



Kazakh ruling party nominates incumbent President Tokayev as candidate for June 9 election



Kazakh First President Nursultan Nazarbayev (C) and current President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev pose for selfie with the participants of the Nur Otan party congress on April 23.

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh ruling Nur Otan party congress unanimously nominated April 23 Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as the party's candidate for Kazakhstan's June 9 presidential election.

The nomination was supported by 600 delegates at the congress and was announced by former

President and current party Chair Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev has described Tokayev as a "close ally and outstanding politician" and noted his vast experience.

"As a party chair, I put forward Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Having known him for many years, working together, I believe he is the most well-deserved candidate for this highest position in the country," said Naz-

arbayev. "I am sure Kassym-Jomart Tokayev is such a candidate that will follow the politics of friendship, equal rights of Kazakh citizens. I call on all our people to support this candidate... I firmly believe in our victory, because our course is right and people trust us," said Nazarbayev.

Tokayev announced early presidential elections April 9 in a televised address to the nation. The former Senate Speaker assumed the office of

President March 20 per the Kazakh Constitution following Nazarbayev's resignation March 19 from the office he had held for nearly 30 years.

Born in 1953, Tokayev is a graduate of Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Beijing Institute of the Chinese Language and the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Kazakhstan unveils new measure to attract foreign investment

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh officials unveiled at an April 22 government meeting the new Coordinating Council on Investment Issues, which is meant to help the country attract more foreign investment.

"A working group with the involvement of all interested government agencies and national companies has developed a new approach to attracting investments. The parties' opinions were taken into consideration and a consensus was formed. The cornerstone of the new architecture will be the Coordinating Council on Investment Issues chaired by the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan," First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov said at the government meeting.

The council will be chaired by Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin and include the first deputy prime minister, deputy prime minister responsible for infrastructure development, heads of key ministries (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Internal Affairs), the National Bank, Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), national holdings, national companies, Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, as well as the chairman of the Specialised Judicial College of the Supreme Court, deputy attorney general and national security committee deputy chairman, said Smailov.

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Global leaders to focus on 'inspiring growth' at AEF

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – More than 3,000 domestic and international economists, political leaders and civil society representatives are expected to gather May 16-17 in the Kazakh capital for the annual Astana Economic Forum (AEF). Approximately half the participants will be foreign delegates from more than 100 countries.

The forum will address changes in global economies, the social sector, digital technologies, multiple industries and the unfolding Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The AEF was convened for the first time in 2008 in the midst of a global financial crisis and has grown into an international plat-

form that helps shape the global economic agenda.

The forum kicks off every year with a focus on a specific topic. Last year, it was about global trends and challenges and this year it will explore "inspiring growth" driven by people, cities and economies.

"The forum participants will discuss new ways for sustainable growth, the development of human capital and how to strengthen the potential of cities as international centres of knowledge and innovations," said forum organisers.

The programme will feature approximately 50 panel sessions, roundtables, conferences and business meetings.

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UK sees Kazakhstan as major strategic partner in Central Asia, says British minister

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The United Kingdom views Kazakhstan as one of its major strategic partners in Central Asia, U.K. Minister of

State for Europe and the Americas Sir Alan Duncan said in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

He spoke about the U.K.'s support for the continuity represented by Kazakhstan's domestic leader-

ship transition. The stability and predictability of the country's policies are important for the international community.

"The whole region is important for us. There are great opportunities and we want to take those op-

portunities. I'm pleased that over the last few years there has been business activity in excess of 20 billion pounds (US\$26 billion). It's a lot, but it's not enough.

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Korean President brings 'Fresh Wind' to relations in Kazakh capital

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and South Korean President Moon Jae-in discussed April 22 the peace process on the Korean Peninsula and bilateral economic cooperation during Moon Jae-in's three-day state visit to Kazakhstan. The visit marked the 10th anniversary of strategic partnership between the two countries.

The two presidents signed a wide-ranging joint statement that dealt, in part, with the Fresh Wind New Economic Programme between Kazakhstan and South Korea. According to the joint statement, the Fresh Wind covers areas such as infrastructure construction, agriculture, healthcare and culture.

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L-R: South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

Belgian travel company offers insights, experiences beyond clichés

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The Caravanistan travel company is often the first stop for first-time and experienced travelers seeking visa, transportation, tour, lodging and attractions information about Central Asia.

The company provides well-rounded information on all aspects of travel in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations. Visitors to their website www.caravanistan.com can also find local tour operators and reach out to fellow travelers in Central Asia in the company's online forum.

Caravanistan was founded by Steven Hermans and Saule Kalysheva in 2010, after they met in Kazakhstan while Hermans was

traveling to China. His interest in media, Kalysheva's interest in marketing and their shared passion for travel led them to create Caravanistan.

"The people who come to see Central Asia are, more often, explorers and pioneers, and discovery is a big part of it," they said in an interview with The Astana Times. "The majority of people who read Caravanistan are between 25 and 34. They are adventurous, don't just want to lay on a beach and don't mind roughing it and having less comfort if they can do something interesting and unusual."

As a key source on the region for English-speaking travelers, Hermans and Kalysheva hope to change the media's narrow conception of Central Asia.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Presidential hopefuls must gather 118,000 signatures to be on early election ballot

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Presidential hopefuls will need to gather approximately 118,000 signatures to be included on the ballot for Kazakhstan's June 9 early presidential election, according to an

April 10 announcement by the Kazakh Central Election Commission (CEC).

Nominations began April 10 and will continue until 6 p.m. April 28. Candidates must be nominated, according to the Kazakh Constitution, by a majority vote of national public

associations, according to election.gov.kz.

Nominated candidates must collect 118,146 signatures, which is 1 percent of Kazakhstan's 11,814,019 registered voters. The signatures must also represent at least two-thirds of regions and cities with national status and the

capital, said CEC Deputy Chairman Konstantin Petrov during the April 10 CEC meeting.

The signatures are to be gathered by proxies of the potential candidate and will be certified by territorial election commissions, he said.

Petrov added that candidates

will be certified within five days of completing all constitutional requirements for candidacy.

The April 10 CEC meeting was joined via video by representatives from political parties, territorial election commissions from the regions, cities with national status and the capital.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan has created a tourist police force, the press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced. Units have been created in Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and the Akmola, Turkestan and East Kazakhstan regions in the first phase of the programme. Tourist police are intended to help keep visitors to Kazakhstan safe and informed. "The ministry initiated proposals to create e-visa and e-hotel databases and the tourist police as part of the concept for the development of the tourism industry. Today, visas are issued electronically for citizens of 117 countries. A hotel database will create accounts for all places of residence and eliminate the obligation to visit the police for registration," Minister of Internal Affairs Yerlan Turgumbayev said April 19.

A solar power station worth \$61 million will be completed in the Karaganda region in June, Kazinform reports. The 50-megawatt-capacity plant is located on an area of 120 hectares. Some 150,000 panels and power substations will be delivered in the near future. "Work is going according to the schedule. A line from the KEGOC substations to our substation will be ready soon. We need to finish the project by June 30," said General Director of SES Saran Evgeny Grebennikov.

KazAgro national holding will move from lending to funding, according to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Agriculture. Entrepreneurs will be able to take out loans through the Economy of Simple Things programme. Loans are provided for seven years at a final rate of 8 percent per year, taking into account subsidies. For the production of agricultural products, loans are provided at a rate of 5 percent. "The work is being done by funding second-tier banks, credit partnerships and microcredit organisations to solve debt problems. The dominance of KazAgro in the financing of the agricultural sector should gradually decrease. KazAgro will shift from direct lending to funding private lending organisations. Access to financing for agricultural producers will become available at the banks, credit partnerships and micro-lending organisations. Second-tier banks should enter this sector, accumulate experience through funding from KazAgro, and then invest... in the agro-industrial complex," Vice Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan Rustem Kurmanov said April 18.

The construction of the Saryarka gas pipeline will be completed in December, according to the press service of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund. "Major construction work will be completed by the end of the year and the commissioning is planned for 2020. The pipeline is intended for the gasification of the capital, the central and northern regions. The capacity of the gas pipeline will be 2.2 billion cubic metres of gas per year. A total of 171 settlements in the Karaganda and Akmola regions will be supplied with gas. The consumption of coal fuel will decrease by 650,000 tonnes per year. The construction provides jobs for more than 800 people and more than 2,000 people in the busiest months," reads a press release from the fund.

A pasta-making plant worth \$580,000 will be opened in the Sarygash district of the Turkestan region. The district's gross output was \$380 million in 2018, and 13,660 small and medium-sized businesses operate there. Seven projects worth \$643,000 have been implemented through the Business Road Map 2020 programme. "We added an investment project worth \$1.1 million to the business support map. Last year, we attracted \$55 million to the region. It is planned to attract \$60 million this year. Last year, we built four tourist facilities and created 80 jobs. This year, we will launch five facilities," said district akim (mayor) Kairat Abdualiyev.

Application process for media, observers opens

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Foreign observers and international organisations observing Kazakhstan's June 9 presidential election must complete an accreditation pro-

cess and can be accompanied by one interpreter, according to Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan rules announced April 12.

The accreditation process will be conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and must be

completed by June 3 at 6 p.m. Foreign observers wishing to monitor the elections must register for accreditation with Central Election Commission through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by emailing their applications to election2019@mfa.kz. Ob-

servers should represent foreign countries or international organisations.

International media seeking to cover the election must also register with the foreign ministry by emailing their applications to accreditation2019@mfa.kz.

Documents required for media accreditation include a cover letter from the editor-in-chief requesting accreditation for a journalist, a copy of a valid passport, a completed accreditation form, a 3x4 cm digital photo and a journalist's brief biography.

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He has held some of the country's highest positions, including foreign minister for a decade, prime minister and, most recently, senate speaker.

"With all my heart, I feel the burden put on me by a great person, founder of our country. Therefore, I pledge to live up to such big trust to the best of my ability."

"Since the very first years of independence, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev worked close to me at different responsible positions. He is among those who was here with me when we started to build Kazakhstan's foreign policy for many years leading

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His diplomatic work is highly appreciated internationally. You know that he has been UN Deputy Secretary General and is a very experienced statesman," said Nazarbayev.

Tokayev thanked Nazarbayev

Tokayev told the gathering he will ensure the continuity of the course.

Nazarbayev noted that the time has come for a new generation of leadership.

"I resigned March 19. But a new generation will come to lead the country. This is how it works in life and I believe they will work for the sake of the country and our generation should help them," said Nazarbayev.

He also noted that he had been planning this decision for several years.

"If I did something over this time, I am a happy person, happy politician. I made a conscious decision. Such decisions are not taken within one day or one month. I was preparing for such a decision for a few years and,

honestly, more than three years. I looked everywhere, looked at allies and came to this conclusion. And it was right," he said.

The Nur Otan Congress gathered nearly 1,500 participants, including the 600 delegates from across the country. Among them are Kazakh Parliament deputies, high-level government officials, heads of national holdings and companies, representatives of civil society, diplomatic missions and international organisations.

Tokayev submitted the nomination documents to the Central Election Commission April 23.

The Uly Dala Qyrandary public association also recently nominated 64-year-old Sadybek Tugel as their candidate for the June 9 election. Tugel is an experienced

journalist and writer. He is the editor-in-chief at Qazanat, a popular science journal and President of the Kazakh Federation of National Equestrian Sports.

The nomination of the candidates will continue until April 28. Several more political parties are expected to hold congress to nominate their candidates.

The Uly Dala Qyrandary public association also recently nominated 64-year-old Sadybek Tugel as their candidate.

Teachers to receive up to 30-percent pay hike

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan plans to boost salaries for education system workers from 10-30 percent starting in June in conjunction with the new system of coefficients to be launched that month, said Kazakh Minister of Education Kulyash Shamshidinova at an April 15 press conference.

The new set of coefficients for calculating salaries applies to state workers, including those in education. The system will take into account the teacher's education level, qualifications and working conditions.

"Seventy-five percent of funds meant for an increase in salaries for state workers will go to the education system," said Shamshidinova.



Kulyash Shamshidinova

The raises are part of the country's efforts to improve its education system and will be implemented in line with former President Nursultan Nazarbayev's instructions to increase salaries for state workers and in line with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's instructions to bring forward the date for the increase by one month, from July 1 to June 1.

In the next three years, the country will allocate 378 billion tenge (US\$996.2 million) to increase salaries, including 67 billion tenge (US\$176.5 million) in 2018.

Nearly 70 percent of teachers, or 208,000, have received a 30-percent increase since 2018 for switching to an updated education programme. Sixty thousand have received a 30-50 percent raise for passing national qualification tests administered in May and November.

"In the upcoming three years, 144,000 teachers will pass qualification tests to teach an updated education programme, 82,000 psychologists, 15,000 engineer and pedagogical college workers and 2,400 university professors," said Shamshidinova.

Teachers can access support material at smk.edu.kz that includes

more than 120,000 references. The ministry will continue to integrate STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Math) learning, IT skills, projects and research in school curriculum, she noted.

Shamshidinova also briefed the gathering on the ministry's efforts to support teachers who are learning English. Educators are taking English language courses and starting next year, teaching English will be a responsibility for Kazakh universities.

"Of 14,000 teachers of chemistry, biology, IT and physics, 11,000 have completed English language courses. The course that started in 2019, we could not stop it now," she said.

"Those teachers that completed three-month courses have taken

additional six-month courses. We revised this issue and starting in 2020, the funds [US\$10.5 million] that were initially meant to improve teachers' qualifications in English will be directed to other education goals and training of specialists in pedagogical universities so that they come already prepared," she added.

The ministry also seeks to encourage student volunteer efforts. Incentives include providing 25,000 tenge (US\$65.89) vouchers and a two-credit retake for 25 volunteer hours and 50,000 tenge (US\$131.70) and a five-credit retake for 50 hours.

The ministry identified several volunteer areas such as helping kids with special learning needs, tutoring, working with minors demonstrating deviant behaviour and social help for the elderly.

APK to continue interethnic, religious harmony building in wake of political changes

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – In response to the recent change in the Kazakh presidency, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) organised a national extended meeting April 2 to redefine and discuss its agenda. The participants agreed to maintain its current course and involve more people in key national modernisation initiatives.

"Today, we are entering a new stage of development. It is important for us to ensure the continuity of the strategic course of Elbasy (Leader of the Nation, the constitutional title accorded to former President Nursultan Nazarbayev)," said APK Deputy Chair and Secretariat head Zhanset Tuimebayev. Nazarbayev established APK on

March 1, 1995 to unite the diverse nation after the collapse of the USSR. It has become a mechanism working on strengthening ethnic and religious peaceful coexistence and promoting family values and youth development. Nazarbayev remains the chairman of the assembly.

The assembly will generally continue its activities and promote the established "Kazakh model of social harmony and national unity, rightly bearing the name of Nursultan Nazarbayev," he noted.

The meeting participants plan to engage all APK structures throughout the country to contribute and participate in national events prioritising the Year of Youth, Ruhani Zhanjyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme and Nazarbayev's 2018 article, "Seven Facets of the Great Steppe."



APK Deputy Chair and Secretariat head Zhanset Tuimebayev.

The assembly's structure includes chairs, mediators, ethno cultural associations, journalism clubs, public accord councils, mothers' councils, scientific expert groups, maslikhats (city assemblies) deputy groups, business as-

sociations and the Zhanjyru Zholy movement.

"In all regions, we have councils of public accord and councils of mediation. A huge role is played by the mothers' councils. Of course, all this is possible with the direct support in each region of scientific expert groups that we operate. We would like to share our work with all our regions, as well as outline a plan for 2019," said Kostanai Region's APK Secretariat head Bibigul Akkuzhina.

The APK structure should encourage all Kazakh citizens to support social initiatives and modernise the country. The assembly should also strengthen tools of ideological control that should eliminate attempts to give inter-ethnic overtones to particular resonance events, said Tuimebayev.

"Such provocations should be immediately stopped, both by law enforcement agencies and by ideological measures," he added.

The meeting participants also discussed the Law on the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Currently, the assembly is working to develop an event plan through 2025 that will enforce the recent changes and additions to the law.

APK will organise its 27th session, Formula of Peace and Harmony: Social Unity and Modernisation, on April 29.

"This session should be a landmark event in the political agenda, ensuring further strengthening of social harmony and national unity in our country. In this regard, there is a need to hold it at a high ideological and organisational level," said Tuimebayev.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh President Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev launched the Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan April 15. The ceremony was attended by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Some of Kazakhstan's brightest stars, including Dimash Kudaibergen, Medet Chotabayev, Nurlan Bekmukhambetov and Maria Mudryak, performed at the concert. The Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan is meant to boost cultural ties between the two countries, among the goals agreed to by Mirziyoyev and Tokayev during Tokayev's recent state visit to Uzbekistan. Last year was the Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan.

The Astana International Financial Centre will partner with Hong Kong-based investment group Raffles Partners Asset Management to launch professional training for Kazakh specialists, giving them a chance to learn more about attracting investments and preparing companies for initial public offerings (IPOs). To select the candidates, the Continuing Professional Development Bureau at the AIFC will conduct a month-long pre-IPO training session in the Kazakh capital open to all specialists. The best candidates will start a month-long internship in Hong Kong July 8.

A Kazakh delegation took part in the High-Level European Union Conference for Central Asia "Connectivity for Sustainable Development" April 15 in Bucharest. Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko emphasised the need to boost connectivity in the broadest sense and use transport and logistics projects to promote greater economic integration. He informed the gathering on Kazakhstan's transport and logistics development through its Nurdy Zhol programme and the Belt and Road initiative. "Synergies between these programmes create good conditions to attract foreign investments, advanced technologies and promote Kazakh exports. Being the first country on the route of the Chinese initiative to Europe, we are connecting China to Europe and serve as a key component of the Eurasian continental bridge," he said.

Kazakh tourism companies are taking part in the China Outbound Travel & Tourism Market (COTTM) exhibition. Eleven Kazakh companies seek to familiarise Chinese visitors with activities in Kazakhstan, tourist routes and Kazakh products. The participation of Kazakh companies was made possible by the support of Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports. "Starting April 1, Chinese citizens can use Kazakhstan's electronic visa system. For that, the Chinese tour operator has to receive an invitation from a Kazakh tour operator. The invitation number is typed into the website, an electronic payment of \$60 is sent and the visa is printed. With this visa, Chinese tourists can fly to Nur-Sultan and Almaty. This is a huge achievement," said Eurasian Tourism Association head Rysty Karabayeva.

The poems of great Kazakh poet Abai Kunanbayev will be translated into Albanian and Macedonian languages, said Chargé d'Affaires of North Macedonia in Kazakhstan Muar-em Medziti. The translation is under way, he said. The works will be available at the National Library in Skopje, where two years ago a Kazakh literature and culture centre opened its doors. Macedonian literature is also available to Kazakh readers at National Library in the Kazakh capital. "In 2017, we opened a Macedonian literature corner here in the library. There are books from Macedonia in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and English. We handed over 2,700 books to the library," said Medziti.

President visits Uzbekistan, assures current bilateral policies will continue

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev paid the state visit to neighbouring Uzbekistan April 14-15. The visit saw a number of intergovernmental documents signed in the area of economy, investment, defence and migration.

Tokayev's visit to Tashkent saw the heads of the two states sign the Joint Statement outlining key priorities for further expansion of ties which have seen a remarkable growth over the last two and a half years.

Other documents signed by the sides in the presence of the two presidents included the agreement between the governments on employment and the protection of the rights of migrant workers, as well

as on cooperation in combating illegal migration and a programme of cooperation between the two foreign ministries.

Agreements were also signed between the Ministries of Defence of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on cooperation in the field of air defence, as well as on the reception, airfield and technical maintenance and protection of military aircraft at military airfields.

As part of the visit, a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan on the establishment of the International Centre for Trade and Economic Cooperation Central Asia, as well as a memorandum on cooperation between the Ministry of Information and Social Development of Kazakhstan and

the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan were signed.

In addition to the agreements, the presidents also discussed cooperation in science, technology, space, education, culture, art, tourism and sports. They also discussed fuel, water and energy, transit and transport, imports and exports, cultural, humanitarian and youth collaboration.

President Tokayev assured his counterpart Kazakhstan would continue the policies established by First President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"I intend to ensure the continuity of the policy of Elbasy (Leader of the Nation) and continue the development of comprehensive Kazakh-Uzbek interaction. This is illustrated by the joint statement of the presidents signed today by us, which reflects the main achieve-

ments and further horizons of our cooperation," Tokayev said.

The Kazakh President also noted the two countries should seek out new economic areas of cooperation to increase trade to \$5 billion by the end of 2020. Tokayev added that the number of Kazakh-Uzbek joint ventures has already begun to grow as a result of Kazakhstan's measures to create a favourable investment climate.

"Successful examples of such interaction include projects on the joint assembly of cars, trucks and other equipment in Kazakhstan. Taking into account the particular importance of this field for our economies, an agreement was reached to continue active work in this direction," Tokayev stated.

He also noted the success of last year's Inter-Regional Cooperation Forum and said the creation of an

International Centre for Trade and Economic Cooperation on the Kazakh-Uzbek border will "streamline cross-border trade, improve the access control infrastructure, as well as create a large trade and logistics hub in Central Asia."

The presidents also said it was important to increase the work of the joint intergovernmental commission on bilateral cooperation and to appoint the heads of the two government as co-chairs.

The sides also agreed to cooperate within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), UN and other international and regional organisations.

Tokayev and Mirziyoyev also discussed ways to help restore Afghanistan. They reaffirmed their commitment to assisting in the revival of the Afghan economy and underlined the need to develop long-term cooperation with Afghanistan, including through the implementation of major transport, education and health projects.

Kazakh-Lithuanian cooperation particularly strong in education, says Lithuanian diplomat

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Bilateral cooperation has been gradually growing since Kazakhstan and Lithuania established diplomatic relations in the early 1990s. Cooperation in education has been the most vivid, said Lithuanian Embassy Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Adomas Davalga in an interview with The Astana Times.

While indicators such as trade turnover are more volatile and fluctuations depend largely on external factors, educational and medical cooperation are managed by interstate interaction that is continually strengthening, he noted.

Universities in the city of Kaunas, for example, are gaining popularity among Kazakh students.

"Some taxi drivers in Kaunas say that they already speak some Kazakh language and most of their profit comes from students and their family members... We have



Lithuanian Embassy Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Adomas Davalga.

hundreds of students every year. We have many students coming, and it is the greatest joy that young people who have the whole world in front of them choose Lithuania," said Davalga.

Lithuanian education is based on the principle of the three Ks (Kauna, Kokybės and Kalba (Price, Quality and Language)), making it

particularly attractive to students. Universities offer a high quality, affordable education, as well as no strict requirement for level of English or Lithuanian.

Davalga, who has served as the second in command at the Embassy for four years, has witnessed how the Kazakh branch of Insocium, institute of integral society based in Lithuania, had started to operate and flourish, becoming a model that can be transferred to other countries.

"The most pleasant surprise now is we have more activities. The institute is more active here than in Lithuania or any other country... It was so successful in Kazakhstan; now, their experience is being exported to other countries, because they put emphasis on unity among people and relationships between people. Their statement is very simple – that the only element we must change is how we interact between each other, the relationship between people," he said.

The institute maintains an informal atmosphere, teaching students through seminars, games, discussions and excursions. It focuses on finding creative solutions and, most importantly, teamwork.

"It is really extraordinary, because you can solve any issue and any problem whether it is in a family, in a business, at the embassy or university – the level doesn't matter. They found out that we need to create an atmosphere like in a perfect family, to work in a team. This is the necessary condition for us to succeed," he added.

Perhaps the key factor that pushed the project is the common ground it shares with the Kazakh government's agenda that promotes unity and tolerance despite diversity in religion, ethnicity or social status.

"We should build and strengthen relationships between people, no matter where, what people and what age, and they (Insocium) do it very professionally. I think I par-

ticipated in all their projects here. Every time I am surprised by what a huge power is being revealed when we reach this atmosphere of family, when we look at another person really precious to you. And that's the whole trick, because if the person is precious to you, then you want to do everything for them. You'll always find a solution," said Davalga.

The same applies to Kazakhstan, as the nation can withstand anything as long as it continues to value unity and is open to new experiences, he noted. Despite First President Nursultan Nazarbayev's resignation and the early election coming up, the country should not fear the transition, the diplomat said.

"I think Kazakhstan is in a very important stage of its development. It's a historical moment now. We already have the date of the presidential election. I think it is good that it will be earlier... I think it is the best way the transition can go," he said.

"The biggest asset that Kazakhstan holds is the eagerness to look for something new. You are open to best practices. Many countries are somehow closed to many things. Thinking that you are a developed country is the beginning of the end," he added.

UK sees Kazakhstan as major strategic partner...

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And as we leave the European Union, we want to look outwards and be more global and Kazakhstan, at the heart of Central Asia is in a very important region," he said.

The U.K. aims to strengthen political, trade and economic cooperation with Kazakhstan.

"We admire this stability and continuity that's good for business. It's also good for any relationship. We obviously think with our deeply-held democratic values that

it can be good for all concerned if there can be more freedom in various areas. But we respect the differences between our countries and the opportunity to have a good constructive relationship," he added.

Duncan also spoke about the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

"All mature markets need supportive financial markets. I think to have the financial centre is a very good ambition and it's an area where we'd like to see further close links with the City of London. The AIFC operates according

to the principles of English common law. To have the integrity of law so that people trust what's going on is very important and I'm glad the U.K. is guiding a lot of the development of the AIFC," he said.

The U.K. is one of the five largest investors in Kazakhstan, with \$13.3 billion in gross direct investment from 2005-2018. More than 860 legal entities, branches and representative offices with British participation are registered in Kazakhstan.

Duncan noted the Kazakh in-

vestment climate is improving.

"People need to trust the law and they need to be able to register and run their businesses on the basis of trust. If there's a dispute, you need to know that it's going to be resolved fairly. You also need an entire climate in which there is no corruption. Corruption actually destroys business and destroys economies and it destroys governments. So ironing out any kind of corruption is very important. In terms of future trade, I think that there are many opportunities in the extractive industries like oil and

gas and mining, but also in agriculture and IT. The job of politicians and government is to create the conditions in which entrepreneurs and business people can take the opportunities," he said.

During his visit to Kazakhstan, Sir Alan met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atankulov on April 17 to discuss prospects of bilateral strategic partnership and issues on the international agenda, as well as Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Speaker of the Senate Dariga Nazarbayeva and Speaker of the Majilis Nurlan Nigmatulin.

Korean President brings 'Fresh Wind' to relations...

Continued from Page A1

"We are already implementing large projects in engineering, road and infrastructure construction, agriculture, the financial sector, healthcare, information and communication technologies. It is great to see that Korean business has a growing interest in stepping up cooperation," Tokayev said at the beginning of the meeting with the Korean leader at the Akorda presidential residence.

Tokayev said Seoul is among Kazakhstan's top 10 partners for developing trade, investment and technology cooperation technology and investment cooperation.

Approximately 110,000 Koreans live in Kazakhstan and South Korean businesses in Kazakhstan operate in the food, mining and automotive sectors.

"Last year, we reached a record \$4 billion [in bilateral trade], doubling the volume of 2017. Systematic development; only inflow of direct investments from Korea amounted to about \$7 billion," he said.

Earlier, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Beibut Atankulov and Korean Ambassador Kim Dae-sik announced that bilateral trade reached \$3.9 billion in 2018, including \$2.9 billion in exports and \$922 million in imports. The sides noted then that approximately 500 joint companies are currently operating in Kazakhstan. Hyundai, LG, Samsung, Lotte Confectionery, SK, Highvill are among the Korean companies working in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh officials have expressed interest in learning about and introducing Korean innovative technologies. That interest is expected to be revived under an intergovernmental

commission on trade, economic and scientific and technological cooperation and through opening a Kazakhstan-South Korean International IT Centre in the Kazakh capital.

The presidents also agreed during the visit on the need to develop transport routes and implement joint infrastructure projects. They also discussed education and healthcare, the Aral Sea, the rehabilitation of ecological disaster zones and parliamentary diplomacy.

Tokayev noted the importance of the peace process on the Korean Peninsula and reiterated Kazakhstan's support for de-nuclearisation in the region.

Moon Jae-in said Kazakhstan is a key partner in promoting Korea's New Northern Policy, which seeks to establish peace and expand cooperation on the Eurasian continent. Kazakh and North Korean officials

have said they seek to expand cooperation in implementing the policy.

"I hope my visit will give impetus not only to the development of bilateral relations, but also to the strengthening of multilateral cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the countries of Central Asia," said the Korean leader.

The two presidents also reiterated support for implementing Kazakhstan's Nurdy Zhol infrastructure development programme.

The presidents also held a joint press briefing after their meeting.

Commending the agreements reached, Tokayev underlined the importance Kazakhstan puts on relationships with its second largest trade and economic partner in Asia. The leading role of Nur-Sultan in advancing the global anti-nuclear movement has been highlighted in relation to efforts to denuclear-

ise the Korean Peninsula. "We are closely following it and highly commend your efforts," said Tokayev, referring to South Korea's efforts.

The presidents also attended a Kazakh-Korean business forum while delegations from each country also signed eight cooperation agreements during the visit.

President Moon also met during his visit with Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev to discuss denuclearisation efforts on Korean Peninsula and ways to build a stronger partnership.

Moon Jae-in began his visit to Kazakhstan in Almaty on April 21 where he saw a play at a local Korean theatre and met with some 300 Koreans living in the city.

He also attended a ceremony returning the remains of two Korean soldiers that fought against Japan.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Key sectors see first-quarter growth

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Construction and trade were among the key sectors in Kazakhstan which experienced first-quarter growth, said Kazakh Minister of National Economy Ruslan Dalenov at an April 16 government meeting.

January through March, growth was 8.9 percent in construction, 7.2 percent in trade, 4.4 percent in transport, 3.6 percent in agriculture, 3.2 percent in industry and 0.2 percent in communication services.

“In the January-March period, gross domestic product growth increased to 3.8 percent. In the January-February period, it was 3.5 percent. Accelerated growth has been achieved by an increased output in the manufacturing industry, as well as by increased growth in construction and investment,” he said.

The light and automotive industries as well as the production of plastic, beverages and building materials also experienced double-digit growth.

In March, the monthly inflation rate was 0.5 percent, said Kazakh National Bank Chairman Yerbolat Dossayev. The annual inflation rate remains at 4.8 percent, which corresponds to this year’s target of four to six percent. The Kazakh National Bank lowered the base rate April 15 to nine percent to stimulate economic activity and help achieve the nation’s inflation target.

In the first quarter, state budget revenue exceeded the planned revenue by 5.6 percent, the national budget revenue exceeded the planned revenue by 2.1 percent and



Alikhan Smailov

local budgets revenue exceeded the planned revenue by 16.6 percent.

Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov also noted a national budget deficit for the first quarter.

“The state budget revenue within this period was 2.9 trillion tenge (US\$7.64 billion). Expenses of three trillion tenge (US\$7.9 billion) were incurred. The state budget deficit was 94 billion tenge (US\$247.6 million). This is 162 billion tenge (US\$426.72 million) less than planned,” said Smailov.

“For the second quarter, it is important to maintain momentum,” noted Dalenov. “Financing from the revised budget will become available, which will increase consumer and investment demand. Secondly, the period for (more) construction, investment and agro-industrial work will begin. Thirdly, small and medium-sized business activity usually picks up in the second quarter.”

Smailov called for industries and regions that did not achieve their growth targets to step up their work in the second quarter of 2019.

GDP grows 3.8 percent in first quarter of 2019

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan’s GDP rose 3.8 percent in the first quarter of 2019, said Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov at an April 10 meeting of the Kazakh Security Council chaired by the country’s First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Smailov noted a 4.8 percent decrease in inflation. Investments in fixed capital increased 7 percent, while industrial production surged 3.2 percent.

Car production rose 33 percent, he said.

Chemistry and construction materials production and machinery grew 10 percent.

Production in agriculture, a key sector of the Kazakh economy, saw 3.6 percent growth.

External trade grew 7.5 percent in two months with exports demonstrating 11.1 percent growth and imports 0.3 percent growth.

Second tier banks loaned 1.9 trillion tenge (US\$5 billion) to Kazakh citizens, 11 percent more than the same period in 2018.



Unemployment reached 4.8 percent, while average real income rose 9.4 percent.

The security council meeting also covered social and economic issues.

In his remarks, Nazarbayev said the political processes currently unfolding in the country, including the recent announcement of a June 9 early presidential election, has drawn the world’s interest.

He said the current leadership will ensure the continuity of political course.

“Going through all trials decently, we have built a successful country known and respected worldwide. As a founder, I am worried about the future of our state and well being of our citizens. All my steps are driven by this,” said Nazarbayev. “Systematic implementation of programmes is a key condition for our development. We need to continue working to provide people with housing, work, quality medical services and education. These are all investments in a bright future.”

Exports increase nearly 25 percent in 2018

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan exported \$68.3 billion in goods and services in 2018, a 24.2-percent growth compared to 2017, said Minister of Finance Ruslan Dalenov at the April 16 government meeting.

Exports accounted for 40.1 percent of Kazakhstan’s gross domestic product (GDP) and contributed 0.5 percent to the country’s GDP growth.

“The growth is primarily due to rising prices for oil. At the same time, non-oil exports and service exports made up \$23 billion, increasing by 4.1 percent since 2017. Service exports demonstrate positive dynamics. The growth is estimated at 12.3 percent, reaching \$7.3 billion,” said Dalenov.

He noted metallurgy industry products contribute the largest percentage of non-oil exports, with an estimated 51-percent share.

Adopted in August 2017, Kazakhstan’s national export strategy is designed to help the country increase non-oil exports to \$32 billion by 2022, including \$20.2 billion in industrial products, \$1.9 billion in agricultural products and \$9.7 billion in service exports.

Kazakhstan currently sends 800 products to 120 countries, said Kazakh Minister of Investment and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar. Afghanistan, China,

Japan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Russia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan are main consumers.

“The main exports in the processing industry are ferroalloys, raw zinc, refined copper, uranium, petroleum gases, transformers and batteries,” said Sklyar. “Growth was also recorded in the chemical industry, which was 2.6 percent, 14.6 percent in mineral products, 11 percent in machinery and 7.6 percent in food products.”

He noted non-oil exports are expected to increase and outlined several factors driving the growth.

“First, new export-oriented enterprises launched last year as part of the national industrial development programme have an export potential of \$458 million and half of their products go to export,” he said.

Kazakhstan will also allocate 500 billion tenge (US\$1.3 billion) to support export-oriented industries.

“Taking into account increasing consumption and demand at foreign markets, we expect export growth in areas such as machinery driven by increasing exports of transformers, batteries and frictionless bearing tools and in metallurgy driven by increasing production of ferroalloys and steel pipes, as well as chemical and light industries,” said Sklyar.

In addition, Kazakh construction

companies will go global, tapping into international construction companies.

Service exports also demonstrated growth in 2018, including a 15-percent hike in transport and 20-percent increase in construction.

“Currently, domestic construction companies have started to enter the international construction market; for instance, road construction in Georgia, railroad construction in Slovakia and a coal preparation plant in Kyrgyzstan. Given the big potential that the construction market has abroad, local companies need to be more active in entering this market using existing export support measures provided by Baitek Holding,” said Sklyar.

“This year, we will organise 15 trade and economic missions, seven national pavilions and four presentations of trade marks, as well as the participation of Kazakh companies in 30 foreign industry exhibitions abroad. They will receive support in the search and organisation of meetings with potential foreign clients, advertisement of their products and covering their expenses for renting exhibition areas, accommodation, meals, tickets and translator services,” he added.

The support measures are expected to help 270 local companies, accounting for 70 percent of local exporters.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan’s international gold reserves had decreased 11.8 percent to \$27 billion by the end of March. The only greater decline (of 20.6 percent) happened in 2013. The drop in the price of gold by 1.8 percent to \$1,302.3 per ounce was one of the reasons for this year’s decline in reserves. At the same time, the share of gold in Kazakhstan’s international reserves increased by 13.8 percent to 55.5 percent (\$15 billion) by the end of March. Foreign exchange reserves declined 31.8 percent. The dynamics of changes in the gold reserves shares and currency reserves is described as de-dollarisation of reserves, finprom.kz reports. Excluding the International Monetary Fund, Kazakhstan is fourteenth in the world in terms of gold reserves, with 356.3 tonnes, 1.1 percent of world’s reserves.

Tariffs for housing and communal services in Kazakhstan have decreased 4 percent since the beginning of the year. The Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) approved a draft legislative amendment on housing and communal services to reduce the contribution by four times to 12 tenge (US\$0.03) per square metre. The cost of housing services, as well as tariffs for water, electricity, gas and heating, decreased 1.7 percent in the first quarter of 2019.

In the same period in 2018, prices had increased 8.1 percent year on year. However, eight regions have seen an increase in tariffs this year. The largest increases are in the Pavlodar (2.7 percent per year), Kostanai (2.2 percent) and East Kazakhstan (1.9 percent) regions. The most significant increases in tariffs have been for garbage collection (8.4 percent), as well as for rental (4.9 percent), repair (4.4 percent) and maintenance of housing (1.2 percent).

Kazakhstan’s trade turnover increased 15.8 percent to \$7.6 billion in January year-on-year. Exported goods’ share in the total trade volume increased by 31 percent to 70.4 percent or \$5.3 billion. While supplies to external markets keep increasing, imports fell 9.3 percent to \$2.2 billion. The Kazakh Export insurance company, a subsidiary of the Baitek National Holding, supported exporters with insurance of 90.2 billion tenge (US\$237.49 million). The export revenues of enterprises that received support as a part of export and pre-export financing from 2014 to 2023 are expected to total 1.1 trillion tenge (US\$2.9 billion). According to the most recent World Bank Doing Business report, in terms of international trade Kazakhstan ranks 102nd, exceeding its goal for 2019, which was to rank 118th.

Over the past three years, foreign direct investment (FDI) to Kazakhstan increased 58 percent, though FDI globally is still falling. In 2018, global investment flows decreased by 18.4 percent to \$1.2 trillion. The same year, almost half of the European Union countries reduced their investments in Kazakhstan. The gross inflow of FDI from EU countries declined 12.2 percent totalling \$24.3 billion. Finland’s FDI fell by 63.3 percent to \$11 million; Belgium’s by 1.9 percent to \$19.9 million. The key investors in Kazakhstan’s economy remain the Netherlands at \$7.3 billion (an increase of 23.8 percent), the United States at \$5.3 billion (an increase of 44.7 percent) and Switzerland at \$2.5 billion (a drop of 14.3 percent).

Kazakhstan’s population increased by 1.3 percent and reached 18.4 million so far this year. Demographic growth, however, is slowing. The birth rate has been declining for three years in a row. In the beginning of 2018, out of a total of 390,300 births, nearly half were the first and the second children in the family. However, for Kazakhstan’s population to continue to grow, families must have at least three children. Only 28.1 percent of all households live with three or more children. In this regard, the Kazakh government is working on a plan to increase social support, especially housing support, for vulnerable families.

Global leaders to focus on ‘inspiring growth’ at AEF

Continued from Page A1

Among key events are the annual Kazakhstan Global Investment Roundtable (KGIR), an international conference marking the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organisation, an interim meeting on the preparation to the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation in 2020 and the first forum in Kazakhstan on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde, 2018 Nobel Prize Winner in Economics and World Bank Chief Economist Paul Romer, former United States Federal Reserve Deputy Chair Stanley Fischer, Execu-

tive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Armida Alisjahbana and Boston Consulting Group Chair Hans-Paul Bürkner are among the speakers who have confirmed their participation at the forum.

Lagarde will take part in the plenary session about the new economy and Kazakhstan’s growing investment potential that will be chaired by Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin.

“The participation of such distinguished politicians and experts in AEF 2019 proves not only the growing interest in the forum itself but is also a sign of a willingness to conduct open dialogue and enter into mutual cooperation,” said forum organisers.

Kazakhstan unveils new measure to attract foreign investment

Continued from Page A1

Attracting foreign investment is a priority for the Kazakh government. The project joins other efforts, including the New Architecture of Investment Issues Framework.

“The project’s promotion within the New Architecture framework will be as follows. The first stage is the centralised collection of all potential investment projects in the Regional Investment Hub. At the second stage, the processing and analysis of projects based on Kazakh Invest with the involvement of experts from the AIFC and consultants will be conducted. We will also bring projects into formats understandable to foreign investors... The third stage is the promotion of ready-made, pack-

aged projects, using the available channels of the AIFC and the infrastructure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fourth stage is the conclusion of contracts made on the basis of the Investment Hub using the legal infrastructure of the AIFC,” said Smailov.

The project is to be presented during the Astana Economic Forum May 16. The AIFC will coordinate the project. Smailov highlighted the importance of the project for the state.

“Increasing the investment inflow rate is a necessary element for ensuring GDP growth at the five percent level and achieving the strategic goals of the state,” he said.

AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov noted in a recent report that the AIFC supports the government’s

initiative to establish a Coordination Council and a Regional Investment Hub.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atamkulov also spoke at the government meeting about efforts completed in the first quarter to build an integrated ecosystem to attract investment. Meeting participants also identified in each ministry the akimat (regional governing body) and national companies deputy chief executive officers who are responsible for investment work and exports.

Atamkulov said the heads of diplomatic missions were given specific tasks in their host countries as well as performance indicators. Forty potential investor countries of priority have been identified, including the United States, Germany and Japan.

The government is also working to automate the process of interaction with organisations to accompany investors at all levels of development. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kazakh Invest have also established an information monitoring system (CRM) to support projects and investors online.

Factors that impede foreign investment were also discussed at the government meeting. Investors at dialogue platforms, such as the Council of Foreign Investors, the Council to Improve the Investment Climate, European Business Association of Kazakhstan have noted challenges, including the rule of law, the volatility of the tenge rate, infrastructure, allocation of land, decriminalisation of tax offenses and migration. On

all the above issues, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has prepared a corresponding Concept and Draft Law and sent it to the Ministry of National Economy. Additionally, Atamkulov pointed out the need to modernise current legislation to maintain its position at the regional level.

Minister of Justice Marat Beketayev also spoke at the meeting on the advantages of the special legal regime of the AIFC. According to the Constitution, a special legal regime was established in the financial sphere in the capital relating to the AIFC. Investor activity at the centre is also governed by English common law and the official language is English. An independent court has also been created related to the AIFC, overseen by English judges.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Baiterek Holding has joined the global initiative of the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) to implement the principles of socially responsible investment, reports Baiterek.gov.kz. The IFC Principles are in line with Baiterek Holding's new investment policy, which aims to achieve social and environmental outcomes, in addition to financial ones. This commitment opens up greater opportunities for attracting foreign capital to social and environmental issues, sets up a new level of engagement with global investment companies and allows Baiterek Holding to receive methodological support regarding responsible investment on a permanent basis from the World Bank, said Baiterek Holding Deputy Chair Galymzhan Tajiyakov at the April 11-13 annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the United States.

Kazakhstan's low-cost airline, FlyArystan, has launched a competition among Kazakhstan's 18 airports to become its airport terminal base, reports FlyArystan's press service. The airport that proposes the best commercial offer by the end of May will win, getting annual passenger traffic of up to 1 million people and the possibility of launching new domestic and international flights to eight to 10 destinations. The base is to also create hundreds of jobs at the airport and develop local tourism and infrastructure. The first FlyArystan flights will launch May 1. Operating daily, the airline will offer more than 130,000 seats annually on Airbus A320 aircraft on each of its routes. It follows the low-cost airline model of airlines Air Asia, Cebu Pacific, easyJet and Indigo.

KazMunayGas increased gasoline production 34.9 percent last year, reports Kmg.kz. Within the same period, diesel fuel production increased 13 percent, and jet fuel production increased 57.4 percent. Overall, the volume of petroleum product production increased to 12.15 million tonnes following the large-scale modernisation of Kazakhstan's three refineries. Oil and gas condensate production in 2018 was 23.6 million tonnes and 8.14 billion cubic metres, respectively, and the volume of oil and gas transportation was 75.04 million tonnes and 111.6 billion cubic metres, respectively.

The umbrella brand "Made in Kazakhstan" will launch in May to raise awareness of and demand for Kazakhstan's products abroad, Kazakh Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar told a recent government meeting. Exporters under the umbrella brand will enjoy state support, which will allow for reduced advertisement and promotion costs and simplify their entry into new markets. Sklyar noted that the price competitiveness of Kazakhstan's exported products is significantly affected by costly transportation, often shouldered by businesses.

Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states will switch to a unified system of electronic passports for vehicles Nov. 1, reports Almaty.kgd.gov.kz. For example, Russian government agencies will only be issuing electronic passports from Nov. 1 and will have a capacity of 170,000 electronic passports per month. Car users will be able to use paper-based vehicle passports for as long as they see fit and until they want to switch to an electronic passport or lose their current passport. A transition to electronic passports will simplify vehicle movement, registration procedures and databases in EAEU countries.

Kazakhstan's embassies will launch front offices for managing investment projects, reports the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs press service. The front offices will provide consulting and governmental services and facilitate investment projects. An online system for investors and project support also recently launched in a customer relationship management mode and will be used as an information platform by front offices.

Huawei to prepare KazNU ICT professionals

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Huawei, the Chinese multinational telecommunications manufacturer, is expanding its investment in Kazakh Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) university programmes by adding Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) to its global network. The company will invite top performing students to an internship at its headquarters in Shenzhen and open a Huawei Authorised Information and Network Academy (HAINA or Huawei ICT (information and communications technology) Academy) on campus.

KazNU President Galymkair Mutanov and Huawei Technologies Kazakhstan Deputy Director General Liyang Dongbo signed a memorandum of cooperation on April 1.

Huawei will send four KazNU students to an internship with Seeds for the Future, a corporate social responsibility (CSR) flagship programme. They will have an opportunity to learn the company's solutions and products and master their skills and knowledge in the latest ICT advancements.

Seeds for the Future, which seeks to develop ICT talents globally, has been operating since 2008. The programme has trained more than 3,600 of the best performing students from approximately 350 universities worldwide, including ten Kazakh students from Gumiulyov Eurasian National University and International University of Information Technologies in 2017.

"Huawei has already been serv-



L-R: KazNU President Galymkair Mutanov and Huawei Technologies Kazakhstan Deputy Director General Liyang Dongbo.

ing the ICT market in Kazakhstan for 21 years and has invested its full soul in the development of talent. Together with KazNU, we will work to spread the education of communication technology and develop ICT personnel; we will create a chance for vocational education so that people can get in touch with the information society," said Dongbo.

The ICT Academy at KazNU will train more young Kazakh professionals in the field. Huawei opened its first HAINA in Kazakhstan at Kazakh British Technical University.

"This is a kind of centre equipped with computers and multimedia equipment. Here, students can take a special course in information programmes and receive a certificate. In the future, graduates and undergraduates may be employed in telecommunications companies that use Huawei products. They

produce not only phones and computers, but also server equipment, equipment of wireless networks and more. We trust Huawei," said KazNU's IT faculty Dean Ualisher Tukeyev.

HAINA is a non-profit partnership project between Huawei and universities around the world. The company has cooperated with more than 300 universities in China and regions such as Europe, Latin America, Central and Southeast Asia, North Africa, the Middle East and Australia, cultivating more than 10,000 students every year.

"We thank you for your cooperation. This will be a good help for our students. I think it is very important for them to undergo this internship and improve their professional skills, as well as give other teachers and students the opportunity to learn how Huawei has become so successful," said Mutanov.

Toyota launches long-term vehicle leasing for businesses

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – After considering the needs of domestic businesses, Toyota Financial Services Kazakhstan, the company's representative branch in the country, is now offering operating leasing to its customers. The action will allow businesses to rent Toyotas for long-term periods with a full range of services.

Renting a car through operating leasing has a number of advantages. The company will always have new cars with a simple monthly fee and no residual risk liability. Unlike finance leasing, in which the client is ultimately obligated to redeem the vehicle in use, the lessor takes the car back and issues new one in return at the end of the rental period. Toyota assumes all the time-consuming responsibilities which customers were required to do themselves with usual corporate fleets such as state registration, compulsory and voluntary insurance and self-service.

The fixed monthly payments in tenge for the entire rental period ensure financial protection. Clients do not have to worry about devaluation risks and an unexpected increase in monthly payments for leasing, as well as unplanned expenses associated with repairs due to accidents and other possible negative scenarios. Toyota insures all its

rental cars under both compulsory civil liability insurance and casualty and collision (CASCO) voluntary car insurance.

Toyota also offers special services such as a tire service and global positioning system (GPS) real time tracking.

Toyota cars are not listed on the client's balance sheet and remain the property of the company. Thus, clients need not pay additional taxes.

All service and repairs are completed at official Toyota dealerships. Service is available even in remote centres, as the company has a large network of dealers in all regions.

Toyota also offers special services such as a tire service and global positioning system (GPS) real time tracking.

The privilege cost is included in the monthly payments and rates depend on model, mileage and lease term. For example, leasing a comfort class Toyota Corolla for two years, with mileage not exceeding 20,000 kilometres per year, is 183,360 tenge (US\$482.40) per month excluding value added tax.

Dairy company Emil exemplifies 'Made in Kazakhstan' label

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The Made in Kazakhstan label is given to agricultural products that are organic, affordable and high-quality. The Emil dairy products company meets all of those standards.

The company was founded in 1993, just two years after independence, and, in the last few years has increased its product supply tenfold. It first won loyalty among customers in East Kazakhstan and has since moved into the capital city Nur-Sultan.

Many people from Ust-Kamenogorsk and the cities and villages near it are familiar with the company from their childhood. In the beginning, Emil started producing only ice cream. In 1997, it began to process milk and use modern equipment.

The company has since been helping to ensure the growth for East Kazakhstan's regional farms, such as Kamyshinskoe, Vorobyev and Co. and Shemonaikhinskoe.

"With many of them, we have been going hand in hand for more than a dozen years," said Emil Director Anna Nikiforova-Aberle. "Many agricultural producers managed to expand their business thanks to the support of the state."

The company also rebranded it-

self in 2015. With the Depot WPF branding agency, the company introduced to its traditional range of milk, kefir (fermented milk), butter, cottage cheese and airan (dilute fermented milk), Le'Vital low calorie yoghurts and Yo-ho-ho! dairy products for children.

Now Emil employs 800 people and produces more than 120 dairy products and more than 100 ice cream flavours. The company repeatedly won national and international competitions.

Emil has consolidated its image as a supplier of dairy products with delicate taste, pleasant uniform consistency, a variety of products and reasonable prices.

"The taste is excellent. I really hope that the quality will not fall. At the moment, you are the best! The only thing is I have to look for your products at the shops," one shopper told comode.kz referring to Emil.

"(Once) we bought it to try and now (we) cannot (live) without this product. First of all, it is very tasty, not any less good than Foodmaster's sweet sour milk, it is also twice cheaper. (Usually,) we buy 20 pieces from Magnum (supermarkets)," said another customer.

"Since I love protein-containing products, every day I go to the store where they are sold – always fresh, relatively inexpensive and

tasty. My family and I like everything, especially the curd, curd

mass and milk. Thank you for such products! It really helps when you

want a quick and healthy snack," said another consumer.



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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Orderly presidential transition represents latest milestone in Kazakhstan's development

In any country with a presidential system of government, who holds the top post matters hugely for its direction and success. The President is inevitably the symbol of leadership at home and abroad. At the very least, too, they set the framework within which the other institutions of government operate. But when a country has been led successfully by the same person for three decades – as is the case here in Kazakhstan – the election of a successor is of even greater importance.

Kazakhstan, of course, is fortunate. The first and founding President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has shaped this country's extraordinary journey since its first days as an independent nation, has made sure of a stable succession process.

Kazakhstan, of course, is fortunate. The first and founding President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has shaped this country's extraordinary journey since its first days as an independent nation, has made sure of a stable succession process. His announcement that he was stepping back in March may have surprised many with its timing. It is clear, however, that the decision to hand over responsibility to highly experienced Kassym-Jomart Tokayev was done in a careful and planned way.

The First President has also made sure through constitutional changes that his significant experience and knowledge can still be drawn on. This, too, has helped re-assure both the country's citizens and Kazakhstan's many friends abroad. The whole transition process, in contrast to the turbulent periods often seen in other countries, has won international plaudits and ensured economic confidence in Kazakhstan remains high.

Kazakhstan also has an enviable track record of facing challenges head on. It is one of the reasons for both the country's success and stability. By bringing forward presidential elections to June, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has shown that these hard-won

prizes are not going to be put at risk.

In his address setting out why he believed the election should not wait until 2020 as scheduled, President Tokayev said the earlier national poll would help end any uncertainty about the country's leadership. Given the momentous change, which had just taken place, he suggested that it would be wrong to take the popular will for granted. Instead, he said the time was right to ask the people directly, through a presidential election, their view on the direction the country should take.

We won't know for a few days who will be standing in this landmark poll on June 9, apart from Kassym-Jomart Tokayev who has been nominated by the ruling Nur Otan party at its April 23 congress. According to the election timetable already set out, the deadline for nominations is April 28. Just as is the case in other countries, potential candidates will have to meet eligibility criteria concerning age, citizenship and residency. They will also have to be able to show a level of public support before they earn a place on the ballot paper.

But while the number and names of candidates won't be clear for a few days, what we do know already is that the election between them will be free and fair. The rules and laws which govern elections in Kazakhstan have been continually modernised and strengthened over the last 25 years to ensure they meet global standards. The reforms were drawn up with the help and advice of local NGOs and major international bodies, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The OSCE is also expected to be among the many organisations that will send observers to monitor the elections and, as has been the case in the past, to watch what happens at polling booths across the country. Journalists, too, from across the globe will travel to Kazakhstan to report on the campaign and polling day. There is a huge amount of interest in what is genuinely an historic election for the country and wider region.

The new President, according to the election timetable, will be in place by June 16 after the country has made its decision. It will be another major moment in Kazakhstan's modern history. But given the calm way the transition has been handled so far, there is every reason for confidence for the future.

Atyrau Region is working to improve investment climate, increase foreign investment, says governor

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – In this exclusive interview, Atyrau Region Akim (Governor) Nurlan Nogayev talks about continued efforts to develop major industries and SMEs in the region famous for its abundant oil and gas reserves and being home to Tengiz, one of the world's largest on-shore oil fields.

What types of social and economic development issues are on the agenda for your region?

The results of the social and economic development of the region for 2018 are as follows:

Gross regional product of the oblast for nine months of 2018 amounted to 4,911.6 billion tenge (US\$12.8 billion). The index of physical volume was 112.5 percent.

The share of the region in the country's gross domestic product is 12.4 percent.

The gross regional product (GRP) per capita is 7.85 million tenge (US\$20,500).

The volume of industrial production amounted to 7.5 trillion tenge (US\$19.6 billion); the physical volume index is 110.6 percent.

Products worth 6.8 trillion tenge (US\$17.8 billion) were produced in the mining industry; the physical volume index was 111.2 percent.

Approximately 47.2 million tonnes of oil and 23.6 billion cubic metres of associated petroleum gas were produced, which equals 111.8 percent and 113 percent, respectively, compared to 2017.

Tengizchevroil produced 28.6 million tonnes of oil, or 99.7 percent compared with 2017, as well as associated petroleum gas in the amount of 15.6 billion cubic metres (99.3 percent).

The North Caspian Operating Company (NOC) produced 13,219.6 tonnes of oil (158.6 percent), and 7,746.5 million cubic metres (157.9 percent) of associated petroleum gas.

The volume of industrial output in the manufacturing industry amounted to 590.5 billion (US\$1.5 billion) tenge or 108.1 percent.

In 2018, within the framework of the Business Map, there were plans to commission six projects in the amount of 9.4 billion tenge (US\$24.5 million) and to create 162 jobs; by the end of the year, five projects were launched in the amount of 6.7 billion tenge (US\$17.5 million) and 127 jobs were created:

* Mill of Karat LLP (the project cost 4,500 million tenge (US\$11,732); 50 jobs);

* Production of ready-mixed concrete by New Ascent LLP (the project cost 1,623 million tenge (US\$4,232); 30 jobs);

* Production of polyethylene bags by Plasticom LLP (the project cost 27 million tenge (US\$70,395); seven jobs);

* Production of disposable paper cups by ANTA LLP (the project cost 20.3 million tenge (US\$52,927); 18 jobs);

* Production of reinforced concrete products by Atyrau Concrete 24 LLP (the project cost 600 million tenge (US\$1.6 billion); 22 jobs).

Investments in fixed assets amounted to 3,689.5 billion tenge (US\$9.6 billion); the physical volume index is 136 percent.

Approximately 793,900 square metres of housing were commissioned in the region (or 127.2 percent in comparison to 2017).

The volume of construction work amounted to 637.2 billion tenge (US\$1.7 billion); the physical volume index is 107.2 percent.

As for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the index of physical volume (services) was 104.6 percent or 67.3 billion tenge (US\$175.5 million).

The number of cattle increased 6.9 percent (168,100 head); horses, 8.9



Nurlan Nogayev

percent (79,300 head); camels, 3.9 percent (31,900 head) and sheep and goats, 3.2 percent (559,900 head).

Approximately 51,600 tonnes (103.8 percent) of meat was produced; milk, 61,400 tonnes (102.2 percent) and eggs, 125.5 million pieces (127 percent).

The number of operating small and medium-sized businesses is 46,756, or 109 percent compared with 2017.

For the third quarter of last year, the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent, as 32,263 new jobs were created (21,214 are permanent and 11,049 are temporary).

The average monthly salary in January-September 2018 was 292,631 tenge (US\$762.96), or 112.6 percent compared with January-September 2017.

In terms of taxes and budget, as of Jan. 1, the state budget received 1,387.9 billion tenge (US\$3.6 billion) in taxes and other obligatory payments (or 101.1 percent of the forecast); the national budget received 1,101.9 billion tenge (US\$2.9 billion) (or 101.1 percent of the forecast); the local budget, 286 billion tenge (US\$745.7 million) (or 101.3 percent of the forecast).

Approximately 1,444.4 billion tenge (US\$3.8 billion) were transferred to the National Fund.

The volume of retail trade amounted to 279.2 billion tenge (US\$272.9 million) or 100.5 percent.

In January-September 2018, the region's foreign trade turnover amounted to \$19.7 billion, or 145.5 percent of the corresponding period of 2017; exports were \$17.8 billion (145.4 percent) and imports, \$1.9 billion (145.7 percent).

What work is planned to improve performance in the coming years?

The akimat (the administration) of the Atyrau Region has been carrying out systematic work to improve the region's investment climate and increase foreign direct investment in the economy.

Currently, the region successfully cooperates with more than 50 countries of the world. More than 1,000 joint ventures and foreign enterprises have been created and successfully operate in the region.

In order to attract domestic and foreign investment in the regional economy, an international investment forum is held annually in the oblast, as well as Global Oil & Gas Atyrau regional exhibitions and the Atyrau Build construction exhibition. These events host exhibitions of investment projects requiring investments.

The investment potential of the region has a number of positive factors:

* Sufficient wind and solar energy to obtain alternative electricity and the presence of self-flowing underground wells makes it possible to create desalination and drinking water production facilities;

* Availability of raw materials, including 88 hydrocarbon deposits and 21 vacant deposits of common minerals;

* Availability of all necessary infrastructure and favourable investment conditions.

One of the elements of investment attractiveness of the region is the presence of the National Industrial Petrochemical Technopark (FEZ),

with a total area of 3,400 hectares, the purpose of which is the construction and commissioning of infrastructure facilities and the development of chemical, petrochemical and related industries. Today, 15 participants are registered on the territory of the FEZ and a number of investment projects are being implemented.

In addition, there are plans to implement such investment projects as the production of polypropylene (with a capacity of 500,000 tonnes per year) and polyethylene (with a capacity of 1.25 million tonnes per year).

The FEZ provides potential participants with a special legal regime in all its territory, which allows tax, customs and other benefits.

How much foreign investment was attracted to Atyrau Region in 2017 and 2018? Please tell us about the most significant projects in the construction, manufacturing and agribusiness fields.

Investments in fixed assets amounted to 3.7 trillion tenge (US\$9.6 billion) or 135.1 percent from January-December 2017, including foreign investment in the amount of 1.6 trillion tenge (US\$4.2 billion).

The main sectors of the region's economy that form a significant part of the GRP are mining, oil refining, mechanical engineering, trade and construction.

In January-December 2018, the share of the mining sector in the structure of industry was 91.1 percent; the share of manufacturing, 7.9 percent and others, 1.0 percent.

In January-December 2018, the volume of production in the mining industry amounted to 6.8 trillion tenge (US\$17.8 billion) and grew by 11.2 percent compared to the previous year.

The basis of the mining industry is oil and gas, sand and salt.

Approximately 47.2 million tonnes of oil and 23.6 billion cubic metres of associated petroleum gas were produced, which is 111.7 percent and 112.9 percent, respectively, compared to the 2017 level.

The mining industry is concentrated mainly in five districts of the oblast: Issatai, Kurmangazy, Kyzylkugin, Makat and Zhylyoi.

Advancement of the mineral resources sector requires large-scale geological exploration in order to increase the exploited reserves.

One hundred and nine mineral deposits have been explored in the region. There are 21 vacant deposits (deposits of construction and technological raw materials) available for investors.

According to experts, the most promising deposits are:

1. Keramzite clay deposits (Makat district) – the reserves equal 49.86 million cubic metres.

2. Gypsum deposits (Inderskoe No. 98) – the estimated resources are 151.19 million cubic metres.

There are 626 industrial enterprises in the region, including 18 medium and 19 large enterprises.

Large manufacturing enterprises operate in oil refining, chemistry, mechanical engineering, food production and construction.

Industrial production is concentrated in the city of Atyrau and Zhylyoi district of the oblast.

The leading enterprises in the region in the field of mechanical engineering are AtyrauNefteMash LLP, Atyrau Pipe Fittings Plant, ChevronMunaiGas Inc. Company Branch, Continent Co. Ltd. LLP; Dossormunaimash LLP, Flowservice LLP, Kazakhstan Integrated Services LLP, KazTurboRemont LLP, Novus Sealing Caspian LLP and ZhigerMunaiService LLP.

In the field of chemistry those are Atyrau Oil Refinery LLP, KasChem LLP, Polymer Production LLP, RauanNalko LLP and TUZ LLP.

The leading companies in the field of construction include Atyrau Poly-

ethylene Pipe Plant of ChevronMunaiGas Company, BatysAlyansStroy LLP, Beton Invest LLP, BIASTECH LLP, Caspian Construction Company Limited LLP, Direct Construction Service LLP, Euroconcrete LLP, ISI Gips-Inder LLP, Kazcomservice LLP and UPTK LLP.

Light industry is represented by CaspiyLanaAtyrau LLP, Ertri LLP and SAFETY SYSTEMS LTD LLP.

Companies in the food industry include Almaly Kus LLP, Amangeldy Production Cooperative, Atyrau Agro Felix LLP, Atyrau Bodene LLP, Atyrau Sauda LLP, Caspian Royal Fish LLP, Karat LLP, Pervomaysky LLP, Saraishyk Breed Livestock Farm LLP, Zaman Group LLP and Zhemchuzhina Health Centre LLP.

These enterprises manufacture products for national companies, as well as other consumers in the region and the near abroad, and can potentially be considered as initiators of the implementation of new investment projects.

Could you talk about activities and projects in the field of public-private partnership (PPP)?

In 2017-2018, bilateral agreements were signed in the region on five projects within the framework of the public-private partnership (PPP). These are construction and operation of street lighting in the city of Atyrau; creation and operation of action plans for the early diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis, including the development of a diagnostic programme, equipment with specialised software and digital X-ray systems in Atyrau Region; construction and operation of street lighting in the city of Atyrau and transfer to trust management for further modernisation and operation of state communal property held by the Atyrau City State Utility Polyclinic No. 2 (without a purchase option).

For the development of PPP mechanisms, explanatory and methodological work was carried out in the region; as a result, an analysis was made with regard to proposals on construction, reconstruction, trust management and service contracts received from departments and akimats of Atyrau city and districts.

To date, proposals are being received on a number of promising projects in order to expand the use of various forms of PPPs and to do a phased substitution of budget funds for private investment.

In addition, documentation is being drafted for several projects.

What work is done to attract tourists? How many tourists visited the region in 2018?

The region pays special attention to the development of tourism. We are one of the leaders in Kazakhstan in terms of business tourism.

At the end of 2017, there were 174,723 people registered in the field of business tourism. The region takes third place in the country, following Nur-Sultan and Almaty. Approximately 135,184 people were registered in the third quarter of 2018 (7,104 more than in 2017).

For the third quarter of 2018, 101,373 visitors were served in domestic tourism (6,561 people more than in 2017) and 49,414 visitors in inbound tourism (8,728 more than in 2017).

Currently, the city of Atyrau has developed and operates a sightseeing tour programme which includes many interesting historical and cultural sights, monuments and entertainment facilities, as well as restaurants and cafés with a variety of cuisines of the people living in the region. At the same time, tourists have the opportunity to visit the creative centre, where weekly shows of the national traditions and customs of the Kazakh people are demonstrated.

The full interview is available online.

KAZAKHSTAN
Land of the Great Steppe

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

Telephone/Facsimile: +7 7172 78 00 08

Publisher: Svezhaya Pressa LLP

News and Editorial: yuatkhanov@astanatimes.com

Advertising: +7 727 252 08 82

Inquiries: info@astanatimes.com

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BUSINESS

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E-commerce takes off in Kazakhstan, citizens double number of purchases

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The number of e-commerce purchases in Kazakhstan jumped from 1.3 million in 2017 to 2.3 million in 2018.

Government officials attribute the increase to the Digital Kazakhstan state programme begun at the end of 2017.

“Today, we see a positive effect from the work being done. In 2018, the volume of the e-commerce market increased by two times compared to 2017 and reached 269 billion tenge (US\$707.1 million),” said Aizhan Bizhanova, Director of Trade Activities Regulation Department of the Ministry of National Economy.

A roadmap for the development of electronic commerce for 2018-2020 has been developed to implement the programme. It includes 28 events in five areas: legislative



Photo credit: static.zakon.kz

regulation of electronic commerce, development of payment systems in electronic commerce, improving digital and financial literacy of population and entrepreneurs, promotion of electronic commerce and logistics infrastructure development.

According to Bizhanova, e-commerce accounts for 2.9 percent of total retail. More than 1,700 online stores operate on the market,

including those eligible for tax breaks under the country's latest tax code.

Bizhanova said Kazakhstan is utilising the experiences of other countries in developing its e-commerce industry.

“Firstly, the development of infrastructure, which includes the improvement of tax and customs administration, logistics and non-cash payments. And secondly, on

the subsequent popularisation of e-commerce, which envisages mass education of commerce through the Internet, accounting for e-commerce entities, comprehensive provision of public and business access to the Internet, and improvement of consumer protection institutions,” she explained.

The Kazakh government is also working to improve electronic commerce tools and to establish electronic trading platforms and electronic information platforms. It is also strengthening the institution of consumer rights protection in electronic commerce and is simplifying the procedure for declaring goods for export for individuals. Individuals can now send goods abroad using postal documents as a declaration of goods.

Also, the government is creating transport and logistic storage centres to help local businesspeople export goods.

Young entrepreneurs to pitch start-ups at Echelon Asia Summit 2019



Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Ten teams from the acceleration programme Smart Zholy will present their start-up projects at Singapore's Echelon Asia Summit May 23-24.

Twenty teams of English-speaking Kazakh entrepreneurs aged 18 to 30 were selected on a competitive basis and given access to world-class experts to develop innovative products and services that have potential in markets in Kazakhstan and Southeast Asia.

“[Smart Zholy] finalists are implementing their projects with the largest companies in Kazakhstan – their solutions are used by the largest insurance companies, and work is underway with leading banks,” said Centras Managing Director Rashid Dyussebayev. “The projects are connected to computer vision, artificial intelligence and corporate software solutions.”

Ten teams, including Sagrad Forms, Opera Build, Turaqshare, Pythonis, Tastamat, Verigram, Biometric, Otbasy, Q-Bit and GoCode, will go to Echelon Asia Summit 2019 to present their projects.

“We expect that, this year, two or three projects will be able to attract investment. We also hope that some of today's finalists will be able to step out and gain a foothold in the Southeast Asian market,” Dyussebayev added.

“We take an identity document (ID) and a person's photo and verify if it is the same person who provided the ID. The verification is based on the person's unique features,” said participant Azamat Galymzhanov to Kazakh-tv.kz on his team's project on a biometric identification system that is geared toward security.

Participant Moldir Kussainova and her team developed a service that sells concert, theatre, movie and sports event tickets at their cost price without commissions.

“The trip to Singapore is an opportunity for us to find investors and expand our service. We plan to enter Uzbekistan,” she said.

The programme was launched in 2017 in Almaty, Karaganda, Nur-Sultan and Pavlodar to give Kazakh entrepreneurs the opportunity to enter the global market, and it expanded to all regions in 2018 and 2019. Two hundred and thirty teams have participated in the programme over three years.

Last year, 20 teams selected from more than 120 applications participated in the programme under the mentorship of Singaporean experts at Astana Hub. Seven teams with the best projects pitched to investors June 28-29 at Echelon Asia Summit 2018, with Kazakhstan's start-up WebTotem ranking among the top 10 start-ups in Southeast Asia.

Business Roadmap 2020 financing increased 57 percent

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Financing for Business Roadmap 2020, which supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through state allocated funds, increased 57 percent this year, said Minister of National Economy Ruslan Dalenov at an April 9 government meeting.

As of Jan. 1, the number of operating SMEs increased 8.3 percent to 1.2 million.

In the last four years, the government has allotted 210 billion tenge (US\$551.79 million) from the national budget to support roadmap initiatives. Funds were provided annually for approximately 13,000 SMEs, training 20,000 entrepreneurs, creating 10,000 jobs and producing goods valued at 3.3 trillion tenge (US\$8.67 billion). Typically, 154,000 entrepreneurs receive consulting and maintenance services each year and taxes

from SMEs were nearly 175 billion tenge (US\$459.82 million) per year.

More than half of the fund, or 60.2 percent, was distributed to subsidise interest rates on loans from allocated funds. Another significant amount, 25.2 percent, was distributed to build lacking infrastructure for factories, plants and other SME production facilities. The balance was directed towards guaranteeing loans and providing grants, training and consulting services for entrepreneurs.

This year, the government will allocate 600 billion tenge (US\$1.58 billion) in preferential loans to the Economy of Simple Things programme to develop the light manufacturing, construction and furniture industries. The programme has identified 365 commodity items from 65 types of economic activities.

Minister of Agriculture Saparkhan Omarov noted the Busi-

ness Roadmap subsidises the concessional lending rate to develop agricultural processing. Agricultural processing accounts for half of the 200 billion tenge (US\$525.51 million) allocated for agro-industrial complex development.

The Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, which is responsible for realising a portion of the roadmap, provides non-financial support measures for entrepreneurs through its 20 business service centres and 191 business support centres. In 2018, more than 138,000 entrepreneurs used the free services, while 20,914 were trained as part of the business school and business connections initiatives.

Since March 18, the project has been monitoring the progress of the preferential loan programme. The office has held seven meetings and been contacted by more than 300 regional enterprises, said Min-

ister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar.

Although the overall picture shows good progress for Business Roadmap 2020, certain regions are outliers. Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin raised concern about the insufficient work of several regional administrations, noting they do not provide a sufficient level of entrepreneurial support.

“The active development of small and medium-sized businesses largely depends on the work of local executive bodies. Unfortunately, there are regions where business support is not up to standard,” he said.

The West Kazakhstan region has shown the worst performance in accomplishing the roadmap's plans. The region has 397 subsidised projects, 14 percent less than the national average, and only 40,000 operating SMEs. The SME share in the gross regional product is also declining.

Kazakhstan ships first Caterpillar carrier tractor exports to Russia

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Semey Machine Building Plant in Kazakhstan is the only factory in the Commonwealth of Independent States that produces Caterpillar carrier tractors and this year the company exported its first four tractors to Russia, reports the Kazakh Ministry of Digital Development, Defense and Aerospace Industry press service.

The Semey factory produces the vehicles with the majority of parts made in Kazakhstan, said Plant General Director Nurlan Omarov. The tractors meet industry requirements and are manufactured according to the same quality specifications as their foreign counterparts.

Caterpillar carrier tractors are high-speed, floating, all-terrain vehicles with a bearing case and lead front wheels. The vehicle is meant to be used within difficult climate conditions on soil with a low load-bearing capacity (swamps, fresh snow, off-road, rugged woodland, desert zone or mountainous terrain) at temperatures between 60 degrees and -70 degrees Celsius. The tractors have high maneuverability, even in difficult circumstances.

They are able to serve as the basis to construct other machines, with the addition of lifting, loading, unloading, drilling and other technological equipment at customers' requests, and are also intended for transporting goods and people.

Caterpillar carrier tractors were formerly produced in a multitude of plants throughout the former Soviet Union, including Kharkov and Rubtsovsk, but are now manufactured only in Semey. The plant was built in 1968 as a branch of the Rubtsovsk plant, but the entire production was transferred to Semey in 1977. In the 1980s, the facility produced 600-700 tractors annually to meet the needs of the entire USSR space, as it was widely used by the Soviet army, according to RMZ.ru, a website dedicated to the history of the Rubtsovsk plant.

The Semey Machine Building Plant is a subsidiary of Kazakhstan Engineering. It also produces rolling-stock details, mortar and other consumer goods.



Photo credit: avtoem.ru

Caterpillar carrier tractor.

FlyArystan launches Almaty-Karaganda flights, announces contest for new airline hub

By Laura Tussupbekova

NUR-SULTAN – FlyArystan, Kazakhstan's first low-cost airline, will launch daily flights from Almaty to Karaganda starting May 2, reported the company press service.

Tickets for the 90-minute flight on a 180-seat Airbus A320 start at 5,999 tenge (US\$16) one way, including all airport taxes. FlyArystan offers options such as additional baggage, in-flight catering and priority boarding and recommends passengers carefully read the fare rules provided in detail on its website.

“Karaganda is the fourth largest city in Kazakhstan and tickets in this direction are in high demand. Now, it will become even easier and more comfortable to reach it from the southern capital. We know that people will enjoy the services of the low-cost airline FlyArystan,” said company sales and marketing director Zhanar Zhailauova.

The airline previously announced an open competition among local airports. The winner will receive passenger traffic of up to one million people per year and the possibility of opening new flights on domestic and international routes.

“Some 18 airports in cities will



be able to take part in the competition. They must submit the best commercial offer by the end of May. The winning city will become FlyArystan's airline hub with two Airbus A320 aircraft with 180 seats, an engineering and technical base and crew,” reads the release.

The designation will create hundreds of jobs at the airport and contribute to developing local tourism and infrastructure.

The company plans to reduce ticket prices by minimising airport costs.

“We agreed with the management of Taraz Airport and they supported our initiative to increase passenger traffic and significantly reduce passenger fees. We reduced

the ticket prices between Almaty and Taraz to 3,999 tenge (US\$11) one way including all fees. We hope that all airports will take part in the competition and we will get a good offer from those who are ready to grow with FlyArystan,” said company planning director Rafael Taizhanov on April 15.

First Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev instructed the country in November to create a budget airline based on Air Astana.

The FlyArystan fleet includes four Airbus 320-232 aircraft, each 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 throughout the country. Tickets are available at www.flyarystan.com.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Kazakh brand Shoqan produces high quality, affordable classic clothing

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Almaty entrepreneurs Nursultan Magzumov and Ulugbek Sharipov are promoting the culture of Kazakh men wearing suits by producing a high-quality, stylish and affordable clothing line.

The team, in conjunction with the Kazakh producer Eric Tastembekov, founded Tumar Qazaqstan in 2016. In January 2017, they registered the Tumar trademark of men's watches and launched sales. As the product met market demands, the entrepreneurs decided to create a clothing line under the Shoqan by Shoqan Ualikhanov brand, reported forbes.kz.

"An additional proposal, which was incorporated in the price of the product, played its role. For 15,000 tenge (US\$39.50), the buyer received a set of watches, a brand pen and a leather purse in a gift box. We successfully chose the moment to start sales, which was on the eve of Feb. 23 (Defender of the Fatherland Day in Russia,



L-R: Nursultan Magzumov and Ulugbek Sharipov.

and still traditionally celebrated in Kazakhstan as an informal Men's Day), and the first set of 1,000 quickly sold out in six weeks," said Magzumov.

The entrepreneurs chose to pro-

duce men's suits due to their interest and love of fashionable classic clothing and desire to prove that high quality, stylish items can be produced in Kazakhstan.

"Talking about the Shoqan

brand, the main idea is to instil the culture of wearing a suit as casual wear in Kazakhstan. We want to prove that it is fashionable, beautiful and comfortable. In the wardrobe of a modern man, there is a place for several suits. In this case, a high quality product does not necessarily have to cost unthinkable money. At the same time, it is not quite true to say that we want to conquer the mass market. The target audience of Shoqan is ambitious people who know their value and want to look stylish," said the entrepreneurs.

The company's name was not chosen accidentally. Shoqan Ualikhanov was a prominent 19th-century intellectual and they wanted to pay a tribute to the Kazakh scholar.

The company subsequently decided to expand production with leather shoes, shirts and other accessories creating a unique place for costumers, where they can fully create their look with professional help.

The company has 11 boutique studios, two sewing production

facilities in Kazakhstan and China and 30 employees. It works in ten Kazakh cities – Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau, Karaganda, Oskemen, Oral, Petropavlovsk, Shymkent, Taraz and the capital – and recently opened a branch in Moscow.

Nearly 70 percent of its products, including shoes, are currently manufactured in modern factories in China, while individual tailoring and corporate orders are completed in Kazakhstan.

Shoqan has a famous clientele, including young Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen and actor Sanzhar Madi.

"Thanks to Nursultan and Ulugbek, who always supported me, Shoqan is a brand of a new generation of man's style – elegant, self-confident, capable and stimulating," noted Kudaibergen on the company website.

"I liked the boutique [of Shoqan]. They help you to choose a suit according to your body type, eye colour and hair. I really liked the costume that they picked for me. It is of a good quality and fits perfectly. Thanks to my friends

from Shoqan suits!" added Madi.

Currently, the clothing line includes 35 suits, 11 shirts, 18 shoe styles and various accessories. One set, which includes a suit, shirt and shoes, retails for 110,000 tenge (US\$290). The suit can be purchased separately for 55,000 tenge (US\$145), while the most expensive, a tuxedo, is approximately 115,000 tenge (US\$303). The shirt costs 12,000 tenge (US\$31.60) and the leather shoes sell for approximately 40,000 tenge (US\$105).

The company uses Australian wool and Caucasian merino wool for its suits and local tanning raw materials for shoes and bags.

"Tourists from Australia and the United Kingdom did not believe their eyes when they saw pure wool costumes for less than \$300. They bought several sets at once and wondered if we were planning to open a store in their homeland. Well, having lived for six months in Moscow, we got an idea of what kind of clothes Russian customers would like to buy. We have created a trend and are working with an audience that understands us," said Sharipov.

The founders have developed a partner package. When investing in construction of a Shoqan store, the company provides marketing and operational support. In the future, they plan to offer full-fledged franchises.

Aselsan Engineering seeks to increase domestic involvement in Kazakhstan in producing military products

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan Aselsan Engineering (KAE) is one of the companies that contributes not only to the city's economy and the domestic market, but to the military preparedness of the country's armed forces.

"The company's main goal and the priority are to supply the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan with high-tech products and systems. Since the beginning of the company's operations, we have supplied more than 15,000 domestic-made devices, such as night vision devices, thermal imaging devices and reconnaissance devices, as well as stabilised remote-controlled weapons systems," said KAE CEO Ziya Yusuf Camoglu in an interview for this story.

Founded in 2013, the company has the mission of providing electronic and electronic-optical goods for the armed forces of Kazakhstan and other military and civil units. Within three years, KAE began producing weapon systems, command control systems (C4ISR) and modernising

existing systems in the army inventory.

"We also carry out projects for the modernisation of the fire control systems and battle management systems of the T-72A and T-72B tanks, fire direction and command control systems for howitzers, the modernisation of the onboard avionic systems and electronic equipment of the MI-17 helicopter, the remote-controlled turret system for IGLA-1 and the

KAE is also working on transferring high technologies, ranging from large-node machinery assembly and equipment for special and dual use, followed by localising the production of systems and parts and creating support and service centres.

production of mobile surveillance and reconnaissance system, anti-drone and electronic warfare systems and production of radios for military and professional use compliant to standard APCO-25," he said.

KAE is also working on transferring high technologies, ranging from large-node machinery assembly and equipment for special and dual use, followed by localising the production of systems and parts and creating support and service centres.

As a foreign investor, the company collaborates with the city administration and Astana Invest company for meetings with government agencies and signing investment contracts, as it gives customs privileges in receiving goods without duties and taxes.

"Export will be the main and driving key for the market around our territory. We are actively working with our neighbouring countries Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey for export opportunities," said Camoglu.

The company observed some decrease in sales compared to 2017.

"We expect an increase in sales for the coming years. The decrease

in sales happened because our production mainly depends on the orders of government departments of Kazakhstan. In order to reduce our risk of losses and increase the efficiency and profitability of the company, we expanded our product range and field of activity and also increased our focus on research and development projects in collaboration with Nazarbayev University. Our approach is to grow by cooperating with local companies and small-medium enterprises together with working with universities and state research centres," he added.

KAE workers participate in seminars and training courses in Hungary, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore and Turkey. The company is also engaged in separate waste collection and disposal including paper, plastics and industrial waste.

"Our goal is to reach a local content of 80 percent in a certain period of time. As a company policy, we are working on increasing the local content by adding Kazakh producers to our suppliers list and enhancing our collaboration with local companies," Camoglu said.

Kazakhstan, Germany seek to increase trade, joint projects

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan used more than \$183 million in German capital last year to implement four investment projects in trade, industry and renewable energy sources, reported the Kazakh Invest press service. The projects created 400 jobs.

More than 90 percent of German investments are directed to the non-primary sector including the processing and chemical industries, building materials production and agro-industrial complex.

Germany is one of Kazakhstan's key political and leading trade and economic partners in the European Union (EU) and one of the priority countries of long-term export interest, said Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yermek Kosherbayev. He spoke in Berlin April 12 at the 12th meeting of the Kazakh-German intergovernmental working group on trade and economic cooperation.

"We are modernising our investment attraction ecosystem. The investment climate will meet the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) standards. We will develop a chain of interaction from embassies abroad to local executive bodies. We are ready to make every effort for our joint investment projects and potential proposals for localising production in Kazakhstan," he noted.

Kosherbayev proposed making maximum efforts to implement large-scale joint investment projects and expand German production activities in Kazakhstan.

Removing barriers opens up new opportunities for increasing cooperation between the countries, said German Deputy Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Eckhard Franz.

"Our relations have a large potential. For us, Kazakhstan is the key and most important partner in Central Asia. The German economy is interested in participation in the modernisation of the Kazakh economy and is ready to make its own contribution in this direction," he noted.

Energy development and efficiency, renewable energy sources, ecology, agriculture, industry, technology transfer, transport and logistics, utilities, health, education and tourism were defined as the priority cooperation areas.

The parties agreed to develop and launch a road map to systematise economic interaction areas be-

tween the countries and implement targeted projects in real sectors of the economy. The road map will contribute to modernising the Kazakh economy, attracting advanced German technologies and producing Kazakh goods with a high degree of processing.

This year, Tönnies, a German meat processing and food production company, will invest in a plant with a feedlot, meat processing facility and distribution centres. Negotiations are underway with the Sun Farming and Prisma Solar companies to build renewable energy facilities.

FB Waste Recycling intends to build a plant in cooperation with a local company in the Zhambyl Region. The 50-million euro (US\$56 million) operation will process 150,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste per year and generate up to five megawatts of electricity per hour. The facility will create 80 jobs.

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"Our plan includes 174 projects worth \$40.1 billion with the participation of foreign investors. The projects are mainly in the agro-industrial and mining-metallurgical complexes, oil and gas, chemistry, engineering, infrastructure and trade. The company, with representatives abroad and in the regions, provides all the services for the investment projects from idea to implementation and in the post-investment period, according to the single window principle," said Kazakh Invest national company Deputy Chairperson Rustam Issatayev.

South Korean Lotte Group to sweeten investment in local candy company

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The Rakhat Shymkent confectionery company plans to launch new product lines to produce marmalade by 2019 and sugar biscuits by 2020, said Rakhat Shymkent Director Zhyldyz Rahipbekova.

South Korean Lotte Group, which owns 92.44 percent of Rakhat Shymkent's shares, will invest five billion tenge (US\$13.1 million) in the product lines.

Rakhat has been operating in Kazakhstan for 75 years and employs 4,500 people at production facilities in Almaty and Shymkent.

Company produces more than 400 confectionery products in 14 categories. Rakhat also manufactures diabetes care products, including chocolate, candy, cookies and waffles with reduced calorie content and sugar alternatives.

The company exports to nine countries, including Germany, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan.

"The construction is currently underway at the marmalade production line. The launch of this line is set for June 2019. Another project is to launch the production of sugar biscuits, which is planned for 2020," said Rahipbekova in an interview for this story.

"With the launch of marmalade production, we plan to create 33 jobs, which is a very good number for the local population. As for sugar production, it is 30-35 people, which means additional jobs," she said.

The new production lines are expected to increase output by 14,000 tonnes per year.

The Shymkent Akimat (city administration) hopes the upgrade will strengthen business ties and increase investment between Kazakhstan and South Korea. Bilateral trade in 2018 reached \$2.5 billion.

Shymkent Deputy Akim Danat Zhumin emphasised the significance of the enterprise for the city development.

"The factory that has been

working since 2001 has been producing for Commonwealth of Independent States countries, Europe, China and Mongolia. This means domestic products comply with international standards," said Zhumin.

In February, Rakhat reported

2018 growth in revenue, profitability and market share.

The company's income grew 4.8 percent compared to 2017, with revenue of 59,171 million tenge (US\$158 million). Market share grew 2 percent and reached 20.5 percent in the main categories.



Nation&Capital

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Athletes to run for charity in annual BI Marathon May 26

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Where can a Finn find like-minded folk in Pavlodar, Kazakhstan? Why, at the Finno-Ugric Ethno Cultural Centre, of course

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The Finno-Ugric ethno cultural centre in the Pavlodar Region gathers nine ethnicities, providing an opportunity for its members to preserve their cultural heritage and share it with the Kazakh people, said chair Olga Nikolashina.

"This is how our work on the creation of the centre began. We worked with the archive, the migration police and called people. At the second stage, [we] sent more than 300 letters and audio invitations about an organisational meeting to large supermarkets and public transport," she told assembly.kz.

The Finno-Ugric centre has a regional centre, a Mordovian branch in Qashyr and Udmurt branch in the Uspen district. The 164 members represent the Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Komi-Permyak, Kven, Mari, Mordvin, Udmurt and Vepsian nationalities.

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Photo credit: assembly.kz

Three new visitors' centres to help explore Kazakhstan's rich cultural history

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Cultural heritage tourism continues to develop in Kazakhstan, covering more regions and involving the country's business community. As part of the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme, the Otyrar, Tamgaly and Ulytau visitor centres will open this year, said Sacral Kazakhstan Research Centre head Berik Abydygaliuly after the programme's national committee meeting.

He spoke about developing the cultural heritage tourism infrastructure, noting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are contributing to its progress.

"Our expert and methodological support mainly works in Nur-Sultan. The main work is carried out in the regions. Roads and objects (historical objects, facilities for tourists) are restored, visitor centres are built. There are also buildings that are built by entrepreneurs. There are places where people want to come overnight, and hotels are built there. All this is carried out on a charity base. The development of this type of tourism creates a good multiplier effect and SMEs develop," he said, reported inform.kz.

Restoring tourism destinations and objects and creating tourist facilities increase locals' and foreigners' interest in the country and its regions.

"Objects are restored, causing

interest among people, and tourism is developing. Our people from time immemorial visited sacred places, but now people will learn more about them. People want to visit them because they are very interesting, because we have an abundance of historical and pilgrimage sites. There are also beautiful nature reserves. Information materials, many legends accompany this. Interesting videos are published, texts are being written about this in social networks and expeditions are being organised. These increase the knowledge of our citizens about their sacred wealth. It is through sacred objects and historical events that we get to know our history all over again," said Abydygaliuly.

Opening the Otyrar (Turkistan Region), Tamgaly (Almaty Region) and Ulytau (Karagandy Region) visitor centres are expected to produce an increase in tourist flow.

"This should contribute to a greater increase in the number of tourists. Previously, tourists could not eat and spend the night there; now, such opportunities appear. In fact, these visitor centres will be like museums with complete information about them [the destinations]. These are the largest national visiting centres; there are also smaller ones in the regions. It is gratifying that entrepreneurs, who are actively building infrastructure there, are very interested in their development," he added.

Erasmus+ contributes to cooperation, mobility of Kazakh universities with EU partner countries

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Since 2007, Kazakh students and organisations have had the opportunity to study in Europe as part of the European Union's (EU) Erasmus+ programme. The Astana Times interviewed National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) Coordinator Shaizada Tasbulatova, university representatives and an Erasmus student to learn more about the project.

NEO seeks to facilitate voluntary convergence of Kazakh higher education with EU developments in higher education, including providing information, promoting Erasmus+ actions and monitoring ongoing Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education projects. More than 170 universities from programme countries cooperate with Kazakh universities. Approximately 47 Kazakh institutions participate in capacity building projects and 61 are involved in International Credit Mobility projects.

"It is a unique programme in the field of education, which is implemented by the EU. The capacity building in higher education action focuses on improving the potential and increasing the quali-



Organic chef Sarah Viener and Anara Kakimova (R).

fications of our staff. It is possible to develop various curricula and modernise the existing courses as part of this project. It is challenging work. The support of European university partners is essential. It includes different aspects of coop-

eration between universities," said Tasbulatova.

The office also assists interested higher education institutions both in Kazakhstan and the EU in searching for partners to build the consortium and coordinating the

activities of the national team of higher education reform experts.

"There are two types of scholarships. Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees offer scholarships for master's students to follow an entire degree programme. The programmes are delivered by a consortium of universities. Students study and do research in at least two European universities. Five local universities are part of the prestigious Erasmus Mundus consortium as full or associate partners. In 2018, 30 students from Kazakhstan received scholarships in the master's programme," she said.

Erasmus+ also facilitates short-term, incoming and outgoing mobility for university students and staff. The programme funded 3.5 million euros (US\$3.9 million) in mobility grants in 2018. International Credit Mobility projects provided Kazakh universities with 11.3 million euros (US\$12.7 million) in grants, which funded movement for 3,224 student and staff in 2015-2018.

"The projects involving Kazakh universities get 65 percent of the International Credit Mobility regional budget for Central Asia," she said.

Continued on Page B5

Bublik wins Monterrey Challenger, enters ATP's top 100

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh tennis player Alexander Bublik won the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Challenger tournament in Monterrey, Mexico, entering ATP's top 100 ranking.

Bublik defeated Serb Pedja Krstin and American Mitchell Krueger in the second and third rounds, respectively, then beat Spaniard Feliciano Lopez in the quarterfinals, 7-6 (5), 6-3. In the semi-finals, he topped American Tenny Sandgren in three sets, 2-6,

6-2 and 7-6 (5). Bublik then defeated Ecuadorian Emilio Gomez in the final match, 6-3, 6-2, to win his third tournament of the year, reported sports.kz.

Bublik (99th) advanced 21 positions to enter ATP's recently-updated top 100. Fellow countryman Mikhail Kukushkin stands at 44th, the highest position among Kazakh tennis players.

Serb Novak Djokovic, Spaniard Rafael Nadal and German Alexander Zverev are ranked number one, two and three, respectively.

Continued on Page B7

Almaty opens its cherry blossom alley

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Almaty and Japanese officials recently planted the first of 100 cherry blossom trees along the Esentai River in Almaty as a symbol of friendship between the city and Japan.

Tokyo Rope International President Sato Kazunori and Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek planted the first trees April 14, reported the city akimat (administration) press service.

"We picked up exactly the kind of sakura (cherry blossom) that fits the climate of Almaty. At the initial stage, we brought over 100 trees, but we plan to plant even more," said Kazunori.

Tokyo Rope International will protect the river bank from erosion using its rock box method. The company, a subsidiary of the transnational Tokyo Rope Manufacturing, has been designing and manufacturing eco-friendly disaster prevention facilities since 1887.

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Khabar TV launches Central Asia's Got Talent

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Khabar TV, in conjunction with Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek channels, started the casting process April 3 for Central Asia's Got Talent. The show will be broadcast in the four countries.

"For the first time in Kazakh TV's history, we will gather all talented people in a single space. Previously, Kazakh TV channels only introduced single talent shows, such as singers, dancers and

sportsmen, while people with any talent will be able to participate in this show. Another feature of this show is in its joint organisation by Central Asian countries with participants from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Central Asia's Got Talent's goal is to find the most talented and original people in the Central Asian countries," said Khabar Agency First Deputy Board Chairperson Rinat Kertayev while presenting the project.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

BARYS ARENA

April 25 at 7 p.m. Kazakhstan – Belarus, friendly

April 26 at 7 p.m. Kazakhstan – South Korea, friendly

April 29 at 12.30 p.m. Hungary – South Korea, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

April 29 at 4 p.m. Lithuania – Belarus, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

April 29 at 8 p.m. Slovenia – Kazakhstan, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

April 30 at 7.30 p.m. Belarus – Hungary, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

May 1 at 4.30 p.m. Kazakhstan – Lithuania, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

May 2 at 12.30 p.m. Lithuania – Hungary, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

May 2 at 4 p.m. Belarus – Slovenia, 2019 IIHF World Championship Division IA

ASTANA OPERA

April 27 at 6 p.m. The Barber of Seville, opera

May 1 at 6 p.m. Don Quixote, ballet

May 4 at 7 p.m. Madame Butterfly, opera

May 7 at 6 p.m. Spartacus, ballet

ASTANA ARENA

April 27 at 7 p.m. FC Astana – FC Tobyl, Qazaqstan Premier League

ASTANA BALLET

May 8 at 2 p.m. Backstage Secrets, excursion

May 11, 12 at 6 p.m. A Journey of a Memory

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

One of 100 New Faces promotes home-grown style of mixed martial arts

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Sergey An, the founder of Nomad MMA (Kazakh national martial arts), has been popularising the group worldwide for nearly 17 years with significant results. Eighteen countries have joined the federation and Nomad MMA tournaments have been organised in Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Uzbekistan.

“Since last year, China, Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan have joined our federation. We will continue to expand its geography. Our aim is to have at least 50 member countries in the Nomad MMA Federation,” he said in an interview with the Astana Times.

“The most recent Nomad MMA tournament was held in Yekaterinburg (Russia) on March



Sergey An

23-24. Our fighters showed good results and won medals. The representatives of the Pakistan MMA community contacted us with the suggestion to organise a Nomad MMA tournament in their country in April. Now, we are discussing the details. All the tournaments abroad are organised by our rules and under the flag of Kazakhstan. Our flag will

be there even if there is no fighter representing Kazakhstan at the tournament, because Nomad MMA originated in our country. Sport is a great way to promote the brand of Kazakhstan internationally,” he said.

More than 13,000 children across Kazakhstan attend Nomad MMA training sessions on a regular basis. The federation has branches in all Kazakh cities.

“The global MMA community recognised Nomad MMA as the most secure martial art. Our aim is to strengthen children’s health, not to destroy it,” said An.

“I have been wrestling since my childhood, but mixed martial arts always attracted me. We have strong traditions of Kazakh wrestling known as kazaksha kures, but we do not have our own national martial arts,” he continued.

“I participated in many tour-

naments and gained a lot of experience in MMA. Nomad MMA embraces the best practices from different martial arts and it is a style created in Kazakhstan. Now, it competes with martial arts from other countries globally. I named it Nomad because I wanted this style to be associated with Kazakhstan and our nomadic roots. Nomad MMA combines the ancient fighting traditions of Kazakh warriors and modern martial arts trends. There is a solid methodology of developing cultural and spiritual values behind a physical training process. We prepare strong fighters and people of spirit. Many fighters of Nomad MMA Federation are successful in the military service and build careers in defence and law enforcement agencies,” said An.

Where can a Finn find like-minded folk...

Continued from Page B1

Twenty-one people attended the centre’s first meeting on Feb. 15, 2015. With the participation of the regional akim (governor), it was presented and dedicated April 30, 2016 on the eve of the Unity Day of the People of Kazakhstan.

The centre has several artistic groups including the Esne vocal group led by Yuliya Safronova, Samruk dance group led by Svetlana Zubkova and Tugan Zher youth vocal group led by Olga Ivashkina.

“During the three years of work of our centre, the creation of creative groups, where the Samruk choreographic group occupies a special place, has become an enormous asset. Why Samruk? Today, representatives of nine nationalities are engaged in our centre. As our choreographic group dances, all the

representatives of the Finno-Ugric peoples’ dances and we all live under one shanyrak (the upper dome of a yurt) in a large multinational family of Kazakhstan, the image of the golden-winged Samruk bird immediately fell to everyone’s liking,” said Nikolashina.

“The Samruk dance group of the centre debuted in November 2017, participating in the Aq Kogershin national contest of creativity in the school age children and adolescent [categories]. [It] gave us the opportunity to look at the work of the groups from other regions, make friends with colleagues in the art of dancing, and most importantly, it laid the foundation for the successful performances of the Samruk group, becoming a launch pad for it,” she noted.

The middle group performed Finnish and Mordovian dances,

winning first place. The older group performed Hungarian and Khanty dances, receiving the Grand Prix.

“Such moments in life allow us to very clearly realise how great it is when there are like-minded people around, people who understand you from a half-word. They also warmly care about their activities and devote themselves utterly to it,” she added.

The centre also has a Council of Elders, Council of Mothers and youth wing. Activities include the Finno-Ugric souvenir workshop, Finnish language studio and School of Finnish Health walking club.

The centre cooperates with the Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples of Russia; the Finno-Ugric centres of Lahti (Finland), Omsk (Russia), Saransk (Mordovia) and Syktyvkar (Komi) and the Suomi Finn-Karelian centre in Almaty. Finland, Karelia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia

and Udmurtia provide dictionaries, phrasebooks and fiction books.

The centre has organised and participated in more than 200 events. One of the more prominent ones was hosted in May 2018, when members joined the Pavlodar Geographic Society on an expeditionary voyage to Lozovoe village of the Uspen district, where 13 ethnicities live together.

The centre presented the branch with a copy of its statute, an Udmurtchka doll made in the Finno-Ugric souvenir workshop, Udmurt Bereginya (doll) brought from Glazov (city in Udmurtia) and collection of Udmurt folk songs and scarves for all participants.

“The mission of our trip to Lozovoe was supported even by the weather. It could not be otherwise, because we arrived at the opening of the Udmurt branch of the Finno-Ugric Centre,” said Nikolashina.



Content creators to share their experiences at festivals in Nur-Sultan, Aktobe, Shymkent



L-R: Ben Mauk, Larissa Pak, Kirsten Lewis.

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The festival The Art of Content kicked off April 24 at the capital’s Astana Hub. The events will take place at Aktobe’s Capital Plaza April 26 and Shymkent’s co-working space Scrum April 27.

Every year, online magazine Vlast.kz delivers an event in which audiences are exposed to diverse, high-quality content from leaders in the media from all over the world. This year, it has expanded the event’s format to include stories that will interest business and civil society leaders, in addition to the media. Speakers will reflect on how they created, packaged and promoted their stories and on crowdfunding, longreads, podcasts and commercial photography.

Speaker Ben Mauk is a journalist who has written for The New York Times Magazine, Harper’s Magazine, The New Yorker, The Guardian, the London Review of Books, Virginia Quarterly Review and n+1.

Speaker Larissa Pak is a TEDx Ambassador and communications specialist and launched one of Kazakhstan’s first podcasts, “Every Day by Day,” in 2018. Her podcast is available at www.everydaybyday.com.

Speaker Kirsten Lewis is a photographer who brings the art of photojournalism to family photography. Her portfolio is available at www.kirstenlewis-photo.com.

Speaker Roman Super is a reporter at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s Russian Service and contributes to the Russian versions of GQ and Esquire. He authored the documentary “On Fingertips,” selected for the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, and the book “Of the Same Blood.”

Speaker Anton Troianovski is the Moscow bureau chief of The Washington Post and previously reported at The Wall Street Journal.

He covered two German elections, two Olympic Games, the Ukraine crisis, migration and populist politics in Europe.

Speaker Aziza Utegenova is the head of Kazakhstan’s largest crowdfunding platform, Start-Time, at www.start-time.kz. The platform supports charity and social projects and start-ups.

Speaker Matse Uwatse Nnoli is the founder of MatseCooks, a Nigerian food blog with Western infusions. She shares news,

Speakers will reflect on how they created, packaged and promoted their stories and on crowdfunding, longreads, podcasts and commercial photography.

kitchen tips, interviews and breakthroughs in the art of cooking at www.matsecooks.co.

Speaker Bill Einreinhofer is the chair of New York Film Academy’s Broadcast Journalism Department. He has developed and produced programming for the PBS NewsHour, Good Morning America and HBO.

Speaker Aleksander Gorbachev is a journalist who was formerly the editor-in-chief of Afisha and deputy editor of Meduza. His master’s thesis at the world’s first school of journalism, Missouri School of Journalism, was on business models of American digital longform publications.

Speaker Anuar Nurpeisov is an actor, and his new documentary “Return from Khan Tengri” with actress Aisulu Azimbayeva on reaching the highest point in Kazakhstan as amateur alpinists will be screened at the event. The trailer is available at youtu.be/Vj28SmNd57o.

Purchase tickets to attend The Art of Content in Nur-Sultan at www.vlast.mito.kz/event/418, in Aktobe at www.vlast.mito.kz/event/419 and in Shymkent at www.vlast.mito.kz/event/420.

IF NOT YOU, WHO? IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

#BECAUSEHUMANITY

AFTER A NUCLEAR BLAST, SOME SAY ALL THAT’S LEFT OF WHO OR WHAT WAS THERE BEFORE IS DUST AND SHADOWS. TODAY, OUR PLANET AND ITS PEOPLE LIVE WITH THE DARK SHADOW OF THE NUCLEAR THREAT. IT FOLLOWS US WHEREVER WE GO. THE ATOM PROJECT AIMS TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THIS PROBLEM—AND THE SOLUTION.



THE ATOM PROJECT

THEATOMPROJECT.ORG



CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Astana Opera presents “La Bohème,” series of chamber orchestra concerts

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Astana Opera House presented Giacomo Puccini’s opera “La Bohème” staged by Andrea Bernard April 19 and 20, reported the theatre’s press service. Mariya Mudryak and Maira Mukhamedkyzy performed Mimi, and Medet Chotabayev and Zhan Tapin played Rodolfo. The orchestra performed under the leadership of Italian music director Giuseppe Acquaviva.

“La Bohème is a lyrical opera, one of the most frequently performed in opera houses, and I put all my passion into this production. I believe that this is a successful production for our opera house,” said set designer Ezio Frigerio.

The opera is based on “Scènes de la Vie de Bohème,” the popular novel by French author Henri Murger. It was conducted by 28-year-old Arturo Toscanini in its 1896 premiere in Turin.

“This is my first time staging ‘La



A scene from “La Bohème”.

Bohème’ and it is also my debut with Puccini’s music. I will try to show my own vision of this wonderful opera. Ideas come to mind when I listen to the music and read the libretto. I always strive to understand the psychology of the characters in order to show them onstage in the best possible way. I am trying to create poetical images and stories that can excite the audience. For me, it is important to tell the audience something new and to give them the opportunity to leave the theatre with an experience that has enriched them,” said Bernard.

The director decided to set the story in the early 1900s, when Paris was a cultural, industrial and architectural centre of the world.

“These were the years right after the world exhibition that put Paris at the centre of international attention. At this time, cinema was born and photography and impressionist art were developed. I thought that it might be the right context to tell the story of these young people,” he said.

Astana Opera Chamber Hall also presented a diverse concert programme. Young musicians and 100 New Faces of Kazakhstan winners Batyrzhan Smakov (countertenor) and Saida Kalykova (piano) performed Gioachino Rossini’s “La Regata Veneziana” on April 21. The programme also in-

cluded works by composers from the 16th-19th centuries including Luigi Boccherini, Christoph Gluck, George Frideric Handel, Nicola Porpora, Giuseppe Valentini, Tomaso Antonio Vitali and Antonio Vivaldi.

“Songs without Words,” a musical evening dedicated to the 210th anniversary of German romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, will be held April 25.

Opera and orchestra soloists will perform the “Spring Waltz” concert April 28. The evening will feature chamber and vocal music works by Yevgeny Brusilovsky, Shamshi Kaldayakov, Latif Khamidi, Nagim Mendygaliyev Sydyk Mukhamedzhanov, Kapan Musin, Yerkegali Rakhmadiyev, Nurgisa Tlendiyev, Mukan Tulebayev, Gaziza Zhubanova and other Kazakh composers.

“Musical Offering to Maestro” is scheduled April 30 as part of the promotion campaign for the fifth Astana Piano Passion International Festival of Classical Music and Competition for Young Pianists. International competition laureate Daniyar Yessimkhanov will play Bach’s English Suite in A minor, Beethoven’s Sonata No. 31 in A flat major, Liszt’s Ballade No. 2 in B minor and Rachmaninoff’s Five Preludes.

Ilyas Zhansugurov’s poem translated into English

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh poet Ilyas Zhansugurov’s poem “Kulager” has been translated into English to celebrate his 125th birthday. The translation, completed by English poet and translator Belinda Cooke, was presented April 5 at the National Academic Library of Kazakhstan, reported Kazinform.

The poem was originally translated line-by-line from its original Kazakh by a team of consultants fluent in Kazakh and English, but Cooke returned the poetic form and metaphorical sound.

The Ilyas Zhansugurov Fund trusted the translation to Cooke, who transcribed the works of Zhansugurov’s contemporaries, Russian poets Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak and Marina Tsvetayeva. The poem was originally translated line-by-line from its original Kazakh by a team of consultants fluent in Kazakh and English, but Cooke returned the poetic form and metaphorical sound.

Cooke immersed herself in Kazakh culture in an effort to convey the emotions in “Kulager”, Zhansugurov’s niece Zhanar Jandosova told Kazakh TV.

“Belinda had to spend some time here, drive to Akan Sery’s grave and go to Borovoye and Zerenda. She saw the places

where it all happened and then she understood this feeling when she tried kumys (fermented mare’s milk) and besbarmak (meat and noodles); when she learned about our hospitality, hiked in the mountains,” she said.

BBC journalist Roza Kudabayeva told Kazinform about the technical details of Cooke’s process.

“Earlier, this poem was translated into Russian and German. Each translator put his or her soul in their translation and I would like to say that there is a part of my soul in an English translation of ‘Kulager.’ Belinda Cooke needed help understanding some Kazakh phrases because the poem was originally written in Kazakh. For example, ‘tabakshylar’ [is a] word that means young people carrying trays of traditional food. We decided to translate it as ‘waiters’, but we kept ‘tabak’ [traditional Kazakh large plate] in the same sentence,” she said.

Nazarbayev University Kazakh language and Turkic studies department chair Uli Schamiloglu told Kazakh TV about the importance of the translation.

“In my opinion, the world today knows very little about Kazakh literature, so it’s important to introduce contemporary Kazakh literature, 20th century literature and classic literature. I think that the best novels and poems in Kazakh have to be translated into English and other world languages. In this sense, the ‘Kulager’ poem translation is very important. I plan to share this book with my colleagues and students. It will only be right if they read it,” he said.

The effort was sponsored by the National Translation Bureau, with the goal of making Kazakh literature available for the international public.



Khabar TV launches Central Asia’s Got Talent

Continued from Page B1

Casting will occur in each country both offline and online via social networks and messenger apps. Central Asia’s Got Talent consists of five stages: casting, open auditions, quarterfinal, semi-final and grand finale. The show will premiere in September and the grand finale is scheduled for December.

The show is organised by Central Asia’s Got Talent Show General

Producer Serik Akishev, Kertayev (Kazakhstan), KTRK Broadcasting Corporation Producer Kanatbek Kultayev (Kyrgyzstan), TV Safina International Department head Nargis Kassymova (Tajikistan) and Zo’r TV Channel Producer Timur Aliyev (Uzbekistan).

Kassymova and Kertayev noted the project is targeted towards strengthening cultural and spiritual integration among the Central Asian nations.

“It allows all our countries to

unite in this cultural space. The project’s main feature is that it has no limitations, neither in gender nor in age of participants. We are really excited about this project – its bright emotions and performances,” said Kassymova at the Central Communications Service press conference.

The winner will receive 10 million tenge (US\$26,278). Each country will also have its own champion who will receive three million tenge (US\$7,883).

Got Talent, created by Simon Cowell, is co-owned by British companies Fremantle and Syco Entertainment. The show was first aired in the United States in June 2006 as America’s Got Talent and licensing for the format has subsequently been purchased in more than 70 countries. Got Talent was included in the Guinness World Records in April 2014 as the most successful TV format in the world, as at the time it was broadcast in 58 countries.

Nur-Sultan hosts Triumvirart contemporary art exhibition



By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The April 4-30 Triumvirart contemporary art exhibition in the capital features the

work of three Kazakh artists Marat Bekeyev, Eduard Kazaryan and Andrei Noda. The artists’ work features paintings and sculptures.

The free exhibition is being hosted by the Forte Bank Kulan-

shi Art Gallery. This exhibition is called Triumvirart, which is a word play on the Latin word triumvirat (“three men union”) and the word “art”, as it will feature the works of three artists, united by a common goal of creating art together and making it more accessible for Kazakh citizens.

Each one of the three artists has a distinct style, as described by the Head of Kulanishi Curator Council Leila Makhat. Bekeyev’s painting style is filled with allegories, combining conciseness with complexity of shapes and images. His paintings’ dramatic qualities aim to create an illusion of the work just being finished, with the viewer feeling the energy of the work.

Kazaryan is a renowned sculptor

who works with a variety of materials. Sculptures are made both of classic and unexpected materials, as Kazaryan likes to play with his material, working with bronze, aluminium, glass and ceramics. He tries to create feelings of harsh romantic and soft monumentalism in his works, subverting expectations to create viewers’ emotions.

Noda’s signature painting style consists of colour, shapes and unexpected composition solutions. He creates a monumental feeling using broken lines, making his paintings graphically precise.

Bekeyev is an Almaty-based artist. He is a member of the Kazakhstan Union of Artists. Kazaryan also is an Almaty-based artist who received numerous awards for his art and his impact on Armenian culture (Kazaryan is ethnically Armenian). Noda is a Tarlan-based artist. During his 40 year-long career he participated in more than 300 exhibitions, including 30 of his personal exhibitions.

Yerzhan Maksim to compete in Russia’s ‘The Voice Kids’ final April 26

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Yerzhan Maksim, a 12-year-old schoolboy from Oral, was selected by Russian singer Valeriy Meladze to compete in the final of the Russian reality talent show “The Voice Kids” in Moscow April 26.

“A lot of people came to support my son, but only four were let in – me, an aunt, my friend and Yerzhan’s friend, whom he met at another international competition,” said Gulmira Alibek, Maksim’s mother, at the semifinal. “The excitement overwhelmed us. My son performed with two other contestants, and they sang Muslim Magomayev’s song ‘Blue Eternity.’”

During the blind audition stage for “The Voice Kids,” Maksim sang Andrea Bocelli’s “Ama Credie Vai.” Judges Pelageya, Meladze and Svetlana Loboda were faced

toward the audience during his performance and were quick to turn their chairs toward him to express their interest in coaching him. Meladze has been Maksim’s mentor throughout the competition, and the young singer is currently preparing for the final in Aktau with vocalist Nurgul Mederbekova. The winner of the sixth season will be determined by television viewers voting by telephone, SMS text and the official app.

“We hope that, with the support of Kazakhstan, we will be able to win because the winner (of the final) will be determined by public voting,” Alibek added.

Maksim has been taking music classes since 2012.

“Yerzhan has grown a lot professionally. He has extensive experience in international competitions. He has a powerful and flexible voice, can hit high notes and always performs songs with passion,” said



Yerzhan Maksim

Dariya Bakytova, Maksim’s music teacher, to Kazakh-tv.kz.

Maksim took first place in the 2016 Batumi Dolphin Fest and second place in the 2017 Slavianski Bazaar and was a finalist in the 2017 San Remo Junior Festival and the 2018 Junior Eurovision Song Contest.

“He has a calm personality. He is confident on stage like a true artist and can interact with the audience. Among friends, he is cheerful, open-minded and friendly... He dreams of putting Kazakhstan on the map in the future like Dimash,” said Alibek referring to the rising star Dimash Kudaibergen.

COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Country modernises criminal procedure law to strengthen human rights in criminal proceedings

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's modernised criminal law has mitigated punitive measures to better protect human rights in criminal processes. As a result, the number of people taken into custody has decreased 37 percent to 9,957 compared to 2018.

The Law on Modernisation of Criminal Procedure entered into force in early 2018. In addition to strengthening human rights, it also increased competition between parties at the trial, expanded judicial control, eliminated duplication and ensured clearer distribution of powers among investigating authorities, the prosecutor's office and the court.

The trend has continued this year. In the first few months, the number of detainees decreased 17 percent to 2,742, while arrests declined 13 percent to 2,633. More people were also



Deputy Prosecutor General Marat Akhmetzhanov.

placed under house arrest and signed a travel ban. The number of those under house arrest doubled from 98 to 229, while those who signed an agreement not to leave his or her residence increased five times, from 526 to 3,121.

The law reduced the detention period from 72 hours to 48 hours and for minors to 24 hours. Last year, 80.27 percent of detainees were

brought to court within two days, rather than three.

"We have simplified proceedings for misconduct and minor crimes. When the guilty person fully admits his guilt, the time and resources of the police is saved. A person is guaranteed to be able to avoid severe punishment. In the order of the new obligatory proceedings, more than 750 (768) cases were investigated and sent to the court," said Deputy Prosecutor General Marat Akhmetzhanov.

The new law also reduced fine costs and eased suspension and resumption processes. Six types of economic crimes have been assessed with fines instead of imprisonment and the law bans a pre-trial arrest for economic crimes except for six extremely serious crimes.

In addition, the changes provide complete exemption from liability for seven economic crimes, if the crime was committed for the first

time and damages are fully compensated. At the same time, the tax evasion damage threshold increased ten times from 2,000 to 20,000 monthly calculation indices (MCIs). As of Jan. 1, the MCI is 2,525 tenge (US\$6.70).

The competitiveness of the criminal process has increased through strengthening the defence side. In particular, the law vests lawyers with broader rights, such as the option to apply to the investigating judge for a petition. The number of participant complaints during the investigating stage of various violations decreased 5 percent, from 123,000 to 117,000.

The same law introduced electronic criminal cases. According to Akhmetzhanov, the digital format minimises falsified evidence and various violations of the law. Since the beginning of last year, approximately 36,000 cases, or 7 percent, have been investigated online, with 8,500 sent to court.

Agro industry goes digital

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan will launch 20 digital and 4,000 advanced farms as part of a larger initiative to digitise the nation's agro-industrial complex.

"As a part of the agro-industrial complex digitisation initiative, no less than 20 digital and 4,000 advanced farms will be created on the entire state territory. Also, 100 percent of processes and state services will be automated. As a part of the precision farming incorporation initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture, three levels of farms were established – a digital farm, an advanced farm and a basic farm, each of which has a set of necessary elements. The further work will be directed towards farmers improving their levels using governmental support services," said Barayev Research and Production Centre Director Kenzhe Abdullayev at the April 15 Central Communication Services press conference.

The country currently has 114 advanced and 10 digital farms, which pave the way to upgrade basic and advanced farms to the next level.

"It's a good beginning, but akimats (local administration) have to continue helping farms in their digital development through state

support measures. Basic levels are ensured through the e-AIC programme via digitising all crop-lands, as well as actualising agro-chemical soil condition maps. Now, we have to progress from the basic level to advanced and from advanced to digital farms. A digital evolution chain has been established and is currently being implemented," he added.

Minister of Agriculture Omirzak Shukeev (currently the Turkestan region akim (governor)) spoke in September with BNews, providing more detail about digital farms.

"We have to create digital farms in every district; we will demand it from the akimats. We are doing it so every Kazakh farmer can see with their own eyes and experience the result of using digital technologies themselves. We created three test sites – these are Kaskelen agro park, Shortandy in Barayev Institute and the Kostanai area based in Zarechny," he said.

Zerde Board Chairperson Ruslan Yessenbayev described precision farming to 24 TV. The process consists of gathering soil chemistry, moisture and weather data for each square metre of land.

With agro-industrial complex digitisation, labour productivity and processed agricultural product export are to increase at least 2.5 times by the end of 2021.

Kazakhstan establishes uniform pricing for pharmaceuticals, makes prices available online

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Uniform prices will be set in all Kazakh pharmacies by May. Medical supply prices will be available online, as well as by request, to make medicine more accessible.

"A law will come into force tomorrow, according to which the Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare is vested with the competence to set prices for all medicine. While implementing this law, the ministry has developed rules that profile

agreed-upon associations. Currently, rules are being approved and registered by the Ministry of Justice," said Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare pharmacy committee chairperson Ludmila Burabekova during a Central Communication Service press conference.

She clarified prices will be established after the law comes into force and spoke about the availability of price lists.

"Approximately this May, these prices will come into force. They will be posted on the ministry, phar-

macy committee, National Centre Medicine Medical Purpose Goods and Medical Technology Expertise websites. A mobile app will also be developed, with all the prices available," she added.

To make medicine more accessible, the initiative includes a medicine supply request that can now be completed electronically. The action will help avoid under- and over-supply of certain medicines, as the needs of those with illnesses will become part of the same database.

"Later, treatment plans by regions will become a part of the SK-Pharmaciya single pharmacy information system, where we will be able to see the total request of the state of the necessary medicine with an amount by regions and clinics. After that, the total request will be sent to the budget commission for budget forming and the distribution of corresponding budget resources," said Burabekova.

She added the work on forming the request will begin soon and end May 15.

National Guard to shoot film about fallen soldiers' heroism

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh National Guard will be shooting a film and TV series about the heroism of fallen Kazakh soldiers in the 1995 battle at the Tajik-Afghan border while protecting the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) external borders, said National Guard Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Major General Mukhometskali Satov at the April 6 wreath laying ceremony in the capital.

The ceremony was held near the Defenders of the Fatherland monument. Veterans of local and international conflicts, National Guard and Border Guard Service officers and military personnel and students from school No. 25's cadet class attended the event.

"The National Guard of Kazakhstan declared April 7 as the Day of Courage. On that day exactly 24 years ago, in the Pshihavr mountain gorge in Tajikistan, an unequal battle ensued with superior gangs from the adjacent side. The battle lasted more than four hours and



took 17 young lives of Kazakh soldiers. Many were injured. In spite of the losses, the seventh company of the Internal Troops honourably fulfilled its military duty and remained faithful to the military oath, without dropping honour and dignity," reported the National Guard's website.

Satov noted all regions of the country, National Guard personnel, veterans, fellow soldiers, friends and comrades honour the heroes' memory.

"Many wonder what the need was to send our children to the Tajik-

Afghan border. Our people never forget their friends, especially since they [the soldiers] went there at the request of the leadership of Tajikistan. You know that Kazakhs never leave their close neighbours and comrades in distress. It is terrible to imagine what would have happened if the Mujahideen had seized power in certain regions. In Dushanbe, in honour of perpetuating the memory of the fallen soldiers, a monument was built. This is a sign of serious recognition," he said.

First President of Kazakhstan

Nursultan Nazarbayev awarded five soldiers posthumously with the II degree Aibyn (Virtue) Order and 12 with Zhaiyngerlik erligi ushin (For military heroism) medals for the courage and dedication shown during their military duty protecting the CIS borders.

The feature film and 10-part television series will recall the fallen soldiers' courage and heroism.

"Along with the Kazakhstan TV channel and the AU Cinema film company with the support of the Ministry of Information and Social Development, we plan to shoot a 10-part television series and a feature film about those tragic events in the summer of this year. I think this project will serve as a good example in educating the future generation in the spirit of Kazakhstan's patriotism," said Satov.

Last year, the National Guard, Khabar TV channel and AU Cinema produced the feature film "Shestoi post" (The Sixth Post), which was shown across the country. Based on real events, the movie was among the top best domestic films of the year.

Atyrau authorities, investor to build waste processing plant

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Atyrau authorities and a private investor will be constructing a waste sorting complex and plastic processing workshop. The high-tech installation is scheduled to launch in May.

"The complex was purchased at the expense of a private investor. The equipment will be delivered from Belarussian Sifaniya-Ekotehnika company, which supplies waste processing equipment to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and the European Union (EU). Such equipment is already operating in Aktau, Kostanai and Zhanaozen. The last fact played a major role in choosing the equipment. The Mangystau and Atyrau regions have similar climatic conditions and the same salty clay soil," said plant head Almas Iztelevov.

Since Jan. 1, Kazakhstan has banned dumping plastic, glass,

waste paper and cardboard into landfills. As a result, the Ministry of Energy and regional akimats (city administrations) have developed a set of measures for the timely disposal and recycling of solid household waste with wide involvement of small and medium-sized businesses.

The complex will be located on 1,000 square meters adjacent to a landfill. The equipment is being supplied on schedule based on an agreement with the manufacturer, according to authorities, which will install the apparatus and put it into operation. A trial launch is scheduled for early summer.

Some of the plastic waste recycling equipment has been received and the hangar mounted.

Approximately 250-300 tonnes of solid waste are taken each day from Atyrau to the garbage landfill. The new equipment is designed to sort up to 100,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste per year and the plant will create 70 new jobs.



Emergency Health Centre meets international regulations for public health crises response

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government has opened an Emergency Health Operations Centre in the capital aimed towards emergency response preparedness, protecting the life and well-being of the country's population and minimising the negative consequences of emergency situations.

"This centre has been established to implement the require-

ments of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the Global Health Protection Programme for the government of Kazakhstan to meet the public health response obligations of the member states to prevent the international spread of diseases. The IHR were adopted by 196 countries of the world, including Kazakhstan, at the 58th World Health Assembly in 2005," said Healthcare Ministry National Centre for Public Health Director Valikhan Akhmetov in his wel-

coming speech at the launch of the facility.

The April 12 presentation was attended by United States Embassy in Kazakhstan Deputy Chief of Mission Ted Ling and representatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Kazakhstan, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture Veterinary Supervision and Control Committee, among others.

The centre was created according to international health regulations and the global health protec-

tion programme, said Healthcare Ministry National Centre for Public Health Deputy Director Damir Kobzhasarov.

"This centre was created with the support of the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Technical and methodological support is provided here [locally]. In general, this centre is designed to ensure that our country and our healthcare system and medicine can respond in time to all cases of public health emergencies, whether

they have chemical, radiological or biological nature," he said.

Zhandarbek Bekshin, the Healthcare Ministry Public Health Committee Chair – Chief State Sanitary Doctor, noted the centre will serve citizens' safety.

The Healthcare Ministry Public Health Committee Chair – Chief State Sanitary Doctor Zhandarbek Bekshin. Photo credit: ortcom.kz.

"We had the opportunity to get acquainted with the activities of a similar situation centre at the CDC

in Atlanta... I think this centre will serve primarily for the security of the people of Kazakhstan and it will also improve the technical operational equipment of the Ministry of Healthcare," he said.

The centre currently has a chemist, radiologist, infectious diseases epidemiologist and IT specialist who will accumulate risk data and inform the relevant state structures to ensure preventive measures, as well as during emergency events.

"Further expansion is planned in order to adequately and fully respond to all cases of emergency situations. We now understand that five people are for the time being the minimum that can ensure the collection and monitoring of information and in the future, we will prepare reserve personnel," said Kobzhasarov.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Kazakh orphans find four-leaf clover with Irish parents

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The statistics show that Irish citizens have adopted more children from Kazakh orphanages than in any other European countries. Today, approximately 150 young ethnic Kazakhs have found new families in Ireland.

The Kazakh diaspora in Ireland along with the Kazakh embassy organised a March 30 festive event at the Pearse Museum in Dublin. Twenty Irish families adopting Kazakh children attended the gathering.

In a cosy atmosphere of traditional Irish melodies, hot English tea and full table of treats children played in Kazakh national costumes. The children could communicate with their peers and learn more about Kazakhstan. All this is a social networking, which



brought together many families from all over Ireland.

Kazakh children, adopted by the Irish, honour national traditions, and their adoptive parents try to keep their children in touch with their historic homeland.

“Local Kazakhs living here teach us to cook national dishes. We always keep in touch with them, learn Kazakh language. We

buy books. My son Sanzhar is interested in hunting with birds. For now, I can't imagine what this will lead to,” said Paula Nyland, Sanzhar-Kormak's mother and a representative of the Association of Irish people Adopting Children in Kazakhstan.

“The adoption programme began its work 15 years ago. Every year we hold events where adop-

tive families gather and share news. Some of them travel to Kazakhstan and come back with pleasant impressions,” said Irish State Adoption Agency Head Patricia Carey.

It is highly important to support a continuous cultural connection of adopted children with their historic homeland, officials and families agree. The Kazakh embassy is ready to provide further assistance in organising general meetings, as well as travel of children to Kazakhstan and providing them with information materials, said Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the United Kingdom and Ireland Erlan Idrissov.

The participants of the meeting received gifts and memorable souvenirs in the form of colourful publications about modern Kazakhstan, its history and culture, CDs with folk songs, as well as products of the confectionery industry of Kazakhstan.

Government to spend nearly \$250 million for targeted social assistance

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh Government has provided social assistance for 282,000 people totaling 9.3 billion tenge (US\$24.44 million) this year and plans to spend another 83 billion tenge (US\$218.12 million) to assist 821,000 more people by year's end, said Kazakh Minister of Labour and Social Protection Berdybek Saparbayev at an April 9 government meeting.

Since April 1, approximately 147,000 people have filed 42,000 applications for targeted social assistance.

“The implementation of Elbasy's (Leader of the Nation, the constitutional title accorded to Former President Nursultan Nazarbayev) new social measures Aleumetyk Kamkorlyk (Social Care) was launched and the legislation was amended accordingly. Documents for targeted social assistance are being accepted everywhere since April 1,” said the minister.

Five hundred billion tenge (US\$1.31 billion) from the national budget will be allocated for rental housing and soft loans through Zhilstroisberbank for 58,000 families.

“According to the akimats (local administrations), there are 340,400 large families in the country. The national budget provides funds for building rental housing and issuing soft loans, as well as for providing assistance to socially vulnerable categories of citizens. I believe that the housing constructed at the expense of the budget will have a positive effect on reducing the number of people on the waiting list of low-income and large families,” noted Saparbayev.



Berdybek Saparbayev

This year, 31,900 new jobs were created, and another 373,000 new jobs will be created by year's end.

“However, one should not rely exclusively on the state,” said Saparbayev. “Akims (governors) of regions, heads of companies and citizens, for whom social responsibility is not just a trend but the foundation of the country's sustainable development, must also contribute [to supporting socially vulnerable groups].”

“Corporate social responsibility should be perceived in society as an effective tool for enhancing a company's reputation because it is a voluntary contribution by the business to the country's socio-economic development,” he added, appealing to the business community.

Outreach work on the new social measures includes visits to the country's regions, during which people receive their information directly from the Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. The ministry also launched a hotline at call centre 111 to answer queries on applying for and receiving targeted social assistance.

Erasmus+ contributes...

Continued from Page B1

Since 2015, more than 200 Gumiyllov Eurasian National University (ENU) students have taken part in the mobility programme, trainings and internships at 36 European universities.

“First of all, knowledge, skills and experience gained as a result of training help students find jobs after graduation and to increase the competitiveness of graduates not only in the domestic, but also in the global labour market. The programme contributes to the promotion of Kazakh universities in Europe and to the assessment of its potential in high-quality training,” said International Ranking Centre Promotion Director Anastassiya Karmelyuk.

Thirty-one students studied at 16

universities in Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Spain and Turkey in the 2018-2019 academic year.

“The sustainable development of partnerships between Kazakh universities and Europe is the result of joint participation in all directions of the Erasmus+ programme. The number of capacity building projects in higher education was 12 since 2015 and ENU became a leader in Kazakhstan,” said Department of International Educational Programmes head Sabina Mendagazieva.

The university also received an EU grant to open the European Diplomacy Department as part of the Jean Monnet activities, which are designed to promote excellence in teaching and research in EU studies.

Khabar TV International Rela-

tions Manager Anara Kakimova has identified herself as a global citizen since graduating from Portugal's Porto University in 2013.

“Studying at one of the European universities is a good experience. The study differs starting from the education system to student life. It mainly focuses on work in libraries and interesting lectures. I especially enjoyed volunteer activities in various social movements and environmental conferences, which enabled me to contribute to solving global issues. The events and meetings within the Erasmus community throughout Europe were exciting. We travelled in groups to different cities, visited museums and exhibitions and shared life experiences. This is also a part of an Erasmus+ student's life,” she said.

Kakimova recommended future students thoroughly study the European universities participating in the programme and prepare admission documents in advance.

“I think it is better to learn about culture and language, even to take a basic language course beforehand. I attended the additional lectures in Portuguese and read local newspapers. I found a lot of friends among locals and participated in interesting projects,” she added.

A good command of English, Portuguese and Spanish helped her find a job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon returning to Kazakhstan.

“At the moment, my career is not related to civil service, but I still take part in the activities of the Portuguese-speaking community. I keep in touch with friends from Portugal and meet with Portuguese who visit Kazakhstan,” said Kakimova.

Kazakhstan tests text messages as way to confirm receipt of state-administered medications

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan is testing a pilot programme using text messages to confirm patients receive medication paid for by the state.

The programme was launched at the end of 2018 and will continue through the end of June. It was launched by the Information System of Drug Provision (ISLO) in cooperation with the Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare, the Social and Medical Insurance Fund and SK Pharmacy.

The messages inform drug recipients who registered with the ISLO about the prescription number and medicines' delivery date. If a patient does not receive their medications, they can respond to the state's text message with “0” or call SK Pharmacy at 1439.

Approximately 191,600 texts have been sent to drug recipients, 8,123 responses have been received and 1,218 calls processed.

The project is able to handle at least 5.7 million phone numbers, but officials urge patients to contact the SK Pharmacy if the patient does not receive their text messages.

“It is necessary to take into account that not everyone will receive the messages, as patients could make mistakes when indicating their contact phone numbers, so we draw the public's attention to the possibility of (giving) feedback through the contact centre of SK Pharmacy,”

said Social and Medical Insurance Fund Chair Aibatyr Zhumagulov.

The messages inform drug recipients who registered with the ISLO about the prescription number and medicines' delivery date.

The fund administers two medical packages, a guaranteed amount of medical care financed from the national budget and compulsory medical insurance financed by contributions from employers, citizens and the state. The fund has been making payment for services in the first package since 2018, while payments for the second package will be collected starting from 2020.

SK Pharmacy purchases drugs and medical products for clinics with funds received from the Social and Medical Insurance Fund.

The fund and SK Pharmacy recently signed an agreement totalling 86.9 billion tenge (US\$228.80 million). As of March 31, medical organisations issued prescriptions worth 14 billion tenge (US\$36.86 million), while the amount of secured prescriptions is 13 billion tenge (US\$34.23 million).

Indian Embassy marks important dates with events in Nur-Sultan

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Indian Embassy in Kazakhstan organised a concert of Kazakh artists performing Indian dance and music April 9 to celebrate the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Foundation Day and the 25th anniversary of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) in Kazakhstan.

Regional performers who have been practicing and promoting Indian music and dance had a chance to showcase their craft. The concert, named PROSAHAN (encouragement), was free of charge and seats were assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

The concert opened with a performance by SVCC students. Shrutii Ghosh, the centre's dance teacher, trained the group in Kathak, Bollywood and Indian



folk and contemporary dance. The performance was followed by Shakhti Dance Studio students from Kostanai trained in Kathak and Bollywood dance by Ainur Uteshova.

A group from Arkalyk, which completed ten years of training in Kathak, Bollywood and Indian folk dances with Aigerim Ossipova, performed Nataraja Dance. It was followed by the Ekeler group

from the Arcelor Mittal, Temirtau Kazakh Culture Centre directed and choreographed by Akmaral Abduakitova. The concert ended with the Centre for Indian Classical Dances group performance. Based in Almaty and headed by Akmaral Kainazarova, the troupe is one of the oldest and foremost Indian culture celebration institutions in Kazakhstan and holds several international awards from Georgian, Kazakh, Polish and Spanish dance contests and festivals.

ICCR was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India's first Education Minister. SVCC, formerly known as the Indian Cultural Centre, was formed in May 1994 in Almaty with the objective of establishing and strengthening cultural relations between India and Kazakhstan. The embassy and centre both relocated to the capital in 2007.

Almaty opens its cherry blossom alley

Continued from Page B1

“This is a strong and durable engineering protection system created from an alloy of aluminum and zinc. It has no analogues in the world. Its environmental friendliness is also important. Unlike concrete, with the rock box, which is produced at the Almaty plant, this is feasible,” he added.

The company also invested approximately \$3 million to open a Japanese eco-style restaurant near the river and continue shore protection works, said Kazunori.

Japan is one of Kazakhstan's key partners. During his first visit to Tokyo several years ago,

then Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev telecast the launch of Tokyo Rope Almaty, the first Japanese steel products manufacturing plant. A year ago, the Japanese business opened its second high-tech plant in the Almaty industrial zone.

The day before the sakura planting, approximately 120 volunteers participated in the city's Jasyl Meken programme, installing nearly 7,000 trees which saturated the city's heavily polluted air with oxygen. The species included ash, birch, linden, oak, maple, acacia and spruce, and the city akimat plans to plant more than 12,000 trees this spring.



Tokyo Rope International President Sato Kazunori (L) and Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek planting the first sakura trees.

Photo credit: almaty.gov.kz

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Bird watchers migrate to Almaty for Wings of Alakol festival

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – The Wings of Alakol bird watching festival will take place May 9-11 at the Pelikan Family Recreation Centre on Alakol Lake in the Almaty Region. Festival will offer bird watching opportunities as well as art and cultural activities and performances.

The recreation centre and Veter Stranstvii (Wind of Travels) magazine are organising the festival with the support of the regional akimat (administration) tourism administration.

“The festival is the only bird watching festival in Kazakhstan, which takes place at the natural and climatic Pelikan Family Recreation Centre resort, (which is located in) an amazing place where the steppe, mountain landscapes and the surface of the most mysterious Alakol Lake join,” noted the magazine’s website.

The festival includes excursions to various nearby coast, steppe and mountain biotopes for watching different species in their specific habitats. Excursions include visiting the city of Usharal and Alakol Nature Reserve museum.

The festival will also offer art and cultural programmes. Participants will be able to paint with artist and Italy Educational Centre Director Carmine Barbaro, cook Italian food with his spouse Sharbat Barbaro and try on hats, earrings, bracelets, rings and glasses made by Almaty artist Vsevolod Demidov at the Ptichii Bazar (bird market) local artists and artisans’ handmade fair. Demidov will also host a master class.



Photo credit: veter.kz

“We will create masterpieces from oil on real canvases at the shore of Alakol Lake... Then, we will arrange an exhibition of your creations right on the shore. There will be gifts from the Italy Educational Centre and workshops of Italian language. Carmine’s spouse, Sharbat Barbaro, will teach us to cook real Italian dishes,” noted the website.

In the evenings, festival goers will be invited to listen to the Sevemyi Veter and Aquafon bands, watch the film “Pelikadry” about Alakol and attend an event organised by XS Company. On the last day, participants will attend a training session by Almaty psychologist Natalia Imtosimi.

“Every time Natalia improves

it, making it even richer and more interesting. The trainings help their participants to find answers to questions that concern them, teach constructive communication with unfamiliar people, find non-standard solutions to the posed issues and much more,” said the website.

And for those in the tourism industry, organisers are also arranging a free two-day training seminar this year for administrators and employees of Alakol coast recreation centres and guesthouse owners in Akshi and Koktum villages. The sessions will focus on updating regional tourism workers and demonstrating possible recreation centre activities beyond beach season, such as bird watching, excursions

to the surrounding area and sightseeing. Kazakh and Russian ornithologists, experienced tourist guides and hotel industry representatives, such as Novosibirsk bird watcher and ornithologist Konstantin Romanov and Tomsk ornithologist and biologist Andrew Bazdyrev, will be among the speakers.

Participants can choose three types of three-day accommodation services at the Pelikan Family Recreation Centre – 19,500 tenge (US\$51.40), 22,500 tenge (US\$59.30) or 25,500 tenge (US\$67.20) per guest. Organisers will provide bus transportation for 6,000 tenge (US\$15.80). For more information, one can visit <http://veters.kz/krylya-alakolya-2019/>.

Construction of Kok Zhailau resort to be delayed 3-5 years

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Construction of the Kok Zhailau Mountain resort near Almaty will be delayed three

to five years as recommended by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Almaty Akim (Mayor) Baurzhan Baibek announced April 8 during an Almaty Public Council meeting.

“I suggest to once again go

through preparatory work for this project and to delay it for now,” Baibek announced

“We are considering that the development of already functioning resorts will take no less than three

to five years, according to the experts. In this time, we will gain the experience we need, will be able to prepare workers better and study public opinions. Only after that we will be able to start Kok Zhailau mountain resort construction,” said Baibek.

President Tokayev tweeted support for the decision on April 8.

“Almaty Akim Baibek suggested delaying the Kok Zhailau project for studying expert and public opinions. I support this decision that is based on my recommendation. There can be no rush with an issue as important as this one is,” wrote Tokayev.

Head of the Almaty Tourism Administration Maksat Kikimov noted that the project can be simplified.

“The Kok Zhailau consultant and developer suggests the option of using another slope for ski slopes, finding the possibility of reducing the area of residential development, moving the hotel project from the top of the plateau to the bottom, building a base station and cableways from CSKA skiing base side. The option of developing existing resorts instead of building new ones is also reflected in the opinion of the director of the consulting and developing company. We also suggested an option of first building cable cars and then gradually transitioning to resort’s development,” said Kikimov.



Photo Credit: pitercom.kz

Belgian travel company offers insights, experiences beyond clichés

Continued from Page A1

“When people talk about Central Asia, if they know anything, it is usually something bad,” they noted. “If you see the travel brochures, everything is fantastic. It is all about eagle hunting and kokpar (national equestrian sport). These things are also true, but we feel like they are all simplifications. It is like you are showing it in black and white, and what we try to do is add a bit of colour to writing and reporting on Central Asia to make it more nuanced.”

With greater freedom of movement and exposure to the region following new policies, such as

Kazakhstan’s visa-free regime and e-visa for many countries, people’s perceptions are beginning to change.

“I think more people are coming to Central Asia, talking about it to their friends and posting their pictures on Instagram,” said Hermans and Kalyshsheva. “When they come back home with their stories, this makes the story [on Central Asia] bigger, and we are happy with that.”

The founders also hope to impress upon their adventurous audience the importance of meaningful travel.

“It is about slowing down and finding something that you find meaningful, not something that is in the guidebooks and people tell you is a ‘must do,’” they said. “Maybe

you’re not interested in museums but really interested in trains, where you can meet all kinds of people. Meaningful travel is also about what is meaningful to locals. If you’re just hopping in and out for a day, you are using the locals’ services, food and hospitality but not really giving anything back. To make these connections, we think that takes time.”

Silk Road tours, which are combined tours of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, are popular among travelers hoping to see Central Asia from its many sides, said Kalyshsheva.

“We used to have a lot of one-day tours, and these were quite popular. We decided to stop promoting them

because we felt it clashed with our mission of meaningful travel. We felt that if you go to the Charyn Canyon for one day, it is not enough,” Hermans added.

With its steppe and mountains, Hermans and Kalyshsheva single out Kazakhstan’s landscapes as truly unique in Central Asia. Their favourite destinations are the Altai mountains, the Mangystau Region and the Almaty Region, the latter’s highlights including Altyn Emel National Park, the Charyn Canyon, the Kolsay Lakes and Lake Kayindy that can be experienced in a five-to-six-day tour.

“These are things that you can’t see in any other Central Asian country and, definitely, not at this scale. The size of Kazakhstan really allows you to see such huge landscapes. It really is a ‘big sky’ country,” they said.

“I would encourage people to come here, see things for themselves and try not to have any clichés in your head,” said Kalyshsheva.

Almaty’s Esentai Mall seeks to go tax-free for tourists

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Almaty’s Esentai Mall will be offering a system for value-added tax (VAT) refunds on purchases made by foreign citizens, said marketing director Olga Komissar at an April 15 meeting with journalists, reported Forbes.kz.

Kazakhstan’s VAT rate is 12 percent and applies to revenues derived from the sale of goods and services within the country and the import of goods.

“Esentai Mall is in negotiations with the government to launch the pilot project this year,” she said. “By the end of the year, we hope to attract additional tourist traffic.”

Komissar previously introduced tax-free shopping at Moscow’s Tsum shopping centre, increasing the percentage of foreign shoppers at the mall to 20 percent. She intends to attract visitors to Kazakhstan from three priority areas.

“Tourists from China often seek out major fashion brands, lower prices and better deals on luxury goods. Secondly, we chose Arab states and, specifically, cities from which tourists fly directly to Kazakhstan, such as Dubai, which is close to Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Some may say that Kazakh tourists fly to Dubai for their shopping, but, upon price comparison, it turned out that Dubai is more expensive. Our third market is the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Russia and

Uzbekistan,” she added. Kazakhstan’s tax rebate programme will launch on a broader scale in 2022 at airports in the capital, Almaty and Shymkent. Refunds will range from 7-22 percent of the purchase price and depend on the size of the VAT and tax-free operator fee.

Komissar also presented Esentai Mall’s new marketing strategy, in which the shopping centre, marking its seventh year, will position itself as a tourist attraction.

“What we are saying is that, upon arriving at Almaty, you can relax at Shymbulak [ski resort], reside at the Ritz-Carlton [hotel] and go shopping at Esentai Mall,” said Komissar.

A loyalty programme for clients of Esentai Mall, the Ritz-Carlton hotel and Shymbulak ski resort will start in May. The shopping centre is also testing its Personal Shopping Service programme, in which personal stylists select clothes for shoppers.

“The service will allow shoppers to not waste time on walking through all of the mall’s floors,” said Komissar. “Now, the programme is running in test mode with 10 stylists.”

The shopping centre will also be opening a concept store, added Deputy General Director for Retail Development Madina Abilpanova.

“This will be a store where trends will be displayed before they reach the masses. In this way, we will cultivate a culture of fashion in our community,” she said.

Hometown love can win schoolchildren 10-day trip across the country

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh school children aged 11 to 15 now have the opportunity to win a 10-day trip across Kazakhstan by expressing what they love about their home region.

The Samruk Kazyna Social Development Trust recently launched a national competition asking participants to write an essay or poem or produce a film describing what they love about their home town and what they would like to change about their home region.

The contest will choose 600 winners who will be divided among three trips. The contest is open to all children, but a percentage of winners will be chosen from remote regions and socially vulnerable groups.

Among the winners will be 500 children of employees of Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund industrial enterprises and plants from remote settlements, children brought up in large, low-income or single parent families and children with good academic performance. Fifty children from across Kazakhstan will be chosen on a competitive basis as well as 50 children from among the representatives of the Kazakh diaspora from other countries, whom the fund will choose in cooperation with the Otandastar Fund.

The winners will travel by train

for 10 days across Kazakhstan to visit five cities. The contest is part of the Tugan Elge Sayahat children’s excursion train project and will include three trips.

The winners will visit destinations on the Nur-Sultan – Baikonur – Taraz – Almaty – Balkhash – Nur-Sultan route.

The trips will also include visits with hobby groups and intellectual clubs, English language courses and sports games.

“The project is aimed at the comprehensive development of children, increasing interest in the outside world, studying historical and architectural monuments of the country and strengthening patriotism,” reported the fund’s website.

“Participants whose work is different in content, unique and has artistic taste and originality of presentation will have the opportunity to go on the excursion tour across Kazakhstan,” reported the website.

Entrants may submit one essay, film or poem by May 17 via e-mail to poezd2019@list.ru. Winners will be announced by May 25 while the first trip begins June 1, according to Samruk Kazyna Trust’s Corporate Communications Department Director Miras Irgebayev.

“The number of children participating in the excursion tour is growing every year. In 2016, 120 children went on a tour across Kazakhstan; in 2017, 400 and in 2017, 600 children,” said Irgebayev.



Photo credit: ak-mat.kz

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Kazakhstan's only professional female F4 driver participates in SEA Championship

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh racer Lyubov Ozeretskovskaya, 22, finished first in the women's standings at the second stage of the 2019 Formula 4 Southeast Asia Championship (F4 SEA) April 19-21 in Kuala Lumpur. She will join the next stage May 10-12 in Thailand.

She scored in three of four races and ranked 10th in the championship standings in the first round of the Sepang International Circuit.

"This is one of the favourite autodromes with small differences in heights and complex, technical turns. Since I had a fairly long break in my racing career for almost three years, I had to get used to everything. We did a great job and managed to make great progress in two short sessions with my engineer Gabriella. Of course, we still have a lot of work ahead to join the group leaders in the championship," she said after the first round.

Ozeretskovskaya finished in 10th place in the first race, 11th in the second, ninth in third and fourth races and 10th place in the last race.

"We had difficult weather con-



Lyubov Ozeretskovskaya (L).

ditions those days. We had racing slicks on a dry surface. Then, it started to rain on the second half of the route and we had to cope with the car in difficult and unfamiliar

conditions. But this was a good experience and I got my points in the championships," she noted.

Physical training is essential for races held in Malaysia. During the

race, the temperature in the car is approximately 58 degrees Celsius and it is important for the driver to maintain his or her fluid balance.

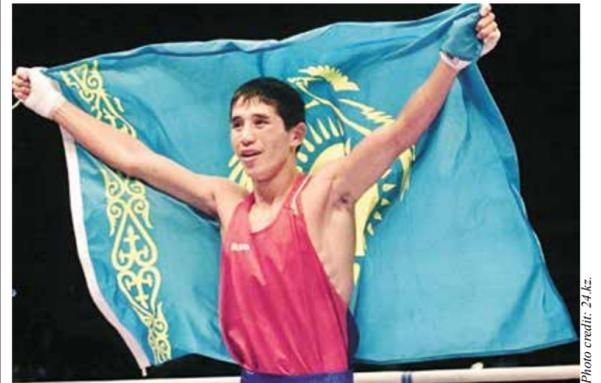
"I plan to drive the whole season in this series, but it also depends on financial support. I need to complete a full season in Formula 4 to gain experience and go through the entire qualifying round of the W Series in 2020. I think that the Asian Championships are quite strong and developed. We performed together with TCR Asia, F3 Asia and Blancpain GT Asia. I express my deep gratitude to everyone who supports me," she added.

Kazakhstan's only female racer, Ozeretskovskaya began her career at age nine and won her first title two years later at the Kazakhstan Karting Championship. She has trained in Moscow since her 2014 Formula Russia debut.

F4 SEA, certified by the International Automobile Federation (FIA), features rounds in India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

French driver Hadrian David leads in the overall standings after winning three of the four first-stage races. Irish driver Luca Allen was the only driver to be on the podium in all four races. Finnish racer Emil Seppanen finished third in Race 4.

Television series on boxer Sattarkhanov to air this spring



Bekzat Sattarkhanov

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Khabar Agency's biographical television series "Bekzat," commemorating the late Kazakh professional boxer Bekzat Sattarkhanov, will air this spring, reports the National Olympic Committee.

Filming of the six-episode series recently wrapped up. Its plot centres on the 2000 Summer Olympic Games, and its characters are former International Boxing Association Vice President Beket Makhmutov, former National Boxing Team Head Coach Tursyngali Yedilov and Kazakh professional boxers Mukhtarkhan Dildabek and Yermakhan Ibrayimov. Kazakh actor Samat Azimkulov plays the role of Sattarkhanov.

Sattarkhanov won the 1998 Junior World Boxing Championships silver medal in the men's bantamweight division (54 kilograms) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He defeated Italian boxer Michele di Angelo, Swedish boxer Patrick Bogere, Cuban boxer Guillermo Rigondeaux and German boxer Hamisi Durst, losing to Ukrainian Servin Suleymanov.

He went on to win the 2000 Summer Olympics gold medal in the men's featherweight division (57 kilograms) in Sydney, Australia. He faced Romanian boxer Ovidiu Bobirna, South African Jeffrey Mathebula, Turkish Ramazan Palyani, Moroccan Tahar Tamsamani and American Ricardo Juarez.

"There is an interesting story behind the Olympics in Sydney. Bekzat borrowed my red singlet to enter the ring. I warned that it would be too big for him, but he said that he would tie a knot at the back. In

the video (of the match,) you can see Sattarkhanov's knot on his back. He said that he wanted to enter the

Ever year in April, the Bekzat Sattarkhanov Youth Memorial Tournament gathers young Kazakh and foreign boxers in Turkestan, the boxer's home city, to compete in 11 divisions.

ring in a champion's shirt, although I was not yet a winner at the time. Bekzat convinced me that I could win a gold medal myself," recalled Ibrayimov, who won the 2000 Summer Olympic Games gold medal in the Light Middleweight division (71 kilograms), reports Kazakh-tv.kz.

Before Sattarkhanov could continue his promising career, he passed away in a car accident Dec. 31, 2000 at the age of 20. On April 4, he would have turned 39 years old.

Ever year in April, the Bekzat Sattarkhanov Youth Memorial Tournament gathers young Kazakh and foreign boxers in Turkestan, the boxer's home city, to compete in 11 divisions. This year, gold medalists are boxers Zharas Komshabayev (46 kg), Daryn Kulzhabayev (49 kg), Almaz Duisenkul (52 kg), Askhat Tastanbek (56 kg), Aidos Zhaparbergen (60 kg), Yermakhan Otemis (64 kg), Madi Altynbayev (69 kg), Marat Kassayev (75 kg), Bagdaulet Kural (81 kg), Bagdaulet Abdullayev (91 kg) and Ozzbek Irismetov (+91 kg).

Bublik wins Monterrey Challenger, enters ATP's top 100

Continued from Page B1

Bublik was born June 17, 1997, in Gatchina, Saint Petersburg, according to his website. His father and coach, Stanislav Bublik, introduced him to tennis at age two.

"A former junior top 20, Alex is from the same generation of highly talented players such as Zverev, [Taylor] Fritz and his co-nationals [Karen] Khachanov, [Andrey] Rublev and [Roman] Safiulin. A bit crazy, aggressive and highly competitive player on court, Alex is recognised by his peers to be a fun, smiling and warm character off the court," it notes.

Bublik turned pro in 2014. Two years later, he played his first ATP tournament in Saint Petersburg, moving more than 700 positions in the ATP ranking (from 964 to

205) and drawing the attention of the sports community. In November 2016, he announced he would represent Kazakhstan.

He entered the top 100 in 2017 after winning the Cuernavaca and Aptos ATP Challengers and reaching the quarterfinals in the ATP 250 tournament in Moscow. He also reached the draws at the Australian Open and Wimbledon. A foot injury at Indian Wells, California (U.S.) in 2018 dropped him to 250th, but he managed to close the year ranked 170th.

The ATP Challenger Tour is a series of professional tennis competitions. In recent years, more than 150 competitions per year (178 in 2008) have been held in more than 40 countries, including those where tennis is a new sport. Players who succeed on the international men's ATP Challenger Tour earn ranking

points to become eligible for the main draw or qualifying draw

entry at ATP World Tour tournaments.



Alexander Bublik

Athletes to run for charity in annual BI Marathon May 26

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Professional and amateur athletes will run for charity in the capital's annual BI Marathon May 26, reports the Nur-Sultan Akimat (city administration) press service.

The event aims to develop sports in the country, familiarise people with physical education, popularise a healthy lifestyle and support charity and social responsibility. Funds raised from the event will go to charity foundation BI Zhuldyzai for the treatment and rehabilitation of children with cerebral palsy.

Running distances include two kilometres for participants under 14 years old, five kilometres for participants between 14 and 16, 10 kilometres for participants over 16, and 21 kilometres and 42.2 kilometres for participants over 18. Nordic walking is an option for athletes of the 10-kilometre race, and corporate participants may run a relay race.

Registration to participate began Dec. 16, earlier than in previous years, to encourage greater participation and preparation. By the end of May, athletes will have had sufficient time to have thoroughly prepared for their chosen distance. Ten thousand athletes are expected to run. Serik Sapiyev, a 2012 Sum-



mer Olympic Games gold medalist in boxing in the welterweight division, recently confirmed his participation.

"Registration is in full swing – approximately 4,000 people have registered," said BI Marathon Sports Director Alexey Sidorenko. "Based on past experience, athletes will come from more than 22 countries in the world, including neighbouring Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as Germany, Austria, Belgium, the United States, Denmark and Indonesia."

This year's route will differ from past races and include exiting the park, running along four streets and the Yessil River embankment and a start and finish line at Triathlon Park.

"Live music along the route, a novelty in 2018, will become a tradition and give strength and spirit to the runners," said BI Marathon Sports Director Sergey Bodrov.

Last year, 7,200 athletes completed the race, including 4,323 men and 2,877 women and 2,131 of the participants were BI Group representatives. They consumed 45,544 litres of water and ran 168,465 kilometres altogether. The best result was 2 hours, 34 minutes and 44 seconds for the full distance.

To register, visit www.bi-marathon.kz.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019

Ploggers clean capital's parks

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – More than 400 ploggers participated in an April 7 event aimed at cleaning the capital's parks and drawing people's attention to the environment, recycling and a healthy lifestyle.

Sparta Astana Eco Club, Sparta Astana Running Club and We Are for a Clean Country Eco Movement, supported by the city akimat (administration) and Adal Volunteers Movement, organised the Menin Kalam-Taza Kala (My city is a clean city) action.

Plogging, or picking up trash while jogging, is a portmanteau of plocka upp (pick up in Swedish) and jogging. The environmental action, which originated in Scandinavia, combines a healthy activity and attentive attitude to nature.

"We decided to organise today's plogging event with the aim of preserving and caring for our environment. One day, during jogging



Photo credit: astana.gov.kz

when the snow melted in the city, we saw a large amount of litter. Therefore, we decided to organise a useful run. We are very glad that today a large number of people supported us," said eco-activist Assel Kuspanova to the akimat's press service.

Participants gathered in the morning in Central, Triathlon and Zheruyik parks, the Botanical Garden and near Kenessary Khan monument on the bank of the Yesil River. They were asked to bring recyclable bags for litter and organisers met them people in each location.

After the run, the organisers held a competition for the heaviest bag of garbage. They weighed the bags in each park, identified four winners and gave them eco prizes. They also held workshops on sorting garbage, which was handed over for recycling.

"There is no task to run at a maximum pace or a full marathon. Adults, children, elders, sportsmen

and non-sportsmen – everyone who wants to see our city, country and the world clean can participate," said the organisers.

Plogging, or picking up trash while jogging, is a portmanteau of plocka upp (pick up in Swedish) and jogging.

Other Kazakh cities organised similar events.

"We have already been supported in Karaganda, Kokshetau, Atyrau and Semei. I know that Almaty held a similar event yesterday and this is very pleasing. We are all for clean cities. All people who came advocate cleanliness of our city, parks and streets," said Oraz Isin, one of organisers, to 24.kz.

Astana Art Show 2019 to kick off June 7



Aleksander Blonar

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The capital will once more become a hub for contemporary art during Astana Art Show 2019 at the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation and Palace of Independence June 7-Aug.

10, reports the city akimat (administration) press service.

To mark the Year of Youth in Kazakhstan, young artists will attend master classes, meet artists and art historians and exhibit their art at an exhibition June 7.

International art exhibition Rac-

ing the Galaxy will launch July 4, in which 40 Kazakh and foreign artists from 15 countries, including Argentina, China, Cuba, France, Korea, Italy, Madagascar, Turkey and the United States, will present their works.

Astana Art Show 2019 organisers are Artios Art Advisory and the city akimat, and its curators are TSE Art Destination and Artios Art Advisory Founder Dina Baitassova and French art critic and director of contemporary art institutions Jérôme Sans. The message Baitassova and Sans hope to convey at Astana Art Show 2019 is the artists' freedom and spirit of nomadism.

From Sept. 15 to Oct. 28, more than 35,000 people attended Astana Art Show 2018 at TSE Art Destination, and more than 2,000 people attended its opening ceremony. Its organisers were Artios Art Advisory, the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sport, the Kazakh

National Museum and the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) Programme Office. Forty Kazakh and foreign artists from 12 countries showcased their works, and exhibited artists featured Kazakh artists Adil Aubekero, Anvar Musrepov and Aza Shadenova and Japanese photographer Ikuru Kuwajima. People also attended master classes, workshops and public lectures with Kazakh artists Saule Suleimenova and Sunbike Suleimenova, Kazakh art critic Ardak Yussupova and Kazakh dancer Arsen Imenov.

Free master classes, workshops and public lectures at TSE Art Destination will resume this month, with Russian art curator Aleksander Blonar presenting a 7 p.m. public lecture April 12-13. One can stay up to date on the capital's upcoming art events on Facebook (@astanaartshow) and Instagram (@astana_art_show).

Nur-Sultan conducts first electronic land sublease auction

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The first land plot sublease electronic auction was conducted in Nur-Sultan from March 20 to April 4. Eighty-one entrepreneurs competed for 10 land plots that were subleased via the auction.

"This electronic platform conducts a land sublease rights auction for the first time. Only the property that is to be transferred into the private sector was sold via this website before," Vice-Chair of the Board of Astana Social Entrepreneurial Corporation Temirlan Nurgisayev told Khabar TV.

"Success of this (sublease rights) auction supports big demand for small and medium-sized businesses for land plots, as well as the trust participants have shown for this distribution type. We intended to make the land distribution process as transparent as possible as a part of '1000 spots – street trade' programme. This technique will allow avoiding manipulating documents, registers. The list of land plots is agreed upon by all governmental organisations involved in this issue, and the only condition for the programme participants is agreeing with all the corresponding laws," said Nurgisayev.

Nurgisayev also discussed the

process of participating in the auction.

"[We have been] using electronic digital signatures, using blockchain technology. So, all the entrepreneurs knew this auction really is transparent. It's impossible to fake, change and somehow influence the results. Everything is done automatically. From the moment of posting the ad, applying for the lot and then the auction itself. So, we can only see the result with the auction winner," said Nurgisayev.

Entrepreneur Adil Bidakhmetov who participated in the auction agrees with Nurgisayev about the convenience of electronic auctions.

"Earlier we had to come here, leave a request, wait a few days when the auction is to end. Later, we were gathered in this big hall. We had to wait in line for our turn. People got tired. We had to spend days to participate in the auction. Then we waited for results. Now, it got way easier. Everything is done online, we analyse everything, quickly, the time has decreased a lot," said Bidakhmetov.

Overall, 100 street trading land plots will be distributed via electronic auctions, with 15 land plots allocated to entrepreneurs from the groups of population considered socially vulnerable.

Ancient manuscripts, autograph sessions and master classes to pique readers' interest at 2019 Eurasian Book Fair

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Eurasian Book Fair 2019, featuring a book exhibition, presentations, talks, workshops and meetings with writers, kicked off April 24 in the capital's Korme Exhibition Centre.

The main goal of the book fair is to promote reading, as well as support literary heritage development among the participant countries. It will include 150 events, approximately the same number of presentations and the exhibit.

"The exhibition will feature rare manuscripts," said National Academic Library Director Umitkhan

Daurenbekkyzy at the Central Communications Service press conference.

She elaborated on the most interesting exhibits to be featured.

"One of the best examples is a manuscript dated 1532 and written in the ancient Roman script. Another highlight is a book dating back to 1735 extracted from the authentic works of Persia, India, China and Japan. There are only three existing copies of the book. The first one is on display at the Louvre Museum, the second in Kazakhstan and the third copy is kept by an unknown reader," she noted.

The fair will include the Best

Book of the Year competition in six categories – Study Book, Local History Edition, Children, Culture and Art, Science and Innovations, and Grand Prix. Competition winners and nominees will be awarded with special diplomas.

Autograph sessions will be featured with writers Anna Goncharova, Yuri Nechiporenko and Anastasiya Strokina. Books will be presented by Rishat Guntekin, Orhan Pamuk, Nazira Rakhmanova and Koishyghar Salgharly and meetings with writers Yerlan Sydykov, Mergen Toksanbai and Ulugbek Yesdaulet are scheduled.

Master classes for children are also planned, including a Mimi-

oria arts master class, as well as a party, the "Alice in Wonderland"-themed quest, concerts and singing competitions.

Kazakh publishing houses Almatykitap, Atamura, Kazakh Encyclopedias and Mektep and Russian publishing houses Ferber, Ivanov, Kozhanaya Mozaika, Mann, Rozovyiy Zhiraf, Samokat, Universalist and White Town are slated to participate. The fair will feature 90 participants from 13 countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, China, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.



Presidential hospital performs robot-aided surgery

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

NUR-SULTAN – Surgeons at the capital's Presidential Hospital are expanding their capabilities in robot-assisted surgery. Using equipment which reduces blood loss and operation time, they have begun doing new procedures to remove kidney tumours and uteruses. The training centre opened in November.

"The main advantage of the robot is higher accuracy and better magnification, which leads to less blood loss and faster recovery. The robot is completely under the control of the surgeon. It is an effective tool that in the

hands of an experienced doctor leads to a better result and saves lives," said David Samadi, an American urologist who advises surgeons on robot-assisted technology.

An ultrasound device, the world's first working with a Senhance surgical robotic system, was applied during urological surgery to remove a kidney tumour.

"This is really a very difficult operation and it was successful. It was easier, of course, to remove the kidney, but we did an operation to preserve the organ. The so-called partial nephrectomy of the left kidney, that is, its partial removal, was carried out. The

kidneys and the functions of the organs are preserved and she will



Photo credit: timgnews.kz

continue to live as an ordinary, healthy person," said surgeon Ye-

rlan Yensebayev referring to a recent patient.

Hospital gynaecologists have already begun laparoscopic robot-assisted surgery by using the Senhance installation to remove an ovarian cyst and completely remove a uterus and uterine tube. Gulbaram Basharova performed a total hysterectomy using the robot.

"A total hysterectomy is the removal of the uterus and adjacent organs. The patient had a pathology of the cervix and fibroids. Today, for the first time in our hospital, we used the radio tool to perform such an operation. It allows surgeons to perform internal manipulations much more

accurately and efficiently," he said.

Fifty-five complex operations have been performed at the hospital using robot-assisted technology. The robotic operating room is a modern, effective method of surgical treatment in urology, gynaecology and general surgery (when internal organs are operated through small openings on the patient's body). Additional benefits for surgeons using robots are multiple image magnification, completely eliminating shaking hands and protecting against errors. The advantages for the patient are no large incisions, minimal blood loss and fast recovery.