal declaration of income and property among Kazakh citizens, starting 2021, reports its press service. Current legislation would introduce the declaration in 2020. Work is underway to prepare a legislative framework, information systems, database updates and pilot projects in Kazakhstan's regions. A pilot project in Karaganda Region indicated several problems that will take some time to solve, the ministry said. It proposes government employees and their spouses declare their income and property January 2021; employees of state-owned firms and their spouses declare their income and property January 2023; heads of legal entities, entrepreneurs and their spouses declare their income and property January 2024; and everyone else declare their income and property January 2025. At each stage, results will be analysed, problems identified and measures undertaken to improve legislation, methodology and information systems. Legislation amendments for submission to the Kazakh Parliament are now being developed.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Eurasian Resources Group (ERG), the ERG Commercial Centre launched its first ERG Supplier Award competition. To participate, producers must win any of ERG's auctions before the October deadline. ERG's needs are met by more than 3,500 suppliers, 2,000 of which are Kazakh firms. The competition aims to support Kazakhstan's producers and recognise their efforts and will be held annually. A jury will decide on the winners Nov. 1, and the winners will receive support in promoting their brand and in participating in ERG tenders.

Kazakhstan's first national low-cost airline, FlyArystan, has launched ticket sales for flights between Almaty and the capital, its press service reports. Flights to and from Nur-Sultan begin May 1 on Airbus A320 jets with a 180-seat capacity. Flight costs start at 6,999 tenge (US\$18.46) for one-way flights. This is the most anticipated flight connection set up by the airline, said FlyArystan Sales and Marketing Director Zhanar Zhailauova. Earlier this month, the airline launched ticket sales for flights between Almaty and Oral and Almaty and Taraz. Tickets are available at www.flyarystan.com.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev approved amendments to Kazakhstan's legislation to improve the country's business environment, reports the Akorda press service. He signed the law "On introducing amendments and addenda to some legislative acts on the development of the business environment and the regulation of trade activities," which aims to improve legislation on entrepreneurship, tax and customs administration, electronic and agro-industrial trade, foreign trade with Eurasian Economic Union member states and the labelling and traceability of goods. For example, participants in special economic zones (SEZ) will have the right to choose a zero value-added tax rate when selling goods within SEZ territory.

Chingis Rakhmetov was appointed April 1 a member of Kaspi Bank's Board of Directors, and Gulnar Koyaidarova left her post at the board, reports KASE. The board now consists of Vyacheslav Kim, Michael Lomtadze and Rakhmetov. Kaspi.kz shares are owned by Kim, Lomtadze and Asia Equity Partners, holding 61.64 percent, 8.58 percent and 29.67 percent, respectively. An initial public offering of Kaspi.kz is planned this year on the London Stock Exchange.

The Kazakh Senate has adopted amendments to the law "On the guaranteed transfer from the Kazakh National Fund in 2019 to 2021," reports Inform.kz. This year, the guaranteed transfer will increase by 250 billion tenge (US\$659.46 million), and 23 percent of the national budget will be drawn from the guaranteed transfer, said Kazakh Senate Finance and Budget Committee Chair Olga Perepechina. The changes were made to finance new initiatives outlined at the Feb. 27 18th Congress of the Nur Otan party.

Light industries focus on local market, face shortage of high-quality raw materials

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Light industry is one of the priorities for the Kazakh economy. Product exports were \$108.5 million for January-August 2018, 21 percent lower compared to the previous year. Imports reached \$845 million, 6.2 percent higher than in 2017.

Approximately 992 enterprises, 13 large, 27 medium-sized and 952 small companies, operate in light industry, reported the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. The field, which represents 0.9 percent of manufacturing, is divided into textiles (51 percent), clothing (38 percent) and leather goods (11 percent). Women make up 90 percent of those employed in factories.

Despite challenges, large and small companies are optimistic about the future and feel competition is good for business.

Shymkent-based AGF Group is the country's largest producer of home textiles. Located at the Ontustik Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the plant has supplied products for IKEA stores in Russia since 2016.

The company recently won the Forbes Kazakhstan World Entrepreneur of The Year award in the regional leader category.

"We studied regulations, laws and internal rules for working with IKEA. We needed some funds and time to restructure the processes and change for the better. But we decided to change, regardless of whether we signed an agreement with IKEA or not," said company head Gaukhar Nassyrova.

AGF needed nearly two years to review all the necessary procedures for IKEA suppliers. The company's openness and level of competence were essential.

"The location of the plant at the SEZ and its close connection to the Eurasian Economic Union were our main advantage," she noted.

Cooperation between AGF and



IKEA has grown 50-60 percent annually. The partnership improved production standards and developed necessary market skills.

Now, the company is focused on promoting its own brand of home textiles.

"We received a grant from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to develop our brand in 2015. Dependence on one customer is a huge risk," said Nassyrova.

AGF delivered the Suave brand of luxury linens and Arua brand for the business-plus segment. It also introduced a market entry strategy.

"Thanks to the work with our consultants, we began to look at our products from the point of view of the customer. The established business relations with suppliers, the technological chain and

the benefits provided by the SEZ gave us a competitive price," she added.

The company delivers Arua products to stores including Home and Metro hypermarkets. Its own brands represent 5 percent of production, as AGF is more interested in developing technology supplies to commercial networks and its own distribution network.

AGF has experienced a five-fold increase in sales compared to 2017.

"We do not have many high-quality brands, for example, like Mimoriki brand. Most clothing and textile factories operate on production order. It is difficult for local brands to compete with Turkish goods, which are in demand in the Russian and international markets. At the same time, local

customers believe that local items should be cheap, but no one takes into account the fact that we purchase materials, fabrics and accessories [abroad] and this affects the price," she said.

This year, AGF is participating in the Fast Track accelerated programme launched by EBRD in cooperation with Ernst & Young.

"We have high expectations about this initiative. We have always been a manufacturing company entering into production order contracts. Recently, we began to produce our own linens and started to think how to bring them to the market. The development of brands and new products requires time and financing. We expect that the programme will help determine the risks in these areas and how we can minimise them so that we can

find out how effective it is from a financial point of view," she said.

The shortage of high-quality materials is one of the industry's main challenges, said Almagul Kassymova, general manager of Metropolitan Textile, which has produced sports and special clothing in the capital since 2015. The lack of production technologists, cutters and designers is also an issue in the northern region.

Although small, Metropolitan's list of major customers is quite impressive, including Etalon Auto gas station network, Hilton Astana, Kazakh Humanitarian Law University, Nazarbayev University, Hotel Ritz Carlton Astana and Zhigergas.

"We don't have many competitors in the local market. We compete more with imported goods in terms of price. The uniqueness of our product is that we can develop an individual design for the customer in a short period of time," she said.

Kassymova feels unique design in sports-style clothing is a promising direction. Last year, the company launched the Evol.Collab brand of athleisure wear, a trend that combines athletic and leisure looks. The sportswear depends on the nature of the sport, climatic conditions and type of physical activity, and manufacturers choose fabrics based on these indicators.

"Our collection consists of only five models for women and five for men. All of them can be combined with each other for a total look. We want our brand to be predictable. People will come and not be overwhelmed by the choice, but at the same time, items will be of high-quality," she said.

The new collection is available online and the showroom is expected to be located adjacent to the sewing workshop.

"We plan to expand production and develop special designs to reduce production costs and compete better. We also want to increase online sales," she added.

Turkestan Region entrepreneur starts Paulownia business

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Dauren Baltabaiuly, an entrepreneur from the Saryagash district in Turkestan region, has aroused the interest of locals since planting 40,000 paulownia trees on two hectares.

One of the fastest growing trees in the world, paulownias are often used in manufacturing. The business may seem like a slow effort, but it is a sure way to earn money and work towards a greener environment.

Baltabaiuly discovered the business while studying at a university in China, reported 24.kz. He was the first in the region to grow and sell paulownia and in several years, his empty farmland became a forest.

"Paulownia has many advantages. It grows quickly and has natural protection against insects. In one year, the tree can grow up to five metres; with good care it will reach 20-25 metres over five years, after which it will grow in width," he said.

The fast-growing feature makes planting paulownia an environmental solution. It prevents erosion in fertile soil and a significant amount of its biomass, after leaf fall, enriches the soil with useful organic substances. It

is the fastest way to restore land plots damaged by fires, landslides, mudflows and other natural disasters.

The tree's large leaves provide substantial surface, allowing them to absorb ten times more carbon dioxide than those of ordinary trees. The leaves are 20 percent protein, making them a nutritious feed in animal husbandry.

Paulownia (or pavlovnia, often referred to as "princess tree") was named in honour of Anna Pavlovna, queen consort of The Netherlands and one of six daughters of Emperor Pavel I of Russia. The wood grows straight and is in high demand in manufacturing furniture and musical instruments, as well as in aircraft and shipbuilding.

Local residents also use the species for fast landscaping and intend to plant more seedlings.

"We are trying to grow trees throughout the region. Now, we plant [them] around the sports complex. The fact is that during the day, the sunrays fall directly into the windows of the gymnasium and prevent children from exercising. We hope that the tree will grow quickly and create a lot of shadow here," said physical culture and sports department head Ablyazim Zhanshuakov.



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Paulownia trees

Photo credit: Longwood Gardens Twitter page

EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Naming Kazakh capital after its visionary is right decision

Changing the name of a nation's capital city is always a profound moment. The capital is the heart of a country, therefore, a decision to rename it should not be taken lightly. Kazakhstan understands this. But considering the contribution the First President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev made to our capital, it is easy to understand why the decision to rename the city was made.

Honouring a national leader in this way is not without precedent, for example St. Petersburg in Russia and, in particular, the U.S. capital, which is named after the fledgling country's first and, at the time, still serving President George Washington. When the United States decided to establish a new capital on the Potomac River, United States Congress named it to honour the man they saw as the prime Founding Father of the nation.

It is a title which few, looking at Kazakhstan's journey since independence, would disagree belongs to Nursultan Nazarbayev. His leadership, as has been recognised in the many international articles discussing his decision to step back, was critical in ensuring Kazakhstan overcame the many challenges the country faced, in shaping its stability, economic growth and international standing and setting a strong course for the future.

But, in one way, the comparison

might underplay the part that our First President played in the birth of the place that now carries his name. For this city is, more than was even the case with America's new capital, the result of his personal vision and determination.

His decision to move the capital from Almaty was, it must be remembered, far from universally popular at the time. There was again plenty of criticism from inside Kazakhstan and beyond at the plan to create a new capital in the centre of our large country. It was viewed as a distraction from the many serious problems our young nation faced as well as an unnecessary call on scarce resources.

Time, however, has shown that the opposite has been true. Far from diverting efforts away from building a modern, dynamic and internationally active country, the decision has helped give them focus and drive them on. Our capital, with its arresting skyline, has become the symbol of our national progress and ambition.

Inside two decades, it has grown to be Kazakhstan's second largest city, with a population of more than one million and national and increasingly international cultural influence. It is now, too, as was hoped a major economic and entrepreneurial motor of our country's continued development. The considerable investment made in building the city is now being repaid as it has

become a net contributor to our national wealth.

This contribution will only increase. Many of the hi-tech and innovative firms on which Kazakhstan's economic future rests have their home here. They are drawn by the young, highly educated workforce who have often received their education at the city's dozen academic institutions. These benefits are spreading out to the country as a whole.

It is not just in Kazakhstan that this positive impact is being felt. Our new capital has become the diplomatic and financial centre of the wider region. It is now pulling in investment and opening eyes to the potential of Central Asia as a whole.

Diplomatically, the new capital has helped put Kazakhstan and the region firmly on the world map. It is now increasingly chosen to host major global conferences and events, such as EXPO 2017 as well as provide safe and neutral ground for talks to find solutions to such difficult and complex challenges as the Syrian conflict. It has earned the title City of Peace bestowed on it by UNESCO.

The new capital has lived up to the far-seeing ambitions of its architect. It has strengthened the unity of our country, provided a new powerful motor for its continued development and helped give Kazakhstan a global profile. It feels right that the city should carry his name.

Strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

By Abdulaziz Kamilov

Today in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, we are witnessing and directly participating in the process of updating the centuries-old chronicle of friendship and good-neighbourliness between our countries.

For a long time, Uzbeks and Kazakhs have been living in peace and harmony, providing support to each other. Time-tested fraternal relations and a high level of strategic partnership are enriched with new content. Over the past two years, we have managed to achieve significant results in the development of Uzbek-Kazakh relations in various fields and directions.

Due to joint efforts, a completely new atmosphere of political trust has been created. A breakthrough has been achieved in resolving many issues that in the past created obstacles to mutual rapprochement to achieve common interests in the further development and improvement of the well-being of our peoples. Trade, investment, transport, communication, cooperation, production, cultural and humanitarian ties, cross-border and interregional collaboration, interaction in the field of security and joint resistance to modern challenges and threats have been intensified and expanded.

A solid foundation has been created to ensure dynamic development of mutually beneficial and multifaceted cooperation based on the provisions of the agreements on eternal friendship and strategic partnership. The legal framework for bilateral cooperation has been significantly strengthened.

Today, we have all the necessary conditions for fruitful and constructive cooperation – deep mutual understanding at all levels. This was largely facilitated by the mutual visits of the heads of our states, which undoubtedly gave new impetus to further strengthen the strategic partnership.

Each meeting of the heads of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is always perceived with great uplift and keen interest, since as part of these meetings the sides exchange views on many issues of mutual interest and reach agreements to further strengthen friendship and cooperation.

At the same time, meetings at the level of ministries and agencies have also become regular and cooperation between regions is actively developing. Border and inter-regional relations are expanding and deepening and new mechanisms for activating economic relations are being developed.

In this context, the First Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan Interregional Cooperation Forum, held with great success last November in Shymkent, marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations. The results of the forum vividly showed the wide, yet untapped potential of Uzbek-Kazakh economic cooperation.

New approaches and trends in the interaction between our countries have led to the intensification of bilateral trade and economic and investment cooperation. Kazakhstan has a firm position as one of the largest foreign trade partners of Uzbekistan. Significant results have been achieved in the development of mutually beneficial cooperation between our countries in economic, trade, transport, scientific, technical, cultural and humanitarian areas. Bilateral trade in 2018 increased by 47 percent and reached \$3.022 billion.

One of the key components of Uzbek-Kazakh relations is the cultural and humanitarian area, which plays an important role in preserving and strengthening inter-ethnic peace and harmony, cultivating a sense of mutual respect, mutual enrichment and further rapprochement of the peoples of our countries. The Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan in 2018 is a vivid example of the development of bilateral cultural ties.

This unique event, organised for



Abdulaziz Kamilov

the first time in the history of many years of our fruitful cooperation, is a striking example of true fraternal relations between two close nations. We are actively working to organise the Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan this year.

The level of successful and productive interaction achieved over the past two years fully meets the interests of the fraternal peoples of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and contributes to ensuring stability and progress throughout the region of Central Asia.

Such a breakthrough was made due to the political will of the heads of our states – Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Nursultan Nazarbayev – aimed at developing good-neighbourly relations and strengthening and further deepening regional cooperation and unity of the countries of Central Asia.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan clearly and precisely defined that the main foreign policy priority of the country is to pursue an open and constructive policy towards its closest neighbours, solving the problems of Central Asia based on equality, mutual consideration of interests and search for reasonable compromises. All these efforts should be aimed at turning Central Asia into a region of stability, security and prosperity.

Achieving these objectives, as well as ensuring sustainable and dynamic development of our entire region, depends largely on how closely and harmoniously the interaction of the Central Asian states is built. In this vein, the partnership of our fraternal countries is important for strengthening regional stability and developing cooperation throughout Central Asia.

This applies not only to political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation, but also to interaction in the fight against major trans-border threats in Central Asia – terrorism, religious extremism, organised crime and drug trafficking.

We should note our close cooperation among international organisations, primarily the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), United Nations (UN) and others. We highly appreciate the level of mutual support while considering within these organisations the most important issues affecting the interests of Central Asia as a whole.

Among them, of particular importance is the creation of a Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ), as well as the announcement of Aug. 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Testing. The global community not only supported the aspirations of the Central Asian countries for a world free of nuclear weapons, but also acknowledged the merits of Kazakhstan in this process, which announced the closure of the test site near Semipalatinsk.

In addition, Uzbekistan supported the bid of Kazakhstan for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, as well as its initiative under the chairpersonship in the Security Council on organising a ministerial debate in 2018 on Building Regional Partnerships in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model for the Security-Development Nexus.

In this context, I would also like to note the joint implementation of the initiative of President

Mirziyoyev in organising regular consultative meetings of the heads of Central Asian states, which is historical in its significance for Central Asia. This initiative was fully supported by President Nazarbayev and at the suggestion of the head of Kazakhstan, the first such meeting was held on March 15, 2018 in Astana.

It should be emphasised that this format is a good platform for the countries of the region to maintain a regular confidential dialogue and develop coordinated approaches on topical regional issues. The practical implementation of this initiative was made possible thanks to the strong commitment of the Central Asian states to the idea of common interests and responsibility for the future of the peoples of the region.

The adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution titled "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region" in June 2018 was of utmost significance. This decision was an important step in the development of Central Asia as a common, consolidated region, states of which are capable of jointly solving common problems and ensuring the prosperity of its multi-million population.

The countries of Central Asia also became co-authors of the UN General Assembly Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance resolution adopted in December 2018. The resolution is aimed at promoting peace, mutual respect, tolerance and integration, the purpose of which is to strengthen and ensure religious freedom, protect the rights of believers and prevent discrimination.

Today, Central Asia is no longer a periphery of world politics. Every year, the region attracts the increasing attention of the global community and key actors of international relations. This is also facilitated by the growing activity of the countries of the region and their involvement in the discussion and resolution of the most important issues of regional and global politics.

These successes were achieved thanks to the joint efforts and mutual support of the countries of the region, including Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to regional initiatives.

In this context, I would like to note similar positions of the leaders of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, who consistently advocate for strengthening regional partnership, deepening integration in various sectors of the economy and developing cultural and humanitarian ties.

Today, the process of creating broad opportunities for deepening and building up interregional cooperation and bringing it to a new level is underway. A new page in the centuries-old chronicle of friendship, good-neighbourliness, mutual support and cooperation has opened before the states of Central Asia.

All these factors laid the foundation to implement new, major regional economic and political initiatives and strengthen the common interests of the countries of the region in the field of security and sustainable development, as well as the common cultural and civilisational identity of Central Asia.

It should be emphasised that our countries have a firm political will and are ready to work together to keep a trustful, open and constructive dialogue over the whole range of interaction-related issues and to make the necessary efforts to strengthen multi-faceted practical and strategic cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, both at the bilateral and regional levels with the active participation of all Central Asian states.

The author is Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. The article originally appeared in the recent issue of the Diplomatic Herald magazine, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.



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Frypore Associated S.A.
BVI Company No. 1612936 (the "Company")

NOTICE is hereby given that, on 13 March 2019, by Order of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court:

1. The dissolution of the Company is rescinded and declared void;
2. The Company be restored to the Register of Companies as a company in voluntary liquidation by the Registrar of Corporate Affairs upon payment of any outstanding fees and penalties pursuant to and in accordance with the BVI Business Companies Act, 2004.
3. Mr Russell Crumpler and Mr Christopher Farmer shall act as joint liquidators;
4. The Company is deemed never to have been dissolved; and
5. Any property which belonged to the Company and which was not disposed of at the date of dissolution or which was received for the benefit of or on behalf of the Company since its dissolution, be restored to and vest in the Company.

The Company was restored in liquidation on 20 March 2018 and Mr. Russell Crumpler and Mr. Christopher Farmer of KPMG (BVI) Limited, 3rd Floor, Banco Popular Building, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands have been appointed as the joint liquidators.

Creditors of the Company are to prove their debts or claims on or before 10 April 2019 and to establish any title they may have, or may be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts are proved, or excluded from the benefit of objecting to the distribution. Claims should be submitted email to christopherfarmer@kpmg.vg

Signed this 20th day of March 2019
(Sgd.) Christopher Farmer

Joint Voluntary Liquidator

THE ASTANA TIMES

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Kazakhstan to double domestic vehicle production, build three plants

Continued from Page A1

Since 2015, the second five-year plan of industrialisation has been implemented in the country. The current year is the last year of the programme. During the four years of the programme, 480 projects were implemented worth 4.9 trillion tenge (US\$12.9 billion), more than 44,000 new jobs were created. The projects were implemented in industries such as mining and metallurgy, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, light and food industries, engineering, construction industry, energy, oil refining, agricultural and industrial complex, agricultural processing and others.

This year, it is planned to introduce about 120 projects worth 1.1 trillion tenge (US\$2.9 billion) with the creation of 20,000 new jobs.



Photo credit: kazantoprom.kz

Kazakh officials, mainly representing Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development and industrial enterprises of the country, visited the new KAMAZ plant March 20. They visited workshops producing cabins and the main assembly line of the automobile plant. The officials also visited Cummins Kama joint venture and got acquainted with Cummins engine assembly line.

"The visit of Kazakh delegation took place to develop cooperation between KAMAZ and Kazakhstan. At this stage, we are discussing the creation of working groups in several areas. In particular, the support of the automotive industry based on KAMAZ's experience, developing local production and cooperation in Kazakhstan," said KAMAZ Director for Kazakhstan,

Caucasus and Ukraine Radik Sofyanov.

He highlighted that the market of heavy trucks in Kazakhstan is one of the most promising for the company. The main consumers of the company are enterprises of the agricultural sector, oil and gas industry and public utilities.

KAMAZ-Engineering, a joint venture in Kazakhstan, established in 2005, has a design capacity of the plant of 1,500 trucks per year. Over the years, the plant has produced more than 12,500 trucks and special vehicles, which are used in many economy sectors of Kazakhstan. The company produces 50 types of vehicles, including dump trucks, tractors, flatbed and four-wheel drive vehicles, as well as more than 35 types of special equipment.

Petropavlovsk-made socks in demand by domestic market



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Matex recently opened the first and only facility in the North Kazakhstan region that manufactures socks. The company represents the economy of simple things in action, as its goods are necessary, in demand and, to date, have almost exclusively been imported.

Company director Aramais Ter-Astvatsaturyan, who extensively studied the light industry market, learned only one-tenth of hosiery products in the domestic market are made in the country. He decided to fill the gap.

"In fact, making socks is not an easy process. Buying machines is not a problem. The main thing is to understand the technology. I considered buying Italian equipment

and met with manufacturers, but it is very difficult for a beginner. I travelled to different factories and got experience in six months. As a result, I decided to purchase Czech equipment. In Soviet times, all factories were equipped with such equipment. These, of course, are modern. The factory has 20 machines," he said, according to inform.kz.

"Everything is important: the number of needles, the quality of the threads and the skills of the employees. Before getting to the counter, the sock goes through several stages. A knit sock is automated. A programme is launched in which all parameters are set: from the size of the sock and its length to a pattern on it," he added.

Ter-Astvatsaturyan creates sketches of future products for programming, noting the need to understand what you draw and how a machine can realise the idea. Each loop must be calculated and the concept adapted within the parameters.

Matex has developed 75 models

of women's, men's and children's socks and knee-highs. The number

"Everything is important: the number of needles, the quality of the threads and the skills of the employees. Before getting to the counter, the sock goes through several stages."

of needles affects the density of the product and the company must stay attuned to customer demands.

Because thin socks do not sell in the region, 200 needles are not required.

"When we discuss 100-percent cotton goods, you need to understand that this does not happen. You won't be able to put on a sock made of 100-percent cotton. If we are talking about the main thread, it is made of 100-percent cotton. In a sock, cotton thread is 85 percent. The rest are synthetic threads that are used for knitting gum, a polyamide thread for a flashing toe and lycra," said Ter-Astvatsaturyan.

Matex purchases raw materials from Turkey and Uzbekistan. A kilogram of yarn starts at \$5.

"You can buy cheaper raw materials, but we will not reduce the cost of production. My idea was not to produce socks and get bil-

lions. I have always wanted to produce high-quality products that will be in demand by our people," he noted.

The equipment's capacity makes it possible to manufacture 4,500 pairs per day. Products are sold only in Petropavlovsk so far.

One of the problems of light industry is the difficult mechanism of public procurement. Ter-Astvatsaturyan proposed devising a method that would allow all participants to be on equal footing during a meeting with regional deputy akim (governor) Dauren Zhandarbek.

Ter-Astvatsaturyan is confident competition should be healthy. In particular, he wants state bodies to require Kazakh content in technical specifications.

FlyArystan low-cost airline launches flights between Almaty, Uralsk, Taraz, Nur-Sultan

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – New low-cost airline FlyArystan will launch flights between Almaty and Taraz, Almaty and Oral and Almaty and Nur-Sultan in May.

The direct flights from Almaty to Oral, the administrative centre of the West Kazakhstan region, will utilise Airbus A320 jets with 180 seats.

Tickets for Almaty and Oral flights will start at 12,999 tenge (US\$34.12) one-way, including passenger fees of the airport. Tickets are available the airline's website www.flyarystan.com. Additional services will also be available, such as extra baggage, on-board meals and choice of seats.

"Almaty and Oral are divided by more than 2,500 kilometres, which

can be overcome in a land-based mode of transport for at least three days. Moving in this way, residents of the two cities spend several days on the road to visit relatives and friends.

From now on, people can visit one of the most beautiful cities of Kazakhstan, the pride of the region, on any day of the week, getting to Oral from Almaty in just two hours. We are confident that this flight will be popular not only among ordinary people, but also entrepreneurs who will contribute to economic development of the region," said FlyArystan Director of Sales and Marketing Zhanar Zhailauova.

Tickets are also available for flights between Almaty and Taraz. Ticket prices for the 60 minute flights start at 5,000 tenge (US\$13.12) one-way, including passenger fees of the airport.

The daily flights will also oper-

ate on Airbus A320 aircraft, which will be able to transport more than 130,000 passengers per year along the Almaty-Taraz-Almaty route.

"Our task is to provide people with the opportunity to travel easily and comfortably, discovering our country with a rich culture and history. We believe these discoveries should not be tiring in hot buses and trains wasting precious time. We are glad that thanks to FlyArystan, they will be able to see relatives more often, and entrepreneurs will build their business, establishing contacts with partners," said Zhailauova.

According to the company, one of the most popular routes will be Almaty-Nur-Sultan-Almaty, which will operate twice a day. One-way ticket prices start at 6,999 tenge (US\$18.4).

"We can say with confidence that this will be the most expected flight, which we are ready to carry out every day at the most affordable prices. We are pleased that from now on... not only will business people be able to fly from Almaty to the capital, but also an ordinary student, who can now visit relatives and friends more often, can do that for only 6,999 tenge (US\$18.4) in less than two hours and that's great," said the Zhailauova.

The FlyArystan fleet includes four Airbus 320-232 aircraft with 180 seats that on average are six years old. In 2022, the airline plans to increase its fleet to 15 aircraft, which will be based around Kazakhstan.



Photo credit: inform.kz

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Kazakhstan's customs Single Window facilitates global trade

By Ruslan Yensebayev

Today, globalisation processes in the global economy are taking place at an increasing pace. Every year, the volume of trade between countries increases, which affects the development of customs cooperation. Under these conditions, the issues of improving competitiveness and stimulating economic growth are also associated with the creation of a reliable system for regulating foreign economic activity and simplifying customs procedure.

In Kazakhstan, for the development of electronic declarations, starting in 2018, the ASTANA-1 Information System (IS) was introduced by state revenue authorities, which allows the automatic production of goods to be carried out in a paperless way.

ASTANA-1 IS has a number of advantages, including the possibility of automated control of the entire customs process from the moment of submission of preliminary information, the use of a risk management system, registering transit and storing goods in a temporary storage warehouse until the control after goods are released.

In addition, work is being done on the exchange of information through ASTANA-1 IS with third



Ruslan Yensebayev

countries on completed export customs declarations, which will allow the control of goods imported from these countries and significantly reduce the volume of the shadow economy.

Single Window mechanism implementation

Further simplification of customs administration and maximum automation of customs processes are planned to be achieved through the implementation of the Single Window Information System for export-import operations.

The system is based on an innovative concept, in accordance with the recommendations of the UN No. 33-34 and the provisions of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation and other documents.

The Single Window website allows participants of foreign economic activity to submit documents required for export-import operations in a standardised form through a single access channel.

Advantages and innovations

Many services and functions that accompanied customs operations were previously obtained through disparate systems. The case was also complicated by the lack of integration with the necessary databases.

By combining more than 13 information resources, including the ASTANA-1 IS, E-Licensing SD and various registries and other systems, information from which is required for performing customs operations, the Single Window website creates conditions for participants of foreign economic activity in which they do not need to go to disparate authorities to collect certain documents and permits. In the future, integration is planned with another 11 information systems of state bodies.

Website users can also access the Integrated Customs Tariff service, which provides access to information on product codes, rates, tariffs, a tariff simulator, state control measures applied to goods and information on submitting applications to obtain permits.

Due to the "Obtaining electronic permits and licenses" component, website users have the opportunity to submit online electronic applications to obtain all licenses and permits issued both directly in Single Window and other information systems.

It should be noted that in the Single Window system there is also the function of issuing documents on conformity assessment, mainly certificates of conformity and declarations of conformity of the form of Kazakhstan and the Eurasian Economic Union.

One of the issues that are subject to corruption in customs activity is the determination of the customs value and the classification of goods. Especially, if we take into account the fact that public services for issuing customs preliminary decisions have not been automated.

Currently, applications for receiving preliminary decisions are submitted in hard copy; in parallel, a legislative regulation on submitting such applications through the information system is being worked out.

The service on the Single Window website – "Electronic services for issuing customs preliminary decisions" – implies the full automation of public services and the availability of integrations to verify the information specified in the application.

The component will allow the electronic submission of applications to obtain preliminary decisions on the classification of goods according to the HS code, the country of origin, decisions on the classification of goods in an unassembled or disassembled form as well as preliminary decisions on the customs value of the goods.

Automation of these public services will reduce the time of their provision by an average of 10 days and will also allow participants of foreign economic activity to avoid contact with customs officers.

The listed innovations will contribute to the exclusion of the fact of indicating in the customs declarations information on counterfeit documents on conformity assessment, accordingly, will create conditions for the subsequent circulation of safe goods in Kazakhstan that meet the requirements of technical regulations.

In addition, the website automates such public services as: obtaining the status of persons carrying out activities in the fields of customs (AEO, TSW,

Duty free, customs warehouses, free warehouses, customs representatives, customs carriers, warehouses storing their own goods) and issuing customs preliminary decisions. The listed services will be available through the Single Window website until the end of April.

In the "Reference books and document registers" section, users will be able to familiarise themselves with national registers and unified EEU registers on permits issued in Eurasian Economic Union member states, as well as with compilations of preliminary decisions, intellectual property registers and drug registers.

As we see, the implementation of Single Window will create conditions for simplifying and speeding up the processes of customs procedures and reducing the time and costs of participants of foreign economic activity.

By eliminating the human factor in making decisions, corruption will be minimised, the transparency of customs and other state authorities will increase. This, in turn, will have a beneficial effect on the growth of economic indicators and the increase of our country's competitiveness on a global and regional scale.

The author is Vice-Minister of Finance of Kazakhstan.

Central Asia has potential to attract \$170 billion in FDI in 10 years

Continued from Page A1

The region holds two trump cards – an abundance in natural resources and young, growing and well-educated population. The countries continually provide more opportunities for the younger workforce. Kazakhstan, for example, announced 2019 as the Year of Youth and started funding various programmes and initiatives that will support youth entrepreneurship and development in general, allowing them to establish sustainable economic growth.

The two biggest emerging markets, China and India, established a closer relation with the Central Asian region. Despite retaining Communist ideology, China experienced rapid economic growth during the first four decades of its market reforms to a more

investment-driven model for exports and manufacturing. The Chinese involvement has shown positive results with the Belt and Road Initiative that reintroduced the region as an important transit corridor between Europe, Russia and Asia.

The region has a relatively stable and secure environment. The report, however, suggests that "this stability is both a blessing and a curse. It reassures potential investors, but, since it is rarely part of the news cycle, Central Asia is often overlooked and is largely unknown to the public."

According to the report, the most promising investment potential is in the agriculture, tourism and petrochemical sectors. The three have a low level of existing investment, high government priority and are easy to enter. Agriculture, for instance, has

minor administrative barriers and low levels of capital expenditure (CapEx). Central Asia has a variety of primary agricultural commodities and processing the raw products will add value to the regional economy.

The region has the potential to serve both domestic and international beef markets. INALCA, Italy's leading beef producer, started a 10-year, \$561.41 million investment project in Kazakh beef production several years ago. In addition, the region provides immense opportunities in textile manufacturing, as the Soviet legacy left cotton fields and wool production that still build a significant part of some Central Asian countries' economies.

The regional countries share the Soviet past, but each has followed different development directions after independence that

make it challenging to look at the region as one entity. Kazakhstan, which comprises only 25 percent of the Central Asian population, generates more than 60 percent of the regional GDP. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remain relatively under-developed, relying heavily on remittances from expatriates. According to the latest World

Bank's Doing Business report, Kazakhstan is the highest among the regional countries in 28th place, while Tajikistan is ranked 126th.

According to the BCG report, there are five steps to narrow the gap and open Central Asia's full potential: building regional infrastructure, facilitating cross-border

movement, harmonising regulations and investment climate, developing complementarity and coordinating investment promotion strategies.

BCG is a global management consulting firm and one of the world's leading advisors on business strategy with more than 90 offices around the world.

Halyk Bank to provide women entrepreneurs with one billion tenge in loans

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Halyk Bank plans to provide one billion tenge (US\$2.6 billion) in loans to women entrepreneurs this year, continuing its 2018 commitment to empowering female businesspersons. The announcement was made by Halyk Bank board chairperson Umut Shayakhmetova during the Women in Business forum in Almaty, reported NewTimes.kz.

"Last year, under the memorandum with the Council of Businesswomen of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan, 236 female entrepreneurs received 1.8 billion tenge (US\$4.73 million) in loans at 5 percent interest from our bank. This year, we are ready to provide one billion tenge (US\$2.6 billion) more for the development of female entrepreneurship," she told the participants.

The loan initiative was launched last year as part of the memorandum between Atameken, Halyk Bank and the ERG company on supporting female business projects. Shayakhmetova explained why they are provided for female entrepreneurs in particular.

"Customer solvency analysis shows that women are more responsible, careful and hard-working. Women show the lowest rates of loan delinquency and default," he noted.

Halyk Bank small and medium business department head Sergei Bulkovski spoke on the same topic last year with appazeta.kz.

The programme is expected to help women entrepreneurs, as the inability to receive loans is the main limiting factor for new businesses.

"Our target is women – individual entrepreneurs who really do manage their own enterprises or plan to launch them and legal entities, given that at least 50 percent of authorised capital in LLPs or JSCs belongs to female founders. There are other requirements for potential applicants. Tax arrears and other overdue mandatory budget payments exclude appli-

cants from consideration, as well as overdue arrears to second tier banks and other financial organisations as of the current month of the application date," he said.

Halyk Bank representatives explained the application mechanism last year at the Regional Entrepreneurs Chamber. Loans can be up to 10 million tenge (US\$26,000). A 5 percent interest rate, the lowest rate available in the country, applies to loans with up to a 24-month repayment period; 36-month loans have a 6-percent interest rate. The maximum repayment term applies to 7-percent, 84-month loans.

The programme is expected to help women entrepreneurs, as the inability to receive loans is the main limiting factor for new businesses.

"We remember that last year, the volatility of the national currency was high and devaluation through 2018 was 17 percent. It's possible that it's related to the ruble losing its value. However, we did not always understand why the tenge kept falling despite positive macroeconomic factors... We think that 2019 will be the year when the banking system will get better," said Shayakhmetova.

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PEOPLE

First Edmund Muskie Alumni Conference gathers individuals from 12 countries

B2

CULTURE

Kazakh filmmaker directs videos for US hip-hop artists

B3

SPORTS

Denis Ten exhibition attracted 35,000 visitors in Japan

B7

Different nationalities live in peace, preserve their culture and traditions in Kazakhstan, says Ukrainian community leader



By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Representatives of different ethnicities live in peace and harmony in Kazakhstan, with opportunities to preserve their traditions, customs and language, and share them

with other members of society, said Tamara Shirmer, head of the capital's Obereg Ukrainians' Community.

"We are proud that fate has given us the opportunity to live in such a beautiful country, where everyone, regardless of nationality or social status, can learn, work and de-

velop their language, culture and traditions," she told assembly.kz, the website of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

The community, created in 2003, develops and preserves Ukrainian language, culture and traditions.

"It was an important decision

for Ukrainians living in the capital. There were native speakers and culture and traditions bearers who united to preserve the ethnic integrity and spiritual values of the people of Kazakhstan and the formation of a common culture," she noted.

Continued on Page B2

Podcasts find growing audience, become new social opinion platform

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Why do creative individuals launch podcasts in a period of YouTube domination? What topics do they explore? Is podcasting becoming more popular in Kazakhstan?

The Astana Times interviewed TEDx Ambassador Larissa Pak and engineer Omar-Sayan Karabayev to learn more about their podcasts and activities.

Pak's "Every Day by Day" covers topical and controversial issues related to the environment, gender equality and society with public figures, writers, reporters and activists. All her guests can be defined as people with social position and their own vision of various situations.

"We are looking for the new ideas and every day meanings of our life in the conversation flow," she said.

She released the first episode with Guzeli Yakhina, best-selling author of "Zuleikha opens her

eyes" and "My Children," in July.

"My podcast is like an inner voice that gives interesting topics or food for thought. We talk about events and things that excite or inspire us every day. At the same time, the podcast is our voice for the world which attracts the public with the same values," she said.

Pak recalled the way she was introduced to the genre. During a road trip, she was impressed by Serial, a podcast telling the story of an American journalist investigating a criminal case. A 17-year-old boy of Pakistani descent was arrested for killing his ex-girlfriend.

"While driving, we were immersed in the story. We imagined the whole world while listening to this podcast. Before, I never liked audio books. Now, podcasts have become something special to me. I like to listen to podcasts in the car or during a walk or when I cook. When I am alone, it feels as if the author speaks to me and it creates a feeling of trust," she noted.

Continued on Page B5

Chi Garage Sales offer space for creativity, support young talents, promote eco-friendly lifestyle

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Chi Garage Sales, started five months ago, have become events that inject the capital's serious and business-oriented atmosphere with fun and creativity. The fifth sale was organised April 7, at Chili Grill Bar.

Gaukhar Bekbusinova, Darya Lavrut, Rakhat Nurtazin and

Merey Nurtazina organised the first event Nov. 11.

"The guys and I thought that it is most likely that many [capital residents] are tormented by the problem of cluttered wardrobes. Lately, because of the [easy] availability [of goods], people [started to] buy too much," said Nurtazina.

Chi Garage Sale stands out from typical resale events. The

organising team is selective about the goods to be sold and sellers must apply in advance.

"Visitors can purchase unusual things, where everyone can find products that emphasise their individuality," she added.

The market of used goods offers film cameras, vinyl records, vintage-style clothing, accessories, jewellery, glasses and other unusual decorative elements that

can create a truly outlandish look. The event is held in a lounge-style atmosphere under the musical mixes of local young DJs who create a relaxing atmosphere, making it worthy of a visit even if one has no intention of buying anything.

Chi Garage Sale is also a creative outlet for young artists who bring their paintings and handicrafts. Guests are offered welcome drinks and the services of tattoo artists and photographers, the latter with prepared sets for photo shoots.

"I like that you can find many extraordinary things from lesser-known designers and small brands, artists who probably couldn't afford the cost of rent. I liked that a lot, because you don't see that very often. Many things are exclusive, because they are hand embroidery. [This] means no one will have the same thing as this," said a visitor at the March 22 sale.

The concept coincides with the issues of environmental friendliness and re-consumption, both of which are gaining momentum in Kazakhstan. The idea prompted a party where young people can sell their handicrafts or unnecessary things and contributes to a greener environment by supporting artists that remake things for secondary use, said Nurtazina.

"There were some guys who re-sew clothes from second hand [items]. They took parts from other clothes to make a new one. This is very nice. I heard Japan has something like that. This is very environmentally friendly. At the same time, it is nice to have interesting things as that," noted the visitor.

"We are very pleased that in Astana (Nur-Sultan) there are a lot of interesting, talented young people who create [and] sell unusual things," added Nurtazina.



L-R: Gaukhar Bekbusinova, Darya Lavrut, Rakhat Nurtazin and Merey Nurtazina.

Norwegian explorer completes Balkhash expedition

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Norwegian explorer William Byholt recently crossed Balkhash Lake in central Kazakhstan during a 23-day solo expedition. He covered 570 kilometres using skis and ice skates, becoming the first person to cross the waterway.

The Feb. 20-March 15 expedition added to the 27-year-old traveller and mountaineer's vast experience. Byholt has summited peaks such 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 was 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. Being the first to "go to an unexplored place" was the main motivation, he said.

"This is a completely new experience. I have never been on a solo expedition on skies in this environment. I have spent a lot of time alone in the mountains and in the jungle, but I have never done anything similar to this before," he told The Astana Times.

"At the beginning, it was not about the country itself, it was primarily about the lake that is in Kazakhstan. I was very fascinated by this; I had never been to this lake before and that started putting my interest into the country and looking further into this. Then, when I realised that no one had done this expedition before, that was the motivation," he added.

There was little online information about the lake.

Continued on Page B6

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- April 12 at 7 p.m.** Chopin, concert
- April 17 at 7 p.m.** Mozart. Debussy. Makhambet, concert
- April 19 at 7 p.m.** La Bohème, opera
- April 21 at 6 p.m.** La Regata Veneziana, concert
- April 24 at 7 p.m.** Karagoz, ballet

SARYARKA VELODROME

- April 15 at 8 p.m.** BC Astana – BC Lokomotiv Kuban

KAZAKHSTAN CONCERT HALL

- April 18 at 7.30 p.m.** Masterpieces of the 21st century, concert
- April 20 at 7 p.m.** Classical Music in My Heart, concert

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

First Edmund Muskie Alumni Conference gathers individuals from 12 countries

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The inaugural Edmund Muskie Alumni Conference was held in the capital March 29-30 to enhance connection and inspire ideas by creating common ground for dialogue and exchange. The event was organised by Cultural Vistas, a non-profit exchange organisation, with the support of the United States Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan.

“The Muskie Internship Programme has multiple goals and building an alumni network is one of these goals that is becoming more and more important as the programme grows. It is easy to gather them in the United States, but it’s hard to do it afterwards. They are not only coming from different countries, but their professional careers are different, so it’s hard to find some common ground. So, the idea of the event is to gather everybody and create a network, hopefully making it a tradition for using the power of networking, sharing experience and creating new ideas. We hope these ideas will be created as a final outcome and we can showcase the success of the programme,” Cultural Vistas Exchange Visitor and Grant Programmes Senior Programme Officer Anastasia Futrell told The Astana Times.

The conference helped to connect alumni of different ages.

“Usually, the people within each group stay close and they continue to strengthen their relationship... But they still don’t have access to



Muskie alumni with United States Ambassador William Moser (C) at the reception.

that greater network. In this case, we did bring members of each of the past four years,” said Exchange Visitor and Grant Programmes Director Paul Champaloux.

“I think it is great proof how important it is to meet in person. We can do many things online, but events like this show nothing can substitute an in-person meeting and connecting on a personal level,” added Futrell.

The number of alumni will reach approximately 250 this year and the organisers noted they are willing to develop and improve supporting mechanisms for them.

“Alumni are a great source of ideas. They are so eager to change and do something, initiate something; thus, it also drives us towards thinking what else we could do,” said Futrell.

As part of the conference pro-

gramme, 77 alumni from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus participated in city tours and ethno-cultural activities.

“I did my Master’s at the University of Missouri as a Fulbright student and now I’m doing my PhD at Colorado State University in agricultural economics. This is my first time in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. This is exciting. I must say I’m impressed with the city... buildings and [especially] bike lanes. They are everywhere. It caught my attention. I’m impressed that there is so much support to promote biking in the city. I think other countries should follow that. It is environmentally sustainable and healthy,” said Armenian participant Armen Ghazaryan.

Half of the participants shared their professional achievements, ideas and concerns through 10-min-

ute presentations on pre-chosen topics.

“Through my presentation, I wanted to share how much librarians contribute to the development of their communities; to underline the uniqueness of the librarianship at the intersection of education, social work, intellectual freedom and openness. Librarians bring community members together in an enthusiastic and engaging manner. It was important to me to show real-life examples to support how librarians bring a positive change in their communities on a daily basis. This resonates with my understanding of the profession. My hope was that the audience would reconsider their perception of the library profession and try to see the librarians as allies and supporters of their ideas and projects,” said Nurganyam Agzamova, of Kazakhstan.

In addition to the presentations and networking activities, participants received an Insights Discovery Personality Profile, Carl Jung’s psychometric tool aimed at helping people understand themselves and others and make the most of workplace relationships.

They also shared their impressions from studying in the United States. Many stressed their experiences helped them to make comparisons and learn from the new environment.

“First of all, networking. There are many amazing people from different fields who I do not normally meet in my daily life. It’s good to see people from various countries. [Secondly, people] have the opportunity to work in different agencies [of the

United States] learning policy tools, research... and taking that example and bringing it to our countries. It’s just fascinating,” said Ghazaryan.

“It had a positive effect on my career. At the moment, I am working at Nazarbayev University in the field of reforming higher education. My study helped in developing my skills and abilities in research and in networking not only with programme participants... but with professors,” said Sanzhar Baizhanov, of Kazakhstan.

“It is truly exciting to work in a small and medium-sized business environment in the United States and to compare the challenges that they face with the challenges that entrepreneurs were facing while I was coordinating the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) project,” said fellow countryperson Azat Samuratykyz.

The participants also talked about their impressions of the conference.

“Here are approximately 80 people [at the event] from all years of the Muskie Programme. It’s a great opportunity to meet other Muskie students and do networking, which is good both for personal and career development,” said Ghazaryan.

“The event has been organised well and gave the participants enough time to interact with one another. I really enjoyed the presentations by other Muskie Alumni; the wide range of topics covered so many things – from humanitarian aid and cultural heritage preservation to teaching practices and methods of personal effectiveness. I learned a lot through the Discovery Insights workshop, which offered a new

perspective on my work and leadership style. I will probably need to set aside more time to reflect about the results and set new goals for the future based on what I learned from the training,” added Agzamova.

The conference ended with a reception celebrating the continuous collaboration between the United States and the programme countries. Attendees included representatives from the U.S. Embassy in the capital and other local organisations and United States Ambassador William Moser spoke to open the gathering.

“I’m happy to see all your enthusiasm... and have a chance to talk with you while you are here... We really believe that you are representative of the future of your countries in your various fields. We sincerely believe in that, because the people of the United States sent you to the United States as you were the most talented and capable. We believe that our exchange programmes and just the experience of going to the United States are so powerful that you will have an experience that will ground an influence on your life and we hope that you’ll become our lasting friends,” he said.

Cultural Vistas is an American non-profit organisation that helps the government implement exchange programmes for Americans citizens and those of other countries. The Muskie Internship Programme, initiated in 2015, is a summer internship for current Fulbright students from 12 eligible countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Every year, the selection committee chooses 50 students for the programme.

Professionalism and dedication to work is valued regardless of gender, says engineer



L-R: Lead Industrial Engineer Anar Turusbekova, Configuration Manager Yenlik Mirzabekova and Planning Engineer Albina Sagyndykova.

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Professionalism and dedication is valued in the workplace regardless of gender, said Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering (KPE) engineer Yenlik Mirzabekova. Work is a part of people’s lives; thus, they should treat it with respect, spend their time with meaning and understand its value for themselves and the development of the country, she noted in an interview with The Astana Times.

Mirzabekova was born in Zhairam village of the Karaganda Region. At 13, her family moved to Karaganda, where she studied at the School Lyceum math class and then entered Karaganda State Technical University, specialising in material science and technologies.

“I believe in fate. One will be where one should be. During my university study, I thought I would be a laboratory assistant at some machine building plant at best... After graduation, I couldn’t find a job for half a year,” she said. “Factories didn’t hire me; firstly, because I am a woman and secondly, I had no work experience.”

Mirzabekova did not give up and continued to search for a suitable engineering position. Six months after graduation, she started working at an

electrical equipment manufacturing plant in Karaganda.

“That was not the field I studied. It was hard,” she said. “My self-confidence weakened. I had no inspiration... My mentor noticed that I had a potential to develop and made an offer that he would train me while I would be working more.”

Mirzabekova was simultaneously invited to another plant in Karaganda. For the next three years, she repaired digging and road-building equipment at Borusan Makina, owned by the Turkish company which represents Caterpillar in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

It was a debut for her career, she said. After some time, her mentor promoted her to head of the shop floor.

“It is a shop floor where 17 male workers do repair works. I was the first woman there,” she said. “The plant was new and I started to restructure it. The shop floor carried out two operations – boring and cutting. We improved it, so that other components of machines were also repaired.”

“Before [I came to the shop floor], a certain amount of money was given for an order and [workers worked within its limit]. Later, we introduced segments on how much every element of a machine costs. Then, we

showed our clients, for example, that a new part is \$8,000, while we repair the part for \$3,000,” she added.

She then received a call from KPE which, at the time, was searching for new cadres for its future plant in the capital. Although Mirzabekova did not apply for the position, she decided to consider the opportunity of coming to an interview.

She thinks professionalism influenced her career growth.

“If a person does work properly, on time and puts in effort, then he or she will be successful... I believe I have good leadership and communication qualities... Also, I think I can see the big picture. If I sign any papers I should know where they are going, what the purpose and results of my actions are and if they are necessary at all. Maybe it’s possible to exclude unnecessary actions from the process,” she said.

“I always say if you know little about a sphere, then just spend half an hour more than others and you’ll catch up slowly. The main thing is to be interested, to root for the company. I believe that work is a part of a person’s life. Why not give it time and become successful in it? Let the work in your little segment of the chain be perfect,” she added.

In her current position, Mirzabekova passes information from clients to production, creating a database

with configurations of the vehicles to be produced.

“I work with configurations. Every client has one’s own demands. Depending on that, vehicles’ configurations change. For example, some want six wheels, others four or, for some missions, a reconnaissance vehicle or ambulance car is needed. This should be tracked and information should be up-to-date, so that the production will not stop... I explain what changed and how much should be produced,” she said.

Mirzabekova has worked at KPE for four years, during which time the vehicles produced have experienced changes, including adaptation to local climate conditions. Although the outer part of the vehicles does not change, the inner part is altered according to the demands of the client and the conditions and where the vehicle will be used. A great deal of work is done, she noted.

“The machine must be built according to technology and meet standards. The most important thing is to produce a high-quality product. Our vehicle is an innovative, counter-rotate machine. It belongs to our partners in South Africa. They came up with a V-shaped bottom of the machine which disperses the explosion of mines. For this, a certain angle must be maintained, certain steel must be used and all attachments must remain in place. The main function of the machine is to save the people inside the vehicle,” she said. “There are many nuances; all this is taken into account by the engineer.”

The plant has approximately 150 employees, 50 of whom are engineers.

“It’s great that 50 engineers could find such a job in Kazakhstan. We are doing something important; maybe in 10 years we will realise it,” she added.

KPE, a joint venture of Paramount Group global defence and aerospace company that has operated in South Africa since 1994. The enterprise has more than 3,000 employees working with governments across the world and manufacturing in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

KPE produces advanced armoured wheeled vehicles such as Arlan 4×4, Barys 4×4, Barys 6×6, Barys 8×8 and Nomad 4×4 in Kazakhstan.

Different nationalities...

Continued from Page B1

“The name of the community contains an important meaning. Obereg (charm) protects from anything. The goal of our activities is to protect the native language from extinction, to preserve traditions and customs, the culture of the Ukrainian people, to foster Kazakh patriotism and to strengthen the unity of the people of the country,” she added.

The community and 10 regional Ukrainian Ethno Cultural Centres are members of the Rada of Ukrainians of Kazakhstan. Since 2006, the society has been a member of the World Congress of Ukrainians.

“On his first trip, the newly elected Chairperson of the World Congress of Ukrainians Mikhail Ratushny went to Kazakhstan. He visited Kazakhstan for the first time and took part in the International Festival of Ukrainian Folk Art as an honoured guest,” said Shirmer.

The community keeps in touch with the Ukrainian diaspora around the world, Birlık Kazakh community in Kharkov, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and Shevchenko National Reserve in Kanev.

The community offers classes where students study Ukrainian traditions, customs and language, and organises music, decorative arts, choreography and puppet theatre classes.

“It is symbolic that 2008 was declared the Year of Ukraine in Kazakhstan and it was in February of that year when the Ridne Slovo Ukrainian Sunday ethno-linguistic school began its work. The main goal of the school is to enable students of different nationalities to study the history and culture of the Ukrainians and to instil in students an understanding of human values and morality,” said Shirmer.

The society closely cooperates with the Ukrainian Centre of Science and Culture of the Rada of Ukrainians of Kazakhstan at Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University, annually organising the International Shevchenko readings and roundtables for significant and memorable dates in Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

“Together with the Rada of Ukrainians of Kazakhstan we hold international and national festivals of Ukrainian folk art, ethnic fashion marathons, various exhibitions and creative evenings dedicated to the memory of the famous poet who

united the Kazakhs and Ukrainians – Taras Shevchenko,” she noted.

The community’s vocal and chorographic group is named after Nikolai Litoshko.

“The repertoire of the group is extensive; it is selected from the best songs of the Ukrainian song heritage... The creative team performs with a charity programme in the Medical and Social Institution for the Elderly and Disabled, the Centre for Motherhood and Childhood, the SOS Astana Children’s Village and other concerts,” said Shirmer.

The works of the community’s Berehynya creative team are exhibited in the House of Friendship in the capital. The exhibition includes household utensils, motanka dolls, embroidered towels and paintings and various objects of decorative and applied art. The team participated in many international, national and city exhibitions, winning awards. In addition to handmade items, the team prepares various dishes of Ukrainian cuisine.

“In Ukraine, flour products such as pampushkas (donuts), cakes and dumplings are popular. Also, the team cooks products and dishes with meat, vegetables and dairy products. One of the favourite drinks in Ukraine is compote – a decoction of fruit or dried fruit (called vzvar (brew)). Ukrainian borscht is especially popular. Salo (cured fat-back) and borscht are kind of culinary symbols of Ukraine,” she said.

The community is actively involved in cooperating and assisting in charity events for SOS Astana Children’s Village, where children without parental care live and study. The community also provides targeted charitable assistance to children with disabilities and conducts charity events for veterans and the elderly. For its activities, the community was awarded appreciation certificates and gifts from the SOS Village of Austria and SOS Astana Children’s Village corporate fund.

Charivni Dzhherela, the youth party created in July 2005, operates in the community to encourage youth to be active members of society. The party organises workshops and seminars on arts and crafts, flash mobs, sports competitions and concerts. It also implements long-term social ventures such as the Give Happiness to Children social project and International Social and Ecological Action project on World Cleanup Day.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Russian artist to open exhibition at Kulanshi Art Centre



Russian artist Tatiana Vavrzhina.

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Russian artist Tatiana Vavrzhina opened her exhibition “Endless Love” April 2 at the capital’s Kulanshi Art Centre. The show will continue through May 10.

The organisers – the Kulanshi, Rossotrudnichestvo representative office and the Russian embassy – promise to bring the city’s discerning public a very unusual art project. The Russian Centre for Science and Iskander also support the initiative.

“Tatiana Vavrzhina’s exhibition is a reason to talk about the interpenetration of different cultures, about the continuity of generations, about the particular view of a woman who has taken a brush [painting] to the world around us [that is] familiar, cosy, but at the same time constantly changing,” wrote Kulanshi art centre on its Facebook page.

The paintings open a conversation about the role of classics and the academic tradition in contemporary art.

“Only at first glance, on the surface, the art of Vavrzhina may seem to be full-scale painting or, which will also be wrong, a retrograde consequence of academic tradition. In fact, everything is very different, much thinner and more complicated. This realism has a different, not immediately, perhaps distinct, side in which the intrigue and charm of this art are hidden. Its semantic essential levels, of course, are by no means irreducible to na-

ive direct drawing from nature and conservatism of academic reception,” said art critic Sergey Kuskov.

The works in the exhibit seem to reflect Kuskov’s opinion.

“The main thing in [Vavrzhina’s] painting, probably as in life, is intrigue, endless desire to either distinguish the dream from reality, or, conversely, turn the ephemeral dream, the movement of the soul into something tangible, understandable and accessible,” the art centre added in the post.

The Kulanshi, one of the capital’s prominent cultural centres, presents monthly exhibitions of contemporary Kazakh and foreign artists. It also has a permanent exhibition hall with printed graphics and original lithographs by Marc Chagall, Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso.

Vavrzhina is bringing her works to Kazakh audience for the first time. She held her first exhibition in Andijan, Uzbekistan in 1974 and has opened more than 30 exhibits in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Belgrade, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Italy and Japan.

Born in Barnaul in the Altai region of Russia, Vavrzhina graduated from the Irkutsk School of Arts in 1973. She is a member of the Russian Artists Union, Irida Creative Association of Women Artists of Moscow, Moscow Artists Union, Russian Artists Union in Paris, Petrovskaya Academy of Sciences and Arts, International Artists Federation and World Art Association.

Kazakh filmmaker directs videos for US hip-hop artists

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh filmmaker Aisultan Seitov has entered the American hip-hop market. He recently directed “Red Room,” a music video for Migos member Offset, reported Kazinform.

Seitov shared his vision of the video in a March 5 interview on VDud, one of the most viewed Russian language YouTube shows featuring interviews with celebrities and hosted by Yuri Dud.

“The entire music video is built around Offset surviving a car accident in 2018. He was dragged out of his car and for some time he walked Atlanta streets covered in blood. He was hospitalised and released a lot about his life,” he said.

Seitov discussed his invitation to work on “Red Room.”

“A cut of my works for 2017 was shown to Offset. It probably happened during the summer of 2018. As soon as the artist saw that link,

he quickly sent it to his producers and said ‘It’s my secret weapon, let’s invite this guy,’” he noted.

He spoke about the difference between working in Kazakh/Russian and U.S. markets.

“In the local (U.S.) industry artists have a lot of money, so the word ‘no’ is nonexistent for them. If we are filming a video in the U.S., we always have to consider that we will have to come up with new versions until the artist says ‘yes.’ I think it’s the main problem,” he added.

“Red Room,” which features a camera moving in circular motion showing various scenes from Offset’s life, ends with the accident and people dressed in Black Panther-themed clothes calmly approaching the police. It was released Feb. 14.

Seitov also directed 21 Savage and J. Cole’s “A Lot” track. The music video, filmed in January in Atlanta (U.S.) and released Feb. 2, was inspired by “The Godfather.” It features a fancy family dinner



Kazakh filmmaker Aisultan Seitov.

interrupted by flashbacks of their rough upbringing.

Born in Almaty in 1997, Seitov started making short movies for his friends and sending his works to competitions at age 16. He graduated from New York Film Academy with a degree in directing.

He began his career in 2016, receiving \$1,000 for his first music video, Kyrgyz band Jaya Mizadzaki’s “Po Vetru” (“With the

Wind”), according to The Flow website. Seitov then directed “I Got Love” for Russian artists Miyagi & Endspiel and Rem Digga.

It topped the views record among Russian-language YouTube music videos, reaching 212 million views by November and currently at 277 million. In March 2018, Seitov directed Jah Khalib’s “Medina,” the most expensive music video in Kazakhstan.

Astana Opera House presents Gioachino Rossini’s opera “The Silken Ladder”

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana Opera House premiered April 6 and 7 Gioachino Rossini’s one-act operatic comedy “The Silken Ladder” as part of the Piccolo theatre project.

The project is supporting talented musicians during Kazakhstan’s Year of Youth. The creative laboratory is working with Astana Opera soloists and aspiring beginning soloists.

On different days, the main parts were performed by Ramzat Balakishiyev and Ruslan Soviet as Dormont; Zhannat Baktai, Saltanat Akhmetova, Alfiya Karimova and Aizada Kaponova as Giulia; and Sundet Baigozhin and Azamat Zhelyrguzov as Germano.

The opera takes place in the 18th century and tells the story of Giulia, who secretly marries her beloved Dorvil, who uses a silk ladder to get to her window. Giulia’s guardian, old Dormont, unaware of her marriage, is meanwhile trying to marry her to Blansac.

“We show the Venice carnival. Naples and Venice are the places where carnival and folk characters of the comic opera were born. Each of these characters has their own cliché, persona and function. The set and costume designer keep this in mind while making the costumes. The characters will wear masks, because Venice and the carnival do not exist without masks. This is a full one-act performance, in which characters impress everyone with their vivacity, getting into amusing situations.

All this turns into an interesting story where love triumphs. The objective of this opera is to bring joy. However, it is very difficult to show humour onstage; therefore, the soloists must have good acting skills. In the comic opera, soloists need to convey joy, have a sense of humour, so that audience members who do not know Italian can understand what is happening onstage through reaction, facial expressions, movements and communication between vocalists,” said Italian stage director Ala Simonishvili prior to the premiere.

Music director and conductor Abzal Mukhitdinov said that it is rare today for a singer to truly master the technique of coloratura singing.

“We have a soprano, a baritone, a tenor, a bass, and even a mezzo-soprano. We are glad that one of our soloists studied in Pesaro, the city where Rossini was born, and at the Accademia Lirica Osimo. The composition of the orchestra in this opera is unusual. After Puccini’s, Wagner’s and Tchaikovsky’s operas, we are used to orchestras consisting of at least 70 people. However, we have a chamber orchestra with up to 20 musicians in this performance. The overture to this opera has become a well-known concert piece, which is performed as an independent work a part of the symphonic programmes of many orchestras,” he commented.

The sets and costumes for the production were prepared in the Commedia dell’Arte style.

“The sets depict the interior of a Venetian bourgeois house of the mid-18th century. The exterior shows the spirit of narrow streets. Colourful video projections will show water. The sets are mobile and are assembled like a mosaic. During the transformation, it will become clear that the interior is depicted on one side, the exterior on the other. They resemble folding books with 3D drawings. During the opera, the scenic elements will be different. Both costumes and sets are made at the Astana Opera at a high level,” said set and costume designer Manana Gunia.



Astana Kazakh Drama theatre premieres Abai Jan

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Astana Kazakh Drama Theatre recently staged “Abai Jan,” a one-person show starring Nurken Oteuil. Directed by Farkhad Moldagali, the play tracks a young man reflecting and trying to find answers to existential questions. The monologues, composed of Abai Kunanbayev’s poetry and prose, mirror today’s reality and strike a chord with spectators.

Kunanbayev, known more by his first name, is a famous 19th-century poet and philosopher and a founder of Kazakh written literature.

“Abai is a planet-scale poet and philosopher. I think his heritage is still underestimated. Some time ago I had a deeper read of his works and now he is my closest friend, advisor and mentor. I cherished the idea of this play for a long time. I

suggested it to Farkhad Moldagali, the young talented director, and tonight you saw the result of our

work,” said Oteuil, honoured actor of Kazakhstan, in an interview with The Astana Times.

He noted the stage decoration has several meanings, as the global shape demonstrates Abai’s univer-

sal talent. A dombyra (long-necked lute) hanging in the middle of the stage symbolises the way his poetry and philosophy reach the population.

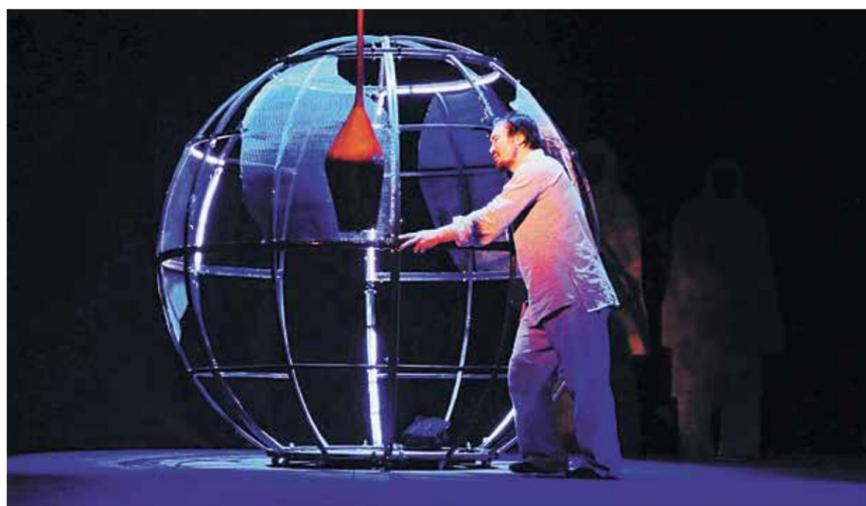
The play starts with the actor lying in a sphere, similar to a womb. “A human life also ends in earth. It is an eternal lifecycle. Abai encourages each of us to realise our mission and every day report to ourselves what we have done good for our families, people around us and society as a whole,” he noted.

“Abai is the greatest critic of Kazakhs, but his criticism stems from the love to his people. He shows us our reflection and makes us think about our attitude and reaction to the existing reality. The play is about Abai’s soul, his thoughts and inner world. We named the play ‘Abai Jan’ (Kazakh for the Soul of Abai) in the hope to touch the soul of every spectator,” he added.

The audience was drawn to the play.

“I enjoyed the performance so much. The city often sucks us into an everyday routine. Such performances give us an opportunity to take a pause and think about the meaning of life. I realised that Abai’s words are still relevant. He described all social diseases existing in our society. He calls us to be responsible for our own life. Each of us should start from ourselves – work hard, be honest, do good things. Only this way can we change ourselves and change the environment,” said Talsha, a spectator who only gave her first name.

“I read a few of Abai’s poems when I was in school. Now, I am 21. I discovered Abai’s philosophy only after this performance. I think that a person should be mature enough to understand Abai’s works. I had unanswered questions for myself. Tonight, I found answers to some of them,” added audience member who gave his name as Ardak.



COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Twenty percent of schoolchildren suffer from excess weight

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Nearly 20 percent of Kazakh youngsters in grades three-four are overweight and 1.1 percent of them suffer from extreme obesity, a situation which poses a public health danger for the nation, according to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

The organisation's healthcare and nutrition experts reported excess weight among Kazakh schoolchildren has become a widespread problem.

"Epidemiological monitoring of childhood obesity in Kazakhstan has shown that 77.5 percent of all children in grades three-four have a normal weight and 19.1 percent of children are overweight, including obese. Among them, 6.5 percent of boys and 5.5 percent of girls are obese and 1.1 percent suffer from extreme obesity," said UNICEF Kazakhstan healthcare and nutrition programme coordinator Kanat Sukhanberdiyev, according to Kazinform.

He noted the situation is the result of children's diets, starting with breastfeeding. Factors include parents' low income and low education levels and food insecurity.

Aman-Saulyk Public Fund president and medical doctor Bakhyt Tumenova described the dangers to OtyrarKz.

"Child obesity increases the likelihood of obesity, premature death and disabilities in adulthood. Apart from increasing future risks

to their health, children suffering from obesity also experience shortness of breath, are at increased risk of fractures, are prone to hypertension, an early manifestation of signs of cardiovascular diseases, insulin resistance and may experience psychological problems," he said.

She stressed the need to tackle the problem.

"The government, international partners, civil society and non-governmental organisations all have to contribute to obesity prevention to shape healthy eating habits among Kazakhs so the obesity problem does not become a social threat to the country's younger generation," he added.

More than 20 percent of Kazakh citizens are overweight, according to national public health centre data. The majority live in the Mangistau region, as well as Central and North Kazakhstan. Experts note each year obesity in the country spreads to a younger age category, with elementary school obesity increasing tenfold compared to statistics from the late 1970s.

Should current trends continue, World Health Organisation (WHO) worldwide projections indicate 70 million pre-school age children will suffer from obesity. In 1975, less than 1 percent of children and teenagers ages 5-19 suffered from obesity compared to 18 percent in 2016 (18 percent of girls and 19 percent of boys), according to The Lancet, a peer-reviewed medical journal. Annually, obesity results in approximately 2.8 million deaths.

KazSat system income expected to reach \$15 million in 2019

By Zhanat Tukpiyev

NUR-SULTAN – Income from the KazSat communication system is expected to reach 6 billion tenge (US\$15 million) this year, said Board Chairman of the National Centre for Space Communications Bauyrzhan Kudabayev at a recent forum in the capital.

According to the centre, 1.3 million users are connected to satellite television and radio broadcasting throughout Kazakhstan. The lease of the KazSat-2 satellite resource is provided to 12 local organisations. The KazSat-3 provides communication and broadcasting services to nine operators. The satellites' total income was 5.4 billion tenge (US\$14 million) in 2018.

"The centre completed its task. The Kazakh space communication system consisting of two spacecraft and two ground complexes operates. We started with 12 percent of space load of KazSat-2 in 2011. Today, this number is 73 percent for both spacecraft and allows the country's telecommunications market demand to reach 100 percent. The import substitution at the domestic market exceeded 47 billion tenge (US\$123 million) in eight years. More than 12,000 earth stations are working through our communications spacecraft," he said.

Television broadcasts were transferred to KazSat communication satellites in 2017.

"The national satellites broadcast to remote regions of the country to improve the population standards of living and eliminate digital inequality. Twelve largest telecommunications operators, all government agencies and the security agencies use the services of the KazSat satellite communication system," he added.

Vice Minister of Digital Development, Defence and Aerospace Industry Daryn Tuyakov said the system is expected to spur development of satellite communications nationwide.

"Space communications as one of the infrastructure elements protects the national interests in the field of information security. The space system also contributes to development of national economy. The space industry is not only a pride, but also serves as a resource for improvement of the quality of life of the population. Space activities for our country with its vast territory and rich resources are a sphere of geopolitical, economic and scientific interests," he said.

The centre's main tasks are to maintain the specified technological characteristics and to monitor the payload of the telecommunications satellites of the KazSat series.

This year, the centre celebrates its 15th anniversary.



Kazakhstan expands measles immunisation programme

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh hospitals expanded starting April 1 the nation's free measles immunisation programme in response to an outbreak that occurred at the end of 2018 and in response to a more recent outbreak in Europe.

The data of daily monitoring from Jan. 1 registered 4,670 cases of measles in Kazakhstan, reports the Ministry of Healthcare. The majority, 71.2 percent, of the cases are among children under 14 years old. To date, 74 patients are under treatment, 19 of them are in Nur-Sultan.

The national clinics use MMR vaccine (vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella) manufactured by the Serum Institute of India. The

World Health Organisation (WHO) guarantees its safety. More than 70 countries have been using this vaccine, including Kazakhstan, over the past 10 years.

The SK-Pharmacia distributing company purchased 651,500 doses of the vaccine at the expense of the national budget for 788.4 million tenge (US\$2.08 million). In May, another 468,000 doses of vaccine will be purchased. The price per one dose is 1,209 tenge (US\$3.2).

Over 10,000 people have been vaccinated by the end of March.

Unvaccinated expectant mothers, who missed immunisation because of the shortage of vaccines in the late 1980s and early 1990s, spread the infection, said the Healthcare Ministry's Public Health Protection Committee Chair – Chief State

Sanitary Doctor Zhandarbek Bekshin at a March 29 press conference in Central Communications Service.

"Given the epidemiological situation of viral infections, including measles, we recommend mothers with young children, as well as all those who have not received a preventive vaccination for various reasons, to abstain from visiting crowded places until the measles epidemic situation has stabilised," Bekshin said.

The vaccination will be free for people in the following categories: infants who reached nine months, people under 30 years with an unknown vaccination status, people who were not vaccinated and have not had measles, vaccinated five or more years ago with a single vac-

cine against measles in a foci of infection, and medical workers having a higher risk of infection due to frequent contacts with potential measles patients.

According to the data from the Healthcare Ministry, unvaccinated children account for 60.2 percent of the measles incidence in Kazakhstan. Yet 54 percent of these unvaccinated children are under-vaccination age (under 12 months).

As for children older than one year, 32 percent were unvaccinated due to medical problems, such as acute and exacerbation of chronic diseases, oncological diseases and severe progressive diseases of the central nervous system. The remaining 13.9 percent of children were not vaccinated due to their parents' refusal.

Kazpost uses drones to increase newspaper and magazine delivery to rural areas

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazpost used drones to increase the volume of newspapers and magazines delivered to rural areas tenfold in 2018. The action has made periodical delivery more cost-efficient.

The postal service distributed 11,000 kilogrammes of newspapers and magazines via drones last year, a number made possible due to the large range of regions which Kazpost covers, according to company board chairperson Saken Sarsenov.

"For the last year, we were able to transport 11,000 kilogrammes of periodicals using unmanned aircraft; overall, to 150 cities and villages in the Almaty, Zhambyl, Karaganda, Turkestan, East Kazakhstan and Kostanai Regions. We used 20 drones, each with a carrying capacity of four kilogrammes," he said, reported Kazinform.

The project was launched in 2017,



Photo credit: uralskweek.kz

when 1,150 kilogrammes of newspapers and magazines were taken to Kazakhstan's distant areas. The same year, drones delivered packages to just 30 villages in mountainous regions. The aircraft are particularly convenient for the country due to its geographic vastness and certain regions being challenging and expensive to reach.

Kazpost only pays service companies for individual flights, Sarsenov

told BNewsKz shortly after the project was launched.

"We now use the service model, i.e. we pay not for the drones themselves, but for each flight. It's very efficient for us because sometimes we have to send a car to deliver two kilogrammes of newspaper using mountain roads. This car has to drive 180 kilometres. Currently, drones can carry two kilogrammes across the mountains, so the entire delivery

distance is only 40 kilometres," he said.

Kazpost pays less than \$1 for drones to deliver one kilogramme of newspapers and the company has found ways to use the money it is saving. "If earlier we planned to purchase new equipment and hire new workers to deliver daily newspapers to residents of each village, then now this problem is solved and resources that became available can be directed to postal offices' renovation and system update," Sarsenov told Profit.kz.

Kazpost uses Adrome Automation equipment for its deliveries. Company CEO Alexei Kim described the production process to Profit.kz.

"They (drones) are assembled in Kazakhstan; we make them ourselves out of details made both in Kazakhstan and abroad. All microchips and electronics are developed by us," he said.

In the future, Kazpost plans to use drones to deliver small packages.

Senate speaker raised concern over environmental problems

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN –The Kazakh Senate speaker recently voiced concerns over environmental problems in Kazakhstan and urged legislators to address the issue.

Senate Speaker Dariga Nazarbayeva raised concerns over Caspian Sea area and Mangistau Region environmental problems during a March 28 Senate plenary session. Nazarbayeva discussed recent environmental threats, measures that have been taken and work that still needs to be done.

"As you know, at the end of last year, due to water pollution on the

Ural River, there was a mass death of fish. To investigate the causes of this emergency, a special interdepartmental commission was created and examinations were conducted. As a result, a criminal proceeding was instigated. However, the work carried out by government agencies to determine the specific causes of the mass fish die-off and damage to the environment should be made widely available to the public. We must pay attention to this," said Nazarbayeva.

Nazarbayeva also recommended having the air quality in the Mangistau Region tested due to a recent fire that has occurred in the Kalamkas oil field.

"On March 13, gas ignition has oc-

curred in one of the wells in the Kalamkas oil field in Mangistau Region, we all know about it. Despite the official statement of the state authorities on environmental issues about the absence of a negative impact of this incident on the environment and the population, we need to assess this emergency. It is necessary to check the quality of water, air and soil each day. We also need to urgently take special measures. This issue is under the personal control of the President," Nazarbayeva said.

She concluded by urging action to mitigate the effects of these environmental problems.

"Therefore, I draw the attention of the Government to the need to take

urgent measures to overcome these environmental problems. If necessary, work should be done to introduce appropriate amendments to legislation in this area," Nazarbayeva concluded.

The Ural River environmental disaster occurred in Atyrau December 2018, according to Atyrau akimat (administration) data. Fish that died over that period are still being found in Ural River, and since it might be poisonous, the concern is preventing the selling of it. A Kalamkas oil field fire occurred March 25 as a result of gas and water mix discharge. However, Vice-Minister of Energy Sabit Nurlybai said the fire did not seriously damage the region's environment.

New course available to teach spelling rules of Kazakh Latin script

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh linguists presented March 26 a course available in the capital to teach the systematic spelling rules of Kazakh Latin script. The course takes 72 hours and includes lectures and practical exercises.

The first people to master the course will be hired to coach and consult people in the regions. They will explain the structure of the new alphabet, phonetic norms and spelling rules.

Learning to read and write with the new alphabet is also possible

with the help of a 12-hour accelerated course.

According to the developers, the biggest challenge is in the spelling of foreign words.

"Despite the fact that the course is very large, mastering the new alphabet and the new rules of writing will be very easy because Latin and Cyrillic are homogeneous alphabets. Nearly 70 percent of their characters are the same, they are very similar. Therefore, mastering will not be accompanied by strong psychological discomfort," said National Scientific and Practical Centre Head Anar Faylzhan.

The Kazakh government, mean-

while, has been taking various actions to popularise learning new alphabet among the population. The Ministry of Culture and Sports, for instance, organised in November the so-called "public dictations," which is one of the largest efforts to promote the new alphabet. The examiners dictated a text consisting of 80 words in 30 minutes. The participants wrote the text using Kazakh Latin alphabet.

Overall, the public dictations covered approximately two million people. All the regional language development departments prepared special classrooms so that everyone could write the dictation

simultaneously. In addition to this, many people participated remotely through live radio stations such as Shalkar and Kazakh radio, as well as online through websites, such as emle.kz and tilalemi.kz.

Public figures, writers, eminent artists and athletes supported the public dictation. The participants noted that it was quite a simple text about Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme.

Former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev amended Oct. 26, 2017 the decree on the transition of the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin script.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Kazakhstan to set up cancer molecular genetic laboratories, gears support towards cancer diagnosis, treatment

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan will establish molecular genetic laboratories in its effort to boost support for early cancer diagnosis and treatment, said Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov at the recent Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) meeting.

This year, the nation will allocate an additional 309 million tenge (US\$817,287) to conduct molecular genetic testing of lung, breast, colorectal and skin cancer in three laboratories in Almaty, Karaganda and the capital. The test, he noted, is required in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries to determine individual patient therapy.

The meeting also emphasised the need to focus support on early detection and more efficient treatment by increasing access to advanced technologies and training high qualified specialists. As of January, 181,344 patients have been diagnosed with cancer, said Birtanov.

The country's 2018-2022 comprehensive plan for fighting cancer is the main document overseeing the area. Its four key directions are regular checkups and controlling risk factors, developing a highly efficient early detection system, incorporating an integrated model of cancer care and treatment and developing specialists, research and science.

"Every year, around 40 billion tenge (US\$105.8 million) is allocated from the national budget to provide medical services to cancer patients. The comprehensive plan envisions an additional eight billion tenge (US\$21.2 million) every year to expand services as part of the guaranteed package of free health medical services. These include screening, molecular genetic testing and radioactive diagnosis. The plan is also to purchase equipment worth 3.2 billion tenge (US\$8.46 million)," he noted.

Providing assistance to cancer patients is a state policy priority, said Birtanov. The country has implemented the Salamatty Kazakhstan health care development programme for 2011-2015 and cancer

care development programme for 2012-2016.

"As a result, the mortality rate declined from 102.4 to 95.8 per 100,000 people in the population and early diagnosis [stages I-II] improved from 50.1 percent to 53.5 percent. As part of the national programme for health care development, in 2018 the goal was reached to reduce the mortality rate from 92.8 to 80.9 per 100,000 in the population. The proportion of patients living five years or more also increased from 50.2 percent to 51 percent in 2018," he added.

Kazakhstan is in the group of countries with a moderately high cancer incidence and mortality rate. In the past 20 years, the nation's incidence rate grew 8 percent, from 181.2 to 195.7 per 100,000, while the mortality rate has declined by 42 percent, from 136.4 to 78.3 per 100,000.

Kazakhstan will also open six positron emission tomography (PET) centres in the capital, Ak-tobe, Karaganda, Semei, Shymkent and Taldykorgan, said Birtanov. The scan is used to reveal abnormal activity in tissues and organs

by injecting a small amount of radioactive substance into the body.

The nation currently has four such centres and the six new ones will help the country reach the international recommendation and standard of one PET per 1.5 million individuals.

"We are introducing teleconsultations with international experts for patients with severe diagnosis as well as telepathology of tissue specimen when the second opinion of a specialist is used. In OECD countries, this is a required component in cancer diagnosis and in Kazakhstan, we will now be conducting it as part of the guaranteed free package of medical services," he noted.

Kazakhstan currently has five linear accelerators across the country used as part of external radiotherapy treatment, although coverage reaches only 20 percent of patients, he added. The comprehensive plan envisions installing ten additional devices in Shymkent and the Akmola, Karaganda, Kostanai, Kyzylorda, Mangistau, North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and Zhambyl regions.

Radionuclide therapy, a systematic cancer treatment method using radio-pharmaceuticals to target specific tumours and destroy cancer cells, is also unavailable in Kazakhstan. A nuclear medicine centre to conduct such therapies will be opened in Semei and a department is being built in the National Oncology Centre in the capital, said Birtanov.

An additional 1.6 billion tenge (US\$4.2 million) will be allotted to fund almost 100,000 computer tomography and magnetic particle tests for patients who display suspicious symptoms.

"The efficiency of cancer treatment depends on the organisation of preventive measures nationwide. In Kazakhstan, spending for preventive measures is 4 percent, while Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries allocated up to 10 percent. The results of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) country assessment revealed a high prevalence of risk factors, such as tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption, that are risk factors for developing cancer," said Birtanov.

Kazakh hospitals currently offer three types of voluntary cancer screenings – breast cancer screening for women age 40 and older, cervical cancer screening for women beginning at age 30 and colorectal cancer screening for men and women age 50 and older. Participation is still below the WHO recommended threshold of 70 percent.

Since 2018, the screening programme has expanded the age for regular screening from 30 to 70, with target group coverage growing from 70 to 90 percent by 2022.

"Vaccination against hepatitis B allows preventing liver cancer. This can be ensured by the vaccination of target groups up to 98.7 percent. Over time, the efficiency of the screening programme has increased in increasing detection of cancer at early stages; for example, cervical cancer screening by 4.5 percent, breast cancer by 6.3 percent and colorectal cancer by 2.3 percent," he said.

Raising awareness of symptoms and treatments through education is also underway.

Population's income from social and housing assistance increases by one-third

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh population's income from targeted social and housing assistance (TSA) increased by one-third in 2018, contributing to last year's 11.3-percent growth. Income per capita was 164,700 tenge (US\$434.48) and the government expanded the percentage of individuals who receive the assistance.

Every month, the government will pay 70 percent or the equivalent of 20,800 tenge (US\$54.87) of the subsistence minimum (29,698 tenge (US\$78.34)) for each child from a low-income family.

The major income, 121,400 tenge (US\$320.25) or an 8.4-percent annual increase, comes from salary. The average monthly

nominal wage per employee increased 7.5 percent during the 12 months.

The government plans to spend 224.3 billion tenge (US\$591.7 million) in 2019 to increase social support, said Vice Minister of Finance Tatyana Savelyyeva during her March 13 presentation to the Majilis (lower house of Parliament).

The government changed the tools for assigning TSA. When allocating the funds, state benefits for mothers or families with many

children who are awarded Kumis Alqa and Altyn Alqa pendants, disability allowances for children and scholarships will be excluded from the family's total income.

Every month, the government will pay 70 percent or the equivalent of 20,800 tenge (US\$54.87) of the subsistence minimum (29,698 tenge (US\$78.34)) for each child from a low-income family.

Beginning July 1, the benefits to parents, guardians raising a child with a disability and for the care

of a person with a group I disability since childhood will increase from 31,200 tenge (US\$82.30) to 41,600 tenge (US\$109.74).

Population expenditures also grew 163,200 tenge (US\$430.52) per month, a 12.1-percent increase. The hike was influenced by the 13.2-percent increase in taxes and payments and 16-percent increase in costs to repay loans and debts. Per capita income exceeded expenditures by just 1,500 tenge (US\$3.96); in 2017, the difference was 2,400 tenge (US\$6.34).



Oralmans may acquire citizenship through a simplified procedure

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Former President Nursultan Nazarbayev directed the government March 16, three days before he announced his resignation, to allow an extension for people with the status of oralman (the "returning ones", ethnic Kazakhs who immigrate to Kazakhstan since its independence) to ac-

quire Kazakh citizenship through a simplified procedure.

People who receive the status of oralman have the right to acquire Kazakh citizenship through a simplified procedure, with the standard procedure for other applicants involving a five-year period of residence in Kazakhstan. Some oralman did not acquire citizenship through a simplified procedure within the allotted time frame

and requested assistance from the Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection for a time period extension. The deadline is now Dec. 31.

As of Jan. 1, more than 14,541 ethnic Kazakhs received the status of oralman since July, reports the Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Forty-nine percent were from Uzbekistan, 37.3 percent from China, 4.9 percent from Mongolia, 3.1 percent from Turkmenistan, 1.3 percent from Russia and 4.4 percent from other countries. Approximately 29 percent settled in Almaty, 16.6 percent in the Turkestan Region, 11.8 percent in the Mangystau Region and 9.1 percent in Nur-Sultan, with 32.6 percent residing elsewhere in Kazakhstan. Just more than 63 percent are of the legal working age, 27.2 percent are under the legal working age and 9.5 percent are pensioners.

Approximately one million ethnic Kazakhs have returned or moved to Kazakhstan following the launch of the government's repatriation programme shortly after independence. People with the status of oralman usually come from Afghanistan, China, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Russia and Pakistan and settle in areas of Kazakhstan adjoining or near to their former homes.

Oralmans are assisted with access to healthcare, education, social security and employment. To facilitate their repatriation process, the government has run integration centres for their temporary residence since 2008. There, oralman receive legal consultations and support for learning the state languages and receiving vocational trainings and professional development. Councils of Oralman were also set up by regional akimats (administrations) to assist them in their new living conditions.

Podcasts find growing audience, become new social opinion platform

Continued from Page B1

She purchased the necessary equipment and learned how to edit sound files using the Garage Band app. Pak has released 24 episodes, approximately one every 10 days.

"This is quite a lot, considering that podcasting is a hobby for me," she said.

Approximately 525,000 podcasts with 18 million episodes are currently available worldwide. Nearly 73 million Americans, or 26 percent of the population, listen to podcasts at least once a month and 48 million people each week. The audience is steadily growing 10-20 percent every year.

"Podcasts will boom in our region. You have to look for new ideas, tell stories and you will find your audience. There are currently no more than 10 podcasts in Central Asia. I suppose that there will be more podcasts in a couple of years. Let's make it better. I reckon that while in the U.S., small talks usually begin with 'What podcast are you listening to now?' My friends based in the U.S. complain that there are only 40 minutes in one episode, as it is often not enough for them, since they have long roads," she said.

Karabayev and Azamat Makh-sudov launched Random Conversations Generator (RCG) in 2017. Later, Aiman Makh-sudova joined the team as a third host.

RCG delves into areas including science, society, culture, music, cinema, relationships, art and psychology.

"The idea of creating a podcast had been cradling in Azamat's head for a while by February 2017 and when he offered me to be a co-host,

I gladly accepted. We both saw this as an opportunity to do something other than our everyday jobs; a great way to learn new things and it seemed like a great hobby, which could become something bigger than just a hobby in the future. We will see," said Karabayev.

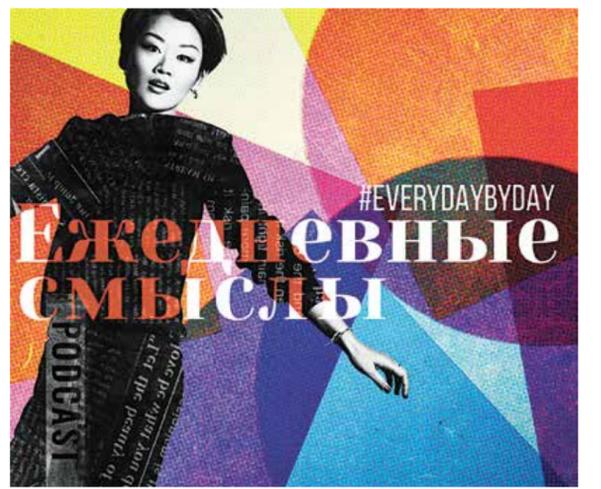
The podcasts mainly feature discussions among the co-hosts, while some episodes include guests.

"If we think that the topic for an episode requires an expert opinion or first-person experience, we try to find a guest who could shine some light on that topic. Usually, the most popular episodes are the ones that our listeners can relate to. As such, I would say that the episodes about the issues of young people in their 20s as well as interviews with popular Kazakh singers and scientists including Mdee, Science and Life, Data Science and Mercury Cachalot are the most popular ones," he noted.

The genre was attractive because unlike video, podcasts are more city-life friendly.

"People can listen to podcasts while they drive, ride bikes, do their house chores and other daily activities. The audio gear doesn't require as much investment as video equipment," said Karabayev.

"As for our audience, most of the listeners are young people in their 20s who go to school or work in Kazakhstan and abroad. I have received quite a few comments from Kazakh people who live abroad who said that listening to our friendly conversations makes them feel closer to home. Other listeners simply like to have virtual company and learn new things while they go about their daily routine," he said.



TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Almaty tourist flow exceeds one million

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The number of tourists to Almaty increased by 11.8 percent to 1.1 million visitors last year, one-fifth of all guests to the country. The city akimat (administration) paid attention to the infrastructure and opened a tourism hub.

“Because of the simplification of the visa regime, EXPO 2017, the Universiade, creation of tourist infrastructure and new objects of attraction, international events and promotion of the city in foreign countries, the number of tourists in the city is growing annually,” reported the Almaty Tourism and Foreign Affairs Department press service.

Local entrepreneurs are improving the quality of services. In 2018, investments in tourism increased 28.7 percent to 77.2 billion tenge (US\$203.65 million).

To create a comfortable urban environment for city residents and tourists, the akimat modernised 60 percent of the city’s historic centre, expanding sidewalks and green areas as a part of the City for People project.

In November, the Tourism and Foreign Affairs Department opened the first tourist hub in Kazakhstan in conjunction with the Visit Almaty Tourist Information Centre. It is situated in the Baluan Sholak Sports Complex, a facility

transferred to the city’s communal property. The hub gathers tourist operators, real estate agencies, a craft centre and tourist recreation areas where tourists and city residents can get guidebooks and information about regional sights and field trips and purchase souvenirs.

“Most foreign tourists are interested in nomadic culture and the thousand-year history of Almaty. Therefore, according to the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme, there are plans to build the Boraldai Saka Kurgans Cultural Centre, the Saka Kurgan and Raiymbek Batyr museums and the Ethnoland Ethno Cultural Complex on the territory of Kazakhfilm,” reads the press release.

As part of event tourism, approximately 50 international events are held annually in Almaty including the International Jazz Festival, Spirit of Tengri, Star of Asia, Parade of Orchestras, Almaty Koktobe Opera, Apple Fest, Tour of Almaty, Almaty Marathon and Almaty Mount Fest.

In 2018, the number of accommodations increased by 102 units to 286; in the past four years, the number of hotels increased by an average of 25 units. Compared to 2017, the number of beds increased 26 percent to 19,400, which allows the city to receive more than 19,000 tourists at a time.

Norwegian explorer completes Balkhash expedition

Continued from Page B1

“At least not in the context related to tourism or travel and especially crossing during the winter. With all lakes in the world, you will always find some information that is about the water quality, more from a geographic point of view. I found some sources that were very informative into the point about the lake, but nothing related to travel,” said Byholt.

“When I started, I had not really decided whether I wanted to do it or not, because I was not sure if I would be able to figure out everything. It was so difficult with information in the beginning that I was almost lost in this,” he said.

His research eventually led him to well-known Kazakh traveller and mountaineer Magzhan Sagimbayev, who works for the Kazakh Geographic Society. The organisation supported the Norwegian explorer throughout his expedition.

“He understood what I wanted to do and he was enthusiastic about helping. That was when I decided to go for it,” he said.

The organisation monitored Byholt’s progress via a tracker and was able to contact him using a satellite phone.

“I was expecting the lake to be windier [based on] the weather



Norwegian explorer William Byholt at the finish.

forecast for a long time. People said the winds were so strong, but it was never really windy there and the snow was not compact like in Antarctica and wind-blown places. It was deep and a bit tougher to make progress,” he said.

Byholt was also sick for more

than a week, a situation which inhibited his progress.

“It was so beautiful there. With the ice formations, the currents make the ice collide together and you have the pressure ridges. It was very fascinating,” he said.

“It was my first time in Kazakhstan and to Central Asia in gener-

al. I was really happy. This time, it was easier than it normally was. Most of the time, when I go to a new country, I am by myself and I do not have anyone waiting for me at the airport. This time, it was really nice with Magzhan and Kazakh Geographic Society helping me around Almaty,” he added.

Air Astana named best regional Asian carrier for second year in a row

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – TripAdvisor, a global travel website, has recognised Air Astana as the winner of the Travelers’ Choice Awards 2019 for Regional Asian Carrier for the second year in a row. The airline was also named best in the new Passenger Comfort category.

“Our airline demonstrates a constant commitment to the highest standards of service, and it is very gratifying that Air Astana has been declared the best again,” Air Astana President Peter Foster said.

“I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who left their opinion about the trip on TripAdvisor, and hope for your continued support,” he added.

Passengers said they like the airline’s on-board service, cabin cleanliness, food and drinks, comfortable seats, value for money, registration and entertainment system and the amount of space between the seats, which allowed the company to win a new category called Passenger Comfort. The best carriers were determined by an algorithm that considers the quantity and quality

of reviews and ratings left by passengers during 2018.

The Travellers’ Choice Awards is awarded to the best airlines in seven regions, including Asia, Europe, North America, Latin America, the South Pacific and Oceania, and the Middle East. The award also marks airlines in four classes of service: international first class, business class, premium economy class and economy class. Award winners’ criteria are exceptional service, quality and value for money.

TripAdvisor is an American travel and restaurant website company that shows hotel and restaurant reviews, accommodation bookings and other travel-related content with interactive travel forums. The company is headquartered in Needham, Massachusetts, and is the largest travel website in the world, with more than 315 million reviewers (active and inactive) and more than 500 million reviews of hotels, restaurants, attractions and other travel-related businesses.

TripAdvisor was an early developer of user-generated content, which is free for users and generates profit from advertising at the website.

Air Astana to begin flights to Tokyo in second half of 2019

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh national airline Air Astana will launch Boeing 767 passenger flights to and from Tokyo in the second half of 2019, according to a March 26 announcement on

the Facebook page of the Kazakh Civil Aviation Committee of the Ministry for Industry and Infrastructure Development.

The announcement follows a Jan. 30 directive from the then Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev for the government to open routes to Japan.

“It is necessary for us to set the task for aviators – this is Air Astana, first of all – (to launch) flights to our main investors. Now we are flying to Europe, we have to fly to the USA, we have to fly to Japan,” Nazarbayev said.

“We need to see what is needed for this: help, support. Maybe at

first it will be unprofitable, but you have to start flying. In terms of help in buying aircraft or using existing ones. This year, this issue needs to be resolved,” he added.

Kazakhstan and Japan established a legal framework in November 2016 that allows flights between the two countries. Prior to that, there was no legal basis between countries for direct flights. The agreement allows each country to offer 14 flights per week.

“Destinations for Kazakh carriers are Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and for Japanese are Astana, Almaty and Karaganda,” said the statement.

Kazakhstan registered Air Astana airlines in 2001. The airline launched May 15, 2002 its first flight on the route Almaty-Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana). The European Aviation Safety Agency (the EASA) certified the national airline company to carry out aircraft maintenance according to the requirements of Directive 145.

Air Astana has modern aircraft of Western production such as Boeing 767-300ER, Boeing 757-200, Airbus A320, Airbus A320neo, Airbus A321, Airbus A321neo, Embraer 190 and Embraer E190-E2. To date, the company has 34 aircraft and plans to increase the fleet to 39 aircraft by the end of 2019.



Kazakh capital to host 2019 UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Nur-Sultan Akimat (city administration) will organise the eighth UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism under the Smart Cities, Smart Destinations theme in the Kazakh capital Oct. 9-12.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili and Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov signed April 5 an agreement at the UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism in Lisbon, where the akim made a pres-

entation of the capital, pointing out that Nur-Sultan has all necessary infrastructure for international events. The decision to have the event in Nur-Sultan was made at the seventh UNWTO Global Summit in Seoul last year.

“The importance of urban tourism is growing in mature and emerging destinations alike, providing immense opportunities to make tourism an integral part of cities’ sustainable future, and we are very pleased to be holding the eighth UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism in Nur-Sultan,” said Pololikashvili.

“In times of intense development of tourism, all stakehold-

ers must work together to ensure sustainable development and social integration of cities. As the akim of Nur-Sultan, a dynamic and growing hub in Central Asia, I am very pleased to invite all to the upcoming eighth UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism,” said Sultanov.

The summit will bring together representatives from national tourism administrations, city authorities and related stakeholders to exchange expertise and set a shared vision to advance urban tourism. Participants will discuss sustainability, accessibility, innovations and inclusion of tourism in the urban agenda.

During the summit, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) will give a masterclass on trends in convention industry.

According to the akimat, having the summit in Nur-Sultan will increase tourism to the capital and strengthen cooperation with major international tourism associations and companies.

The UNWTO is responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism around the world. It promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to advance knowledge and tourism policies worldwide. The

organisation has 158 member countries, six associate members and more than 500 affiliate members. The UNWTO Global Summit is designed to encourage new approaches to tourism and its impact



L-R: Nur-Sultan Akim Bakhyt Sultanov and UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

on urban destinations. Previously, the event took place in Seoul (2018), Kuala Lumpur (2017), Luxor (2016), Marrakesh (2015), Barcelona (2014), Moscow (2013) and Istanbul (2012).

Photo credit: astana.gov.kz

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Elizabet Tursynbayeva wins silver medal at World Championship, completes history-making quadruple salchow



L-R: Silver medalist Elizabet Tursynbayeva of Kazakhstan, gold medalist Alina Zagitova of Russia and bronze medalist Yevgenia Medvedeva of Russia.

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh figure skater Elizabet Tursynbayeva, who won the silver medal at the 2019 World Figure Skating

Championship in Saitama, Japan March 22, made history in the process. She is the country's first female athlete to receive a medal and first woman to complete a quadruple salchow at the event.

"I am overwhelmed with emo-

tions. The silver medal was a surprise for me. Of course, I am very happy. This is the first medal in the history of Kazakhstan in women's single skating. I tried not to think about anything when I performed. I just focused on my programme. I still cannot believe that I made this jump. Everything was good in the morning training today, but I could not do it in the last two competitions. I am very glad that it happened today. When I went on the ice, I felt great; I believed that I could do this and I really did it," she said at the final press conference, reported olympics.kz.

Tursynbayeva captured the bronze medal in the short programme, yielding only to Japan's Kaori Sakamoto and Russia's Alina Zagitova.

The quadruple salchow in her long programme was a history-making moment not just for Kazakhstan, but for world figure skating, as no female athlete had

ever performed the jump at the World Championship. The judges rated her performance at 148.80 points and her 224.76-point total earned the silver medal.

Zagitova took home the gold, scoring 237.50. Fellow Russian Evgenia Medvedeva won the bronze, scoring 223.80.

Tursynbayeva dedicated her exhibition performance to Denis Ten, the Kazakh figure skater who died July 19 in Almaty. His bronze medal at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi was the culmination of his career, as he became the first and only Kazakh figure skater to ascend the Olympic pedestal. He also won the 2013 and 2015 World Championship medals and many smaller tournaments.

Forty-two athletes from more than 30 countries performed in the women's singles at this year's World Championships, 24 of whom qualified for free skating.

Acrobatic gymnasts win medals at 2019 World Cup in Las Vegas

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh male acrobatic gymnastics team of Daniel Dil and Vadim Shulyar won the gold medal March 25 at the 2019 Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) World Cup in Las Vegas. The women's team of Anel Nurzhanova and Yulia Prosvetova took the bronze. The victories are the first for the country at the world championship level.

Dil and Shulyar live and train at Karaganda Regional Gymnastics Youth Sports School.

Dil and Shulyar live and train at Karaganda Regional Gymnastics Youth Sports School. Their coaches are Irina Balagutina and Sergey Vertyankin.

"This is the first medal in the history of acrobatics in Kazakhstan at such top-level tournaments in this age category. Congratulations to the team and their coaches! Today, they are the best in the world," said Karaganda Regional Department of Physical Culture

and Sports head Dmitry Karpov, reported sports.kz.

The team performed an international class master of sports programme. Earlier, they had the rank of Kazakhstan masters of sports.

Winning the tournament with the score of 28.45, the team surpassed pairs from Germany (28.44) and the United Kingdom (28.26).

Nurzhanova and Prosvetova are from the National Specialised School-Boarding College of the Olympic Reserve named after Qazhymuqan Munaitpasov in Zhambyl.

"Athletes from Kazakhstan won for the first time in competition at this level, although this is not the first victory of Zhambyl athletes under the guidance of coach Tatyana Simagina," Zhambyl Akimat (administration) Department of Physical Culture and Sports head Oksana Borisjuk told inform.kz.

The team earned a score of 26.44, yielding to Portugal (28.37) and Austria (27.17).

"Ferreira and Teixeira (Portugal) won with a routine that scored highest for difficulty and execution, while there were also impressive medal-winning performances from Katelyn Dullard and Tori Singleton (Austria) and Anelya

Nurzhanova and Yuliya Prosvetova (Kazakhstan) who took silver and bronze, respectively, in their World Cup debuts," noted the FIG website.

The 2019 World Cup, known as the Vegas Acro Cup, was held March 22-24 at the Rio Hotel, Ca-

sino and Convention Centre. More than 110 athletes from 18 countries competed in the event. Pairs and groups performed three routines – balance (focus on strength, poise and flexibility), dynamic (includes throws, somersaults and catches) and combined (elements of both).



Daniel Dil and Vadim Shulyar.

Astana's Barys Hockey Club to shift to NHL-sized rink, might increase budget

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Astana's Barys Hockey Club will use a North American NHL-sized rink during the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) 2019 to 2020 season, Barys President Boris Ivanishchev told an April 2 press conference.

The club also announced plans to play KHL regular season games in Almaty in September.

"We plan to introduce NHL standards in rink size this summer. The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) considers smaller, NHL-sized rinks by 2022. We need to prepare for this innovation," he said. Olympic-size hockey rinks are typically about 15 feet wider than a standard NHL rink.

Ivanishchev also discussed the clubs that will take part in the 2019 Cup of the President Championship in the capital.

"Ak Bars Kazan and Avtomobilist Yekaterinburg Hockey Clubs

have already confirmed their participation. Negotiations are underway with a foreign team. Overall, five teams will play in one round," he said.

Barys will begin its pre-season games at its home arena, then travel to Europe.

"The team will participate in a tournament in Switzerland and play two more friendly matches. There will be no preseason games in Almaty," he said.

Barys club won the Chernyshev division and took second place in the KHL Eastern Conference. The club beat Nizhny Novgorod's Torpedo Hockey Club 3:2 in the seventh game of their quarterfinals series, but lost to Avangard Omsk Hockey Club in the semi-finals.

These are good results, given the team's relatively small budget when compared to the rest of the KHL, some experts say, but with more funding might come more success.

"We achieved good results in the regular season but we missed our



chances in the playoffs. There was a shortage of qualified players. We didn't have sufficient capital to sign experienced players. Of course, we had ambitions to play further. Each team wants to win the Gagarin Cup. We also strive for this. We have a good team but they lack skill. We

need to increase our budget in order to play in the finals of the conference. We need financial assistance to attract players who can play for that result," the club president said.

Barys and national team head coach Andrei Skabelka said the club's management, fans and play-

Denis Ten exhibition attracted 35,000 visitors in Japan



Photo credit: denistefoundation.org

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The Denis Ten Foundation organised the D10 world exhibition, dedicated to the memory of the Kazakh figure skater and bronze medalist at the 2014 Sochi Olympics, during the 2019 World Figure Skating Championship in Saitama, Japan. The four-day exhibit attracted 35,000 visitors.

The exhibition presented Ten's own photos and those taken during his performances, and his friends prepared a video installation shown on several screens. A book was also available for guests to express words of support to his family and friends. The International Skating Union and the Kazakh Embassy in Japan supported the foundation in preparing the exhibit.

"The initiative came from the Japanese fan community, who, after exhibitions in Almaty and Astana, asked the Denis Ten Foundation to come to Japan. They greeted us very warmly. Many visitors came [including those who] came specifically [to the exhibition] from other cities of Japan. People cried, smiled and approached us and Oksana Alekseevna (Ten's mother). They thanked us for holding this photo exhibition," said Denis Ten Foundation Executive Director and the skater's friend Gauhar Omar, reported informburo.kz.

Figure skating is one of the most popular winter sports in Japan, and Ten is well known in the country. His Japanese fans presented him with handmade presents and travelled around the world to see his performances, including to Kazakhstan for the Friends of Denis Ten ice show which he initiated and organised.

Ten was not only an athlete, but a person with a rich personality who expressed kindness to others,

a trait which the foundation wanted to highlight, said Omar.

"Initially, our concept was to show the multifaceted personality of Denis, not only as an athlete. Everyone knows him as a champion, but also, he is a friend. For example, videos from the personal archive show him as a human, a friend and a creative person. Here, people can see photos of Denis and photographs made by him. The warmth that Denis gave people is now returning. The fact that he is remembered is heart-warming. It seems to me that this is what drives the foundation and all of us – that people remember and want all his projects to continue," she said to 24.kz.

Ten's fan and sports announcer Eri Suzuki, who knew the athlete personally, began to study the Kazakh culture and, due to his influence, mastered the dombra (Kazakh stringed instrument).

Suzuki served as the announcer at the 2019 World Championship. During breaks, she shared her memories of the athlete with visitors.

"When I saw his performance for the first time, I was just impressed and thought 'what a charming figure skater.' I just loved him... His skating performances, of course, are very good; they are wonderful. I think that not only his performances, but also his talents, his heart, his character – everything is very kind; therefore, many people loved him so much and continue loving him," she said in Russian.

"When we knew that such a photo exhibition was held in Kazakhstan, numerous fans wanted it to take place in Japan. As far as I know, there have been many appeals to parents and friends. Thanks to the fans and the Denis Ten Foundation that despite the difficulties, they organised this event. We are very grateful for the opportunity to visit the exhibition," said fan Rie Soda.

ers did their best to win in this season.

"Everyone was ready to go and to fight. The players showed their character, aspiration and skill. I think we can divide the season into two parts. We were pleased with the achievements in the regular championship. But we didn't succeed in the playoffs. Due to this, we cannot be completely satisfied with the season. I want to thank our audience and fans for their support. We are one with the fans. We had a busy schedule and many guest games. But in general, we took a step forward and became stronger," he added.

News about new contracts and players will be available in the near future.

KHL observer Alessandro Seren Rosso summed up the results of the season for the Kazakh team.

"Under their new coach Andrei Skabelka, Barys had a strong season. Their international players delivered, but local players like Roman Starchenko and Nikita Mikhailis also had substantial contributions, especially in the regular season... With this foundation, Barys will most likely be once again one of the teams to beat in the Eastern Conference. Multiple key players are under contract for the next season, like Darren Dietz, Henrik Karlsson,

and Nikita Mikhailis, and indeed the boards will manage to retain some of the talents that moved to Kazakhstan last summer. Astana seems to have found the right coach in Skabelka after a couple of disappointing seasons," he wrote on khl.ru.

"The team will participate in a tournament in Switzerland and play two more friendly matches. There will be no preseason games in Almaty."

Barys hockey players will play with the national team at the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship Division I Group A April 29 to May 5 at Barys Arena. The teams playing for promotion will be Belarus, Hungary, Lithuania, Korea, Kazakhstan and Slovenia. The top two teams will go on to the 2020 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship in Switzerland.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019

Virtual and augmented reality lab launches school to help kids learn

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The virtual and augmented reality laboratory NurLab recently opened in the 73rd lyceum in the Kazakh capital. The lab gives students there the opportunity to interact with augmented or virtual reality content and create multi-dimensional environments for learning.

The laboratory is a joint project of Kazakhstan's STEM Academia and the Bolashak Association.

"This project is entirely innovative for us. It is the first such project for Kazakhstan. Augmented and virtual reality classes now exist only in the United States and China. In NurLab, the technology is meant to employ both augmented reality and virtual reality. With these, kids can study, in more detail, STEM, physics, math, chemistry – and this can encourage more interest," said Bolashak Association Executive Director Laura Demessinova at the presentation.

The lab's equipment includes a Zspace laptop featuring patented 3D screen technology, lightweight glasses and a stylus pen and a ClassVR headset that delivers a fully immersive environment.

Class VR content covers nearly 500 areas, including history, nature, geography, physical features, art and culture.



The four-kilogramme ZSpace laptop – produced in Sunnyvale, California – comes equipped with specially designed lightweight glasses and a stylus that allows us-

ers to pick up items on the screen and locate them in 3D space. It has sensors that track head and hand movements and ensure dynamic updating of perspective. The lap-

top can also be used as a traditional Windows PC laptop.

Kazakhstan is the third country for ZSpace after the United States and China.

ZSpace technology is present in 10,000 of the U.S.' 140,000 schools, and in 2,000 schools across China.

"As a company, we have been there for 12 years, the last six years very focused in the United States and China. Very focused on K12 [education] and originally focused on STEM, and now we are having broader content than that," ZSpace CEO Paul Kellenberger told The Astana Times.

"Almost every subject [is available], with the exception of language. We started with science, technology, engineering, math. We expanded it to chemistry, physics," he said.

The content goes beyond traditional school curriculum subjects. Among ZSpace applications that are updated regularly are automotive mechanics, 3D design, welding, veterinary studies, virtual ECG, medical imaging scans and unity programming.

Kazakhstan's STEM Academia partnered with the company to bring virtual and augmented reality content to Kazakhstan's classrooms.

Encouraging the interest of children in learning is the key value of ZSpace technology.

"From the very beginning of the company – I am one of the founders – it was all about creating something that got kids interested in learning and engaged in learning what they otherwise would not be interested in or things that they could not do. For example, chemistry is one of the things where you have some risks with doing it. If you do it virtually, there is no issue whatsoever. The engagement is the biggest part of ZSpace," Kellenberger said.

Research shows academic performance of students using such technology rises between 16 percent to 26 percent, he said.

"We did not do the studies: Stanford University did, North Carolina University did. We have data. Kids got engaged in the learning process and got excited about it and they learn by doing, so they remember much better," he noted.

Kellenberger commended the countries taking steps towards embracing new technologies.

The lab's equipment includes a Zspace laptop featuring patented 3D screen technology, lightweight glasses and a stylus pen and a ClassVR headset that delivers a fully immersive environment.

"It is [at] different levels in different countries. China is the one that is very aggressive in bringing new advanced technologies. The United States, when we first started six years ago, had fallen behind, in STEM, science and math in particular, compared with other countries in the world. People who are willing in embracing new technology are the ones that typically end up doing extremely well. We believe that Kazakhstan has that as well," he said.

Inclusive kindergarten opens



By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – RostOk inclusive kindergarten, which provides rehabilitation for children with autism spectrum disorders, hearing impairments and speech and movement disorders, opened April 1 in the capital.

The kindergarten can accept 55 youngsters aged from two and a half to seven on a paid basis for a full day and 65 from low-income families for a year free of charge for a course of remedial care, reported astana.gov.kz.

"It is important for a child with special needs to be provided with timely remedial assistance in educational institutions for further successful socialisation. I would like to note that the victorious results of our foundation's activities are the admission of 15 children to secondary schools in the city," said Co-Make Public Foundation Director Irina Kalyuzhna in her speech at the opening.

According to the Psychological Medical Pedagogical Committees (PMPC), 7,557 children with special needs currently live in the capital. Rehabilitation and social adaptation are vital issues for their parents.

In an effort to solve the issues, the city akimat (administration) transferred the non-residential premises to Astana Social and Entrepreneurial Corporation (SEC) and approved the programme as an effective use of municipal property. At least 60 percent of non-residential prem-

ises will be designated for social projects and approximately 5,400 square metres have been leased for projects such as the kindergarten.

"The opening of an inclusive kindergarten is a big and important event in the life of the capital, since this preschool institution is an early stage of inclusion, giving children the opportunity to fully adapt in society and study in secondary schools along with other children. We are glad to be part of such a project... The SEC will continue to work on supporting socially important projects in the capital that help our country to develop," said SEC acting Chair Rustem Kuanyshbayev at the opening.

Ombudsman for Protection of Children's Rights in Kazakhstan Saule Aitpayeva, Deputy Chairperson of the National Commission for Women and Family and Demographic Policy Yelena Tarasenko, Senate Deputies and Representatives of the Presidential Administration, Ministry of Education and Science and PMPC attended the event.

"Inclusion is more than just being together. This is the process of creating an appropriate environment for all children, which, in turn, means the need to adapt education and training programmes to the needs and interests of children and not vice versa. It is gratifying that topical projects for children with special educational needs are being created in Kazakhstan," said Aitpayeva.

Capital name change to be gradual, existing legal documents remain valid

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The country will keep Astana name as world known brand and renaming process will be gradual and not expensive. The capital residents don't need to change their documents.

"In his first speech a President of Kazakhstan, Kazakh President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev gave a very clear rationale: renaming the capital is an acknowledgment of the historical merit of the Leader of the Nation and a way to perpetuate his name. Another thing is that the renaming process itself will not be as radical as many people think. In total, the akimat (the capital administration) will choose the most inexpensive way for the renaming using the state budget. No one sets the task to change all banners, signs and announcements in one day. This will not happen," Minister of Information and Social Development Dauren Abayev said in the Open Dialogue programme on Khabar TV channel.

According to him, all well known objects of the city will retain their name.

"All key objects of the city – Astana Opera, Astana Arena, sports clubs, Astana TV channel and others will not change their names. We will also keep, which

is very important, the international brand Astana. For example, Astana International Financial Centre, Air Astana, the Astana team, the Astana Arlans sports team – all of them will keep their names," he said.

Abayev highlighted that the country will keep Astana as the world-famous brand and will develop a new brand with a huge potential – Nur-Sultan.

"As the city akim correctly noted today, the word of Astana is very convenient for us, because it means capital. For example, in Kazakh we will continue to call the residents of our capital 'astanalyktar.' We suggest doing the same in the Russian language – to call Astana residents – astanchane," he explained.

The minister also drew attention

to the fact that the general change of documents is not required for people living in Astana.

"Official documents, which indicate the old name of the capital will not lose their legal force. No one needs to go to the population serving centres and change them. The change of documents will take place strictly after their validity has expired," Abayev added.



Akimat officials available for prompt responses on social media

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The Nur-Sultan Akimat (city administration) recently published the phone numbers and social media accounts of akims (mayors) of districts and the city akimat's department heads on its official website so that they may be more accessible to the public.

Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Bakhyt Sultanov instructed akims of districts and the city

akimat's department heads to more closely engage with people on social media.

"Akims of districts and the city akimat's department heads should be in constant communication with citizens. Pay special attention to the quality of your content. In addition, do not dwell on any one particular social media account, much less launch a social media page for the sake of having it. You should know and understand your audience. For example, as far as I know, school

children and students prefer VKontakte. It means that staff of the Education Department should not only be on Facebook, but also on VKontakte. Twitter may be used to attract investment and for brand promotion. Therefore, there should be a systematic approach to the execution of this task," he told the city leaders, as reported the Nur-Sultan Akimat press service.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev tasked akims of cities and regions March 27 with

promptly responding to the demands of the population.

"Akims of cities and regions should respond quickly to public inquiries and carry out explanatory work. It is important to engage with people on social media – create groups in messenger services, explain current policies and moderate a given situation," he said at a recent meeting with the akims of regions, as well as the akims of three cities of national significance, Nur-Sultan, Almaty and Shymkent.