



Nur-Sultan hosts capital day celebrations, raises money for Arys assistance



Capital Day celebrations

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Parliament adopts 2019-2021 national budget, plans to visit regions

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Chair Nurlan Nigmatulin summed up July 5 the work of the deputies in the fourth session of the sixth convocation at the joint meeting of chambers of Parliament in the capital. The Parliament adopted social and economic legislation and the national budget for 2019-2021.

Nigmatulin stressed that during the work of the session, the deputies focused primarily on the strategic guidelines formulated by First Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the opening session in September last year and his state-of-the-nation address to the people of Kazakhstan.

The initiative of Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on state support of the socially vulnerable population gave an additional impetus to the legislative activity, he said.

Among the economic laws reviewed and adopted for the implementation of these large-scale initiatives are laws on economic issues such as on natural monopolies, on standardisation, on special economic and industrial zones and on transport issues.

Among social legislations are

laws on healthcare, circulation of medicines and medical devices, regarding employment and amendments on housing relations.

The chair stressed that the most important laws adopted during the session were the national budget for 2019-2021, which primarily focuses on social tasks' implementation.

The redistribution of the expenditure side of the budget was carried out in the following areas. The Parliament allocated 89.2 billion tenge (US\$232.19 million) for implementation of the presidential decree on measures to reduce the debt burden of citizens of Kazakhstan, who find themselves in a difficult life situation, 138.6 billion tenge (US\$360.77 million) for the expansion of existing measures to provide employment and support for low-income, large families and young people, 72.2 billion tenge (US\$187.93 million) to increase the reserve of the government, part of which will be sent to eliminate consequences of an emergency situation in Arys.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed the bill into law on July 5.

Along with the adoption of budgetary amendments, Mazhilis deputies started work on new legislation, including an agreement on cooperation of the Commonwealth

Independent States in combating information technology crimes, the Kazakhstan-Ukraine treaty on extradition, amendments to the agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on border crossing points, amendments to the convention on information access and public participation in the decision-making process on matters relating to the environment.

The Chairman of the Majilis noted the law on the transfer of functions of central and local executive bodies to a competitive environment, which expands the ability of citizens to participate in the decision-making process through the development of a self-government system.

“Every law gives impetus to the development of our country and the improvement of the quality of life of the population. And most importantly, every adopted law is designed to support and protect all citizens,” said Nigmatulin.

He also noted the deputies not only work with government bills, but also exercise their right of legislative initiative. In particular, the deputies initiated laws on the activities of organisations performing the functions of protecting the rights of children, as well as on the civil service and combating corruption.

The deputies are working on bills

initiated by deputies of Parliament, such as on issues of enforcement proceedings and the provision of public services.

According to Nigmatulin, deputies of both houses of Parliament sent 319 deputy requests to the Government over the past session. The Parliament received approximately 7,000 appeals from citizens during the session, all of which were considered in accordance with the legislation. The deputies visited more than 2,000 settlements.

The chair also mentioned other issues to be solved. Among them are the lack of effectiveness in planning the legislative work of the government. He said that the bills received from the government do not meet the high requirements. He also drew attention to the late submission of conclusions by the government to the amendments of the deputies.

After the session is closed, parliamentarians will travel to the regions to meet with the public.

“The session ends, but there are trips to the regions to meet with the population. The proposals that will be made during these meetings, we should take into account in our further legislative work. Such meetings are an important part of our work. Feedback from the population is very important for us,” said Nigmatulin.

EU announces new programmes in Central Asia

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – The European Union's political commitment and a set of European Union-funded regional programmes were announced during a recent high-level meeting in Bishkek between Central Asian ministers of foreign affairs and Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini. The announcement marks the official start of the implementation of the European Union's new Strategy on Central Asia.

In addition to the existing \$1.12 billion bilateral and regional assistance for the period 2014-2020, programmes within those worth \$80.7 billion, the amount available for the overall international development assistance by the EU to the world, will also benefit sustainable development, economic empowerment, anti-terrorism efforts, education, and intra-regional trade in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

“Kazakhstan stands for the effective use of the tools of EU-Central Asia relations as the new EU

strategy takes effect, and it calls for ensuring the integrity, visualisation and visual perception of EU-CA cooperation,” said Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Beibut Atamkulov at the 15th EU-Central Asia Ministerial on July 7.

He said he was pleased Kazakhstan's proposals on women entrepreneurship, small- and medium-sized businesses, transport and logistics infrastructure, energy efficiency, environmental protection, combating climate change, and rational use of water resources, education and digitisation were reflected in the document.

Earlier in its statement, the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the decision by the European Council to adopt the strategy and noted that Kazakhstan equally shares the conceptual foundations of the document where “sustainability” and “prosperity” are given a special importance. The country sees the new strategy as a potential for bringing EU-CA relations to a new level, according to the ministry's statement.

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Jusan operation sets example for other countries, says UN official

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's Jusan operation, which returned nearly 600 citizens from Syria, is an excellent example for other countries to follow, said United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child Chair Renate Winter in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

During several stages of the humanitarian operation, conducted from January through June, a total of 595 Kazakh citizens, including 406 children, among them 31 orphans, 156 women and 33 men were returned to the country. The name of the operation, Jusan, is translated as bitter wormwood from Kazakh. It refers to a plant widely spread in the Kazakh steppes and its specific and pleasant smell is synonymous for Kazakhs with their ancestral home.

The country has been provid-

ing comprehensive assistance to the children and women returned from the zone of the conflict, while the men are being prosecuted for participating in a foreign war. The efforts set an unprecedented example, though “risking quite a lot of problems,” Winter said.

“Jumping into cold water without any experience in dealing with such difficult, really difficult cases, difficult situations and getting people home, no other country has done that in such an amount and so quickly as Kazakhstan. When other countries also started to do it, it was slowly and reluctantly, but Kazakhstan went and did it. For that, I think one really has to congratulate somebody and, in this case, Kazakhstan,” she added.

The majority of the returnees are children and the operation also included their mothers.

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Kazakhstan ratifies Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed the law July 3 ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, reported Akorda.kz.

Nuclear weapons, unlike chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, are not comprehensively and universally prohibited. The treaty is the first legally-binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, prohibiting their development, testing, production, stockpiling, stationing, transfer, use and threat of use, as well as assistance and encouragement to the prohibited activities.

The treaty must be signed and ratified by at least 50 countries to come into effect. Seventy countries have signed the treaty and 24 have ratified it. Kazakhstan signed and ratified the treaty March 2, 2018 and July 3, respectively.

One and a-half million people suffered from the 456 nuclear tests conducted over 40 years at the Soviet Union's Semipalatinsk Test Site and many still live with the aftereffects. The country's anti-nuclear movement, formed in 1989, gained global support and led to the closure of the site. A key figure in the movement and now The ATOM Project Honourary Ambassador, artist and activist Karipbek Kuyukov, delivered a powerful plea to ban nuclear testing at the Sept. 6

session of the United Nations General Assembly and received the Nuclear-Free Future Award Oct. 24 from the Franz Moll Foundation for the Coming Generations.

“It really was an honour to participate in the anti-nuclear movement, having been born in the village called Yegindibulak, located 100 kilometres from the Semipalatinsk Test Site,” he said at a Feb. 26 documentary screening of “Where the Wind Blew” commemorating the Nevada-Semipalatinsk International Anti-Nuclear Movement's 30th anniversary. “I remember seeing students going around with plain A4 papers collecting people's signatures to demand the closure of the test site and, when visiting the movement's offices, seeing these

stacked papers with signatures reaching the office ceiling.”

Kazakhstan recently assumed the chairmanship of the 48-member multilateral export control regime Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), with Kazakh Permanent Representative to the International Organisations in Vienna Kairat Sarybay serving as chairperson until June 2020. Tokayev's address at the NSG meeting noted former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's key contributions to ending nuclear weapons testing, including shutting down the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, launching The ATOM Project and producing the anti-nuclear manifesto “The World. The 21st Century.”

Lutsenko wins gold in individual, group races at cycling championships

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Astana Pro Team cyclist Alexey Lutsenko won gold in the 40-kilometre individual race June 26 and the 162-kilometre group race June 30 at the Akmola Region's Kazakhstan National Time Trial Championships and Kazakhstan National Road Race Championships, respectively.

Representing the North Kazakhstan Region, Lutsenko finished the Kazakhstan National Time Trial

Championships individual race in 49:50, followed by Dmitry Gruzdev (1:10:00) and Daniil Fominykh (1:31:00).

Lutsenko, who also took the top prize in the 2018 Kazakhstan National Road Race Championships group race, finished this year's group race with a time of 3:31:29. Gruzdev won silver (3:32:30) and Anton Kuzmin, bronze (3:32:33).

Every year, the national championships help determine the best cyclists in the country.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Tokayev signs decree to eliminate debts for approximately 500,000 citizens

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed a decree June 26 providing immediate debt relief to some of the country’s most vulnerable groups.

The President’s one-time action calls for the government to take measures to repay unsecured consumer loans in second-tier banks and microfinance organisations for certain segments of the population, including large families, families that have lost their main breadwinners, families with children with disabilities, adults who have been disabled since childhood, recipients of state targeted social assistance, orphans, children left without parental care under the age of twenty-nine and those who



Photo credit: tengrinews.kz

lost their parents until the age of majority.

According to First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov, the measures should help approximately 500,000 people, primeminister.kz reports.

“The position of the President is that the situation with consumer loans should not be repeated,” he said during a June 27 press conference.

The state will repay debts up to 3 million tenge (US\$7,905) and interest up to 300,000 tenge (US\$790) in second-tier banks and microfinance organisations as a one-time, targeted financial assistance measure for each borrower from the above-mentioned category of citizens. The borrowers’ accrued fines and penalties will be written off as of July 1.

The decree also instructs the Kazakh National Bank to increase regulations on consumer loans. This includes imposing a ban on the accrual of penalties, commissions and other payments related to the issuance and servicing of loans for all unsecured consumer loans of individuals more than 90 days overdue.

The bank should also ban loans to citizens with incomes below the subsistence minimum (29,698 tenge or US\$78.25 per month) to avoid further deterioration of their financial situation. It will take additional regulatory measures when issuing unsecured consumer loans, such as considering the overall ratio of the debt burden on a borrower and imposing additional requirements for bank equity, among other steps.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The second international BI Group Ironman 70.3 Astana 2019 will be held July 12-14 in the capital, reported the company’s press service. Approximately 1,400 participants from 50 countries have registered for the competition, including professional triathletes Tim Don, Nils Fromhold, Radka Kahlefeldt and Olympic cycling champion and Astana Team general manager Alexander Vinokurov. “Over the past few years, triathlon has become increasingly popular and this sports event in Nur-Sultan proves it. The first triathlon won the global athlete satisfaction award in the best new events 2018 category,” reads the release from the company.

The Visa Everywhere Initiative announced its winners July 2 at the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Fintech Hub. The list included Nebank.kz and re-Kassa (Kazakhstan), NumbaPay (Kyrgyzstan), LendingStar (Singapore) and Marta (Uzbekistan). Twenty teams from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Singapore, Russia and Uzbekistan presented working prototypes and detailed business models. The jury was composed of fintech experts and representatives from ABC-I2BF Seed Fund, Alfa-Bank, First Credit Bureau, Halyk Bank and Visa. Projects were presented in financial literacy and services for small and medium businesses, new technologies and insurance products. “We are very pleased with the results of the programme with Visa. We are especially happy with the high evaluation of the programme by participant start-ups, mentors and partners. For us, this is a confirmation that we correctly chose the direction, which is support for young innovative companies that will bring the change and fundamental improvements in the financial services of the country and the region,” said AIFC CEO Nurlan Kussainov.

The Almaty, Kostanai and Pavlodar regions transferred to digital on-air broadcasting July 1 by completely disconnecting analogue television, according to Kazinform. Approximately 178 radio and television stations were built and modernised and 1,755 villages and towns switched to the new quality format. Ninety radio-technical stations were commissioned in the Almaty Region, while 59 in the Kostanai Region and 29 in the Pavlodar Region were built or modernised. Digital broadcasting now covers 4,255 villages and towns in the country. Up to 15 TV channels area available for village residents and up to 30 for those in regional centres and nearby areas.

Khabar TV channel presented “Bekzat,” a film about boxer Bekzat Sattarkhanov, who won gold at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney. The documentary, directed by Murat Bidosov, will be released in theatres in October. The story follows three stages of Sattarkhanov’s life – his childhood, sports career and last moments before his tragic death in a car accident. Filming was completed in Almaty, Istanbul and Turkestan. Actor Samat Azimkulov, who plays the lead, is a two-time Kazakh kickboxing champion.

KazWaste Association for Waste Management will involve approximately four million people in four or five major Kazakh cities within three years in a project for separate waste collection. Launched in cooperation with the Coca-Cola Foundation, the project will increase the share of plastic waste collection for further processing. Kazakhstan is the first country in the Caucasus and Central Asia to legislate waste disposal measures and, in the past three years, the level of waste recycling in the country has increased from 2 to 12 percent. “The concept involves several areas and working with processors to determine the best ways to collect and transport waste is one of them. Transportation of collected plastic is expensive, because it is light and it needs to be compressed. We will work to create hubs for collection and pressing of plastic to continue delivery to manufacturers,” said Alexandra Akkirman, Coca-Cola Company public affairs and communications manager for the Caucasus and Central Asia region.

President replaces his chief of staff, makes new government appointments

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev replaced his chief of staff and made new appointments to government positions June 28, reported Akorda press service. Changes were also made at the regional level.

Krymbek Kusherbayev was appointed as the head of the Presidential Administration, having previously served as the Kyzylorda Region’s Akim (Governor).

In the 1990s, Kusherbayev served as an assistant to the deputy prime minister and a press secretary – the head of the presidential press service. Previously, he had served as minister of education, culture and health and minister of education and science. In late 2000, he became an Akim (Governor) of the West Kazakhstan Region, and in November 2003, he became ambassador of Kazakhstan to Russia. From January 2006, he was the Akim (Governor) of the Mangystau Region. In 2012, he

was appointed as a Deputy Prime Minister. From January 2013, he became the Akim (Governor) of the Kyzylorda region.

Bakytzhan Sagintayev was removed from his post as head of the Presidential Administration to be appointed as Almaty’s Akim (Mayor). He had served as the head of the administration since March 24. Prior to that, he served as the Prime Minister from September 2016.

Zhanibek Nupirov was appointed executive secretary of the Kazakh Ministry of Trade and Integration. Nupirov graduated from Karaganda Economic University of Kazpotrebsoyuz, and the Academy of National Economy under the Russian Government.

He began his career in 1999 in the Treasury Department of the capital, then continued working in the Ministry of Finance since 2001. Over the years, he worked as a head of structural divisions at the Kazakh Statistics Agency, the Ministries of Finance and of Economy and Budget Planning, as

well as the Accounts Committee for Control over Execution of the National Budget. Since 2017, he served as a deputy head of the Department of Social and Economic Monitoring of the Presidential Administration.

Daulet Yemberdiyev was appointed ambassador of Kazakhstan to Kuwait and Akan Rakhmetullin as ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan.

Yemberdiyev is a diplomat, a specialist in the Middle East. He worked for a long time in that region. He has the diplomatic rank of Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Envoy of Class II. He is fluent in Arabic, English, Turkish, Persian and Hebrew. His career in the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan began in 1993. Prior to his appointment, he was the counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the United Nations in New York.

Rakhmetullin is a diplomat, a specialist in multilateral diplomacy, international security and disarmament. He began his diplomat-

ic career as an assistant, and then as an attaché at the Consular Department of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993. Prior to his appointment, from December 2015, he was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Multilateral Cooperation Department director.

Along with that, according to the Kazakh government’s decree, Daniyar Yesin was appointed to the position of Vice Minister of Information and Social Development of Kazakhstan.

Yesin was born in 1981 in the Karaganda Region. He studied at the Kazakh Financial Police Academy, Kazakh-Russian University, Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the Russian President.

He began his career in 1998. In various years, he worked in the Office for Investment and Development of the capital being as its deputy head and later its head. In 2016-2018, he was head of the Office of Religious Affairs of the capital. Since March 2018, he has

Government adopts action plan to implement Tokayev’s election platform

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government recently adopted an action plan to implement the election platform of recently elected President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The platform focuses on continuing to have existing policies, ensuring justice and progress.

Tokayev stressed during his campaign that if elected he would continue the political course of the country’s founding President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

“The measures in the action plan fully reflect the political course of Strategy 2050, five institutional reforms and Kazakhstan’s third modernisation,” said Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov at a June 25 government session.

The justice principle envisions promoting the rule of law and fair judiciary, increasing public safety, curbing corruption at all levels and creating a social security system targeting low income and large families.

Among the initiatives is the introduction of a social card or social ID to increase the transparency of targeted social assistance. The card will show the information about the income and standard of living of each citizen and all social obligations of the state, including allowances to socially vulnerable categories.

“Defined contributions pension scheme will be improved by building long-term actuarial models,” said Smailov.



Photo credit: primeminister.kz

The justice part of the plan includes improving Kazakhstan’s healthcare system. The government seeks to address a shortage of specialists, expand access to medical aid, bring mobile doctors to remote areas and digitise the system.

The doctor to patient load is expected to drop to 1,700 people, bringing Kazakhstan closer to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommended maximum of 1,500 people. Healthcare spending is also expected to reach five percent of the country’s GDP by 2025.

“In the next three years, primary health care facilities will be equipped with 11,000 units of medical equipment. Five-hundred and ninety-five primary health care facilities will be opened and 228 facilities will go through a major renovation,” said Smailov.

Improving the quality of pre-

school education, transitioning to an updated school curriculum, transitioning to 12-year secondary education and incorporating the use of three languages are among the education goals.

The Enbek national programme, part of the action plan, is designed to create jobs, encourage employers to create conditions for their workers to acquire new skills and knowledge and develop social entrepreneurship.

Smailov said the government expects to create nearly 370,000 jobs and help as many as 500,000 people find jobs annually.

“The plan is also to prepare a comprehensive employment monitoring system and create a single database of the created jobs,” said Smailov.

“Special attention will be paid to increasing responsibility and accountability of state workers

for implementation of state programmes and use of budget funds. A set of measures will be developed to improve budget planning and reduce inefficient image building spending,” said the minister.

The country’s national programmes will be analysed to evaluate their efficiency in supporting business, another important area in the document.

“The measures will be taken to develop and support business, particularly stimulating entrepreneurial initiative and enhancing business climate. The results of the analysis will be used to develop new approaches incorporating cross liabilities of entrepreneurs,” said Smailov.

The Business Roadmap 2025 programme will develop new tools of financial and other support for entrepreneurs in an effort to increase the share of small and

medium-sized businesses in the economy to 35 percent by 2025 and 50 percent by 2050. The programme will also increase loan amounts and engage microfinance organisations.

“We will analyse the situation at key commodity markets and will develop a road map to eliminate barriers for competition and prevent abuse of monopoly power. We will need to work on the adoption of a revised law on rehabilitation and bankruptcy using the best practices in the OECD countries,” said Smailov.

To strengthen the financial system, the government plans to restrict transfers from the National Fund, decrease the dependency on the resource sector and develop a set of measures to communicate the implementation of the exchange rate policy of the National Bank, among other goals.

“We will continue working to develop the stock market and carry out IPO of national companies. The measures will allow increasing the efficiency of state management, create favourable conditions to run competitive business and improve the welfare of the people,” said Smailov.

Implementation of these measures should be a first priority for the government, said Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin.

“We need to take a proactive position in addressing problems, particularly social ones. All social obligations of the state must be fully fulfilled,” said Mamin.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Investment opportunities in Kazakhstan were presented in Moscow during “Kazakhstan: New Opportunities,” an event organised by the Kazakh Embassy in Russia, Kazakh Trade Mission in Russia and Association of European Business (AEB) which attracted representatives of more than 50 foreign companies. Investors were briefed on the nation’s efforts to improve the business climate and support foreign investors. The conference featured a presentation by Kazakh Invest promoting the nation’s investment potential to attract investments, the Astana International Financial Centre and Pavlodar special economic zone. “Given the unfolding integration processes within the Eurasian Economic Union, it is very important for European businesses to learn and understand how the Kazakh economy is developing and what potential it has,” said AEB Director General Frank Schauff.

Ninety-four athletes are representing Kazakhstan at the 30th Summer Universiade Napoli 2019 that opened July 4 in Naples. More than 30,000 people gathered in San Paolo Stadium for the opening ceremony, where 900 participants paraded and Italian football player Lorenzo Insigne kicked a ball to light the universiade cauldron. Nearly 6,000 athletes from 112 countries will compete in 222 events across 18 sports. Kazakh gymnasts Milad Karimi and Nariman Kurbanov advanced the first day to the July 6-7 finals. The event will run through July 14.

As part of his visit to the United States, Kazakh Foreign Minister Beibit Atamkulov met July 2 with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton. Pompeo expressed support for an enhanced Kazakh-U.S. strategic partnership, noting he “looked forward to continuing to strengthen bilateral relations with the new government of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.” He also commended Kazakhstan’s Jusan humanitarian operation that returned nearly 600 Kazakh citizens from the conflict zone in Syria, encouraging Kazakhstan to share its experience with other nations. Bolton reaffirmed his country’s strong partnership with Kazakhstan, which he described as “an already robust relationship.” “Kazakhstan is a highly-valued partner in Central Asia, working with us to advance energy, economic, security and other regional priorities,” he said. American investments in Kazakhstan nearly doubled in 2018, reaching a record of \$5.3 billion.

Kazakhstan’s Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and Nasdaq Dubai, the region’s international financial exchange, agreed to promote the Islamic capital market and enhance financial markets in both countries. The memorandum also seeks to advance international awareness of investment opportunities in Kazakhstan. Nasdaq Dubai CEO Hamed Ali said Kazakhstan’s thriving and dynamic companies make the nation one of the world’s most attractive destinations for foreign investors. “Building on the close ties between our countries, Nasdaq Dubai is ready to provide its know-how and infrastructure to facilitate investments by private and public investors in Kazakh companies,” he said.

Adilkhan Yerzhanov’s “Night God” will be entered in the Camera Lucida competition at the Fantasia International Film Festival July 11-Aug. 1 in Montreal, Canada. The lineup includes more than 130 features from across the globe. Yerzhanov is a well-known director in Kazakhstan, whose works have been submitted to the most prestigious events, including the Cannes and Rotterdam film festivals. “The film reflects the great work of all departments, actors, artists and cameramen. Their work shaped a rather abstract plot. I am very glad that the film will be shown to audiences in Canada,” said Yerzhanov.

Kazakhstan, UN to cooperate in space exploration to manage disasters

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry signed a memorandum of understanding on the use of space information and technology to manage disaster relief and development with the United Nations during the recent session of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) in Vienna, Austria.

The parties agreed to work to cooperate in the use of space-based information for disaster management and to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They also plan to promote innovation in the space sector, work together on capacity-building activities to improve the skills of scientists, students and other specialists, as well as to facilitate their participation in joint research activities and projects.

“UNOOSA [the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs] is proud to have signed this memorandum of



Photo credit: 24.kz

understanding with the Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a country with an illustrious tradition in enabling space exploration and innovation. Together, we will promote further innovation in the sector and we will help humanity leverage the full potential of space science and applications, which

keeps growing every day, for fostering sustainable development,” said UNOOSA Director Simonetta Di Pippo.

Space-based technologies can remotely predict disasters and provide information and early warnings for models and systems. The use of these technologies could

help minimise the loss of life and property resulting from earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, landslides and wildfires.

“This memorandum will be a good basis for the development of cooperation between the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the UN in the field of space activities,” said Kazakh Vice Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry Marat Nurguzhin, who headed Nur-Sultan’s delegation at the session.

With this memorandum, the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) programme is a step closer to ensuring access to, and developing the capacity to use, all types of space-based information to support the full disaster management cycle in all countries. The UN General Assembly established UN-SPIDER in 2006.

The Kazakh delegation also held a number of bilateral meetings, speaking with the heads of

the space agencies of the United Arab Emirates, Japan and Peru and the heads of the Royal Jordan Geographic Centre and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organisation.

The vice minister invited session participants and heads of space agencies to take part in the Space Days in Kazakhstan forum that will be held in Nur-Sultan in October.

The UN General Assembly set up UNCOPUOS in 1959 to guide the exploration and use of space to establish peace, security and development. The committee reviews international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, studying space-related activities that could be undertaken by the United Nations, encouraging space research programmes and studying legal problems arising from the exploration of outer space. International cooperation in space exploration and the use of space technology applications to meet global development goals are discussed in the committee every year.

MC12 will create new trade, business and investment opportunities for Central Asia, says WTO spokesperson

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan will be the first Central Asian country to host the World Trade Organisation’s (WTO) 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) June 8-11, 2020. The event will gather trade ministers from 164 member countries and 20 WTO observer nations.

A delegation headed by WTO Deputy Director General Karl Brauner recently met in the capital with foreign diplomats accredited in the country and discussed organisational issues related to the upcoming event with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the visit, The Astana Times spoke with WTO spokesperson and Information and External Relations Director Keith Rockwell about the importance of the conference and how WTO membership contributes to promoting investment.

“We were very impressed with the facilities. The people who are working there have been extremely kind and hospitable to us. We’ve

been very impressed by what we’ve seen,” he said.

Rockwell said the conference is significant for Central Asia as it can boost trade within the region.

“We will have many business organisations as well as journalists coming to our ministerial conference. It’s an opportunity to display all the wonderful things that the country has to offer both for business and tourism for all kinds of relationships that might emerge going forward. It might be some kind of a



WTO spokesperson and Information and External Relations Director Keith Rockwell

catalyst for sectors of the economy. Kazakhstan now puts forth efforts to attract foreign direct investment. The Nurly Zhol programme is designed to diversify the economy, small-medium sized companies and to help women get more active in the economy. The conference can lead to lots of exchanges of ideas and possibilities. When you bring people together from all over the world, a lot of good things can happen,” he said.

The conference is coming “at a very tense time,” he noted, and Kazakhstan has a history of being able to bring nations together and understand the perspectives of large countries.

“The Silk Road went through Kazakhstan and trade is a part of the historical DNA of the country. But perhaps the event might create new trade, business and investment opportunities as well as to show the facilities of this impressive city,” he said.

Rockwell also spoke about major challenges currently facing global trade. The WTO’s Monitor-

ing Report on G20 trade measures released June 24 showed the trade coverage of new import-restrictive measures was more than 3.5 times the average since May 2012.

“What we saw was that that \$335.9 billion worth of trade was affected by these trade restrictive measures, which is the second highest total we’ve ever seen. The only higher total came the previous six months. In the last 12 months, among G20 countries we have seen almost \$820 billion worth of trade has been restricted by various measures that have been applied. This is the reason why we have reduced our trade forecast and our trade expansion forecast to 2.6 percent for this year, which is below the historical trend,” he said.

“Just two years ago, we grew trade at 4.6 percent. Last year, it was at 3 percent. We’re seeing that there is a strong downward pressure on trade, which is having an impact on the global economy,” he said.

The WTO and trade trading system reform is also an important issue. Multilateralism is “under some

strain,” Rockwell noted, because the system needs to be strengthened and modernised, as the world has changed a lot. Now, electronic commerce and digital trade shape the future.

“This creates tremendous opportunities for entrepreneurs. They can go online rather cheaply and find new markets, customers and suppliers. The fact that these small and medium-sized enterprises are trying to get into trade more now is something that our members are very cognizant of and they want to try and create a trading system where it’s easier to do this. This means reducing trade costs and making the process more transparent. The discussions are underway about removing bureaucratic red tape,” he said.

Creating an environment in which business can thrive while at the same time preserving elements of domestic policy is not easy.

“One of the objectives is to try and create global rules so that people and small companies will understand what they have to do in order to do business,” he said.

EU announces new programmes in Central Asia

Continued from Page A1

The European Union is Kazakhstan’s number one trading and investment partner with 50.6 percent of foreign trade occurring with EU member states. According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, 48 percent of the accumulated foreign capital in Kazakhstan originates from the European Union; mutual trade in 2018 grew 23 percent from 2017, reaching \$37 billion (exports – \$31 billion, imports – \$6.7).

Between January-March 2019, Kazakhstan and the European Union has had foreign trade turnover of \$7.09 billion; the gross inflow of direct foreign investment from the European Union in 2018 amounted to \$11.6 billion, which is 18.4 percent higher than 2017. In addition, the European Union remains an important source of advanced technologies and innovations for Kazakhstan.

Among the proposals tabled by Kazakhstan were the use the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA) and European Investment Bank for financing projects in the region, as well as launching a virtual platform to increase public awareness of the EU-CA partnership.

Atamkulov noted the importance of the EU’s decision to bring back the bilateral projects, as well as the possibility of implementing joint EU-Central Asia programmes with other Central Asian states.



L-R: Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Beibit Atamkulov, Foreign Minister of Tajikistan Sirodjidin Muhriddin, Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini, Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Chingiz Aidarbekov, Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov and Vice Foreign Minister Vepa Khadzhiyev.

For instance, the EU’s 2-million-euro (\$2.24 million) funding will be implemented jointly with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to provide Afghan women with the education necessary for economic empowerment.

“The positive regional dynamics in Central Asia and a demand for closer cooperation with the European Union present a significant opportunity for a closer, stronger partnership,” said Mogherini. “We are ready to build on the enormous momentum gained over the last five years, as a consistent and re-

liable partner, to foster resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation.”

To reaffirm their commitment to “a strong, diversified and forward-looking partnership that builds upon the positive dynamics underway in Central Asia and the strong mutual interests between the two regions,” the parties adopted a joint communiqué calling “The EU and Central Asia: Forging a Stronger Partnership Together.”

In it, Central Asia and the EU also agreed to work together for peace, security, human rights, democracy

and sustainable development in full respect for international law.

The communiqué commended the role of EU High Representative Mogherini in strengthening relations between EU and Central Asia during her tenure.

A day prior to the ministerial meeting, the first EU-Central Asia Forum took place in Bishkek. The meeting was meant to bring together ideas from members of civil society, think-tanks, youth and business leaders. Regional foreign ministers praised the meeting.

Mogherini called the forum a key

opportunity for the societies of the EU and Central Asia to contribute to a new phase in the partnership between the two regions.

“We want to build stronger ties among us, this is not only an institutional exercise. This is first and foremost a societal exercise, a people exercise; we also believe in the economic potential of this region; to fulfil it, there is the need for something more than some big infrastructure projects that run through these countries. There is a need to have real, long-term investments that bring benefits to local communities, and with sustainable and long-standing perspectives,” said the EU high representative.

The new EU Strategy on Central Asia is in line with the EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia and the EU’s vision for a strategy to better connect the two big regions.

In the meantime, as underlined in the joint communiqué, the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements remain a cornerstone of relations between the EU and Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan signed and ratified such an agreement with the EU in 2015 and 2016 respectively, while Kyrgyzstan initialised such a document on July 6 and Uzbekistan is in the process of negotiating a similar agreement.

The next EU-Central Asia ministerial is planned for 2020 in Brussels.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Climate change may cut grain harvest by 37 percent by 2030

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN — Climate change may reduce the Kazakh grain harvest by 37 percent by 2030 and 48 percent by 2050, said the World Bank in its recent statement.

The phenomenon presents enormous challenges for development, including its impact on agricultural supply chains.

Sixty-six percent of Kazakh land is vulnerable to drought. The numbers can be critical for the country, the world's ninth largest by land-mass and second largest in arable land per inhabitant, where cultivated land occupies an estimated 81 percent of the total area.

World Bank experts forecast significant temperature increases in Central Asia in the coming decades, ranking it among the most climate-vulnerable regions.

"Today, we can see rising temperatures, melting of glaciers, declining water resources and natural disasters as droughts and floods occur more often. This all has huge economic damage on countries in Central Asia," noted the statement.

Average temperature in Central Asia has been rising by 0.5 degrees Celsius in the southern portion and 1.6 degrees in the northern part since the mid-20th century, leading to shrinking water supplies and glacier melting. Glaciers in the region have shrunk by one-third since the beginning of the 20th century.

Economic damage from a hotter planet is expected to effect the Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan economies, causing an estimated 0.4-1.3 percent change in the countries' annual gross domestic product (GDP).

Central Asia's heavy dependence on natural resources is cited

as a key factor increasing the region's vulnerability to climate change.

"For example, as much as 30 percent-60 percent of Central Asia's population relies on agriculture for its livelihood. In Tajikistan, harvests may decrease by 30 percent. At the turn of the century, half of Kyrgyzstan territory and huge territories in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan could turn into dry lands," said the statement.

Water availability is one of the region's major concerns. Climate change has worsened the situation in the Aral Sea, once the fourth largest lake in the world and now among its most rapidly degrading areas. The sea has shrunk to one-tenth of its original size, significantly hurting the local community that depended on the waterway for its livelihood.

Water shortages also effect electricity, as 90 percent of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's hydropower is generated by the thousands of glaciers in the high mountains of the Pamir region that give rise to the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, Central Asia's two major rivers. Experts forecast the water flow in the Syr Darya basin could be slashed by 2-5 percent and the Amu Darya by 10-15 percent, exacerbating the shortage.

"Climate change is a common concern for all countries in Central Asia. Addressing its consequences requires joint efforts in regional cooperation," said World Bank lead environmental specialist Gayane Minasyan.

Key recommendations include upgrading outdated infrastructure, promoting effective use of energy resources and taking efforts to achieve more sustainable agricultural use. More resources should also be directed to research and monitoring climate change and the environment.

Akmola Region expects alternative energy to cover up to 45 percent of all energy resources by 2023



By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN — The Akmola Region will be launching six alternative energy projects totalling 153 billion tenge (US\$404.16 million). As a result, local authorities expect the share of alternative energy to increase up to 45 percent by 2023, said Ivan Yurchenko, head of the regional energy and utilities department, at a June 18 press briefing.

Two wind farms with 45-megawatt (MW) and 750,000-kilowatt (KW) capability currently operate at First Wind Power Station (Yereymentau district) and Agrofirm Rodina (Tselinograd district) respectively. The 19.1-billion tenge (US\$50.51 million) investment projects produce 17 percent of the total electrical energy generated annually, reported the regional akim's (governor) press service.

In addition, five wind and one

solar power stations will begin operating in Arshaly district, Kokshetau (regional centre), Sandkytau, Tselinograd and Yereymentau districts.

The largest project in the region, the 50-MW TsATEK Green Energy wind power plant in the Arshaly area, will launch its first stage in late July.

Equipment installation and adjustment has started for the 3.75-MW, 1.7 billion tenge (US\$4.49 million) Vetro Invest Kokshetau wind power plant and should be completed in the fourth quarter.

The largest project in the region, the 50-MW TsATEK Green

Energy wind power plant in the Arshaly area, will launch its first stage in late July. Commissioning works have already started. With the second stage, the company should increase the power capacity to 100 MW. The capacity will double again when the company finishes the third stage.

KB Enterprises plans to commission a 100-MW solar power plant in Tselinograd district next year. The 53.3-billion tenge (US\$140.8 million) investment is being completed with the participation of foreign capital. A 300-hectare tract has been allocated, and design and survey work is underway.

Ereimentau Wind Power (50 MW) and Golden Energy Corp (30 MW) plan to commission wind power stations in 2021.

The deadline to implement the last project, the 2.5-billion tenge (US\$6.60 million), 7 MW Vichi wind power plant, is 2022.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The assets of Kazakh second-tier banks increased 1.5 percent in June and 6 percent over the year to 24.9 trillion tenge (US\$64.66 billion). June produced a noticeable change in bank relocation by assets. ForteBank climbed two positions, moving from fourth to second and overtaking Kaspi Bank and Sberbank. The bank's assets grew 7.2 percent in May and 33.5 percent in a year. Jýsan Bank (formerly Tsesnabank) also rose two positions from ninth to seventh, increasing its assets 12.4 percent; its assets in a year, however, dropped 44.1 percent. Although Kaspi Bank and Sberbank were downgraded in the ranking, they had a 1.5 percent (31.7 percent annual growth rate) and 1.6 percent (14.6 percent annual growth) increase in their assets, respectively.

Investments in health and social services decreased 15.1 percent to 25.2 billion tenge (US\$65.44 million) from January-May year-on-year (yoy). The biggest share, 37.8 percent or 9.5 billion tenge (US\$24.67 million), came from the national budget, a 32.7 percent increase yoy. The investment share from local budgets and the businesses' own funds significantly decreased. Local budget investments in healthcare decreased 51.4 percent to 5.2 billion tenge (US\$13.50 million) and its share fell from 36.2 percent to 20.8 percent. Investments from the businesses' own funds decreased 24.2 percent to 8.7 billion tenge (US\$22.59 million). At the same time, investments from borrowed funds and bank loans increased noticeably, more than 5.6 times a year. Their cumulative sum increased to 1.8 billion tenge (US\$4.67 million).

By the end of May, the number of private enterprises operating with state participation had decreased 5 percent during the year to 651 companies, a figure that has been reducing since 2016. At the same time, the number of public-private partnerships (PPP) has been growing; 302 PPP contracts were signed by the end of 2018, a 61.5 percent increase year-on-year (yoy), and 546 units were in place at the end of May. The largest share of PPP projects, 26.6 percent, are concentrated in the East Kazakhstan Region, followed by the Pavlodar Region and Almaty with a combined 19 percent. The vast majority, or 80.8 percent, of all PPPs are in education (49.6 percent), healthcare (20.5 percent) and energy and utilities (10.6 percent).

Capital investments in arts, entertainment and recreation increased 30.6 percent to 35.5 billion tenge (US\$92.19 million) from January-May. The East Kazakhstan Region received the largest investment, 12.1 billion tenge (US\$31.42 million), to promote tourism, followed by art and leisure investments in the Almaty and Kostanai regions of 7.7 billion tenge (US\$20 million) and 6.3 billion tenge (US\$16.36 million), respectively. The investments came mainly from local budgets representing 61.8 percent (22 billion tenge or US\$57.13 million) of the total capital expenditure, a 32.1-percent increase per year.

Kazakh money transfer systems sent 227.6 billion tenge (US\$591.06 million) remittances abroad from January-May, a 7.4-percent increase year-on-year (yoy). The largest share, 36 percent or 82 billion tenge (US\$212.95 million), was sent to Russia, an 8.3-percent decrease compared to last year. The second largest transfers, 40.3 billion tenge (US\$104.66 million), were sent to Uzbekistan, a 28.9-percent increase yoy, followed by 33.4 billion tenge (US\$86.74 million) sent to Turkey, a 33.6-percent increase yoy. Golden Crown has the largest margin of money transfers abroad with 162.7 billion tenge (US\$422.52 million), 71.5 percent of the total and a 28.3-percent increase yoy. It was followed by Western Union (28.8 billion tenge or US\$74.79 million, an 11.6-percent decrease yoy) and Unistream (10.1 billion tenge or US\$26.23 million, a 45.4-percent decrease yoy).



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WE AGREE.



Kazakhstan adopts phased introduction of universal tax declaration



By Laura Tussupbekova

NUR-SULTAN — The Kazakh government has approved suspending the universal declaration and tax penalty cancellation. Following two readings, the Senate (upper house of Parliament) adopted the amendments June 24 on regulating and developing the financial market, microfinance activities and taxation.

The document proposes phasing in the universal declaration.

In the first stage, the plan would be postponed from Jan. 1, 2020 to Jan. 1, 2021. Individuals holding a responsible government office and their spouses, those who serve in state bodies and their spouses and those who hold a position equivalent to civil service and their spouses will be required to provide the declaration in accordance with the legislation.

In the second stage, employees of state institutions and their spouses and those of the quasi-

state sector and their spouses will be subject to the initial declaration beginning January 2023.

The initial declaration for the heads and founders of legal entities and their spouses and entrepreneurs and their spouses will be introduced in the third stage starting Jan. 1, 2025.

Plans are underway to write off penalties on individuals for tax liabilities for tax periods through January 2019, subject to repayment of the principal debt by the end of the year. Cancellation of penalties is proposed for property and land tax obligations for tax periods up to January 2018, taking into account the deadline for payment is before October.

The law also provides for creating the Agency for Regulation and Development of Financial Markets reporting directly to the President. As a result, all entities providing financial services, including mortgage, insurance and collection organisations, will be transferred to the agency's bureau.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

BUSINESS
NEWS IN BRIEF

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has invested more than \$9 billion in Kazakhstan since the country's independence, said EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti in Nur-Sultan July 4 during the 32nd plenary session of the Foreign Investors' Council chaired by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. This year, the bank has invested more than \$450 million in the country. Chakrabarti emphasised EBRD measures its effectiveness by the quality of its investments, not just by the quantity. For example, the bank signed three renewable energy projects this year as part of its effort to support the country's transition to a low-carbon economy.

Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin approved the 2019-2024 Roadmap to Develop Mechanical Engineering June 26 designed by the Kazakh Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development and the Kazakh Union of Mechanical Engineers, reported the union. The roadmap sets out a strategic vision for medium-term development of the industry and goal of introducing new technologies, improving the competitiveness of domestic machine-building firms and boosting the industry's export potential. Roadmap measures include providing domestic firms with raw materials, improving technical regulation and introducing economic incentives. Adopting the law "On Industrial Policy," for example, would simplify the national policy and creating the Kazakh Industrial Development Fund would expand firms' access to co-financing.

As part of its effort to integrate state programmes on infrastructure with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Kazakhstan is implementing more than 100 projects under the BRI, said Deputy Prime Minister Zhenis Kassymbek at the Astana Finance Days' July 3 plenary session on Silk Road Opportunities – Financing the Region. Trade turnover between Kazakhstan and China is increasing every year. Notably, Kazakhstan aims to connect the markets of China and Europe by constructing and modernising its infrastructure and reducing transport costs and time through state programmes such as Nurlı Zhol. The Astana International Financial Centre can also become a key driver for implementing BRI projects in Kazakhstan, he added.

Air Astana replenished its fleet with three Airbus A320neo aircraft in July, reported its press service. The planes will be used for domestic flights, as well as international routes to China, India, Russia and Ukraine. Airbus A320neos have Pratt&Whitney engines, LED lighting systems and 162 economy-class seats equipped with individual entertainment systems. Air Astana, Kazakhstan's largest carrier and a joint venture between Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and BAE Systems, operates domestic and international flights to 64 destinations.

Construction has begun on the Turkestan Region's largest, 50-megawatt solar power plant, reported Kazakh Invest. The \$60 million project, to be completed in early 2020, will create approximately 400 jobs. The project's foreign investor, Risen Energy from China, previously built a 40-megawatt solar power plant in the Karaganda Region. The Turkestan Region has an energy deficit and significant solar energy potential, said Kazakh Invest Turkestan Region Director Dauletkozha Mamyrrov. With 3,000 hours of sunny weather every year, the region's solar insolation reaches an average of 1,600 kilowatts per square metre.

Approximately 435,600 small and medium-sized businesses are currently registered in Kazakhstan, 3.1 percent more than last year, reported Energyprom. The number is expected to grow, as the Business Roadmap 2020 state programme will support 14,600 small and medium-sized enterprises this year. Business Roadmap 2025 will develop new financial support tools for entrepreneurs and back efficient and competitive businesses. Its goal is to increase the share of small and medium-sized businesses to 35 percent by 2025 and 50 percent by 2050.

Debt relief for approximately 500,000 to cost \$274 million over two months

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Approximately 105 billion tenge (US\$274.32 million) will be required to execute President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's decree to provide debt relief to some of the country's most vulnerable groups, said First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov at a recent press conference.

Of that figure, approximately 88 billion tenge (US\$229.9 million) will be drawn from the national budget and 17 billion tenge (US\$44.41 million) from bonds issued from the Troubled Loans Fund.

The President's one-time action calls for the government to take measures to repay unsecured consumer loans in second-tier banks and microfinance organisations for certain segments of the population, including large families, those that have lost their main breadwinners and those with children with disabilities; adults who have been disabled since childhood; recipients of state targeted social assistance and orphans, children left without parental care under the age of 29 and those who lost their parents before they reached the majority age.

"The Kazakh National Bank, the government, banks and microfinance organisations have developed a mechanism for repaying the debt of citizens who find themselves in a difficult life situation," said bank chairperson Yerbolat Dossayev at a July government meeting. "This mechanism provides for the Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Security to form a list of citizens who find themselves in a difficult life situation."

The debt relief is intended to

help approximately 500,000 people.

"According to preliminary data, there are 443,000 people in dire need of government assistance that have loans," said Deputy Prime Minister Gulshara Abdykalikova at the press conference.

The state will repay debts up to three million tenge (US\$7.84 million) and interest up to 300,000 tenge (US\$783.76) in second-tier banks and microfinance organisations as a one-time, targeted financial assistance measure for each borrower from the above-mentioned categories.

"The reasons for having obtained a loan and how the money was spent will not be reviewed too closely, because these are poor citizens who require social support," said Abdykalikova.

"It is not necessary for people to go to the banks for now, because this work will take some time. It will be complete within two months," added National Bank Deputy Chairperson Oleg Smolyakov at the press conference.

The decree also instructs the National Bank to strengthen regulations on consumer loans. This includes imposing a ban on accruing penalties, commissions and other payments related to issuing and servicing loans for all unsecured individual consumer loans more than 90 days overdue.

The bank will also ban loans to citizens with incomes below the subsistence minimum (29,698 tenge or US\$77.59 per month) to avoid further deterioration of their financial situation. It will take additional regulatory measures when issuing unsecured consumer loans, such as considering the overall ratio of the debt burden on a borrower and imposing additional requirements for bank equity, among other steps.



Deputy Prime Minister Gulshara Abdykalikova.

Government plans to provide 46,000 people with new skills this year



Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, in conjunction with the Centre for the Development of Labour Resources, has revised the approach for selecting educational institutions to conduct short-term training courses as part of the Enbek state programme to develop productive employment and mass entrepreneurship in 2017-2021.

The ministry expects the change will affect the relevance of the professions in the labour market and make it easier for trainees to find jobs.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 16,000 people have been trained through the programme. The ministry plans to instruct an additional 30,000 individuals.

Based on the needs of the regions, a list of the more than 200 most in-demand qualifications and skills for short-term training courses was formed as part of the Smart Data Ukimet project. The ministry has also compiled and approved a list of 100 popular service and industrial professions, including 35 jobs requiring higher education and 65 needing technical and vocational skills.

Working with the Atameken Na-

tional Chamber of Entrepreneurs and support of the World Bank, the ministry formed a register of 534 educational institutions. All meet the requirements of dual training with mentoring and one-year of experience in conducting short-term vocational trainings to issue a certificate.

To be included in the register, the institutions must also have a modern material and technical base and at least a 60-percent record of employing those who have undergone training. Educational programmes for short-term vocational training should be coordinated with the regional chamber of entrepreneurs and employers.

Social spending is largest percentage of budget in first half of 2019

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Spending on social programmes accounted for the largest part of Kazakhstan's government spending from January to April.

Social assistance spending accounted for 27.6 percent of Kazakhstan's \$9.98 billion state expenditures during that period.

Total government spending increased 16.7 percent for that time period year-on-year with spending on social assistance increasing 20 percent to 1.1 trillion tenge (US\$2.88 billion). In the same period in 2018, social spending totaled 875 billion tenge (US\$2.3 billion).

Social sector spending has been increasing on average 15.6 percent per year for the last five years. Total government spending over that same period has been increasing an average of 12.3 percent per year.

The state guarantees 39 types of social assistance. In 2018, 3.8 million Kazakhs, which is 20.9 percent of the population, received more than 2.5 trillion tenge (US\$6.57 billion) in pensions and allowances. In addition to this, approximately 800,000 people received 190 billion tenge (US\$499.17 million) payments from the system of compulsory social insurance.

The Kazakh government allo-

cated the second biggest bulk of state budget expenses for January to April to the education sector at 17.6 percent or nearly 671 billion tenge (US\$1.76 billion), which is 16.2 percent more than the same time in 2018.

Expenditures on the healthcare sector for January to April increased 12.3 percent to 488.9 billion tenge (US\$1.28 billion), 12.8 percent of the total.

The top five list of state budget expenditures from January to April also includes debt service and general public services, which are 252 billion tenge (US\$662.05 million) and 225.1 billion tenge (US\$591.38 million), respectively.

zakhstan with the support of local officials.

IT startups attract \$76 million in investments in two years

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh IT startups have attracted nearly 29 billion tenge (US\$76.3 million) since 2018.

Astana Hub, the capital's international technopark of IT startups, contributes to the country's Digital Kazakhstan programme designed to build secure digital infrastructure, incorporate digital technologies into the country's economy, digitise government services and train Kazakh specialists, noted Minister of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry Askar Zhumagaliyev.

It launched in February 2018 and has now 100-percent occupancy, noted the minister.

More than 260 projects involving nearly 1,000 entrepreneurs have completed Astana Hub incubation and acceleration programmes. The hub also hosts 16 research and development centres representing such companies as CISCO, Huawei, IBM and Intellisense.



"Innovators have access to consultations, technical expertise, equipment and software," he said.

It seeks to attract at least 67 billion tenge (US\$176.4 million) by 2022, increase local content in IT companies up to 70 percent and contribute to creating ten IT companies by 2025 with a market capitalisation of \$1 billion.

Zhumagaliyev said the law on venture financing adopted in Oc-

tober 2018 is an important factor in developing an innovation ecosystem providing financial support to startups, among other goals. The document introduces state support mechanisms provided through QazTech Ventures and QazAngels business angels club.

QazTech Ventures, a subsidiary of Baiterek National Holding, was established in May after the National Agency for Technologi-

cal Development was changed. The new company is tasked with supporting development of private capital market through venture financing, supporting private business incubators and providing technology consulting services and training programmes.

QazTech Ventures and QazAngels will create two venture capital funds, he added.

IT companies also enjoy a special regime including tax preferences and simplified visa and labour procedures. The investments are regulated by the Astana International Financial Centre and its English common law principles.

"These simplified procedures are accessible to all IT companies. In addition, for Astana Hub participants, there are special conditions to attract foreign specialists. These include exemption from taxes and work visas for up to five years. We received 120 applications and 52 companies of those are being registered," said Zhumagaliyev.

IT hubs are opening across Ka-

More than 260 projects involving nearly 1,000 entrepreneurs have completed Astana Hub incubation and acceleration programmes. The hub also hosts 16 research and development centres representing such companies as CISCO, Huawei, IBM and Intellisense.

"Given such dynamics in the ecosystem growth in the capital, we plan to share the experience with startups in Kazakh regions," he added.

Astana Hub and the ministry plan to launch a regional road show programme in September that will include visits to all 14 regions and three cities of national significance.

EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Kazakhstan can become one of global leaders in investment attractiveness

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, during his inauguration speech last month, stated that one of the key priorities for Kazakhstan is to create new jobs and provide people with good wages. One of the ways to achieve this objective is to attract more foreign investment to Kazakhstan.

This is why the Government has been actively working to create a favourable investment climate in the country. The results so far have been promising. Fifty-seven projects with foreign capital, worth \$5.1 billion, will create more than 10,000 jobs in Kazakhstan by the end of the year. This is in addition to 6,000 new jobs that were created between January 2018 and the present day, thanks to 29 projects that are currently being implemented.

Overall, Kazakhstan remains the number one investment destination in the region. As was noted recently by Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Zhenis Kasymbek, the country accounts for approximately 75 percent of the total foreign direct investment inflows into the Central Asian region. Given Kazakhstan's active involvement in major international projects, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, this figure is not surprising. For instance, right now Kazakhstan, together with Chinese companies, is implementing 55 industrial projects worth almost \$28 billion as part of the New Silk Road project.

But to further improve Kazakhstan's economy, which would contribute to the country's development, Kazakhstan needs to work to reach new levels. This is why new targets have been set. For example, gross foreign direct investment should increase by 26 percent by 2022 compared to 2016, and the ratio of foreign direct investment to GDP should reach 19 percent, up from the current 16.5 percent.

However, as is well known, the global business and investment climate is extremely competitive, with every country vying for for-

eign investments. Countries need to continuously aim to improve their investment climate. Kazakhstan will need to focus on a number of issues to further stimulate investments. For instance, investors and diplomats at dialogue platforms, such as the Council of Foreign Investors, the Council to Improve the Investment Climate and the recent first meeting of EU ambassadors in Kazakhstan with the Prime Minister, have noted a number of issues that need to be addressed. These include the rule of law, the volatility of the tenge rate, infrastructure, allocation of land, decriminalisation of tax offenses, and migration.

These are undoubtedly not straightforward issues. But the Government has been working hard to address them. For example, earlier this year the new Coordinating Council on Investment Issues was established under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Askar Mamin. In addition, Foreign Minister Beibut Atamkulov, stressed the need to modernise current legislation. It is encouraging to note that Parliament is already working on this.

Attracting foreign investment is also directly linked to diplomacy. The Government of Kazakhstan has been busy in this regard recently. As already mentioned, on July 1, Prime Minister Askar Mamin met with European Union diplomatic mission heads to discuss investment cooperation, including increasing agricultural product trade, as well as promoting the export of Kazakh products to the EU.

Overall, Kazakhstan is on the right track when it comes to improving its investment climate and attracting foreign businesspeople. But it is important not to become complacent. Our competitors are also not standing still. Therefore, it is important to address any remaining issues and to push forward with investment reforms. Once this is achieved, Kazakhstan can go beyond being a regional frontrunner in terms of investment attractiveness and become one of the global leaders.

In today's world, we need a stronger partnership between the European Union and Central Asia

By Federica Mogherini and Neven Mimica

In our highly interconnected world of today, where closer regional and inter-regional cooperation is essential for peace and prosperity, Europe and Central Asia have never been so close. Neither have the potential benefits of working even more closely together been so evident.

We are witnessing a time of important change for Central Asia. Central Asian States are opening up, implementing reforms, and advancing regional cooperation among themselves. They have become stronger through increased independence and inter-dependence. In short, Central Asia's political importance is now reflecting its geographical place as pivotal partner for the East and for the West, although many challenges still remain.

In this new, positive political context, the European Union – with all EU Member States behind it – has devised a new approach to its relations with Central Asia. Our new strategy focusses on supporting the region's resilience and prosperity, building on our extensive existing cooperation, to create a modern EU-Central



Federica Mogherini



Neven Mimica

Asia partnership for the benefit of our citizens.

The European Union is a natural partner for the region. We have a history that has convinced us of the benefits of cooperation and integration with our neighbours, and we can share this experience without playing political games.

We want to support the countries of Central Asia in becoming more resilient, whether societally, economically, or environmentally. This means strengthening independent media, opening space for civil society, reinforcing the rule of law and good governance, combatting corruption, and empowering youth.

We also want to contribute to the region's prosperity. The EU, as the largest source of private investment worldwide, has the potential to bring significant quality investment in sustainable connectivity projects in Central Asia, provided a sound business climate is in place. To that end, the EU will continue to support the

reform and modernisation of the economies of the region, including the development of a strong private sector. The EU also remains a key supporter of the accession of all Central Asian states to the World Trade Organisation.

Besides these two pillars, the European Union and Central Asia will look to work together more closely to connect our two regions, as well as to enhance links within Central Asia itself, making sure that this is done in a sustainable, open and rules-based way that avoids indebtedness or poor quality infrastructure.

Similarly, the European Union will partner with Central Asia to face the many challenges that no single country can address alone, ranging from the environment, including water management, border management to the fight against terrorism and trafficking of illicit drugs.

Peace in Afghanistan is another challenge that requires the active support

of the international community, including Central Asian partners. Integrating Afghanistan as appropriate in relevant regional meetings and programmes, and supporting more regional and trilateral cooperation projects with Afghan and Central Asian partners, will therefore remain a priority in our joint work.

This weekend in Bishkek, the European Union and the Central Asian States will hold our annual regional meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers. The European Union's message will be that our cooperation can bring real, tangible benefits to citizens in the region and in the EU, from stronger and diversified economies, more opportunities for students to experience Europe, more job opportunities, and a more peaceful, secure region for all. In today's world, we need a stronger partnership between our two regions. Let us work together to achieve it.

Federica Mogherini is the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy & Vice-President of the European Commission and Neven Mimica is the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development.

KAZAKHSTAN
Land of the Great Steppe

DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP

A unique digital product - "Kazakhstan - Land of the Great Steppe" - is one-of-a-kind high quality interactive application, presenting multimedia on the most representative geographic, political, touristic, historical, economic facts about Kazakhstan. It contains hundreds of high quality unique photographs, videos, 3D objects, panoramic tours, interactive charts, and innovative maps. It should be of interest to anyone who wants to learn about the world's ninth largest country, including tourists, students, and business people. Available in English, Russian, and Kazakh.

Mobile device versions are available in AppStore and PlayMarket. Also available in Windows and as a web version.

You can run an application webpage by following the link: <http://bit.ly/28PkZza>

Please help women and children who were deceived by ISIS!

By Aida Sarina

I am Aida. I am from Kazakhstan. I am 25 years old and I have witnessed war, hunger and cold. Before that, I lived a normal life in Kazakhstan, graduated from high school, used to play sports and dance and dreamed of becoming a journalist.

Everything changed when in the summer of 2015 I, my husband and my son went to Istanbul. My husband suggested we spend a vacation in Turkey. But a few days later, he said that we will not go back to Kazakhstan, and will live in Syria.

I succumbed to my husband's persuasion. Back then, it seemed to me that this was the right decision. Much has been said on the internet that Muslims must move to an Islamic state to live happily.

But once in Syria, we realised that it was a lie. Our life became a nightmare. Getting out of this hell was impossible. There were always ISIS agents around us. They searched for those who wanted to escape, put them in jail, and could execute several people a day.

We lived in total fear and did not confide in anyone. And after the death of my husband, I just fought for survival. ISIS militants scared us by saying that if we were imprisoned, they would rape and kill us. Falling asleep at night, I didn't know if I and my child would wake up in the morning.

I couldn't see a way out.



Aida Sarina. This video still is taken from her testimony prepared for a UN event in New York.

We were trapped. We slept on the damp ground under an open sky. Every day children died in the arms of their mothers who were unable to help.

My acquaintance was digging a grave for her child with her hands, since cats and dogs had already begun to eat the body. I could not look at this anymore.

I took a risk. Under fire, bypassing the mines, we got to the refugee camp. Everything was like in a nightmare. I prayed to return home, I wanted to see and hug my mother again.

In this refugee camp in Syria, there were many women from around the world with a similar fate. We did not know what would happen to us in the future.

But at one point in the camp they told us, "Kazakhstan takes back its citizens!" I could not believe it. And only when I actually saw rescuers from Kazakhstan,

I realised that we were not abandoned.

Next to me were women from France, Germany and other countries. I remember them looking enviously at us. They asked to find out if Kazakhstan could also take them, pleading to at least take their children from Syria.

I could not help these women. But I decided to help and save an orphan boy from Kazakhstan. He is 7 years old. His name is Musa. I found him in the camp and took him with me.

He is the only one who survived out of his entire family. His father died, his mother was killed by ISIS, his sister was missing, and his younger brother died of exhaustion.

When rescuers from Kazakhstan came to Syria, I told them about Musa. Rescuers found Musa's grandparents in Kazakhstan and took him home with me. Now he is safe at home, as is my own child.

I returned to Kazakhstan just a few months ago with other women and children. Of course, at first, I didn't know what to do next.

For about a month, we lived in a rehabilitation centre. We were preparing for a peaceful life. Doctors, theologians, teachers, psychologists and volunteers worked with us. They helped us to recover our identification documents. And after that we returned home to our relatives.

Honestly, I still go through a rehabilitation course. Everyone experiences and copes with the nightmares of war

in their own way. Many people just want to forget everything. But I decided that I would openly talk about it.

I managed to do it. I was lucky. My country and my people did not leave me in trouble, did not abandon me. They took me in and forgave me. Now I feel strong and have a great desire to help Muslims learn lessons from my story and not to repeat my mistakes.

Addressing the UN is a great chance to speak out loud about the war in Syria and the fraud caliphate that the terrorists built there.

Yes, I am a victim of terrorism. But now I want to become a fighter against terrorism, to contribute and be a part of this great purpose. I want to be the voice of all female victims of terrorism!

Yes, we made mistakes, stumbled. But everyone has the right to make a mistake, and to achieve salvation after repentance.

Please help other women and children who were also deceived. Perhaps they will also be of service to their country, as I am today.

This text is a transcript of a video testimony by a Kazakh woman caught up in the Syrian conflict who was returned to Kazakhstan through the country's efforts to evacuate its citizens from the Syrian conflict under Operation Jusan which has already brought back around 600 Kazakh citizens, mostly children and women.

THE ASTANA TIMES

Dear Friends,

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

THE ASTANA TIMES
astanatimes.com

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Astana Hub launches Roadshow 2019 programme to promote start-ups



Roadshow Astana Hub.

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana Hub recently launched Roadshow 2019, a programme to promote start-up projects internationally. The programme will help start-ups grow and secure international funding and will promote tech entrepreneurship, reports Bnews.kz.

The programme includes complex coaching for start-up project entrepreneurs and bringing them to the world's largest tech events. Upcoming events roadshow participants will attend include Techcrunch Disrupt in San Francisco (October 2 to 4), Gitex in Dubai (October 6 to 9), Websummit in Lisbon (November 4 to 7) and Slush in Helsinki (November 21 to 22).

Requirements for start-ups seeking to take part in the programme are having a minimum viable product (MVP), having initial sales and investment attraction experience, having a ready strategy and being ready to start working internationally, and having at least one English speaker among the project members. Astana Hub project members have a priority at the selection stage, while non-members are encouraged to join the Astana Hub.

The programme also intends to promote the Astana Hub itself in the international arena and to popularise the information and communication technology sector in Kazakhstan, as well as to promote individual start-ups in foreign markets and help Technopark start-up teams attract international partners and foreign investments and make their way into foreign markets.

The Astana Hub team provides full support to start-up teams with a return flight and accommodation for one representative of each team. It also organises a boot camp in the form of online webinars and offline consultations regarding trip

The Astana Hub team provides full support to start-up teams with a return flight and accommodation for one representative of each team.

planning and preparing for meetings with potential investors and foreign partners. As a part of the Astana Hub Programme, it organises the participation of local start-ups in 10 leading technological events around the world. Five technology events in five countries – Singapore, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, China – have already been visited by roadshow participants.

Eleven start-up projects represented the Astana Hub at iForum in Kyiv, the Echelon Asia Summit in Singapore, Startup Village in Moscow, EMERGE in Minsk and the Mobile World Congress in Shanghai. Representatives of the Astana Hub signed a memorandum of understanding with leading foreign innovative companies and representatives of the start-up ecosystem. Start-ups may still register to take part in the programme through July 20.

North Kazakhstan Region to allocate \$525,000 next year to support young entrepreneurs

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The North Kazakhstan Region will allocate 200 million tenge (US\$525,240) next year to develop youth entrepreneurship.

One in five Kazakh citizens is a member of the younger generation and supporting them is among the nation's priorities. Approximately 2.3 million live in cities, 1.7 million in rural areas.

North Kazakhstan Region Akim (Governor) Kumar Aksakalov recently met with young people to talk about business support measures.

“With the Damu Business Development Fund, we need to increase the financing of youth entrepreneurship. We are ready to allocate 200 million tenge (US\$525,240) next year,” he said. He encouraged young people to conduct business in the economy of simple things.

“We need to involve business-people to train young people. I call on all heads of educational institutions to organise pitch events. Young people will come



Photo credit: shg.gov.kz

there with a business idea and businesspeople will get their projects for joint implementation,” he added.

Aksakalov noted the increasing importance of volunteering.

“In many countries around the world, volunteering is considered as a plus in getting a job or enrolling in a university. Our young people are taking an active part in society,” he said.

Students should also use op-

portunities to implement projects during their studies. The region will start constructing an education and lab campus that will be equipped with modern technologies.

“All the best technologies from across the world will be here. We need to incorporate practices such as when a student works on a concrete scientific project with his or her professors and turns it into production. They will defend

their project with a diploma,” he said.

In 2018, the region launched Jas Project (Young Project), where 67 proposals received grants totalling one million tenge (US\$2,626) and 236 individuals completed business basics courses. More than 118 million tenge (US\$309,891) came into the region through grants and scholarships.

As part of the Business Roadmap, 600 young entrepreneurs across Kazakhstan will receive grants over three years. Every year within a three-year period, 10,000 young entrepreneurs will receive grants and another 15,000 will receive microcredit under the Yenbek state programme.

Measures also include teaching business skills, coaching, providing psychological support and assisting in executing start-up projects.

During the three-year period, the initiative will train more than 60,000 young people in the basics of entrepreneurship and another 180,000 will be prepared through a university or vocational education institution.

Foreign investments create 6,000 jobs since 2018, 4,000 more expected by year's end

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Fifty-seven projects with foreign capital and worth \$5.1 billion will have created more than 10,000 jobs in Kazakhstan by the year's end, said Kazakh Invest Deputy Chairman Rustam Issatayev at a press conference in the capital.

Twenty-nine projects with foreign capital were commissioned with Kazakh Invest support between January 2018 and July, creating 6,000 jobs in the country, reports Invest.gov.kz. Another 28 projects will launch by the year's end and create an additional 4,000 jobs in the country.

In 2018, 27 projects worth \$3.1 billion were commissioned

with Kazakh Invest support, such as the Zhambyl Region's 50-megawatt solar power plant, the Kyzylorda Region's cement plant with a production capacity of one million tonnes per year, the Turkestan Region's dry camel milk production plant with a production capacity of 100 tonnes of milk per day, the Pavlodar Region's railway wheels production plant with a production capacity of 200,000 wheels per year, the Karaganda Region's modernised machinery building plant with a production capacity of 8,500 tonnes per year and Nur-Sultan's transformers production plant with a production capacity of 100 transformers per year. Five projects were implemented in Almaty, four in the Pavlodar

Region, three in the Karaganda Region, three in the Turkestan Region and three in the Almaty Region.

This year, Kazakh Invest plans to support the commissioning of 30 projects with foreign capital worth \$2 billion. Forty percent of these projects centre on the new sectors of the economy, such as renewable energy and information technology. For example, \$680 million will be invested in power plants this year. Production capacity will be 400 megawatts for solar power plants, 90 megawatts for wind power plants and 25 megawatts for hydropower plants.

In 2018, Kazakh Invest helped create two joint ventures worth \$335 million and attracted eight

transnational corporations with projects worth \$930 million, such as German company Linde, Dutch company Farm Frites, Belgian company Carmeuse Group, Chinese company China Triumph International Engineering, Emirati company Phoenix Global, Turkish company Yıldırım Holding, British company United Green and Singaporean company CG Corp Global.

This year, Kazakh Invest aims to assist in the creation of at least two joint ventures with foreign investors and attract at least eight transnational corporations, targeting Russian company ECO-Culture, French company Servier, German company Tonnies and American companies AGCO, Tyson Foods and Valmont.

UMAY Boost business education programme develops women entrepreneurs' skills, vision

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The first round of the UMay Boost business education project to increase the practical skills and knowledge of Kazakhstan's women entrepreneurs has concluded. The Nur-Sultan course offered professional training and life-coaching sessions with the goal of building specific capabilities, but also transforming and widening the business vision of participants, inspiring them to build partnerships and create opportunities to scale their enterprises.

“The idea of this project stemmed from the UMay Global Summit organised as part of the Women Entrepreneurship Day movement in December. I am the ambassador of Women Entrepreneurship Day for Kazakhstan and CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] countries,” Merrey Mustafina, the project organiser, told The Astana Times.

“This project is a sustainable continuation of the UMay Global Summit. Last year, I participated in the THINK School of Creative Leadership Programme in Amsterdam, which inspired me to do something similar here in Kazakhstan. We took some elements from



Chevron and Fortebank supported the project.

that programme, such as coaching, peer to peer help, et cetera, and adapted them to Kazakh business reality. After participating in the programme, I realised that personal changes and transformations happen only when other people help you to see your potential,” she explained.

“Kazakh society demands a lot from women. We are wives, mothers, daughters, and we have to combine our personal life functions with the realisation of our potential in our professions and careers. It is always hard for a woman to harmonise all spheres of her life. My experience at the

THNK School of Creative Leadership showed me that like-minded people are the best source of inspiration and motivation,” she said.

“At our UMay Boost programme, we created an atmosphere of trust and cooperation so that every participant could find the way to personal development.”

The project was announced this winter and received 50 applications. The programme had two main entry requirements: at least three years experience running a business and a yearly turnover of 20 million tenge (US\$52,500). Sixteen women entrepreneurs were selected to take part.

“The training started in April and included sessions on strategic planning, business modelling, financial analysis, marketing, sales, human resource management, personal branding and information technology solutions for business. We also introduced coaching sessions into the programme to develop the participants' soft skills, which are crucial in business. At the final stage of the project, the participants presented their strategic development plan,” Makhabbat Sadvakassova, the project organiser, told The Astana Times.

“We plan to organise UMay Boost trainings on a regular basis, several times a year. The programme will be amended based on the project results and participants' feedback. For the next intake, we plan to enrol both men and women. We feel that the format of ‘He for She’ or ‘She for He’ will be more efficient. We believe that men and women have different approaches to business because of their natural gender differences. Men will contribute to the group training by trying to find a rationale for every strategic decision, whereas women will definitely help male participants with developing emotional intelligence, communication and empathy skills necessary for doing

business in the 21st century. This balance will make the training more engaging and deliver great results,” Mustafina added.

“We want to scale our project, but it needs funding. We will welcome any help and support for our project. Female entrepreneurship support is a great way for any company to implement its social responsibility policy. Supporting women entrepreneurs means supporting families, children and gender balance in business,” the organisers said.

Maira Karybayeva, a project participant and CEO of the 12 Months building materials retail chain, told The Astana Times the project gave her a kind of support she'd never encountered.

“I have been running a chain of building material stores for 10 years. I never felt any kind of support similar to the support I received at this programme. It is hard to think strategically and see the opportunities when you are isolated from the business community. Things get clear when you are surrounded by people who are also in business and face the same problems as you do. Communication and networking with other businesspeople facilitates the process of exchanging ideas, getting new insights, building partnerships

and ultimately expanding the business,” she said. Karybayeva introduced a range of changes in her stores' everyday processes, based on the things she learned through the UMay Boost programme. In particular, managers are emphasising service.

“For example, we decided to introduce a free interior design service at our stores. A designer draws a design project with an eye to the materials we have in our store. The service saves our customers time and money. We introduced elements of augmented reality using QR codes, so that our customers can easily visualise how wallpapers or ceramic tile will look in their apartment... A personal shopper now accompanies customers in any sector of the store,” Karybayeva explained.

The changes delivered financial results. The number of customers increased by 2,500. The chain hadn't seen a revenue increase in 18 months – and saw a 13 percent jump last month, after the changes had been implemented.

“We still have a lot to improve. Thanks to this programme, I am now not afraid of experiments and see points of growth for our business. I believe that even greater achievements are ahead of us,” she said.

ASTANA FINANCE DAYS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

AIFC International Arbitration Centre opening ceremony, EdTech and FinTech summits mark second day of Astana Finance Days

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The second day of the Astana Finance Days conference in the capital included the opening ceremony of the Astana International Finance Centre (AIFC) International Arbitration Centre (IAC) and EdTech and FinTech summits.

The IAC provides an independent alternative to court litigation and uses international standards to settle AIFC civil and commercial disputes. The court is independent from the Kazakh judicial system.

“We clearly understand that the rule of law is the foundation for successful economic growth. Because of this, we pay special attention to the formation of a modern professional and independent judiciary with an accessible justice system. By creating the AIFC court and the international arbitration centre using the principles of English law, we complete the creation of the institutional structure of the centre,” said Kazakh President Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev at the court’s opening ceremony referring to AIFC.

July 2 was also devoted to EdTech. The main topic of discussion was whether the education pres-



ently provided by universities answers the needs of the future labour market. Depending on estimates, from 15-50 percent of the current job market will be automated in the next 10 years, prompting the need to adapt to change, said Fung Group Chairperson Victor Fung during the Education in the Digital Age discussion. He suggested the current education system does not prepare students for the future challenges.

By contrast, Accenture Managing Director Anton Mussin argued the current discourse overestimates the dangers of automatization, due to the limitations of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that currently are unsolvable and prevent it from automatising the job market beyond jobs requiring very simple tasks.

“We think currently we are in the winter of the AI life cycle, as only 30 percent of cases actually use some form of AI; the rest is

either declarative or blatant lies. Generally, the current interest is in decline,” he said.

Mussin agreed the existing academic system is inadequate even for today’s job market. Speakers in other parts of the forum broached necessary changes.

In the Building Better Schools and Leading Forward Education Transformation discussions, Kazakh specialists from the high school and higher education sec-

tors tried to answer the question of how the existing system can adapt to these challenges. They argued that better data analysis, educating teachers and a top-down approach could assist in reforming the current system.

EdTech sector representatives offered alternative solutions to the job market supply problem. Coursera India customer success department head Bibin Shivas suggested online education is the best response to the emerging need to acquire new skills. Microsoft Education industry lead Nurlan Zhanybek emphasised the need for AI and acquiring better data for further EdTech sector development. EdTech Fund founder Maksutbek Aitmagambet spoke in favour of investing in the EdTech sector, showing its rapid growth rate. Compared with FinTech sectors, EdTech is of marginal interest to investors, noted Mussin.

Technical skills acquisition and better data access are only a part of the response to existing challenges, said Kazakh start-up Edgravity CEO and founder Aigerim Khafizova. She suggested learning how to learn should be a cornerstone of online education, as without it, it is impossible to

move forward in one’s education. Skillfolio company R&D director Viktoriya Shimanskaya added the importance of also learning soft skills, as according to Skillfolio research, they are a greater predictor of school children’s career success than technical skills.

The FinTech summit was concerned with more lucrative sectors of the economy, as the discussions analysed the latest trends of the sector and the way they apply to Central Asia. Particular attention was given to emerging trends such as blockchain, FinTech cybersecurity and personal data privacy. Lykke Corp. CEO Richard Olsen emphasised new trends do not necessarily threaten the existing financial sectors, as the interests of the investors make those areas more conservative and the new ones develop in a complementary way as a response to the existing finances crises.

The summit also hosted the final of the Visa Everywhere Initiative start-up competition, as well as a series of memorandums of cooperation in ecosystem development initiatives, using technologies such as digital and mobile payments and developing ecosystems for students and FinTech start-ups.

Islamic finance, AIFC law conferences among Astana Finance Days events

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Astana Finance Days hosted the Financing the Economy through Capital Market Instruments Forum, Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Law Conference, Islamic Finance Conference and other events July 3 and 4. Also, several memorandums were signed over the two days of meetings.

On July 3, Astana Finance Days hosted the Financing the Economy through Capital Market Instruments Forum. Speakers at the conference discussed the Silk Road project, as Kazakhstan brands itself a transit hub between China and Europe.

“We have quite ambitious plans for the Silk Road project. We understand that for Kazakhstan it is not only a challenge, but also a great chance and prospect. The government aims to work substan-

tively on each project around this large global Silk Road project,” said Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Zhenis Kassymbek.

Also, Astana Finance Days hosted July 3 the AIFC Law Conference. The speakers discussed the latest changes in the law of the AIFC and explained the legal features of the AIFC. The practical aspects of the application of AIFC law and the possibility of implementing initiatives in maritime and transport law within the framework of the development of the AIFC were also discussed. Special attention was paid to the AIFC Court based on the principles of law of England and Wales. The speakers stressed the importance of alternative dispute resolution at the International Arbitration Centre.

The AIFC Islamic Finance Conference took place during the July 3 and 4 Astana Finance Days. Participants discussed the development of

Islamic finance as well as prospects for the Islamic financial services industry in Kazakhstan. The first day of the conference also included presentations of the Roadmap for Islamic Finance in Kazakhstan and the report of the Islamic International Rating Agency (IIRA) on the main macroeconomic and social factors that characterise Kazakhstan’s economy and affect the country’s sovereign rating.

On July 4, a workshop of subsidiaries of the Islamic Development Bank (ITFC, ICD, ICIEC) was held where Islamic financial instruments aimed at developing the private sector of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation member countries were discussed. There was also a “Halal Lifestyle: the Experience of Tatarstan” session by the Investment Development Agency of Tatarstan that showcased the experience and challenges that Tatarstan faces on the path

to building an Islamic economy.

An arbitration processes demonstration took place July 4. The demonstration of arbitration and mediation processes was conducted under the guidance of the Chair of the IAC Barbara Domann, with the participation of members of the IAC Board, arbitrators and mediators.

Participants were shown how to resolve a commercial dispute through a unique hybrid form of arbitration and mediation. Participants were also able to observe the interactive debates and dialogue of famous Kazakh lawyers and international practitioners.

A series of memorandums was signed over two days. The Astana Financial Services Authority (AFSA), the regulatory body of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), has become a participant to the IOSCO Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding

concerning Consultation and Cooperation and the Exchange of Information (IOSCO MMoU).

Becoming a signatory to the MMoU confirms that the AIFC financial regulatory framework complies with global standards for the information on cross border financial activities in capital markets exchange and the confidential information protection. The AFSA will enhance its supervision of cross-border securities’ transactions to ensure market integrity and stability and to facilitate enforcement of AIFC regulations and rules.

Timothy Bennett, chairman of the board of the Astana International Exchange (AIX) signed memorandums of understanding and cooperation between the China Construction Bank and CITIC Securities, the China Overseas Development Association, investment bank CITIC Securities, law firm Deheng Law Offices and the China Chengxin International Rating Agency (CCXI). In addition, AIX has signed cooperation agreements with PwC Kazakhstan.

A memorandum of understanding between the AIFC and the Busan International Financial City Promotion Centre was also signed

within the framework of Astana Finance Days. Both sides intend to participate in expanding business networks, developing common business strategies and projects aimed at growing the economy and promoting regional projects, as well as sharing knowledge through various programs and events.

The AIFC Court and International Arbitration Centre (IAC) signed Memorandums of Understanding with the European Business Association of Kazakhstan (EUROBAK). EUROBAK is a strategic partner of the AIFC Court and IAC.

The signing ceremony was organised within a roundtable during the Astana Finance Days. The roundtable was opened by Christopher Campbell-Holt, registrar and chief executive of the AIFC Court and IAC.

“Considering the importance of the AIFC Court and the International Arbitration Centre it is a great honour for the European Business Association of Kazakhstan to sign these Memorandums of Understanding. We believe in our continued cooperation in the future,” said EUROBAK Executive Director Julie Kussidi.

AIFC Bureau organises seminars for Kazakh companies preparing for IPOs

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – As part of the 2019 Astana Finance Days, the Astana International Financial Centre’s (AIFC) Bureau for Continuing Professional Development (BCPD) organised Getting Trained for IPO (Initial Public Offering) seminars (July 1 for Kazakh companies which are considering entering international capital markets and attracting foreign investments. The meetings involved approximately 50 companies.

“Within the first half of this year, we have been working very closely with investment projects, enterprises and firms. We asked them what kind of needs they have. They all need investments to expand their capacity... From the other side, we were on board with a few large institutional investors to the AIFC... It’s good – we have investors who want to invest and projects that need them. But in this half year, we realised that there is a gap in projects’ investability – what the projects are and what investors want,” AIFC Deputy Board Chair Yernur Rysmagambetov told The Astana Times.



L-R: Vikas Aggarwal and Yernur Rysmagambetov.

To close the gap, the AIFC team developed a series of workshops for companies willing to venture into the international market, attract foreign investments and launch an IPO.

“We decided to take a proactive approach and initiate a series of workshops and trainings to educate these projects’ holders and companies on what kind of things they need to have to make their companies investable, to attract

foreign investors and, the grand goal, to do an IPO,” he added.

To help companies reach their goals, AIFC promotes the idea of educating their staffs to meet international standards and properly and professionally execute all stages of IPO preparation.

“Doing an IPO is hard, but actually being a public company is even harder, because you need to react faster and have an internationally certified staff. Once you

have engaged in any performance of investment agreement as a foreign investor, you have certain liabilities. We felt like most of the companies in Central Asia and Kazakhstan are not ready... to be in such environment,” he said.

In the last two years, BCPD has created professional development programmes for accountants, financial analysts, investment managers and risk managers and in human resources, corporate governance and English common law. The organisation is now planning to gather the courses into a single training, the first step of which is Getting Trained for IPO. The next step is to select companies which will continue working with AIFC in September, further educating their staff and expanding their capacity.

“What we are trying to do right now is combine all these programmes into one single large programme which we call Getting Trained for IPO... and work with the companies which are seriously willing to attract foreign investors, want to teach their staff first and upgrade their company... If you are thinking about going international, we are promoting the idea of investing in your own staff

and capacity and then going to international markets,” said Rysmagambetov.

Leading experts in key competence areas with international certifications in investment management, risk management, accounting and auditing and personnel management attended the event. The speakers examined practical aspects such as corporate governance, legal support and building relations with investors before, during and after the IPO.

Akshu Campbell-Holt, AIFC Authority senior adviser, spoke about corporate management in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. She noted “the key factors surviving it are environment, social and governance (ESG) investments” that outperformed “traditional investments” in the last several years.

“Companies that have integrated robust ESG practices have displayed lower cost of capital, lower volatility and even fewer instances of bribery, fraud and corruption. These are what we’d like to see as stakeholders of a company,” she said.

“I believe that sustainability is a strong contender to become a new

norm in making investment decisions in general,” she added.

Alexander Van de Putte, AIFC Academic Council chair and Governor’s Council Chief Strategy Officer, moderated the workshop. He talked about the importance of diversity in company structure, particularly in gender, age, ethnicity and most importantly mindset that directly influence decision making in the company. He also showed a timetable presenting the method of implementing corporate governance in pre-IPO companies.

In the first half of the training, participants learned about the audit and governance needs of small and medium businesses from Vikas Aggarwal, Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) regional head of Policy for Emerging Markets; investor relations from AIFC chief private banking officer Heiner Hartwich; human resources, particularly long term motivation strategies of top managers during IPO preparation, from Korn Ferry senior consultant Irina Chernozubova, and IPO regulations, particularly preparing a prospectus for investors to familiarise themselves with companies where they want to invest, from Semion Issyk, a lawyer with Zan Hub.

PEOPLE

Jusan operation sets example for other countries, says UN Children's Rights Committee Chair

B2

CULTURE

Astana Opera to present "Abai" and "Madama Butterfly" in Tashkent

B3

SPORTS

Swimmers take gold, silver at Dolfin Fran Crippen SMOC

B7

World of Nomads festival presents ancient traditions, martial arts competitions



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The fourth Koshpendiler Alemi (World of Nomads) festival took place June 28-30 at the Ethnoaul national cultural complex in the capital.

The festival included competitions of professional archers, kokpar (the ancient nomadic game) players, eagle hunters, warrior battles to create the atmosphere of life of ancient nomads.

“The main purpose of the event is to promote the cultural and historical heritage of nomads, to revive national traditions and ideology of martial arts and to expand the cultural exchanges between countries,” according to the city administration spokesperson.

The equestrian performances of batyrs (warriors) demonstrated the elements of trick riding and

the techniques of equestrian battle. Costumed performances of the Huns, Kangju, Massagetae, Saka, Scythians, Sarmatians, Ti-grahauda and Wusun epochs was also presented. An ethnic music concert was also included in the programme.

Each kokpar team consisted of 22 participants from Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, South Korea, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

Master classes on traditional nomadic art including felting, leather working, working with silver, pottery wheel was also held during the festival.

The concept of the festival is based on the model of Kurultai a celebration of ancient traditions, which serves as a revival of ancient Hungarian and other nomadic cultures. Hungary has hosted the Kurultai annually since 2008. Hungarian anthropologist and re-

searcher Zsolt Andras Biro, who heads the Magyar Turan Foundation, serves as the main consultant of the project.

Overall, this year 108 events were held and more than 80 of these were free of charge as part of the celebration of the Day of the Capital. This year, the cultural programme was socially orientated. The concert organisers said that the proceeds from the sale of tickets will be given to the fund that helps the residents affected by explosions in Arys.

The events kicked off with the annual ceremony of raising the national flag.

Famous Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen presented a concert June 29. Moscow Sovremennik Theatre staged the plays “Woe from Wit” by Griboedov and “The Cherry Orchard” by Chekhov July 3-7.

Thirteen music bands from Alge-

ria, Estonia, France, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mozambique, Russian, South Korea, Spain, Ukraine and Zimbabwe performed at The Spirit of Eurasia 2019 open-air concert July 5 and 6. The colourful performance featured live performances and interactive films about the countries participating in the project.

The tenth Astana Samaly international festival of brass orchestras gathered the best local and foreign brass groups July 4-6.

A concert dedicated to the celebration of the National Day of Dombra was held July 7 on the square near the Kazakh Eli monument.

The International Street Dance Session attracted approximately 1,000 participants July 5-6. This year the competition was held in 32 categories. The event includes team and one-on-one dance battles.

KazakhExport to strengthen Kazakh-Chinese business relations through new office in Xiyang County

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan’s export insurance company will establish and strengthen business relations among Kazakh and Chinese firms through its new representative office in China, reports Inform.kz.

“As part of the development programme for Kazakh companies, we planned to open two offices in China,” said KazakhExport Board Chairman Ruslan Iskakov at the recent signing of KazakhExport’s memorandum with the Rural Supply Cooperation of China’s Shanxi province.

“We see great potential in cooperation between Kazakhstan and China. The very first meetings that we had yesterday and today show us what opportunities have opened up among our countries, which are much greater than previously. I very much hope that our office in Xiyang County will become a centre for the development of bilateral trade.”

KazakhExport’s mission is to boost growth in the export of non-organic goods and services in the priority sectors of Kazakhstan’s economy. Its representative office in Xiyang County will support Kazakh firms by providing informa-

tion and consulting services and reaching out to potential Chinese firms interested in Kazakh products.

“The representative office of KazakhExport will help exporters orient themselves in the Chinese market – identifying firms interested in importing Kazakh products and providing support in organising financing for import. Moreover, through the efforts of the KazakhExport representative office, (Chinese) firms that are often closed off when they are addressed independently will be more open,” said Iskakov.

KazakhExport’s representative offices may also be found in Tajikistan, Tatarstan and Uzbekistan. By year’s end, a network of representative offices will be set up in Central Asian countries and Russia.

According to the Kazakh Ministry of National Economy, January-December trade turnover between Kazakhstan and China was \$11.7 billion. In his May meeting with Chinese Vice Premier and Politburo Standing Committee Member Han Zheng, Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin noted the need to boost the export potential of Kazakh products and strengthen bilateral cooperation on transit corridors, energy, industry and the agro-industrial complex.

Putintseva defeats Osaka for third time, crashes out of Wimbledon second round

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan’s Yulia Putintseva, ranked 39th by the World Tennis Association (WTA), defeated world number two player and U.S. and Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka of Japan, 7-6, 6-2, in the first round at Wimbledon. She advanced to the second round, where she lost 6-4, 7-6 July 3 to Viktorija Golubic of Switzerland (WTA rank 81).

“I was trying to concentrate on each and every point, especially when I was returning,” said Putintseva in her post-match press conference, reported Wtatennis.com. “It was a very tough match, especially mentally, because she (Osaka) is always pressing, pressing, pressing. You have to stay cool.”

Putintseva, 24, previously defeated 21-year-old Osaka at the 2018 Hobart International and 2019 Birmingham Classic.

Continued on Page B7

KazAvtoProm increases car sales, number of domestically-assembled cars hikes

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – KazAvtoProm, the Kazakh Union of Automotive Enterprises, sold 24,700 new passenger and light

commercial vehicles in the country from January-May, a 19.9-percent increase year-on-year.

More than half of the cars, or 13,745 vehicles, were assembled domestically. The share

increased from 47.1 in 2018 to 55.6 percent this year, reported ranking.kz.

The number of imported cars increased only 0.6 percent to 10,971, a yearly decline in share from 52.9 percent to 44.4 per-

cent. LADA continues as the leader in new passenger car sales. The company has sold 6,013 vehicles since the beginning of the year, a 28.1-percent increase.

Toyota sales rose 30.1 percent with 5,413 cars, followed by Hyundai with 4,647 cars, a 76.2-percent hike. The top three brands account for 65 percent of all sold cars in the last five months.

LADA is also the leader for new cars assembled in the country. The company sold 5,925 domestically-produced vehicles, a 30.6-percent increase year-on-year. LADA Granta (2,119) and 4x4 (1,358) were the most popular made in Kazakhstan models. Its Vesta (1,225), Largus (889) and XRAY (331) also made the top ten list.

Hyundai supplied 4,598 domestically-produced cars to the market, an 87.4-percent increase year-on-year. Kazakh plants mostly produce the Hyundai Tucson (1,616), although the top ten also includes its Accent (1,072), Creta (776) and Elantra (765).

KIA sold 1,560 domestically-assembled cars, an annual growth of 54.9 percent.

Nine out of ten domestically-produced models sold were either LADA and Hyundai.



THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

PALACE OF INDEPENDENCE
June 2 - Aug.10 First contact, exhibition

PALACE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
June 25 - Aug.10 Remembering, Dialogues of Memories, exhibition

TSE ART DESTINATION
July 4 - Aug.8 Racing the Galaxy, exhibition

ASTANA OPERA
July 12 at 7 p.m. Kazakh music evening, concert
July 17 at 6 p.m. Scarlet Sails, musical
July 17 at 7 p.m. Kyz Zhibek, opera

ASTANA TRIATHLON PARK
July 13 at 10 a.m. Yarko Kross, marathon
July 14 at 7 a.m. Ironman 70.3 Astana

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Jusan operation sets example for other countries, says UN Children’s Rights Committee Chair

Continued from Page A1

“It is again quite something, because a lot of member states of the United Nations do not do that. They are ready to take children, most of all children from one to six, but not all of them, because they think they are all terrorists already, and certainly not the parents or very rarely the mothers. This is the usual situation and it was so different with Kazakhstan,” said Winter.

She noted the country’s example will be brought to the attention of other nations.

“Believe me, in my visits to other countries and in Geneva, when we speak about the issue, I am going to cite the example of Kazakhstan. It is a really good example. The committee on the rights of the child collects good initiatives, good examples and bad examples and when we have a good example, we always mention a country,” she said.

To ensure smooth integration, work must be done to communicate with local communities nationwide to prevent discrimination.

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“If they do, then we have a big problem and a big risk that they



United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child Chair Renate Winter.

reoffend again, because if they are not accepted, then they do the same thing once again. Because most of the time they do it first of all because they are not accepted, because they do not have the means to live, because they are discriminated against. All these kinds of issues are reasons, but the children, especially children born there, they have no fault; they have not committed anything, they did not ask to be born, but nevertheless, they are now in very difficult situations,” she said.

Winter commended Kazakhstan’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which the country ratified in 1994, as the nation did not revoke citizenship from children, which, she noted, is against any humanitarian law.

Children have to cope with

severe physical and psychological scars. The government, specialised psychologists and social workers need to ensure assistance, support and appropriate care that varies depending on the child’s age.

“A programme for children age three to adapt to a new environment is completely different from a programme that has to deal with a six to ten-year-old child who has already seen the decapitations, cruelties, lost one parent, experienced bombs and so on. These children are completely different, because they are all traumatised,” she said.

Whether the action was forced or of their free will is also very hard to determine.

“You never know if it was free will. What is free will for a child in this regard? The child does not

have informed consent to anything. There are several types of programmes and there is no programme to cover all. That is impossible,” said Winter.

Young prisoners, aged 16-18, present multiple risks, as they can recruit while incarcerated. Penal Reform International (PRI), which assists counties, including Kazakhstan, in criminal justice and penal reforms, is currently in negotiations with the Kazakh government to provide experts who would organise training for local officials.

“You cannot train somebody who would not like to be trained and you cannot give information to somebody who says ‘I know it all.’ If it is not a case and officials would like to have some kind of information and assistance, I am very sure PRI is ready to help, as is UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund). A combination of both is very good, because they come from different angles,” said Winter.

She praised Kazakhstan’s juvenile code. Nineteen specialised courts, initiated by the government in 2007, work specifically with children.

“It is one of the countries in the region and I think the only one that has a real juvenile code with specialised juvenile judges. The specialisation is not that advanced, but it is there already and judges are doing whatever they can with the not-so-good law that they have had until now,” she said.

Winter recommended incorporating diversion programmes and mediation into the country’s juvenile penal law.

“On top of it, PRI is working

to convince legislators to really change either the new code, which will be the best solution, or to put in at least a few articles concerning new things and developments like diversion and alternatives in old law. We are ready and can train the judges in this regard,” she said.

She noted the importance to prevent mixing the penal code and family code.

“The family code is a civil

Young prisoners, aged 16-18, present multiple risks, as they can recruit while incarcerated. Penal Reform International (PRI), which assists counties, including Kazakhstan, in criminal justice and penal reforms, is currently in negotiations with the Kazakh government to provide experts who would organise training for local officials.

matter code that has to deal with family issues, divorce, custody rights, heritage and adoption, but not with penal matters. What is

important now is to say that the child with penal responsibility (in Kazakhstan, the age is 14) is an issue for the penal justice and juvenile code, but a child under that age is criminally not responsible and therefore belongs to the family code. But a family code can never, ever send such a child to a closed institution,” she said.

The government must prevent police from sending young children to a closed institution, as the decision is only within the purview of judges.

“As soon as you speak about a closed institution, it is deprivation of liberty whatever name the closed institution has and deprivation of liberty is an attack on the political rights of the person. This can only be done by a judge; not by the police, not by the administration and not by the parents,” said Winter.

She also noted the importance of creating a foster family institution.

“In a country where families love children, it should be not that difficult to find a family where you can put a difficult child who is grateful not to be in the institution. In the institution, you always have the same problem. The stronger, the worst of the children, so to say, is the boss and this is the problem for all the other children. There are quite a lot of children in the institution who have not done anything wrong; nothing, no crime, not even a small one, only unruly behaviour. If the teacher is not happy with me, it is not a reason to send me to an institution, but this is happening and it should not happen,” she added.

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.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Astana Opera to present “Abai” and “Madama Butterfly” in Tashkent

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana Opera will stage Latyf Khamidi and Akhmet Zhubanov’s opera “Abai” July 10 and Giacomo Puccini’s opera “Madama Butterfly” July 13 in Tashkent. The company’s first tour to Uzbekistan is being organised as part of the Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan.

Saltanat Akhmetova, Sundet Baigozhin, Meir Baines, Talgat Galeev, Beimbet Tanarykov, Yerzhan Saipov and Tatyana Vitsinskaya will perform the main parts. Opera music director Alan Buribayev will conduct the symphony orchestra.

“Next year will mark the 175th anniversary of great Kazakh poet, composer and philosopher Abai. Thanks to the maestro, ‘Abai’ opera was performed for the first time at the Meininger Staatstheater in South Thuringia. The Astana Opera House also presented the national classical masterpiece in Italy. The members of the creative team received the State Prize of Kazakhstan for this production in 2018. The opera is one of the major works in the culture and art of Kazakhstan,” according to the opera house release.

Stage director Lorenzo Amato and set designer Ezio Frigerio will present “Madama Butterfly.” Zhannat Baktai will play the title role and Medet Chotabayev



A scene from “Madama Butterfly” opera.

will perform the part of American Navy Lieutenant B. F. Pinkerton.

The opera tells a story of Cio-Cio-san (Butterfly), a young geisha

known for her beauty and grace, who falls in love with Pinkerton.

The scenery includes an 18-metre pool and minkas (traditional Japa-

nese houses) made of wood and bamboo and decorated with sakura (cherry blossoms) and drawings.

The Astana Opera Ballet Company is currently in Italy, where it presented “Spartacus” July 1-2 at the Rome Opera House. Principal soloist Bakhtiyar Adamzhan performed the title role and Aigerim Beketayeva played Phrygia.

“First of all, Spartacus is a man with his strengths and weaknesses. I try to show his character in different periods of his life – in love, in battles, in moments of despair... I hope that this makes my part different from other soloists, because they show him only as a warrior and his character is interpreted one-dimensionally throughout the entire ballet,” said Adamzhan after the performance.

Ballet company Artistic Director Altynai Asylmuratova said the troupe did a good job and the performance was an exciting and important moment for them.

“If we managed to impress the Italian audience, it means that our work was not in vain. Performing in Rome, the capital of Italy, on this stage, is certainly not easy, because it is difficult to surprise such viewers. I did not expect a reaction like this; there was a great resonance about our company, about the Astana Opera,” she said.

The theatre is scheduled to present the gala ballet programme July 5 in Kaunas, Lithuania.

International Yoga Day celebrated

By Ainur Seidakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The fifth International Day of Yoga was marked across Kazakhstan from June 15 to 23 with events organised by the embassy of India and the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre. All events were free and open to the public.

The celebrations started with an inaugural ceremony held at Yoga Park in Nur-Sultan June 15. Celebratory events continued in the cities of Almaty, Arkalyk, Atyrau, Karaganda, Kostanai, Taraz and Temirtau.

In his welcome speech in Nur-Sultan, Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan Prabhat Kumar declared “Yoga for Peace, Harmony and Progress” to be the motto for the celebrations.

“You would be interested to know that this year the Indian Prime Minister’s Award for Outstanding Contribution for the Promotion and Development of Yoga

has also been announced, which includes two categories for international practitioners and promoters of yoga, namely individual and organisation. For 2019, the individual category award has been given to Ms. Antonietta Rozzi of

The Centre for Indian Classical Dances held yoga workshops every day from June 24 to 28 at the Ak Danat Resort in the Zerenda resort zone. International Yoga Day Celebrations finished in Nur-Sultan June 22 with a grand finale organised in the forecourt of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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Italy, and under the organisation category, Japan Yoga Niketan has received this award. I would be very happy to see yoga practitioners – individuals and organisations – of Kazakhstan receiving this prestigious award as well,” said Kumar.

organised in the forecourt of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The events in Nur-Sultan were organised with the support of the Nur-Sultan akimat and the akimat of Saryarka District, with the National Museum as a venue partner.

ONGC Videsh Limited and Tengri Bank sponsored the celebrations, and Turan mineral water and Yoga Family, Astana supported activities.

The events are intended to promote yoga and disseminate information about the benefits of a regular yoga practice, particularly for city residents susceptible to stress and lifestyle-related illnesses. Demanding schedules can lead to substance abuse, alcoholism, diabetes and other evils, practitioners say. Yoga offers a solution for these problems by combining physical, mental and spiritual pursuits to achieve harmony of a body and mind. Yoga’s emphasis on unity and harmony should also resonate as nations of the world tackle global challenges, its promoters note.

International Day of Yoga has been celebrated every year since 2015 after 177 UN member states co-sponsored a resolution declaring June 21 the day of its recognition.

Kazakhstan, UNESCO to establish ‘International Centre for Rapprochement of Cultures’



L-R: Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Gulshara Abdykalikova and General Director Audrey Azoulay at UNESCO centre.

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan and the United Nations signed an agreement June 25 in Paris to establish an international centre for the rapprochement of cultures in Almaty under UNESCO, reports primeminister.kz.

The centre will promote cultural studies and research in related fields, prepare publications and organise educational activities on the history and practice of intercultural interaction in Central Asia and other regions.

UNESCO General Director Audrey Azoulay, who signed the agreement along with Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Gulshara Abdykalikova, thanked Kazakhstan for contributing to UNESCO’s work and said the centre will facilitate intercultural dialogue on a global and regional scale.

Abdykalikova briefed Azoulay on the development of Turkestan city and other UNESCO-related projects and reaffirmed Kazakhstan’s commitment to UNESCO’s work. Abdykalikova said Kazakhstan takes into account the World Heritage Site status of the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi and treats it in accordance with international standards for the

protection of historical and cultural monuments.

The deputy prime minister also asked UNESCO to support a celebration marking the 175th anniversary of Kazakh poet and thinker Abai Kunanbayuly at the organisation’s headquarters next year.

Kazakhstan has been a member of UNESCO since May 22, 1992. The National Commission of Kazakhstan for UNESCO and Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) coordinates the work with the organisation.

Currently, Kazakhstan has five UNESCO World Heritage sites, with three cultural and two nature sites. The cultural sites are the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (inscribed in 2003, considered to be the best-preserved Timurid Empire construction), Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly (2004, the site features 500 petroglyphs or rock carvings, which scientists date back to the latter half of the second millennium BC) and Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor (2014, includes 33 ancient and historical sites). The natural sites are Saryaka (2008, steppe and lakes of Northern Kazakhstan) and the Western Tien-Shan (2016, mountain range system).



Atyrau radio station unveils a studio, larger transmitter



Photo credit: Inform.kz

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The Atyrau radio station opened a new studio and launched new radio transmitter June 25, devoting the event to the Day of Communications and Information Workers. The radio station also recently unveiled a new logo.

“Atyrau TV channel is one of the fundamental and large institutions of the region. More than 80 years ago, it began to go on air. Today, the Atyrau TV and radio channel meets all the requirements of the time, it is equipped with up-to-date equipment, pleases its viewers and lis-

teners with a variety of informative and fascinating programmes. Broadcasting is conducted from

“Atyrau TV channel is one of the fundamental and large institutions of the region. More than 80 years ago, it began to go on air. Today, the Atyrau TV and radio channel meets all the requirements of the time, it is equipped with up-to-date equipment...”

the scene of events taking place in the country. The population is timely informed about all political and economic news,” Akim (Governor) of the Atyrau Region Nurlan Nogayev said.

Atyrau radio broadcasts at 102.0 FM and is the Atyrau regional branch of the Kazakhstan radio and TV company. The first issue of television and radio broadcasts was devoted to destructive explosions in in the Turkestan Region, in the city of Arys, and to the assistance that the Atyrau people have provided to victims. A unique feature of the broadcasting format is that for the first time in Atyrau, the radio broadcast was connected to the TV air. Thus, residents were able not only listen to them on the radio, but also to watch the broadcasts using their TVs, Kazinform reports.

“Today, here is a presentation of the new extension of the building, a new radio studio has opened in a new format. I wish you success and good luck!” Nogayev said.

The radio station’s old transmitter was only 250 kilowatts in power and it covered only three kilometres area. The new radio transmitter, which is 1,000 kilowatts, expanded the range to 60 kilometres. High-rise buildings are obstacles for radio waves. Given this, the new radio transmitter was installed on a 180-metre TV tower located outside the city.

A new extension building for the radio station was also opened. A three-story building of 1,000 square metres has the offices of administrative and management personnel, engineers, editorial staff and correspondents.

Kindergarten shares innovative ideas for effective learning with regional teachers

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The experienced and qualified teachers at Karlygash kindergarten under the Presidential Affairs Department medical centre use best practices by sharing knowledge with preschool teachers from the regions.

They demonstrated that exchange of ideas in mid-June when more than 100 teachers participated in a seminar in the capital dedicated to developing preschool education in the context of modern requirements. The event gathered leading experts, scholars and practitioners in the field to discuss innovative educational methods.

“Our teachers have studied the best international practices and adapted them to the local education system over the last 10 years. Now, they are ready to share the knowledge and lessons learned with preschool teachers nationwide,” said Presidential Affairs Department medical centre head Alexey Tsoy in his opening remarks. The medical centre is the parent company for the kindergarten.

Three kindergartens with a design capacity of 750 seats are located on the left bank of the city. They are open for children of civil service workers.

“First director Gulnara Abdullina is the ideological founder of our kindergarten. She introduced new techniques and contributed to the development of preschool education. Our regulatory documents developed on the basis of the regulatory frame-



work and practical works help our teachers and staff. We are also proud to have a wide range of additional services,” said Karlygash kindergarten director Gulnara Iskakova.

Innovative methodologist Assel Sadvakasova noted the 4Cs – creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration in schools – are the main components in education.

“Our kindergarten has 10 years of experience. We have smart rooms and interactive sandboxes for motor development. We also use the

Reggio Emilia philosophy in the learning process. Children should have many ways to express themselves through drama, music, painting, singing, dancing, designing and discussion activities. This requires a creative environment and space such as centres of activity, creativity and design,” she said.

The innovative methods include the language immersion used in bilingual language education, which in Estonia starts in kindergarten.

To develop communication skills

and visual perception, teachers present materials with the help of interactive equipment such as boards with different content, floors and sandboxes, a virtual museum and touch panels.

The STEAM technology helps to develop mathematical skills and the fundamentals of robotics and creative activity.

The kindergarten organised the Green-studio laboratory, where the water system, hydroponics and vertical flowerbeds demonstrate intelligent farming. A creative and experimental atelier is also available.

“We plan to organise an international forum in Sept. 19-20 and to invite professionals and experts from other countries to share the knowledge and advanced methods in teaching. There are more questions than answers today in the field of preschool education. The lack of specialists is also a challenge,” she said.

The kindergarten pays special attention to diet and healthy lifestyle, said medical support department head and paediatrician Saida Khal-mukhamedova.

“We make a special menu for the season. The menu is reviewed and analysed by a dietician. We also want to introduce a varied menu. Next year, we will make a menu taking into account the individual characteristics of children and the allergic diseases. We carry out daily corrections in the menu. In the future, we want to use the elements of molecular cuisine. We use some elements of stone therapy and water therapy by Sebastian Kneipp’s method,” she said.

GPS tracking technology to prevent cattle loss

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Cattle in the Almaty Region are being tracked by Global Positioning System (GPS) as part of a \$700,000 pilot project developed by South Korean companies LivesTalk and Samsung Electronics and supported by Kazakh Invest.

A GPS device costs less than \$300 and consists of three transmitters and waterproof collars and a receiver for mobile phone monitoring, reported Invest.gov.kz. Fifteen antennas were installed in the region to operate 30 devices donated to farmers as part of the project launch.

“The lack of Internet connectivity in this area creates a special need for our product in view of annual cattle losses in the highland pastures,” said LivesTalk CEO Yuri Yon. “On average, up to 10 percent of cattle is lost annually. Our tracking system is the only one in Kazakhstan that can operate without an Internet connection.”

Kumtogen Farm Chairperson Kanat Moldasanov has approximately 400 horses and cows and more than 2,000 sheep on his farm. He struggles with keeping track of cattle manually, because when grazing, by the end of the day the animals may have wandered sev-

eral kilometres from their morning location.

“Cattle breeding is a very labour-intensive activity,” he said. “In the mountains, it is not easy to keep track of cattle. On top of this, cases of cattle raiding have become more frequent. It is great that we are given the opportunity to test this system for free. Even if we have to pay, it is better to spend money from the sale of two horses on the devices rather than lose more cattle. These devices will also be of tremendous help to police officers, because cattle raiders are becoming more and more agile every year.”

Kazakh Invest assisted in pre-

paring and providing all the necessary permits to implement the project.

“We attracted these investors through our efforts with the Kazakh Embassy in South Korea,” said Kazakh Invest Almaty Region Office Director Zangar Salimbayev. “We targeted investors engaged in high-tech development projects that we do not yet have in our country.”

The pilot project will conclude in September and data from the GPS devices will be collected and analysed to improve the product. LivesTalk plans to produce the devices in the region if project is deemed a success.

Kazakh authorities work to resolve conflict at Tengiz oilfield

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – More than 40 people received minor injuries after a conflict, 11 a.m., June 29, among Consolidated Contracting Engineering & Procurement S.A.L Offshore (CCEP) workers at the Tengiz oil and gas field in the Zhylyoi district of the Atyrau Region. The Kazakh government and law enforcement agencies promptly reached the site to ensure the safety of all employees.

Atyrau Region Akim (Governor) Nurlan Nogayev visited the field the following day to meet with Tengizchevroil (TCO) management and CCEP workers, reported the regional akimat’s (administration) press service.

“This problem arose due to different working conditions; it is a systemic issue that needs to be addressed both by TCO management and all contractors. For our part, we are ready to provide maximum support. Investors need to understand that while working in our country, they need to comply with the law and moral and ethical standards that do not offend anyone’s dignity. In the near future, we will hold a meeting with all the project participants, where all the first leaders of the companies will be present. We will solve these issues. One of the main ones is that working conditions should be equal for all,” said Nogayev.

The regional akimat has created



Photo credit: bnews.kz

an interdepartmental commission headed by Atyrau Region First Deputy Akim Serik Shapkenov to investigate the incident, prompted by a perceived indecency in a social media post by a foreign worker with a Kazakh female, and resolve issues of labour organisation at the field. TCO is a member of the commission.

CCEP workers can also include their representatives on the commission, said Nogayev in a meeting with the employees.

Atyrau Region Akim (Governor) Nurlan Nogayev at the June 30 meeting with the Tengizchevroil (TCO) management. Photo credit: bnews.kz. First Vice Minister of Energy Makhambet Dosmukhambetov and KazMunayGas Deputy

In response to the incident, CCEP General Director Hisham Kawash visited Atyrau, made a public apology on the behalf of the company and posted a video on social media platforms.

“I want to apologise to all whom Eli Daoud has offended. On behalf of CCC (Consolidated Contractors Company) management and CCC staff, I want to say that it was a totally inappropriate incident which does not comply with CCC policy, values and principles. Immediately after I learned about this incident, Eli was dismissed and (his contract was) terminated. We will make a full internal investigation of this event. We will take all necessary actions as required. Putting my hand on my heart, I want to say that CCC treats our Kazakh brothers with deep respect. I want to apologise again for what happened,” he said.

Nogayev met July 1 with the ambassadors of Jordan Yousuf Abdul Ghani, Lebanon Giscard El Khoury and Palestine Montaser Abu Zeid, the akimat press service reported. The ambassadors expressed their readiness to provide all possible assistance to prevent such incidents from recurring in the future.

“We know that the incident that has been at the Tengiz field is isolated, it does not reflect Kazakh people who are welcoming and hospitable. We enjoy very strong relations between Jordan and Kazakhstan. The akim assured us that the safety regarding our citizens is

very important to Kazakhstan and investigation is going on... We hope that our employees will go and resume their duties as soon as possible... The Kazakh government cooperates with us in this matter and provides us with all the necessary support from the very beginning,” said Abdul Ghani.

“We are not here, as I heard some rumors, to ask our citizens to leave Kazakhstan... Lebanon and Kazakhstan are friends. If (there is) any issue (between our countries), we can discuss it in friendly and open manner as it happened with the akim,” said El Khoury.

“We would not want this problem to spoil the historical relations between Palestine and Kazakhstan. Our leadership and the Palestinian people highly appreciate the principled positions of Kazakhstan, led by First President Nursultan Nazarbayev, as it supports all the resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the United Nations concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict,” Abu Zeid said.

The Atyrau Region Police Department launched a pre-trial investigation. The conflict has been settled and the situation is stable.

TCO is continuing to operate on a regular basis. Work on the Future Growth Project (FGP) construction site was temporarily suspended and TCO will soon resume production. Other work on FGP construction sites was restored and all other FGP construction locations have resumed work.

“There is a need to control the issue of paying equal wages to foreign and local workers. You cannot pay different salaries for the same job,” Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said during his June 4 meeting with Atyrau Region citizens.

Mutual understanding is one of TCO’s values and the company expects its employees and those from contracting agencies to respect diversity and prevent discrimination.

TCO, established by Kazakhstan and Chevron in 1993, is a Kazakh company engaged in the production and sale of crude oil, liquid and dry gas and sulphur. Chevron Corporation is a 50-percent partner, with smaller portions owned by KazMunayGas (20 percent), ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Ventures (25 percent) and LukArco (5 percent).

TCO is operating simultaneously on combined projects with FGP and Wellhead Pressure Management Project (WPMP). FGP and WPMP will be increasing oil production at the Tengiz field by approximately 12 million tonnes per year (260,000 barrels per day), resulting in an annual output of approximately 39 million tonnes (850,000 barrels per day). FGP is aiming towards increasing production capacities and WPMP will provide full-fledged operation of existing Tengiz oilfields by reducing the pressure on the wells and increasing the pressure in the existing six complex technology lines.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Kazakhstan continues justice system reform efforts



Children's rights conference in Nur-Sultan on June 27.

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan continued its efforts to improve and reform its justice system with a national conference in the nation's capital June 27 on the country's juvenile penal system.

“Kazakhstan is a country that implements a fair criminal justice policy for children, meeting the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there are still several issues that require special attention from both the state and society. It is very important for the administration of fair justice to be provided with the opportunity for its implementation and alternative ways of dealing with each case,” said UN Children's Rights Chair Renate Winter.

The conference was titled Standing on Protection of the Rights of the Children of Kazakhstan. It was organised by Penal Reform International in Central Asia with the Kazakh Mazhilis and the Ministry of Education and Science. It gathered experts from the government, civil society, academia and other areas.

At the conference, Deputy of the Mazhilis (lower chamber

of Parliament) Zagipa Baliyeva talked about existing reforms and the need for further work on the juvenile penal system. She high-

“Kazakhstan is a country that implements a fair criminal justice policy for children, meeting the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there are still several issues that require special attention from both the state and society.”

lighted that there should be a separation of duties performed by the state and civil society regarding juvenile justice, as the goal is adding legislative measures to the existing law. Baliyeva said there is a need to reformat existing special schools by avoiding punitive measures.

Yerzhan Zhirenbai, representing the Committee of Children's Rights Protection of the Ministry of Education and Science, described measures already undertaken by the state. The latest draft of the law regarding juvenile justice took approximately six years in the making, due to the amount of research that had to be undertaken.

UNICEF in Kazakhstan Childhood Protection Programme Coordinator Meiramgul Alybekova presented a policy proposal to restructure the penal system by making three more specialised levels of social services for minors. This would help avoid the application of blanket punitive measures as the solution to any infractions by minors.

Winter also noted that special schools where Kazakh children can be sent if their schools or families can't handle them are not discussed in terms of penal reform, even though the same rules should apply there.

Penal Reform International in Central Asia Regional Director Azamat Shambilov also said the country needs to better address instances when children end up in detention with their parents because their caregivers are serving sentences.

Country to create more favourable conditions for ethnic brethren

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan is attempting to create better conditions for oralmans (ethnic Kazakhs leaving in other states and returning to their historic motherland) by improving the legislation concerning them and creating additional adaptation and integration centres, said Vice Minister of Labour and Social Security Akmadi Sarbasov.

According to the current legislation, oralmans who want to apply for Kazakh citizenship must provide documents supporting the fact that they resided in another country before Kazakhstan established its independence in 1991. The current legislation excludes oralpersons born after that year and the amendment would tackle this problem by redefining the term.

“In this regard, the concept of oralman will be clarified in the new edition, according to which the main criterion will be the fact that the ethnic Kazakh was not previously a citizen of Kazakhstan,” said Sarbasov.

Oralmans will be able to apply for a residence permit and Ka-

zakh citizenship simultaneously, as they require the same set of documents.

Oralman adaptations and integration centres will be created in the Akmola, East Kazakhstan, Kostanai, North Kazakhstan and Pavlodar regions. Three centres are currently operating in Karaganda, Shymkent and Aksukent village in the Turkestan Region.

According to the amendments, the ability to receive applications from citizens for inclusion in the regional quota for receiving immigrants would be assigned to employment centres. The competence

currently belongs to employment coordination departments.

According to official data posted by Tengrinews.kz, 957,764 oralmans arrived in Kazakhstan from 1991-2016. Counting their descendants, as well as those who arrived without the help of the state resettlement programme, there are more than one million oralmans in the country, or 10 percent of all ethnic Kazakhs.

The highest number of oralmans reside in the Almaty, Mangystau and South Kazakhstan regions, as well as Almaty, the capital and Taraz.



Mobile app provides legal assistance to young families

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government unveiled June 25 a mobile app to provide legal assistance to young families, announced Minister of Information and Societal Development Dauren Abayev at a public meeting.

The app is not yet available but developers hope it will be available soon through the Apple Store and Google Market.

The government created the app using data from 200 Kazakh youth service centres. The app can answer legal questions common to young families and was created as a part of a national family values promotion programme, Abayev said.

“A big problem for Kazakhstan is the decline in family values. According to the British edition of The Economist, Kazakhstan is among the top ten countries with a high divorce rate. Elbasy (Leader of the Nation, the constitutional title accorded to the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev) at the opening ceremony of the Year of Youth set the goal of reducing the divorce rate among the young families. We are now systematically working in this direction,” said Abayev.

As part of the national programme to promote family values, the government is advising young couples who apply for marriage registration on topics such as family and marriage values and the

importance of having children. The national programme also provides psychological and legal support for couples in the process of divorcing. Family resource support centres for family courts have been opened in eight regions of Kazakhstan.

“Today, we work with the akimats to open such centres in all regions and cities of the country. Social services for the prevention of domestic violence are also organised. Inspectors for the protection of women from violence and juvenile affairs are to be involved in this work,” said Abayev.

Nazarbayev declared in 2018 that 2019 be the Year of Youth. The opening ceremony of the Year of Youth was Jan. 23 in Nur-Sultan.

Kaskasu Science School prepares young scientists to commercialise their projects

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kaskasu Science School, an interdisciplinary summer school, held a five-day educational programme June 24-28 for young scientists and researchers to help them commercialise their projects and technological developments. The programme selected only 27 individuals from more than 100 applicants.

Student organisation heads, chairs of Young Scientists' Councils and scientific research institutes, teachers and research staff under 30 years old participated in the national educational project.

The young scientists, who used the week to design and develop a project, had an opportunity to present it to potential investors. The programme differed from regular classrooms and laboratories by offering an intensive one-week opportunity to work in teams in a less formal atmosphere.

The Foundation of the First Kazakh President – Elbasy organised the summer school in Kaskasu gorge, in the Turkestan Region. The foundation's science council member and certified and well-known business coach Gani Abadan mentored the participants.

“Our main task as organisers is to create comfortable conditions for the participants, thanks

to which young scientists must learn to present their own projects in a popular language to convey their scientific ideas to society,

media representatives and the business sphere. Kazakh science has reached a level where it is not enough for scientists to conduct

research and develop projects. There is a need to commercialise scientific research, attract investments and find various sources

of funding and support,” said Sukhrab Zhaparov, science council deputy chair, PhD in Medical Sciences and a winner of the 100



New Faces of Kazakhstan project, reported inform.kz.

The participants demonstrated their leadership skills, the ability to think outside the box, generate creative ideas and find innovative solutions in difficult situations.

The participants attended lectures, trainings and master classes to grasp the basics of project management, learn how to constructively resolve conflicts and overcome the fear of public speaking. They were also trained in copywriting skills to promote research projects through the media and social networks.

“Participation in the Kaskasu Science School is a great opportunity for me to gain new knowledge, experience and skills in presenting, promoting and commercialising my research and ideas. In addition, we all have already received a big bonus – new contacts and acquaintances, which later will bring fruitful results and, I hope, will grow into joint research. I want to thank the Foundation of the First President for the opportunity to participate and be in a great place, Kaskasu, with the best participants and excellent mentors,” said project participant Irina Chidunchi, PhD and chair of the Council of Young Scientists at Toraygyrov Pavlodar State University. The authors of the best research project received a financial grant from the foundation.

Bozzhyra tract “sugar castles” fascinate tourists

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – Bozzhyra is a picturesque tract on the Mangystau Region’s Ustyurt Plateau, decorated with chalk mountains that visitors call “sugar castles.” The most famous are the 200-metre tall outcrops resembling two fangs and the dazzling white landscapes are reminiscent of Monument Valley in Arizona in the U.S.

The tract measures 17 kilometres north to south and 11 kilometres east to west and the huge area requires more than one day to become acquainted with it. Although the spot is still little known and difficult for tourists to reach, travellers are attracted by its fascinating landscapes.

On the north, Bozzhyra borders Zhosaly Hill, reaching 268 metres above sea level. On the southwest, it abuts the Baisara tract. Its western boundary ends with the Ustyurt Plateau cliff and the southern side with Karashek sor (solonchak), reported silkadv.com.

Traveling around Bozzhyra usually consists of two parts – car trips and hiking. The distance from Zhanaozen to Bozzhyra is 148 kilometres; from Aktau, 298 kilome-



tres. The Beket Ata Necropolis – Zhanaozen Road is approximately 20 kilometres from the tract.

The most famous point is the foot of the fangs, where travellers paved the road. It is a convenient spot to pitch a tent camp and walk to different parts of the valley.

Hiking trails range from five-eight kilometres and the local terrain, although rugged, does not require special mountain training. Visitors only need to use caution when climbing and descending the chalk slopes. The only unpleasant feature of Bozzhyra might be frequent strong winds, which may rise suddenly and from which it is impossible to hide.

The tract also boasts remnant chameleon mountains that change their appearance from different angles, a mountain yurt, sheer gorges, intricately washed-out cretaceous layers, stone concretions and fossils.

The car route is connected with the exit through Zhosaly Hill to the edge of the plateau, which can be reached from Beket Ata Necropolis – Zhanaozen Road. Arans (ancient hunting structures made of stones for the corral of wild animals) can be found at almost every stop.

Photo credit: kazakh-rt.kz

High-altitude Assy-Turgen Observatory offers visitors steppe plus stars

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Built in 1981, the Assy-Turgen Observatory (ATO) conducts astronomical observations for the Fesenkov Astrophysical Institute. The observatory is located on the picturesque Assy-Turgen plateau, 85 kilometres east of Almaty and 2,750 metres above sea level.

The high transparency of the atmosphere in the Assy-Turgen plateau, plus a lack of light pollution

and turbulence create the ideal astro-climate for stargazing.

The institute had built two telescope towers, a one-metre telescope and some hotel facilities by 1991. The Assy-Turgen Observatory’s 1-metre telescope is used to investigate Herbig Ae/Be, symbiotic stars and binary systems with X-ray components.

The institute began to set up a 1.5-metre AZT-20 reflector telescope, completing its dome and building by the beginning of the 1990s, but the collapse of

the Soviet Union suspended construction, and it wasn’t resumed until 2014. AZT-20 was finally equipped with an Apogee UV42 ultraviolet camera that allowed the observatory to really take advantage of its altitude. The scientists saw the first light with the telescope in October 2016 and put it into test operation July 27, 2017. The telescope is one of the world’s largest.

Tourists can take one- or two-day guided tours to see the observatory and enjoy the nature of

Assy-Turgen plateau, as it is also an incredibly beautiful place to visit.

In late spring and summer, Assy-Turgen offers mountain landscapes and a huge green pasture area that extends to the Bartogai reservoir. In centuries past, it was a waypoint for caravans of merchants from Europe to China and India.

The road to the observatory lies through the Turgen valley, one of the favourite destinations for a Sunday rest among locals. The valley offers a wide range of entertainment, including a trout farm, an ostrich farm, an open-air museum, Issyk mounds, and more. In a two-hour ride, there are also the famous Turgen waterfalls.

The plateau’s fauna includes marmots, snakes, deer, bears, ibis, leopards, lynx, argali, Siberian mountain goats and Siberian stags. Wolves are regular guests in winter.

The average air temperature on the plateau in July reaches 16 degrees Celsius. It often rains in summer, and sometimes even snows. At the same time, the nearby Bartogai reservoir area in summer is very hot and temperatures can reach 50 degrees Celsius.

The institute plans to install new telescopes serving scientific organisations and universities in the Assy-Turgen observatory. In the near future, it is planned to modify the existing telescope’s optical system and equip it with an enlightened quartz-fluorite focus reducer, which will more than quadruple its field of view.



Photo credit: informburo.kz

The Astrophysical Institute.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy launches more convenient ticket sales system

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), the nation’s railway and logistics company, launched a new ticket sales system on July 1. The system is aimed at countering resales, which have become a problem during the summer tourist season, reported Ten-gernews.kz.

The change was recommended by the Adal Zhol project office, which seeks to identify and eliminate unofficial tickets sold to and returned by travellers.

“The main advantage of the development is the blocking of the mechanism of ‘catching of places,’

which unscrupulous cashiers use to sell tickets at an inflated price. Thanks to the new functionality, each passenger now has equal access to the seats provided,” said Adal Zhol head Islambek Maishekin.

The returned tickets will not appear in the system immediately, which will make the job of finding resellers more difficult.

“They (tickets) can appear in the system in 40 minutes or in an hour,” said a KTZ press centre representative on June 27.

The system will make it impossible to purchase tickets in bulk. The earlier version allowed buying up to 40 tickets at once, which was abused by re-

sellers who changed the names of the ticket holders and charged inflated prices to the new buyers.

The issue was raised at the April 5 Anti-Corruption Agency briefing by Alibek Sultanov, head of the service and client department at Passazhirskie Perevozki (Passenger Transportation), a KTZ subsidiary which provides local and suburban mass passenger transportation. He argued in favour of introducing legal measures to counter ticket resellers, adding they are a much-needed but long process.

While the problem has existed for a while, it became particularly difficult for summer travellers

who were unable to buy tickets without paying twice as much to resellers.

“I began to plan a trip to Alakol in mid-June. We tried the Kazakhstan Temir Zholy electronic system and there were no tickets available until Aug. 2. We went to the cashier at the station, where we were only able to find two tickets for Aug. 2. It didn’t work for us, so we went and bought four tickets from a second-hand dealer for July 20. They were twice as expensive. People say that trains go empty; dealers cannot sell all the tickets they bought,” Almaty resident Olesya told the website.

SCAT Airlines launches direct Nur-Sultan – Tokyo flight

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – SCAT Airlines launched a direct Nur-Sultan – Tokyo flight July 6, Capital Day in Kazakhstan. The flight, taking approximately seven hours to Tokyo and eight hours back, will leave every Saturday from the Kazakh capital.

The cost of the round-trip flight is approximately 200,000 tenge (US\$519.40). The Kazakh government is subsidising the fee with 1.4 billion tenge (US\$3.6 million) this year to enhance commercialisation.

“I want to congratulate you all on the opening of the direct Nur-Sultan – Tokyo flight. This became possible in accordance with the instructions of the First President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Kazakhstan and Japan, as you know, have long-standing friendly, economic and social ties... In all cases, when direct flights open between countries, this always contributes to the intensive growth of all aspects of relations between them,” said Civil Aviation Committee Chair Talgat Lastayev at the July 3 presentation.

He stressed opening the direction will contribute to developing the Astana International Financial Centre, as the committee “puts in priority connections with large financial centres, one of which is in the Tokyo metropolis.” The committee plans to open similar direct flights to Singapore and Shanghai.

“I think that as a result of this work we should get a connection with all major cities that are within reach, seven-eight hours of flight. This is the goal that was set for us and what we are working on,” he said.

Japanese Ambassador to Kazakhstan Tatsuhiko Kasai attended the event.

“We have been waiting for this flight for a long time. We are not only diplomats, but also businesspeople, leaders of different countries... Of course, this brings our countries closer, encourages friendly exchange, business and scientific exchange. Thank you for that,” he said before the flight.

He noted the first flight also coincided with a celebration for his country, known in Japan as Tanabata (the Star Festival).

“The plane will take off from Nur-Sultan July 6 and will arrive in Tokyo July 7. This day, July 7, is a special day for us (the Japanese), Tanabata or Star Festival. There are two stars in the sky, Hikoboshi and Orihime; they personify a couple and they meet once a year... Those passengers who take this flight will witness this meeting. This is a symbol of happiness for us. Therefore, I believe that your flight will be successful and passengers on this flight will receive good luck for the whole year,” said Kasai before the flight.

SCAT Vice President Vladimir Sytnik thanked the state institutions and the embassy for their support in organising the flight.

“I think it is significant. Moreover, this flight opens on the Day of the Capital, as Mr. Ambassador said; in Japan it is also a holiday,” he noted. “We will do everything to make this flight for passengers pass quickly.”

The frequency is expected to increase to two times a week in August. Air Astana, which was initially announced as flight’s operator, is undertaking the required procedures to provide the direct flight in the future, said Lastayev.



L-R: Vladimir Sytnik, Tatsuhiko Kasai and Talgat Lastayev.

Photo credit: mid.gov.kz

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2019

Almaty Marathon's open water swim promotes healthy lifestyle for all



Photo credit: almaty-marathon.kz

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The annual open water swim portion of the Almaty Marathon was held June 30 at the Heaven Club recreation area in the Almaty Region's Kapshagai reservoir. The event, working in conjunction with the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, organised a special swim for children with autism.

Amateur swimmers overcame distances of 500 metres, two kilometres and three kilometres. The best at the shortest distance were Anton Khamatov and Yekaterina Tsaboleva.

The two-kilometre winners were identified in three age categories. The top swimmers were Ayia Mashtieva and Kirill Uvarov (18-34), Yevgeny Alexandrov and Galina Rezvantseva (35-49) and Vladislav Buzunov and Aliya Kanankyz (over 50).

The leaders in the longest distance were also awarded in age categories. The winners were Olga Yershova and Danel Zhulamanov (18-34), Dina Shaimerdenova and Murat Usmanov (34-49) and Zein-eziyep Yerezhpova (over 50). All participants received the traditional commemorative medals and the results were posted on the Almaty Marathon website.

"The swim of the Almaty Marathon is our annual event. It's already three years old. Today, we see people's growing interest in cyclical sports. It's fashionable. Thanks to these events, we instill the culture of mass sports, show its beauty, benefit and attract more people to our movement," said Saltanat Kazybayeva, executive director of the Courage to be the First corporate fund.

"Unfortunately, in Almaty there are not too many places for swimming in open water. However, Kapshagai provides a great opportunity to develop one's own skills. The main thing is to do it, being confident in your abilities and under the control of the trainer," she added.

The Almaty Marathon team continues to support charitable projects. The separate distance for children with autism was for youngsters from the Mercy Voluntary Society's We Will Win project, part of Challenge Another You!

"Our children struggle with autism. They are often self-absorbed; it can be difficult for them to interact with the outside world and they are in dire need of physical exercise. Swimming makes a person calm and helps to master and feel one's body."

Twenty-two children and their parents participated and received medals.

Studies show that there is a connection between mind and body through swimming. In water, children not only develop their muscles, motor skills and coordination, but also improve speech and develop the brain and general intelligence. Our children work on themselves every day to become full members of society. Stories are known of many cases in which even celebrities suffered from autism, but this did not prevent them from creating masterpieces of art or being phenomenal scientists, writers, athletes and even presidents," said Saiyara Mikhramova, We Will Win project coordinator.

The swim's organisers were the Courage to be the First corporate fund, World Class Almaty fitness club and Shakhmardan Yessenov scientific and educational foundation.

Swimmers take gold, silver at Dolfin Fran Crippen SMOC

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh swimmers Adilbek Mussin and Dmitri Balandin earned gold and silver at the Dolfin Fran Crippen Swim Meet of Champions June 22-24 in Southern California (United States), reported Olympic.kz.

Mussin took gold and silver; Balandin, silver. The latter swam the first day in the 200-metre breaststroke crown-style competition, finishing behind Asian Games 2018 winner Yan Zibei of China. He also finished second in the 100-metre breaststroke with a time of 1.00.12.

The same day Mussin earned the



Photo credit: Kazinform

silver and set a new Kazakh record in the 200-metre butterfly. He

topped the country's best time in the preliminary swim, then bested

his new mark in the finals with a time of 1:59.48.

Mussin won gold in the 50-metre butterfly June 24 with a time of 23.76. In the 100 metres, he set a new Kazakh record of 52.42 in reaching the finals. He took silver in the last race with a time of 52.61.

Adil Kaskabay finished 13th in the 100-metre freestyle and fifth in the 100-metre backstroke, the latter with a time of 57.43 seconds.

Balandin became a national sensation in 2016 after winning gold at the Rio Olympics, reported Olympic.kz. He has already won a licence to participate in the 2020 Games in Tokyo.

Balandin, Kaskabay and Mussin are preparing for the 2019 World Cup, which will be held this summer in South Korea. They will spend a special preparatory period in the United States, where renowned swimming coach Dave Salo will supervise their training process, as well as some of their rivals.

Putintseva defeats Osaka for third time, crashes out of Wimbledon second round



Photo credit: wtatennis.com

Yulia Putintseva

Continued from Page B1

"Honestly, I think I was able to keep my concentration up high in all these three matches," she said.

"I was trying to make it as uncomfortable for her as possible. That's the only thing."

Osaka was mostly speechless during her press conference.

"There are answers to questions that you guys ask that I still have not figured out yet," she said.

"In all, the unseeded 24-year-old played a clean match from

start to finish, balancing 15 winners to just seven unforced errors as she converted three of seven breakpoint opportunities in total. While Osaka managed 34 winners of her own, 37 unforced errors ultimately undid her aggressive game plan and ended her fortnight at SW19," reported Wtatennis.com in its assessment of the match.

Even though Putintseva's favourite surface is clay, she found playing on grass "a great experience."

"I remember how much I hated grass courts. With my coach, I was fighting. I was saying that I do not want to play here. I used to play more on clay courts, where it is more spin, dropshots and serve kick," she said.

Lutsenko wins gold in individual, group races at cycling championships

Continued from Page A1

"Many thought that I would not come to the championships (this year) and my participation was perhaps a surprise, but it was in my plans," said Lutsenko in a June 30 post-race interview, reported Olympic.kz. "It is important for my region, for the North Kazakhstan Region and for me. I gladly agreed to take part. I did the maximum for the region, I won three gold medals."

The cyclist has represented the Astana Pro Team since 2013 and will participate in major international cycling championships in the year ahead.

"It is a great honour and pride to wear a national champion's jersey one more year before the important Tour de France race," he wrote in a July 1 Instagram post (@lutsenko_alexey).

"Next year will be an Olympic one, but I have ambitions for every competitive year. There is no such thing that I focus exclusively on one competition. This season, there are also many important starts, (such as) the UCI Road World Championships at the end of the year. But 2020 will be important. I will concentrate on the Olympic Games," he said in the post-race interview.



Photo credit: olympic.kz

Alexey Lutsenko

Olympic Committee head attends opening of Olympic House in Lausanne

By Saltanat Botou

NUR-SULTAN – Timur Kulibayev, president of the National Olympic Committee of Kazakhstan (NOC), took part in the 125th anniversary celebration of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne June 23, during which IOC President Thomas Bach officially opened Olympic House, the new headquarters of the organisation. Olympic House is recognised as one of the world's most sustainable buildings.

"The IOC acts as a catalyst for cooperation between all parties to the Olympic family. Keeping its best traditions, the IOC for 125 years has created conditions and opportunities for athletic development for athletes from all over the world, in particular for young, promising ones. We were lucky to



Photo credit: olympic.kz

Thomas Bach (L) and Ulrich Maurer (R) are cutting the ribbon at the Olympic House's opening ceremony.

be witnesses and participants of a historic event, the opening of a new IOC headquarters. The new Olympic House is the embodiment of our aspirations to create a better world and preserve the basic principles of the IOC, such as the

spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play," said Kulibayev, according to olympic.kz.

Bach received the ceremonial key for Olympic House and cut the ribbon along with Swiss President Ulrich Maurer.



Photo credit: olympic.kz

More than 700 people, including IOC members, heads of 206 national Olympic committees and international sports federations and athletes, attended the event.

The building, which the U.S. Green Building Council has called one of the most sustainable buildings in the world, will house all

500 IOC staff, which had previously been scattered across several places in Lausanne.

Olympic House, on the shores of Lake Geneva, was built by the Danish architectural firm 3XN. It consumes 60 percent less water and 35 percent less energy than average offices. During the construc-

tion, more than 95 percent of the materials of the former IOC office were used or recycled, and 95 percent of the construction waste was also recycled.

The new headquarters has a glass facade, a spiral staircase with a picture of five rings and a roof described by the IOC as in the shape of a dove.

"We wanted it to be more than just another office building. Of course, we wanted to unite everyone – the Olympic family and all IOC employees – under one roof. In this sense, the Olympic House is an expression of our unity. At the same time, we wanted the Olympic House to include elements of sustainable development, trust and youth – the three pillars of the 2020 Olympic agenda. The building reflects three elements that are so important to our mission," said Bach.

He emphasised that the Olympic House will be "home to the entire Olympic movement."

"To my dear friends and colleagues, members of the IOC, 206 National Olympic Committees and international sports federations – to all of you, I say, welcome home," said the IOC president.

Nur-Sultan hosts capital day celebrations, raises money for Arys assistance



By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Celebrations began July 4 for the 2019 Day of the Capital celebration marking the 21st anniversary of the establishment of Nur-Sultan, formerly Astana, as the capital of Kazakhstan. The events featured concerts, festivals, karaoke competitions and more than 100 other events that were attended by more than 450,000 people, reports Ten-

grinews.kz website. The celebratory events started with the Shattyq international children’s competition. Children had a chance to showcase their singing, dancing and designing skills in this competition at the city centre square. Also, The Echo of Asia circus festival started July 4. It brought together 70 circus performers from 13 countries. This festival was free and attracted a large audience. On July 5, celebrations started with the national flag raising ceremony, which signalled the official

start of the celebration. The day was also marked by the beginning of The Spirit of Eurasia 2019 music festival that took place on the EXPO territory. This festival gathered musicians from all regions of Eurasia and the world who played music partially inspired by their heritage. Among the artists who played on the festival stage were Ak Dan Gwang Chil from South Korea, Childo Tomas from Mozambique and Spain, ZeMe from Latvia, Ashina from Kazakhstan and other artists.

The capital hosted a literature festival that gathered emerging Kazakh poets and writers. Readings of Abai (Kazakh poet), theatrical performances, books exhibition and other events took place during the festival. The celebrations took place not only in the capital centre but in more distant districts as well. The “Dumanda Saryarka” series of concerts was held in the Industrialnyi, Mezhdunarodnyi, Zheleznodorozhny, Prigorodnoye and Koktal-1 neighbourhoods. Kazakh pop

stars and children’s entertainers also performed in the districts. On July 6, which was the official date, a new martial arts centre opened in the capital and a gala festival of martial arts took place. Also, July 6, the Astana Samaly 10th Astana International Festival of Orchestras took place in the capital. The festival event that attracted the largest audience was the orchestras parade through the streets of the capital. On the evening of July 6, Bar-

ys Arena ice palace hosted professional boxing. Kazakh boxer Zhankosh Turarov won the title that evening. This year’s capital city day fireworks were cancelled due to the recent tragic explosions in the city of Arys, reported nur.kz. The number of celebratory events was three times fewer than a regular number with unused funds directed towards social projects. Also, all of the proceeds from tickets sales for the non-free events were directed to Arys disaster relief.

Hundreds race through capital Duathlon

By Anzhela Kaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The Nur-Sultan Duathlon 2019 was held in the Kazakh capital June 23. About 500 people took part in this event. The competition consisted of a five-kilometre run, followed by a 20-kilometre cycling race and another 2.5-kilometre run. The route of the race went through Kunayev Street, Kabanbai Batyr Avenue, Akmeshit Street, Dostyk Street and Mangilik El Avenue. The bike segment also started from Kunayev Street, then continued along Turan Avenue to the Star of Astana monument, where participants turned around and continued along Turan Avenue to Dostyk Street, ending with a ride along Mangilik El Avenue to Kunayev Street to finish. Men and women were divided into four age categories: 16 to 29 years old, 30 to 39 years old, 40 to 49 years old and 50 and older. The first participant finished 57 minutes after the start. With a large margin between him and his nearest rival, Mark Starostin was the absolute winner of the duathlon.

“I am a master of sports of international class in ski racing. It is the first time that I’ve participated in this kind of competition. My participation today is a preparation for the upcoming Ironman triathlon. We are lucky with the weather. Organisation is at a fairly good level,” the winner said at the finish. Daria Starostina, Mark’s sister, was the absolute champion among women. “Our dad and mom are masters of sports in skiing. It has been 15 years since I left major sport, but I train for myself. Today I decided to participate in the sports life of our city. I did not [try to keep a certain pace], I ran according to my state of health,” said Starostina. Vsevolod Yevchenko, another participant, also made the duathlon a family event. “I participated with my brother and my dad. Our dad has taken a place. My current achievement is that I have won over myself. The hardest thing is to start,” said Yevchenko. According to the results of the competition, the top three men in the 16 to 29 group were winner

Alimzhan Baltabek followed by Dmitry Adamovich and Dmitry Ink. Among women in that group, the winner was Ekaterina Brynza, with Dinara Kaparova in second and Ekaterina Brynza third. Arman Galimov was the winner among men 30 to 39, followed by Yevgeny Leontyev and Sergey Prokhorov. On top of the women was Gulmira Amenova, trailed by Elena Ponomareva and Elmira Moldasheva. Marat Farrahov won among men 40 to 49 years old, with Kairat Koyanbayev finishing second and Vadim Shulinov third. Gulmira Tuenbaeva won among women in that group, followed by Madina Berkaliyeva. Rinat Salikzhanov took the gold in the 50 and over group, followed by Mendybai Alimgazinov and Marat Alimzhanov. Among women, first place went to Tatyana Mikhaleva, second to Irina Mustafina. All the winners were given prizes. By tradition, at the end of the competition, five bicycles were played out among the participants of the duathlon.

Capital Day celebrations include 100 events, event spending scaled back

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh capital celebrated its 21st birthday July 6. As part of the celebration, approximately 100 events were held, 73 of which were free. Some scheduled events were cancelled because of the recent tragic explosions at an ammunition depot in Arys. The explosions killed at least three people and caused the evacuation of thousands from the city. “It is worth noting that annually the celebration of the Day of the Capital includes more than 300 events, but this year, in order to optimise costs, the budget for the festive events was reduced by three times. Such major events as Open Air with the participation of Kazakh and Russian pop stars, an open air gala concert, mass festivities on the main squares of the capital and other costly activities were removed from the sched-

ule,” said Deputy Akim (Mayor) of Nur-Sultan Yerlan Kanalimov at a briefing in the Central Communications Service. Some scheduled events were cancelled because of the recent tragic explosions at an ammunition depot in Arys. The celebration day events were held at eight residential areas in the outskirts of Nur-Sultan, parks, squares, boulevards and along the Yessil River embankment. Locating the celebrations throughout the city was meant to avoid mass congestion in the central part of the city and concentrate as much as possible on ensuring public safety.

“According to calculations, we will spend 300-400 million tenge (US\$800,000-\$1 million), no more. This is much less than before. We have to cut the budget three times. This is not only a culture, it is the improvement of facilities, security, the device stage, technical equipment,” Kanalimov said before the celebrations. He also said the celebration cannot be cancelled completely. “You cannot completely cancel it. It’s much more modest than it was. The Capital Day marks the 21st year. This is already a favourite holiday not only for the capital residents, but for all Kazakh people. It is held in the summer period, three days off, a lot of people come to us from all regions of the country. The city’s population is 1.1 million people, plus foreign tourists come to this. That is, we can’t cancel it completely. Everyone needs rest, whatever it is,” Kanalimov explained.