



Tokayev's first state-of-the-nation address sets tone for socially oriented and business friendly state

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev delivered his first state-of-the-nation address as the head of state at the Sept. 2 joint session of the Kazakh Parliament. The hour-long address provided specific instructions to government officials and calls on legislators to help strengthen civil society and social security, support domestic businesses and develop the economy.

Kazakhstan will continue its development by progressing the model set forth by Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, said Tokayev.

"The political transformation that I promised will be implemented gradually taking into account interests of the state and people. We will pursue political reforms without running ahead of ourselves," he said.

The changes will start with an increase in civil society's involvement in shaping government policies. This will be accomplished through the recent establishment of the National Council of Public Trust. The council is meant to help the government "quickly and efficiently respond to all constructive requests of citizens," Tokayev said.



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"It is necessary to support civil society, to involve it in the discussion of the most urgent national tasks," he said.

The future elections to the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) and maslikhats (regional or city assemblies) will also help broaden the country's multiparty system, he said.

The Kazakh President also instructed officials to allow more peaceful public rallies and to allow those protests to take place in more prominent locations.

"If peaceful rallies do not seek to violate the law or the safety of citizens, they need to be embraced and to be given permissions required by law and

offered special locations, not in the outskirts of cities, by the way," Tokayev said. The Presidential Administration has also created a department to ensure public appeals to local government bodies are heard and considered.

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Banking sector reforms are critical to developing Kazakh economy, says EBRD President

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which has an extensive portfolio of 262 projects in Kazakhstan, has invested nearly \$9.1 billion since the country's independence in 1991. The bank now seeks to grow its assistance in banking sector reforms, said EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti in a recent interview with a group of journalists in the capital.

gard. This is quite natural in many emerging markets. We think we can help with that, with the reform, but also investment in the banking sector going forward," he said.

In considering providing assistance for the country's banking sector reforms, EBRD will need a complete picture of banks' asset quality and capital adequacy.

"We would like to see more consolidation in the banking sector; we would like to see some of the integrity concerns that have been well-known slowly being cleared up. But the key action is an asset quality review this year," he said.

The National Bank of Kazakhstan started a review Aug. 1 of the country's 14 banks, which make up 87 percent of its banking sector, and plans to finish the work by December.

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Kazakhstan marks International Day against Nuclear Tests with non-proliferation award

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev presented Aug. 29 the Nazarbayev Prize for a Nuclear-Free-World and Global Security to the relatives of former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Yukiya Amano, who passed away in July, and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo in Nur-Sultan.

Established in 2016, the Nazarbayev Prize is awarded to prominent individuals for their contribution to nuclear disarmament and global security.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev praised the significant efforts undertaken by Amano and Zerbo towards nuclear non-proliferation and security.

"Heading the IAEA, Yukiya Amano played a key role in the creation of the low-enriched uranium bank in Kazakhstan and contributed to the settlement of Iran's nuclear issue. The activities and efforts of Lassina Zerbo have



Photo credit: akonrad.kz

L-R: Mrs. Zerbo, CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan's First President Nursultan Nazarbayev and widow of former IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano and his brother Mari Amano at the award ceremony in Nur-Sultan on Aug. 29.

resulted in the near completion of the international monitoring network for the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. He also took the initiative to establish the CTBTO Group of Eminent Persons and the CTBTO Youth Group," said Tokayev.

"This year marks the 25th anniversary since Kazakhstan signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, our country's membership in the IAEA as well as the 10th anniversary since the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free

zone in Central Asia," said Tokayev.

The award ceremony coincided with the Aug. 29 International Day against Nuclear Tests, which was unanimously designated by the United Nations in 2009.

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Kazakhstan shows positive model of integration, says OSCE HCNM

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – How can a country ensure social integration for national minorities? Why is a state language key for integration? How do digital media help to ease inter-ethnic tensions?

"I saw it in different contexts, not only at the House of Friendship in Nur-Sultan; I saw it in the Parliament, where I witnessed that there are parliamentary representatives of many ethnic communities," he added.

HCNM provided its recommendations related to policing in multi-ethnic societies.

The Astana Times exclusively interviewed Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) Lamberto Zannier Sept. 3 to learn more about the organisation's activities and the importance of integration.

"In Kazakhstan, we observe an openness to all ethnic groups and every one of them should be given a chance to emerge in the top positions. We promote equal opportunities for all without discrimination and that will help institutions like police that need to be trusted by the people. It will make it more effective, because then every community will trust that the police represent everybody and not only be seen as representing one ethnic group. There are good examples that Kazakhstan can present to the international community," he said.

As part of his visit to Kazakhstan, Zannier met with state officials and ministers to outline issues for them to address. He also sat with many ethnic groups to explore the way forward in terms of further engagement.

Since 2012, HCNM has been implementing the Central Asia Education Programme to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of education.

"Kazakhstan is an active OSCE participating state. During its chairmanship [in 2010] Kazakhstan organised an OSCE summit, which remains the last summit in the organisation. Nobody else managed to organise one after that. It also showed leadership. Some of the conclusions of that summit still resonate strongly in the organisation," he said.

"In the area of education, authorities in Kazakhstan have invested a lot. There are schools in languages of different ethnic groups, whether it is Uzbek, Tajik, Uighur or Russian. We recommend in all our documents that everybody should learn the state language, as this is a key tool for integration. If minorities or ethnic groups really want to play a role in society, feel that this is their home and they want to become a full part of Kazakhstan's society, then they also need to invest in learning the language. At the same time, the authorities should continue to ensure that groups also have the opportunity to learn their native language," he said.

The idea of creating a common Eurasian security space remains an important objective for the organisation "even though now geopolitics have changed and have become much more of an issue."

Zannier noted the positive dynamics in the last few years in terms of developing cooperation in Central Asia. Most importantly, the region can boast having ethnically diverse societies.

"Dialogue is increasingly difficult in the organisation, but it is more needed than ever. We need to try to find areas of cooperation and to find solutions to problems. The OSCE does remain one of the only fora where you find this space," he added.

The office of High Commissioner provides recommendations for government bodies and societies regarding common challenges and the best practice to improve inter-ethnic relations.

"We have a set of recommendations on integration of what we call diverse societies. Many of these recommendations are relevant for Kazakhstan, but none of these recommendations is valid in absolute terms or is applicable anywhere. Everything needs to be adjusted to specific situations. There is a need to take into account the history, culture and the specific sensitivities of the people who live in Kazakhstan, both majorities and minorities," he said.

In many areas, Kazakhstan is at the forefront as a positive model of integration, said Zannier. The nation is a good way to show how to integrate diversity in society.

"When you have the dialogue, you have the beginning of the solution to all the problems. I visited all the Central Asian countries. In some countries, I raised the issue of schools for their ethnic groups and assistance to these schools. For instance, in Uzbekistan I visited the Tajik philology department at Fergana State University. Uzbeks are training teachers to be teachers in Tajik schools in Uzbekistan. It is a very good example of openness or cooperation," he said.

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President calls for gradual reforms in first National Council of Public Trust meeting

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said during the Sept. 6 first meeting of the National Council of Public Trust that reforms are needed to improve life and government in Kazakhstan but that those reforms should be adopted gradually and only after thorough discussion.

"The reforms will not be carried out for the sake of reform, but out of necessity. The need for reforms has ripened, everyone understands this. But what reforms we should carry out, this is a question that

should be discussed here, together, certainly we must make agreed decisions. Sometimes some slogans and appeals look extremely attractive, but their authors are not responsible to the country. Reforms for the sake of reforms are a sure way to crisis and loss of state control," Tokayev said.

The National Council of Public Trust was established over the summer by Tokayev to better facilitate public input in the formation of national policies.

Tokayev also said in the meeting that before adopting any economic reforms, Kazakhstan's socio-political life needs transformation, in-

cluding a more active role for the Kazakh Parliament, reported the Akorda press service.

"I am convinced that Kazakhstan should remain a state with a presidential form of government, but Parliament will have to take its rightful place in the political system," he said.

The President also supported the council's proposals to develop a "listening state" that should achieve its strategic development goals with input from civil society.

"I support the proposal to include representatives of the civil sector in the supervisory boards of national companies, socio-

entrepreneurial corporations, and collegiums of central government bodies. This will improve transparency, including in the quasi-public sector, which has fallen from the public attention zone. Members of the National Council propose the widespread practice of Open Akimat (city or regional administration). Indeed, we need to move to new standards of managerial culture. And the Open Akimat will allow the local government to be a service providing to society, remove the barriers between the population and civil servants," Tokayev said.

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STATE-OF-THE-NATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

Public response generally positive

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – People in Kazakhstan shared their thoughts online and with The Astana Times regarding President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's Sept. 2 first state-of-the-nation address.

Tokayev was elected President June 9 in an early election and in his first state-of-the-nation address outlined his vision for "a state that listens" and responds to citizens' constructive criticism. A complete summary of his address can be found elsewhere in this publication.

"It is necessary to support civil society, to involve it in the discussion of the most pressing tasks for the state. That is why a representative National Council of Public Trust has been created, which will work on a rotational basis," he said of the council that will meet for the first time Sept. 6 to determine council rules.

He also called for more flexibility

in allowing public rallies and for those rallies to be allowed in more prominent locations.

"According to the Constitution, our citizens have the right to freedom of expression. If peaceful rallies do not aim to violate the law and calmness of the citizens, they need to be embraced and they need to be given permissions required by law and offered special locations. Not on the outskirts of cities, by the way," he added.

Tokayev also called for the toughening of penalties "for sexual violence, pedophilia, drug trafficking, human trafficking and other serious crimes, especially those against children."

"We have moved away from excessively repressive measures and harsh punitive practices. However, numerous serious crimes still occur in the country. We got carried away with the humanisation of legislation, having lost sight of the fundamental rights of citizens," he said.

The President also suggested launching a pilot project on assessing akimats' (local administrations) efficacy through surveys, so that "if more than 30 percent of surveyed people believe that the akim (mayor) of a city or village is ineffective, then this is a reason to set up a special commission."

He also aims to strengthen the role of Kazakh as a state language, saying "the time will come when it will turn into a language of interethnic communication."

People responded to Tokayev's remarks online and in interviews with The Astana Times.

In response to the President's call for efforts to allow more public rallies, Oyan Qazaqstan (Wake Up Kazakhstan) civic movement activist Assem Zhapisheva responded on Twitter (@zhapisheva), saying she would like to see the government require "only notification" of a protest, not seeing the necessity for its permission. Zhapisheva also urged during an August

30 rally for "the government and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to listen (to the movement) and begin a dialogue with civil society... to bring national law in line with international law."

A twenty-year-old university student who only gave his first name Alisher told The Astana Times he agreed with Tokayev's call for tougher penalties for sexual violence, but said it is important for the humanisation of the justice system to continue.

He emphasised that "it is also important that reform in humanising the justice system, particularly the rehabilitation of offenders, does not cease in the midst of toughening laws."

Alisher also said he supported Tokayev's task to make local authorities more accountable through surveys, considering it important "to monitor the (pilot project's) implementation to ensure that the opinions of people are taken into account, not made-up statistics or non-representative survey results."

Tokayev also noted in his address the need to strengthen the protections for children and in

July Aruzhan Sain was appointed Kazakhstan's ombudswoman for children's rights. A thirty-two-year-old mother of three, who gave the name Togzhan, told The Astana Times that "the country faces high rates of suicide among teenagers and abuse in children's homes (but that) Sain seems up for the tough job."

"The politics of language in Kazakhstan is an important issue," Astana Debate Union Co-founder Aigerim Shadeyeva also said in response to Tokayev's instruction to strengthen Kazakh as a state language. "We must not necessarily focus on strengthening the status of the Kazakh language so much as on addressing communication issues among various socioeconomic groups in our country so that people may better understand each other and each other's problems and so that no language group would face discrimination in educational institutions and the job market or at entertainment centres, such as cafes, cinemas or restaurants, due to the fact that they do not know a given language, particularly Kazakh."

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan has adopted a road map to promote exporting non-primary goods and services. The plan eliminates internal and external barriers, which will reduce the negative factors and consequences faced by producers and exporters while promoting domestic products to foreign markets. The measures will also enhance export sectors through economic and income policies by supporting national exports through creating favourable competitive conditions and trade policy. The road map was developed based on the conceptual and reformatory proposals by non-resource sector exporters and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. It also contains new approaches to providing state support measures and offers 81 events, 52 to promote exporting non-primary goods and 29 for services.

The Chess at School programme was launched this year in 160 schools in 80 towns and villages, bringing the total to more than 15,000 children studying the strategy board game in 205 schools nationwide. The Kazakhstan Chess Federation began the programme in 2017. "Special textbooks were developed and 223 teachers and 25 psychologists took part in trainings. The effects of chess on development of children were assessed in 22 schools. A training section, a glossary of chess terminology and an online platform for trainers are available on the federation's website," said executive director Irina Grishchenko.

FlyArystan, the national low-cost airline, will begin flights from Kostanai to Nur-Sultan on Oct. 3, reported the company's press service. Ticket prices will begin at 5,999 tenge (US\$15) one way, which is 73 percent lower than competitors' existing pricing. Daily one-hour flights will be operated on 180-seat Airbus A320 aircraft and tickets are available on the airline's website until March 28, 2020. Earlier, FlyArystan expanded its route network with flights from Shymkent to Nur-Sultan starting Oct. 3 and also announced plans to double flights from Pavlodar to the capital beginning the following day.

BI Group has started work on the ModeX modular home plant at the Astana Industrial special economic zone in Nur-Sultan, reported Primeminister.kz. Modular housing construction, an advanced technology used in countries such as China, Germany and Singapore, reduces the cost and time of construction and makes housing more affordable. The project will create in excess of 700 jobs and 405,000 square metres of housing per year. The first phase of the plant will be commissioned in December. "The construction sector is the most dynamically developing sector of the economy. This project will not only increase housing affordability, but also give impetus to the development of the construction industry," said Prime Minister Askar Mamin at the plant's Sept. 2 opening ceremony.

Kazakh geologists have identified more than a dozen sedimentary basins which, according to the forecast, can produce approximately 130 billion tonnes of fuel. "There is a need now to intensify exploration, since at least 15 years went by between the discovery and launch of a new field. The KazMunayGas national company started to develop a geological exploration programme for 2021-2025. The programme will indicate the areas of prospective sites and the necessary financial resources. A set of measures will be developed to improve legislation and provide tax incentives to attract investment," said Minister of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources Magzum Mirzagaliyev at the Sept. 6 oil and gas sector meeting in Atyrau.

The Astana Motors car assembly company will provide 60 18-metre Golden Dragon buses to Almaty transport parks, reported Kazinform. The larger-capacity vehicles will serve routes with intensive passenger traffic and the specific engines are adapted to operate on environmentally friendly gas fuels. The first buses will start running in December. All buses meet the Euro-5 standard requirements and a test drive is available for all fleets.

First National Council meeting

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"It is time to give an impetus to political competition, expand the real participation of citizens in the political life of the country, and promote the development of a multiparty system. The state is obliged to listen to its citizens and, most importantly, to hear them," he said.

Tokayev also asked the National Council to further develop in

working groups the initiatives he presented in his state-of-the-nation address.

Tokayev stressed the role of the National Council in developing initiatives and modernising the country, saying the members' varied opinions and positions will help the country develop.

"Each of the members of the National Council has their own opinion and position. This is a completely natural state of a developed

civil society. We all must proceed from the thesis that I expressed in my inaugural speech, 'Different opinions – one nation.' Indeed, without alternative, initiative and activity, there is no development," he said.

The National Council includes more than 40 representatives of civil society, public activists, political scientists and experts. Tokayev chairs the council himself.

Socially oriented state

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Such a department is necessary as "often people are forced to turn to the president because of the deafness and closed officials in the centre and in the localities," he said.

The President also said Kazakhstan needs to increase the penalties for sexual violence. The country had softened the penalties in May 2000 to encourage more victims to report these crimes. That effort, however, did not have the intended effect and the government has determined tougher penalties are needed.

"We have gotten carried away with the humanisation of legislation, having lost sight of the fundamental rights of citizens. We urgently need to tighten the punishment for sexual violence, paedophilia, drug trafficking, human trafficking and other grave crimes, especially against children," the President said.

The President also instructed national officials to increase the pay of civil protection officers and reform the Ministry of Internal Affairs. He instructed the allocation of 173 billion tenge (US\$445,587.5) toward these tasks.

"One of most pressing tasks is full-fledged reform of the law enforcement system.

The image of police as an instrument of power of the state will gradually recede into the past. It will become a body to provide services to the citizens to ensure their security. At the first stage, we need to reform, before end of 2020, the work of the Committee of Administrative Police. We need to do it in a quality way and without gung-ho approaches," he said.

The government will gradually cut a quarter of civil servants from 2020 to 2024. This is intended to leave workers that are more productive and provide them with material incentives, Tokayev said.

The President also called for the exemption of micro and small businesses from taxes on core activities for three years starting from 2020 and tasked the government to reduce the numbers of state-owned companies.

The reduction of the companies operating in strategic sectors, however, should be carefully approached, Tokayev said, to prevent a substitution of state-owned monopolies by private monopolies.

He also said the government will seize unused agricultural land.

"Many of those who received land leases for free from the state keep the land for future use without working on it. A whole layer of the so-called latifundists has developed in the country," explained the President.

The President emphasised the use of land should be entirely the responsibility of the Kazakh people. He also stressed that foreigners will not be able to buy lands in the country.

"The situation is aggravated by the low level of direct taxes on land," he said.

Address emphasises public involvement in government, say experts

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's first state-of-the-nation address focused on constructive public dialogue as a basis for a stable and prosperous Kazakhstan, experts say.

"President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's state-of-the-nation address was interesting not only in terms of what reforms and visions were presented, but also in terms of the fact that this was the first presentation of the country's development vision for the medium term. Many initiatives and concepts were presented. The goals and tasks set are based on the continuity of reforms declared by Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev," Expert and Associate Professor of the Department of Political Science of Lev Gumilyov Eurasian National University Mukhit-Ardager Sydyknazarov said in an interview for this story.

Tokayev set the task for legislators and government to strengthen civil society and social security, support domestic business and economic development at the Sept. 2 joint session of the Kazakh Parliament.

The President proposed a new concept of a "state that listens" with an interactive dialogue between civil society and government. A National Council of Public Trust has been established to facilitate this dialogue.

"The main problems in our society should be discussed and find their solution in the Parliament, but not in the streets. The authorities should efficiently respond to all constructive requests of people. There would be no need for public councils if the Maslikhats (regional or city assemblies) fully fulfilled their role at the district, city and regional levels. The local authorities should support civil society," said Sydyknazarov.

He also said major economic reforms require the modernisation of the socio-political life.

"The First President has built a strong and independent state with all its institutions of statehood during 30 years. Now, at a new stage of development, the country is facing new challenges," he said.

The expert also spoke about Tokayev's initiative to facilitate the development of a multiparty system.

"The head of state set the task to contribute to the development of a

multiparty system, political competition and pluralism of opinions in the country because it is important for the stability of the political system in the long run. A multiparty system will push the ruling party to learn people's problems, implement more tasks and be more demanding. Effective feedback, as Tokayev mentions in his address, continues the course declared by Nur Otan Party leader Nazarbayev at the recent congress," he said.

Sydyknazarov also said he thought Tokayev's initiative to allow more peaceful rallies is important for the development of civil society.

"The President said that if peaceful rallies do not seek to violate the law or calmness of citizens, then authorities need to go forward and give permission to conduct them and allocate special places for these, not on the outskirts. I think this is an important thing for a civil society," Sydyknazarov said.

The expert also emphasised the unity of the nation in its diversity as a key message.

"The concept of Civil Society Development 2025 will be adopted. Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, the 1150th anniversary of philosopher Al-Farabi and the 175th anniversary of poet Abai Kunanbayev. All these events are important dates for Kazakh people," he said.

According to Sydyknazarov, the President also paid much attention to ensuring the rights and security of citizens. A key factor in enhancing the protection of citizens' rights and their security is the reforms of the judicial and law enforcement systems.

"For the first time, Tokayev draws attention to the provocation of crime, corruption and the quality of court decisions. And he does not focus on the state, but on the individual. All contradictions and ambiguities of the legislation should be interpreted in favour of citizens. The presumption of innocence is taken at a high level," he said.

Tokayev's instructions to toughen punishments for drug dealing, paedophilia, sexual assault and other serious violations of the laws are crucial.

Zarema Shaukenova, director of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President, said constructive public dialogue is the

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan presented the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) ratification instrument to the United Nations (UN) Secretariat Aug. 29 in New York. The official ceremony, which coincided with the UN International Day against Nuclear Tests, was attended by representatives of the UN and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the coalition of more than 500 non-governmental organisations from 103 countries committed to banning nuclear weapons. The participants commended Kazakhstan's strong commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Thirty-nine Kazakh students won the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree scholarship, the biggest education programme in the European Union (EU). They were selected from nearly 585 fellow national applicants, joining this year's 2,273 Erasmus scholarship recipients worldwide. The Kazakh students will begin their studies at universities in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. During the pre-departure orientation session in Nur-Sultan organised by the EU Delegation, EU Ambassador Sven-Olov Carlsson said high quality education is the "key for resilient societies," with resilience, along with prosperity, being the two main pillars of the recently adopted EU Strategy for Central Asia. The programme, he noted, contributes to "people empowerment."

Popular Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen announced his Dec. 10 solo concert will be held at the Barclays Centre in New York, a venue that can accommodate up to 19,000 people. He will present his "Arnu" programme. The concert is being organised with the support of the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports. Before travelling to New York, Kudaibergen will fly to St. Petersburg to perform Nov. 29 for 12,000 fans.

Kazakhstan has moved up one spot to 80th in the World Travel and Competitiveness Index released Sept. 4 by the World Economic Forum (WEF) that ranks 140 countries on their relative strengths in global tourism and travel. The report methodology is based on four sub-indices including an enabling environment, travel tourism policy and enabling conditions, infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, and 90 individual indicators distributed among 14 pillars. Kazakhstan scored 3.7 points. In the Europe and Eurasia sub-regional area, the country led in the price competitiveness category due to reduced hotel and fuel prices, greater purchasing power and low ticket taxes and airport charges. Spain topped the ranking with 5.4 points, followed by France, Germany, Japan and the United States replacing the United Kingdom in the top five.

Parliamentarians from more than 60 European and Asian countries and 16 international organisations will gather Sept. 23-24 in Nur-Sultan for the Fourth Meeting of Speakers of Eurasian Countries' Parliaments themed Greater Eurasia: Dialogue, Trust, Partnership. Kazakhstan's Mazhilis, lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament, Russian State Duma and National Assembly of South Korea are co-organisers of the inter-parliamentary forum. During the two-day meeting, the participants will explore the ways to promote sustainable development in Eurasia, the world's largest continent accounting for 65 percent of the world's population, 75 percent of the energy resources and 40 percent of the global GDP. The gathering will also seek solutions to better coordinate the cooperation between the countries and implement economic projects. The forum coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Eurasian integration initiative put forward by Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in 1994.

Nazarbayev opens Kazakhstan's pavilion at exhibition hall in Moscow, meets with Putin

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and attended the opening ceremony of Kazakhstan's pavilion at the VDNH exposition, museum and recreational complex in Moscow. Nazarbayev was visiting Moscow for the city's 872nd anniversary.

Kazakh artists and musicians welcomed pavilion visitors who were presented with Kazakh agricultural products, organic and eco-friendly food.

The Kazakh Embassy also organised a presentation of a traditional Kazakh yurt and an exhibition of crafts and more than 30 unique items of 8th and 6th centuries BC. from the National Museum of Kazakhstan.

"VDNH successfully is getting back at its main purpose – to become the largest exhibition, museum, cultural, educational, public space, confirming Moscow's enduring importance as a creative and unifying centre," said Putin.

"Moscow is very close to our hearts, we used to visit it, we stud-



Photo credit: ebyay.kz

ied, worked here, participated in events," said Nazarbayev at the City Day ceremonies.

Nazarbayev also noted that on the eve of the 75th anniversary of victory in World War II it is important to relish the friendship and peace the current generation is living in and acknowledge the "ideal" Kazakh-Russian relations. "I did everything to make this happen and hope to see this continuing," he said.

Nazarbayev also said the two countries live in the Eurasian Eco-

nomie Union, so although he is no longer the head of state with a status of First President and certain responsibilities, there is something to discuss and he will continue working toward strengthening the country and helping his successors continue his work.

"There is no need to emphasise once again that you are largely a builder of Russian-Kazakh relations that have reached an unprecedented high level of alliance in the humanitarian and military fields, and military-technical cooperation.

President proposes award to recognise Asian writers

By Zhanna Shayakmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed at the recent first Forum of Asian Countries' Writers in Nur-Sultan to establish the Asian Giant International Literary award. Tokayev called for increasing the prestige of the award and making it world-famous.

"For the further development of Asian literature, we need to pay attention to the following important issues. First of all, the Forum of Asian writers should become an important dialogue platform for the creative community. I believe that

this important event should be held on a permanent basis in Asia. Such events should highlight the complex issues of concern for humanity. Of particular importance is the development of Asia as a world centre of spiritual development. Therefore, the creation of conditions for the modernisation of literary processes is one of the main tasks," Tokayev said Sept. 4, addressing the forum participants.

The Sept. 4-6 event gathered 300 writers, including Nobel Prize nominees, Booker and ASEAN winners and winners of creative and national awards from 38 countries.

The head of state also suggested creating a single electronic library

of works by Asian writers. "It is high time to create a single electronic library of works by Asian writers. A treasury will be open to the world, in which materials of the unique Asian worldview will be collected. I am sure that the work on the implementation of such initiatives will unite our writers and take Asian literature to a new level," he said.

Meanwhile, the works of 30 Kazakh writers and 31 poets will be translated and published in six UN languages. These works will be available to 2.5 billion readers in more than 90 countries. "Thanks to the works of Kazakh writers, the world community is studying our

national culture. The great steppe has witnessed diverse civilisations and cultures. Our country is located at the junction of roads connecting the west and the east, and the south and the north of a vast continent. We are a people that have preserved the Turkic identity, who originate from the Great Turkic Kaganate," he said.

Asia observed how great civilisations emerged, reached power and disappeared, he added. The history of mankind is impossible without taking into account Arab, Chinese, Indian and Persian civilisations. Despite all the differences, "oriental cultures have always had much in common." The secret of

Honoured artist of Kazakhstan, soloist of the Astana Opera Nur-lan Bekmukhambetov and ethno-folklore ensemble Astana Sazy performed the Russian folk song "Jivet moya otrada."

Opera singer Saltanat Akhmetova and laureates of international competitions Aizada Kaponova and Anastasia Kozhukharova presented the Moscow audience a song titled "Nightingales of the Great Steppe." Alibek Dnishev, the famous Soviet-era singer who is popular today, also performed Abai's songs.

"So many emotions in dancing, so much depth in their voice. This is the first time I hear the Astana Opera performers and the performance of the Astana Ballet artists – it is amazing," said Galina, who was visiting Moscow with her family and came to Kazakhstan's concert.

Rising stars from Kazakhstan and winners of the Voice song contest, Daneliya Tuleshova and Yerzhan Maxim, were also on the stage.

The days of Kazakh culture will continue in the Tretyakov Gallery and Moscow's cinemas. On Sept. 11, pianist Amir Tebenikhin is expected to perform at the small hall of the Peter Tchaikovsky conservatory.

Also during the visit, Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin met with his Russian counterpart Dmitri Medvedev and several senior officials to discuss trade and investment, joint infrastructure projects and e-commerce in EAEU, among other topics.

International Day against Nuclear Tests...

Continued from Page A1

The date commemorates the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, where 456 Soviet nuclear tests were conducted over 40 years. Nearly 1.5 million people in Kazakhstan have suffered from the consequences.

Among the guests were former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and member of the award committee Franco Frattini, the IAEA Deputy Director General Mary Alice Hayward, former Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Ahmet Uzumcu, Deputy Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative Foundation and former United Kingdom Secretary of Defence Lord Desmond Browne.

Tokayev noted the decision to close the Semipalatinsk test site had "historical significance."

"Taken against the resistance of the Soviet military elite and individual politicians, the decision of the First President Nazarbayev to close the nuclear test site required great courage and firm will. It has facilitated the entire antinuclear

movement," added Tokayev. In turn, Nazarbayev said the escalating confrontation between the two nuclear powers, the United States and Russia, and their exit from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty produced "serious negative consequences."

"The renewed nuclear arms race, including in space, that the two countries started, is of great concern. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty ceased to have effect and Kazakhstan was party to this treaty," said Nazarbayev.

The risk of terrorist groups acquiring nuclear weapons remains the gravest threat.

"More than 20 countries of the world keep potentially dangerous nuclear materials and each of them can become a target for destructive forces," said Nazarbayev.

The world's nine nuclear-armed states, he noted, do not intend to curtail their programmes. With the increasing global distrust and geopolitical confrontation, the world ushers in the unprecedentedly difficult stage.

Nazarbayev urged the gathering and the international community to

take more vigorous steps towards a nuclear weapons-free world.

"We need to revise the archaic concept of strategic stability based on nuclear weapons. We need to create a new nuclear arms control system. It is important to negotiate the development of the Universal Treaty on the Reduction of Nuclear Weapons," said Nazarbayev.

He underscored the need to introduce an effective system of legally binding negative security guarantees from the nuclear powers.

"At the same time, members of the nuclear club must commit to a package of obligations and restrictions to adjust their policies in the area of weapons of mass destruction. It is first of all important that they curtail the traditional practice of maintaining and modernising nuclear facilities," he said.

Nazarbayev said the award serves as a reminder that the future should entail a world without nuclear weapons.

In the video address to the gathering, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres thanked Kazakhstan for the efforts.

"A world free of nuclear weapons, including banning on nuclear testing, remains the highest disarmament priority of the UN. Kazakhstan has been strong supporter in this task. I thank former president Nursultan Nazarbayev for his commitment to this cause and the establishment of this prize. This year's laureates, Yukio Amano and Lassina Zerbo, richly deserve this recognition," said Guterres.

The disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime faces "deep and growing challenges."

"The international community must stress in its cooperation to achieve our collective goal – the world without nuclear weapons. I count on your support in securing our future," he concluded.

The Kazakh capital also welcomed Aug. 28 the representatives of the nuclear-weapons-free zones of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, South Pacific, Central Asia and Southeast Asia for the seminar themed "Development and Strengthening of Consultation Mechanisms between Existing Nuclear-Weapon-Free zones." The representatives of the IAEA,

the CTBTO and Mongolia also attended the event.

Mongolia declared nuclear-weapon-free status in 1992 and that was recognised internationally by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 55/33S on "Mongolia's International Security and Nuclear Weapon Free Status" in 2000.

The seminar participants explored the key challenges in nuclear non-proliferation and capacity building, ways to strengthen cooperation and the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the broader effort to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. They also reviewed proposals to institutionalise the inter-zonal cooperation between the zones and efforts to expand the geography of the zones.

The seminar was organised in partnership with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and is part of the preparation work to the Fourth Conference of the State Parties to Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones scheduled for April 24, 2020 in New York.

Kazakhstan shows...

Continued from Page A1

In February, HCNM released the Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age, a paper outlining policies that may help ease inter-ethnic tensions. Zannier noted digital media platforms are a great tool to communicate more broadly and have a dialogue in society.

"This not only reflects the technological progress, but it also

reflects the social progress. The problem we face in some cases is that digital media can be misused for all sorts of reasons and purposes. Sometimes negative elements and tendencies, for instance, hate speech and tendencies to discriminate against certain groups, can emerge in social media and can also create coalitions of people who see things in the same manner. Now, we are all arguing in favour of freedom of expression. Free-

dom of expression is something that we do defend, but we need to make sure that this freedom of expression is used positively, avoiding situations where everybody is free to insult everybody and try to damage everything," he added.

The guidelines show how to address the problem in social media. There is a balance between freedom of expression and the need to regulate the use of social media, as it has no boundaries. Education is the answer. The more people invest in education, the more they will work with the younger generation.

"We invest in making sure that

the users of the media have a good cultural level. I think we will see less and less of these problems. I think it's a good investment in the long term," he said.

To reach their target audience, the OSCE High Commissioner launched a live #AskHCNM question and answer session in May 2018 on Twitter.

"We have an e-mail address, which is hcnm@hcnm.org, and we often get requests of intervention to look into certain issues, especially from minority groups. It's a good way to show that we're there and we're there to listen. This is a

bit of a departure from the original method as the office was created with a task of quiet diplomacy. In the beginning, everything happened behind closed doors and nobody knew exactly what the High Commissioner was working on. Times have changed. Some of the things that we still do behind closed doors are some sensitive issues that need to be handled carefully. And we still do that, but we can be vocal and we can also tell people what principles we stand for and try also to promote them with governments and in their societies," he said.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

Government explores structural changes to increase GDP growth

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government and the Accounts Committee will examine state holdings and national companies to determine if structural changes are needed to increase GDP growth, said First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov at a Sept. 3 government meeting.

Approximately 100 billion tenge (US\$257.43 million) was allocated by the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund to reduce unemployment and improve living standards among the rural population as of September.

The effort follows Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's call for structural transformations in the public and quasi-public sector to ensure annual gross domestic product growth of at least 5 percent by 2025.

Approximately 100 billion tenge (US\$257.43 million) was allocated by the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund to reduce unemployment and improve living standards among the rural population as of September.

"We will evaluate the real contribution of the Sovereign Wealth Fund to the growth of people's welfare over the past 14 years," said Smailov.

After evaluating the effectiveness of the fund, the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank will develop measures to improve its use.

"We will seek funds to improve social support for the population by reducing inefficient spending and increasing budget revenues (in the fund)," said the minister.

"Amendments to the law (On



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov.

Public Procurement) have been developed to stimulate fair competition, reduce corruption and improve the quality of goods, services and qualifications of suppliers. This will make it possible to increase budget revenues," he explained.

The Ministry of Finance will consolidate an extrabudgetary social security system by creating a unified social fund and introducing a single social payment to further optimise costs.

"The organisation of the budget process at all levels will also be built to accommodate the involvement of the population in forming local budgets. Laws will be adopted for regional, city and rural levels of power to become more economically independent in solving local problems," said Smailov on a measure for efficient budget formation and use.

The Ministry of Finance will consolidate an extrabudgetary social security system by creating a unified social fund.

In addition, according to the Sept. 2 state-of-the-nation address, the number of civil servants and employees in national companies will be reduced 25 percent in 2020-2024, and financial incentives will be created for the best employees to boost their productivity.

Kazakhstan must tighten its monetary policy, says NB head

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Existing global economic trends dictate a tighter monetary policy in Kazakhstan, said Kazakh National Bank Head Erbolat Dossaev Aug. 27. He named lowering global demand and uncertainty in trade policies as factors affecting the policy.

"The following factors will influence the decline in inflation rates. Lowering global demand and uncertainty in trade policies have helped soften external monetary conditions. In particular, the Fed rate was reduced for the first time in 10 years," he noted, referring to the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Particularly for Kazakhstan, the reduced demand for oil is an important factor that affects its future monetary policy forecasts.

"The world oil market is characterised by the uncertainty associated with the continuing tension in trade relations between large economies. We forecast a slight weakening in demand for Kazakh export products to 12 percent in 2019. These dynamics are based on the scenario of a decline in oil



Kazakh National Bank Head Erbolat Dossaev.

prices from \$71.60 per barrel in 2018 to \$61.30 in 2019. The forecasts of the National Bank were based on data from the Ministry of National Economy on oil prices and other indicators of the external sector and economic development," he added.

According to the National Bank, however, inflation will be within the forecast target corridor, as factors such as the slowdown of the U.S. economy, stabilised inflation in Russia and reduced price in-

crease rates in the European Union and China lower inflationary pressures.

"The slowdown of the U.S. economy reduces the risk of capital outflows from developing countries and, accordingly, relieves pressure on their currencies. Inflationary pressures are relatively low amid stabilisation of inflation in Russia, as well as low rates of price increases in the European Union and China," said Dossaev.

Even though the global factors mostly dictate a tighter monetary policy, the National Bank intends to pursue a balanced interest rate policy while monitoring the future dynamics of both external and internal factors.

"Given growing consumption in emerging global markets and declining global stocks, especially grain and meat, rising global prices could become a long-term and negative global inflation trend. In these conditions, the National Bank intends to pursue a balanced interest rate policy. Currently, factors so far favour a tighter monetary policy. We will closely monitor the dynamics of external and internal factors," he added.

Social spending to increase 2.9 percent by 2022

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government will increase social spending 2.9 percent by 2022, said Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov Aug. 27.

He also outlined the main features of the proposed 2020 to 2022 national budget law, which is based on the forecast of socio-economic development until 2024.

"Social spending for 2020 is planned in the amount of 5.69 trillion tenge (US\$14.69 billion), or with an increase of 303 billion tenge (US\$782 million)," said Smailov.

Another priority area from 2020 is implementing President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's instructions to improve the status of teachers with expenses of 1.2 trillion tenge (US\$30 billion) for three

years, of which 749 billion tenge (US\$1.9 billion) are transferred to local budgets. Three hundred and four billion tenge (US\$784 million) is additionally provided for annual indexation and increase in recipients of pensions and benefits.

The increase in spending will be reflected in the percentage of the state budget allocated to the social sector, from 44.7 percent to 47.6 percent by 2022.

Another state budget priority area will be the real sector development, for which 2.39 trillion tenge (US\$616 billion) is provided, which makes 18 percent of the budget.

"To support the development of the real sector of the economy for 2020, 2.39 trillion tenge (US\$616 billion) is provided. Implementation of the Nurly Zhol, Nurly Zher programmes, the development of the agro-industrial complex, State Programme of Accelerated Indus-

trial and Innovative Development (SPAID), the new Business Roadmap programme will continue, and the tasks of developing local roads, rural water supply, gasification and housing for youth and large families with low-income families will be ensured," said Smailov.

Total 2020 expenditures will be 12.7 trillion (US\$31 billion) tenge.

"Expenditures in 2020 are planned in the amount of 12.7 trillion tenge (US\$31 billion) with an increase of 809 billion tenge (US\$2 billion) by this year," said Smailov.

The increase in social expenditure measures were accepted within the context of the budget deficit decrease.

"The share of non-oil revenues is growing steadily from 61.4 percent this year to 71.2 percent in 2022. The budget deficit is planned with a phased decrease to 1 percent of the GDP in 2020," said Smailov.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Non-cash payments on Kazakh issuers' cards within and beyond the country doubled to 6.3 trillion tenge (US\$16.24 billion) from January-July, reported ranking.kz. Until 2019, the share of international payment systems in non-cash options ranged between 97-99 percent. During the first six months of 2019, the share of local payment systems had significant growth from 0.7 to 7.5 percent year-on-year (yoy) and 476 billion tenge (US\$1.23 billion), a 23-time increase. The share of non-cash in the total turnover increased from 26.2 to 39.4 percent. Internet payments accounted for 65.2 percent of the total, while those via POS-terminals represented 33 percent.

Private enterprises operating with state participation decreased 5.3 percent to 648 year-on-year (yoy) in the first half of 2019 and 16 percent over the past five years. Yet in the same six months, 566 public private partnership (PPP) contracts were signed for 1.5 trillion tenge (US\$3.87 billion). According to the Kazakhstan Public Private Partnership Centre, the PPP contracts were 1.5 times the cost of the projects' portfolio. The main share of the contracts is at the local level and represents 98.4 percent of the total. Private investments exceeded 570 billion tenge (US\$1.47 billion) and state obligations related to investment were 177.5 billion tenge (US\$457.49 million). The figures show private business and the state have found mutually beneficial points of cooperation, said the centre.

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) exported 41.517 million tonnes of oil from January-August, a 3.26-percent increase year-on-year (yoy). CPC exported 61.084 million tonnes of oil in 2018, 10.8 percent more than in 2017. Of all the oil CPC shipped last year from the Novorossiysk port sea terminal, 54.3 million tonnes were from Kazakh fields. The largest volumes came from Tengiz (28.7 million tonnes), Kashagan (13.2 million tonnes) and Karachaganak (10.3 million tonnes). CPC, which transports more than two-thirds of Kazakhstan's total oil exports, was established to construct pipeline and export oil in transit through Russia's territory. The consortium owns the 1,511-kilometre Tengiz-Novorossiysk pipeline, which connects the fields in western Kazakhstan with the Black Sea coast.

Consulting services for parent companies, as well as in the management sector, decreased 26.2 percent to 123.6 billion tenge (US\$318.57 million) in the first half of the year, reported energyprom.kz. The main bulk of services (90.8 percent) is in three regions. Companies in Nur-Sultan account for 55.7 percent of the consulting budget, a decrease of more than 40 percent over the year. Almaty companies' spending increased 20.1 percent, comprising 28.4 percent of the total. Atyrau Region spending decreased 29.2 percent, accounting for 6.6 percent of the total. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev urged reducing unreasonable consulting spending from the budget during the August meeting with the government.

Aluminium ore production declined 20.8 percent year-on-year (yoy) to 2.5 million tonnes in January-August. In 2018, the production volume reached 6.1 million tonnes, a 26-percent increase. The largest enterprise in the industry is Aluminium of Kazakhstan, owned by Eurasian Resources Group (ERG). The company is the only one in the country producing alumina (raw materials for aluminium production). On average, the company annually produces 1.4 million tonnes of alumina from bauxite mined in the Kostanai and Pavlodar regions. Unprocessed aluminium production also decreased 6.7 percent yoy to 965,200 tonnes.

Government presents plan to implement state-of-nation address

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh government prepared the national plan to implement the initiatives presented by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in his Sept. 2 state-of-the-nation address. The plan has now been sent to Tokayev for review and approval.

In his address, Tokayev pledged to improve public administration, better protect citizens rights, diversify the economy, support micro and small business, modernise the social security system and develop the country's vast regions.

The President also directed the development of a "listening state" in which public input is more heavily considered in the formation of policy.

Following that address, Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Berdybek Saparbayev briefed a Sept. 3 government meeting on some of the country's existing and future initiatives that were included in the plan presented by Sept. 10 to implement the President's goals.

In his address, Tokayev emphasised the need for quality education and instructed teacher pay raises over the next four years, beginning with a 25 percent salary increase in 2020. He also said

Kazakhstan needs to close the education gap between cities and rural areas and increase the number of qualified education professionals in rural areas.

To achieve these goals, said Saparbayev, the government will implement plans, such as a new model to finance schools, a mobile teacher project and the multidiscipline preparation of teachers.

Legislation is also planned to protect the rights of women and children.

"We will introduce changes to the education system in rural areas to improve the work conditions for teachers in understaffed schools. The government was instructed to develop the roadmap to support gifted kids, analyse the training of specialists that are in no demand. We are also introducing amendments to the legal acts in the development of science," said Saparbayev.

Tokayev also underscored the need to protect children's rights and increase the penalties for sexual and domestic violence.

Saparbayev said in the next two

years, Kazakhstan will set up centres nationwide to support children who have suffered from violence.

Legislation is also planned to protect the rights of women and children.

"The 2030 concept to protect children will be developed. With this in place, we expect the decline in crime rates among children and the decline in the suicide cases. The work will be done with the local executive bodies," he said.

Tokayev also urged the government to work on the price formation and tariffs, stressing the high prices for goods and services in the country. He cited the high air fares as an example.

"It raises questions why the flights of our main air carrier (Air Astana) on the most popular routes are much more expensive and sometimes for up to 30 percent than [along the comparable distances] in Europe. What explains the high cost of services at our airports? Why is the cost of jet fuel for foreign carriers at the airports higher than for domestic ones? This hurts the aviation industry of Kazakhstan and the country's transit potential as it loses its international competitiveness," he said.

In response, Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Zhenis Kassymbek

said the problem is in the transport capacity and the shortage of aircraft to meet the existing demand.

The launch of low-cost airline FlyArystan in May was part of the effort to decrease the ticket fares.

Kassymbek said the airline plans a double increase in the number of flights from 14 to 28 by the end of 2019.

"The government and Samruk Kazyna plan the additional capitalisation of Air Astana and Qazaq Air airlines to increase their fleet. The work will be continued to decrease the cost of jet fuel given the modernisation of Kazakhstan's oil processing plants that nears its completion," said Kassymbek.

In line with Tokayev's instruction to allow working citizens to use part of their pension savings, Saparbayev said the government will consider allowing citizens to use the funds to buy homes, get an education or medical services.

Saparbayev also said the government along with the National Bank of Kazakhstan will examine the nation's pension system.

"We need precise calculation and careful decision to ensure the lifelong pension payments of citizens and not undermine the stability of the system in general," he said.

Making housing more afford-

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

A pilot project on a tax-free shopping for foreigners will be implemented in Almaty's Esentai Mall to boost tourist inflow and purchasing power, reported the Ministry of Finance State Revenue Committee. The committee developed the rules and terms in accordance with Article 68 of Kazakhstan's tax code. Tax-free shopping is the ability to buy goods in a foreign country and obtain a sales tax refund. The country's tax rebate programme will launch on a broader scale in 2022 at airports in the capital, Almaty and Shymkent. Refunds will range from 7-22 percent of the purchase price and depend on the size of the value-added tax and tax-free operator fee.

An investment agreement was signed Aug. 24 among the Turkistan Region Akimat (administration), Kazakh Invest, ECO-culture, Green Land Alatau and Eurasian Development Bank to construct a 500-hectare greenhouse complex in the Keles district, reported the akimat press service. The planned investment is \$1.1 billion. Construction will be carried out in several stages and the greenhouse will be equipped with a modern climate control system. Approximately 50,000 tonnes of product will be collected from the greenhouse annually.

Pavlodar Region Akim (Governor) Bulat Bakauov charged the regional akimat (administration) with creating industrial zones in the region before year's end to boost economic activity, reported Pavlodarnews.kz. Constructing new infrastructure for businesses in Pavlodar's special economic zone (SEZ) is under way; for example, 2.2 billion tenge (US\$5.67 million) has been allocated to construct communications needs, he said. Three large projects – a new power unit at Eurasian Energy Corporation, manufacturing reinforced concrete products at Bogatyr Invest and producing sand blocks at Pavlodar River Port – will also be implemented in the region in the near future, said akimat Industrial and Innovative Development department head Gani-bet Aubakirov.

Kazakhstan recently approved the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) introducing a quota on importing hot-rolled steel to protect metal producers in member countries, reported Kazinform. A 12,029-tonne quota for Kazakhstan and a 20-percent duty will be levied for imports exceeding established volumes starting Dec. 1. Hot-rolled steel, used to manufacture metal structures and products and construction materials, is produced by the country's Arcelor-Mittal Temirtau, which supported the measure.

The international rating agency Moody's Investors Service changed the outlooks on the Development Bank of Kazakhstan (DBK) and Fund of Financial Support for Agriculture (FFSA) Aug. 28 from stable to positive, reported Moodys.com. Moody's also affirmed their global scale ratings. FFSA's national scale rating was upgraded from A2.kz to A1.kz. "The change in outlooks to positive on DBK and FFSA mirrors the change in outlooks on their parents' (Baiterek National Management Holding (Baa3 positive) and KazAgro National Management Holding (Ba1 positive)) long-term issuer ratings and reflects the very high affiliate support incorporated in their ratings," noted the report.

The Centre for Attracting Investors and Promoting Investment Projects will launch in the East Kazakhstan Region in September, reported the East Kazakhstan Infocentre. It will seek to support new investment projects in the region, such as the 14 recently-approved projects in food production, furniture, light industry and tourism worth 1.1 billion tenge (US\$2.84 million). Twenty-two projects worth 551 billion tenge (US\$1.42 billion) are scheduled to begin in the region by 2022 and create 6,400 jobs.

Banking sector reforms are critical...

Continued from Page A1

"What we promised is that we would send one of our managing directors, the one who leads on banking sector, to Kazakhstan and then we will take his conclusions. We will then track the asset quality review for the rest of the year and we will make some decisions in early January next year about what sort of investments would be appropriate," said Chakrabarti.

He noted EBRD invests in the banking sector in two ways.

"One is we often provide, particularly, debt finance to help a bank move in a right direction; not just a credit line, but also technical assistance to improve the capability of the bank itself. The other area is that we sometimes take the equity in the bank before privatisation. Right now, we are doing something like that in Belarus prior to privatisation as well," he said.

He noted the significant achievements Kazakhstan has made since 1991 and said further reforms are needed.

"One of the fundamental issues is that the country has been modernising and transforming very fast in the last 25 years; it is also true that many people have felt left out of that transformation. That is very common in economic history if you look

at other countries. Inequality tends to increase in the initial period of modernisation. Jobs have to be created first of all, good quality jobs," he said.

The country needs to make another push on privatisation and develop public and private partnerships (PPP), he added.

Chakrabarti commended Kazakhstan's large-scale privatisation programme and noted KazAtomProm's initial public offering in November found 15 percent of its shares listed on the London Stock Exchange and the Astana International Exchange (AIX). Listing Polymetal shares on the AIX has been "transformative."

Kazakhstan also plans to float stocks of its biggest companies, including Air Astana, Kazakhtelecom and KazMunayGas. He noted the move will attract more strategic investors to the country.

"We have been at the heart of encouraging privatisations of these entities. We think it will be very successful. We have been lobbying for ensuring that the timeline on these privatisations is met, because Kazakhstan has made great public commitments on progressing these privatisations and doing them in a quality way," he said.

Political economy decisions, he noted, are fundamental to determine how much should be privatised and



EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti.

public-private partnerships (PPPs) could also draw investors to the nation. Chakrabarti cited the Big Almaty Ring Road as an example of a PPP project of paramount importance not only for Kazakhstan, but also Central Asia.

The 66-kilometre road that encircles Almaty, the country's largest city, will be completed in 2021. Turkish and South Korean investors have provided \$387 million for the project.

"It will then pave the way for other new PPP deals in Kazakhstan. We have been thinking about Asfendiyarov Hospital in Almaty and also highways as well as a hospital in Karaganda. There are lots of ideas for PPPs and we are exploring them,

but because the ring road is getting so much time to get to the starting line, it now needs to start; then, the other ones will be unlocked," he said.

Chakrabarti also noted the organisation's increasing renewable sector activities.

"The first six months of this year we have done three major solar projects; that is three of the ten we have done. That shows the momentum is increasing in this area and I am pretty sure there will be more of these projects to come in the coming year or two. I really think Kazakhstan will come as a regional leader in this area without a doubt," he said.

EBRD provided a \$51.3-million loan to the 100-MW Saran solar power plant, the largest solar project in Central Asia, adding to the \$22 million Green Climate Fund (GCF) loan. It also supported constructing the Burnoye 1 and Burnoye 2 solar power plants in the Zhambyl Region. The projects are part of the EBRD and GCF renewable framework designed to increase investments in the sector and tap Kazakhstan's renewable energy market.

Chakrabarti praised Kazakhstan's commitment to global efforts to combat climate change. In February, the country launched an online platform to monitor, report and verify emission sources and greenhouse

gases (GHG), part of its National Emissions Trading System begun in 2013 as the key mechanism to regulate carbon emissions and boost low-carbon technology development.

Kazakhstan also ratified the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016 and committed to ensure a 15-percent reduction of greenhouse emissions by 2030 as its nationally determined contribution.

"That is how Kazakhstan became a leader amongst emerging markets at the Paris Climate Agreement. It was one of the first countries that said it would set a national determined contribution towards reducing carbon emissions and so during that space, we were the first bank to do solar project in Kazakhstan. The potential is huge here, because the weather conditions are such that we can invest very easily. But some of the things that happened that made renewables much more attractive are that prices have come down, so the technological advances everywhere mean the prices reduced," he said.

Cooperation is gaining momentum.

"In the last 18 months, we have invested another billion dollars in another 43 projects, so there is big momentum going forward," he said.

The EBRD will start preparing a new country strategy for 2021-2025 next year.

Lack of standardisation poses problems for halal industry in CIS, notes conference

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Participants at a recent conference in the Kazakh capital discussed the difficulties of introducing standards in the halal industry in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), reports the Islamic Organisation for Food Security.

Bodies often certify companies that process halal and non-halal products using the same equipment, causing cross-contamination, and the majority do not examine products for traces of pork in gene laboratories.

Rimma Gakhova, representing the Consumer Rights Protection National Association Society, noted pork DNA was found in halal products at the Bizhan, Pervomaiskie Delicatessy and Rubikom Enterprise meat factories in October 2018. It is unclear how the companies were able to obtain their halal certificates and who issued them.

Recently, the Tsaritsyno meat plant in Russia was also held administratively liable, as its sausages marketed as halal have been found to contain pork, continued Gakhova. The factory obtained its certifi-

cate from Halal Audit and Control Centre, a private company which had no affiliate links with any official Muslim organisation.

Post-Soviet countries have similar industry problems, said Islamic Organisation for Food Security (IOFS) General Director Erlan Baidalet, who noted the main difficulty is the lack of a universal, internationally-recognised accreditation body. Certificates are currently issued by international, state and private companies, which often do not recognise certificates other than their own.

The lack of international and state accreditation bodies is also a concern, said Baidalet. Private companies frequently work without accreditation certificates and several organisations issuing them are not registered legal entities.

Halal certification bodies do not cooperate with each other, even within a single country, according to conference participants, continued Baidalet. Certificates are issued by five non-state organisations, the Association of Halal Industries in Kazakhstan, Halal Damu, Halal Holding, Halal Quality and Halal Services Alliance, each of which works according to its own understanding of the principles.

Bodies often certify companies that process halal and non-halal products using the same equipment, causing cross-contamination, and the majority do not examine products for traces of pork in gene laboratories. The lack of funding for Muslim organisations is also a problem, said Baidalet.

Conference participants agreed there is a pressing need for international halal industry standards in CIS countries. Standards and

Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries (SMIIC) General Director Ikhsan Ovut noted such criteria are already present in Muslim nations and CIS countries may simply need to follow the institute's existing model to overcome technical trade obstacles. CIS country participation in developing universal halal standards and other procedures within SMIIC, however, is still under question.

Irek Ziganshin, chairperson of

the Tatarstan Halal Standards Committee, represented one of the organisations willing to participate in developing universal standards. He proposed prohibiting certifying products that contain beef protein from cattle skins, a source of protein which is unnecessary but makes production cheaper. Its value is also doubted because its halal status is difficult to prove. Moreover, Tatarstan certification bodies closely watch for the presence of animal

rennet, as it is often of non-halal origin, and does not certify companies that mechanically slaughter cattle and poultry.

As a result of the discussion, participants proposed the IOFS Secretariat create a working group to develop suggestions to improve the current halal system in CIS regions. The roadmap was developed Sept. 1, and Ovut was offered a consulting role to create, implement and audit universal standards.



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THE ASTANA TIMES

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The Astana Times

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

President's state-of-the-nation address sets right course for country's future

The first state-of-the-nation address Sept. 2 from President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev underlined how Kazakhstan is confidently beginning the next stage of its development. On the economy, public services, quality of life and political reform, there were ambitious plans to drive the country forward.

There was a commitment – backed by concrete policies – to tackle inequality and ensure that all shared in the country's growing prosperity. There will be a more determined effort to close the gap, whether it is by raising incomes or improving health and education services in rural areas. Communities, too, are to be helped by new investments to expand the supply of drinking water and to offer modern sanitation and gas to homes across the country. The new policies to increase the supply of affordable homes and, importantly, to ensure fairness in the way they are allocated, will be widely welcomed.

There was investment as well to boost agricultural production, including through a huge increase in irrigated land. Ensuring start-up businesses are not strangled in red-tape and inspections should provide a big boost to jobs and innovation.

But it was perhaps in the commitment to step up political reform that the clearest signs that Kazakhstan is entering a new stage of our journey. It is a change of emphasis, which reveals a real confidence in the future and how far the nation together has come.

For as our country worked to overcome the many challenges it faced in the first tough years after independence, precedence was given rightly to economic progress over political modernisation. Those questioning this approach only need to look at many recent examples around the world of what can happen if political liberalisation is rushed or comes before citizens have an economic stake in their society. The result too often is not more democracy but more chaos and violence.

Nothing will be done to risk all that Kazakhstan has achieved in the last three decades. But while there is, of course, more to do on the economy – and no room

for complacency when global growth is slowing and uncertainty is rising – independent analysts are increasingly confident Kazakhstan is firmly on the right track. This hard work explains why the time has arrived for a greater priority for gradual but steady political reform.

Indeed, it is telling that President Tokayev has gone further by suggesting that to build on his predecessor's illustrious legacy depends on such a move. The sustained economic progress the country needs to achieve its goal of joining the top 30 most-developed countries, he said, requires political reform.

What was clear, as well, was the direction he saw these reforms taking. The aim is a modern and effective "listening" state – responsive to the concerns and ambitions of the Kazakh people and, in turn, providing them with the opportunity to find solutions to the challenges the country faces. It is a political process in which a genuine two-way dialogue was not just encouraged but essential.

This is to be achieved by further developing Kazakhstan's multiparty system, strengthening civic society and building on the promising initial work of the National Council of Public Trust. In his address, President Tokayev made clear that he believed a modern country should not fear differing opinions. Such diversity, provided the views were expressed constructively, could add to the long-term strength and stability of a country, he suggested.

There was an emphasis, too, on the individual and ensuring their rights were respected. Time and time again during his speech, President Tokayev showed that he was on the side of the citizen – whether it was against the indifference or inefficiency of a government body or an over-reaching official. He announced new mechanisms to ensure government, national and local, was more responsive to its citizens and to enhance the rights of the individual.

The aim, he said, was a strong President, an influential parliament and an accountable government. Last week showed Kazakhstan has made a good start in reaching this goal.

European Union and Central Asia: New Partnership in Action

By Peter Burian

The European Union (EU) has been engaged with the five countries in Central Asia from the very moment they gained their independence in the early 1990s. During that period the EU, as the biggest donor in the region, played an important role in supporting sovereignty and independence of the partner countries in Central Asia, helping them to build their new socio-economic systems, create a legislative basis and development programmes and strategies for sustainable development. I dare say that also thanks to this contribution, the region managed to preserve a large degree of stability in a situation when it was facing many formidable challenges, both inherited and new ones.

The first comprehensive EU strategy for the region, adopted in 2007, represented an important qualitative upgrade of the relationship and paved the way for a more coherent and better coordinated engagement of the EU in key areas of transformation and modernisation of the Central Asia partner countries reflected in three strategic initiatives: European Rule of Law Initiative for Central Asia, European Education Initiative for Central Asia and the Regional Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation. These three initiatives together with the regional security programmes – BOMCA and CADAP – have provided useful platforms for inter- and intra-regional dialogue and cooperation in addressing key challenges in the region through regional cooperation.

It is important to note in this regard that the implementation of various regional and bilateral programmes within the EU's multi-annual indicative programme in Central Asia for 2014-2020 has been underpinned by a significant increase in financial allocations exceeding one billion euros (US\$1.1 billion). These financial resources were provided at a time when the EU was facing consequences of the global financial crisis. This is, in my view, the best testimony of the EU's strong commitment to the security, stability and prosperity of Central Asia – key objectives of our strategy.

I did not want to sound complacent and imply that everything that the EU was trying to achieve in Central Asia when implementing the strategy was easy and successful. There were also difficult moments and setbacks, which some interpreted as the EU's inability to promote, and the Central Asian countries incapability



to embrace, common values and international commitments, in particular in the area of basic freedoms and human rights.

While expecting more progress in reforms, we fully understand the complexity of challenges the countries of Central Asia and their societies are facing. In this regard, I am pleased to note that there is a growing understanding in the region that promoting rule of law, good governance, human rights and a strong role of civil society is not a "Western agenda." These principles are universally recognised. These elements are key for all the countries in gaining their rightful place in the world economy, global trade and transport as well.

It is encouraging to see that these principles have also found their place in the National Development Strategies of our partners, including the ambitious reform programme 100 steps initiated by First President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. They need to be implemented in practice, and we are ready to help to this end.

One of the important conclusions we also drew from our own experience was that for the region to remain stable and fully benefit from its strategic location and potential, it needs to address existing challenges without delay; it needs to continue reforming and modernising, creating better conditions for all citizens to exercise their rights, improving the business environment and building a rules-based space attractive for investors.

New Momentum and Dynamism in EU-Central Asia Cooperation and Partnership

I am pleased to note that through these years our partnership has matured and, in particular, in recent years it acquired new content and dynamism also thanks to a pro-active attitude of our partners to inter- and intra-regional cooperation.

Indeed, we clearly registered this new spirit of regional cooperation and solidarity in Samarkand in 2017 during the Conference on regional development and security. We welcome these "new positive winds blowing" in Central Asia conducive to strengthening regional cooperation.

Regional cooperation as a factor of stability and sustainable development is deeply rooted in EU's DNA. That is why the EU very much welcomes and supports this direction and wants to help and contribute to translating this positive spirit into concrete action.

Having said that, I wish to emphasise that the EU does not want to push or impose any models of regional integration and cooperation or put our partners before any binary choices. It should be firmly in the hands of the countries of Central Asia themselves to decide how they want to cooperate. At the same time, the EU's experience, including the values and principles the EU was established upon, as a peace project could serve as a source of inspiration and useful practices for our partners.

The capital of Kazakhstan – Astana (Nur-Sultan) – historically hosted the first consultative summit of the leaders of Central Asia, discussing strengthened regional cooperation in jointly addressing many inherited and new challenges the region is facing, including border security, prevention of violent extremism and climate change, but also regional trade and connectivity. In a very short period of time, these initiatives and rapprochement between neighbours, addressing many outstanding issues through constructive dialogue, led among other things to an unprecedented growth of cross-border trade and strengthening regional cooperation. I believe this is the best testimony of benefits and dividends of regional and cooperative approaches over regional competition and rivalry.

New EU Central Asia Strategy: Partnership for Resilience and Prosperity

In 2017, the EU Member States in Council Conclusions on the EU strategy for Central Asia from June 19 recognised that the countries of Central Asia have become significant partners of the EU and welcomed the progress achieved in developing EU relations with all five countries individually, as well as the Central Asia region as a whole.

While emphasising that the main objectives and priority areas of the 2007 EU Strategy for Central Asia and the Council Conclusions on the Strategy of June 22, 2015 remained pertinent, the Council of the EU recognised that it was time to review and renew the EU relationship, taking into account new geopolitical realities and evolving needs and capacities of our Central Asian partners. The Council therefore invited the High Representative and the EU Commission to come forward with

a proposal for a new Strategy by the end of 2019.

The extensive and inclusive consultation process with Central Asian partners on the orientations of the future EU Strategy involving governments, civil society, the private sector and researchers from the region and the EU member states have confirmed that the significant changes underway in Central Asia create important opportunities for greater EU engagement. An explicit demand for a "more ambitious" presence and engagement of the EU made the preparation of a new Strategy for Central Asia particularly timely.

The main goal of the EU is to help through existing and new initiatives and platforms to increase the resilience of the region as a whole, as well as of the individual states of the region, since only resilient states and societies are able to efficiently tackle the existing challenges and pressures of today.

Here, I wish to use an excellent quote of First President Nazarbayev from his speech on the Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan: "Only those nations, which manage to get ahead of the future and decisively meet the challenges, without standing and waiting, are the winners."

The EU is interested in all Central Asian countries becoming winners and wants to continue to be a reliable and committed partner for the modernisation and sustainable development of the region based on regional and local ownership and leadership, with no hidden geopolitical agenda. The EU has the only interest and objective – that Central Asia develops as a peaceful, resilient and more closely interconnected economic and political space.

I believe the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a new opportunity for strengthening the partnership and cooperation, on one hand, between the EU and our partners in Central Asia, but on the other hand, also between the EU and other international organisations, in particular the UN, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and other actors pursuing the same values and approaches in implementing together an ambitious package of sustainable development goals based on national ownership, shared responsibility and accountability.

I believe the EU has a lot to offer to our partners through sharing the experience of individual member states from their modernisation and transformation processes and reforms.

Ambassador Peter Burian has been the EU Special Representative for Central Asia since April 15, 2015. The opinion originally appeared in the Diplomatic Herald of Kazakhstan, Issue No. 2 of 2019.

The full version of the interview is available online.

Kazakhstan has potential for additional reductions of GHG emissions

By Bakhyt Yessekina

The efforts of countries for sustainable development are especially relevant today when the entire system of international relations is facing new global challenges. Today, opportunities for cooperation between states and the private sector and public organisations as well as increasingly accessible technologies help address complex and unresolved past issues.

The trend, approved at the 21st United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference on Climate Change (COP21) in 2015, remains a priority in the global economy and demonstrates the constructive attitude of the leading powers under the auspices of the UN towards the need to transform the commodity model of the economy and transition to a low-carbon development model.

According to estimates by the International Energy Agency (IEA), even an annual delay in



the start of more active actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the new climate agreement will inevitably lead to an increase in global economic costs of \$1 trillion and a reduction of the global GDP in 2030 by 1.9 percent.

Kazakhstan has declared itself an initiator and responsible participant in international and regional programmes for sustainable development and ecology. As it is known, Kazakhstan has ratified more than the 22 UN en-

vironmental conventions, including the Kyoto Protocol (2009) and the Paris Climate Agreement (PCA, 2015), under which the country has committed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 15-25 percent from the 1990 level.

Mitigating global climate warming by reducing GHGs emissions and environmental pollutions are some of the main directions of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme (GBPP) suggested by the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in 2012 and approved by the 66th United Nations General Assembly.

Unfortunately, the potential of the GBPP included in the Rio Declaration has not been realised. At the same time, when cross-country initiatives are welcomed, such as the C40 initiative in which cities around the world work together and share experiences, they should be updated and should be used as a driver for the implementation of the PCA not only in Kazakhstan but also in the Asia-Pacific region.

Green Academy was established in 2013 and was the first green think tank in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Its experts have identified at least three trends in the framework of the PCA. First is planning the development of energy and the economy, taking into account the likely changes for 2020-2040. In many cases, this leads to a wait-and-see attitude in approving international and national projects that would be profitable if the current situation were maintained.

Second, the introduction of the "carbon price," which are charges for greenhouse gas emissions in one form or another in a stimulating or burdensome form, that is being implemented or expected in the future, which shifts the competitiveness of various projects and trade flows. This is clearly evidenced by the results of bilateral meetings of the main emitters such as China, the United States, the European Union and India.

Third, the total trend towards the choice of low-carbon solutions,

if, when planning for 20-30 years in terms of profitability, they are equal in costs or not significantly more expensive than traditional ones. This is clearly confirmed when concluding partnership deals and choosing investment options in almost all countries of the world and in state and private companies in all sectors of the economy.

Without the implementation of pilot projects for the development of breakthrough low-carbon technologies in the next decade, it will be practically impossible to restrain the increase in global average temperature by more than 2 degrees Celsius. At present, a wide range of technologies exist and are successfully used in the world to ensure economic growth and at the same time reduce emissions and improve the quality of the environment.

For Kazakhstan, an important direction in harnessing the carbon potential is to increase energy efficiency and energy conservation in all sectors of the national economy. According to the calculations

of the National Chamber of Energy Auditors and Experts, the potential for energy saving in the whole of Kazakhstan, according to the energy audit of top 50 enterprises, is up to five million tonnes of standard fuel, which will reduce CO₂ to 3.6 million tonnes per year, i.e. almost one percent of total GHGs emission in the country.

World experience demonstrates that the UN countries in terms of the implementation of Paris Climate Agreement have started to develop low carbon strategies on the national and sub-regional levels. In this regard, it is hoped the new Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan continues to develop the low carbon strategy started in 2016 with the wide participation of scientists, experts, businesses and NGOs.

The author is a member of the Green Council under President of Kazakhstan and Director of the Green Academy Scientific Research and Education Centre.

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BUSINESS

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Kazakhstan, Russia to manufacture Mi helicopters in Almaty

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development (MIID) Roman Sklyar and Russian Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov discussed implementing joint projects during an Aug. 27 meeting at the 14th International Aviation and Space Salon MAKS-2019 in Zhukovsky city in Russia.

“An agreement to start making large assemblies of civilian Mi-class helicopters at the Almaty Aircraft Repair Plant No. 405 in 2020 was reached,” the MIID press service reported.

The countries have also launched an effort to facilitate cooperation between Kazakh and Russian aircraft construction companies. They also discussed integrating Kazakh-



stan-produced products into the production chain for the assembly

of aircraft manufactured in Russia, Lsm.kz reported. The parties also

discussed developing industrial cooperation and implementing bi-

lateral projects in existing and new industries in Kazakhstan.

The N-125, N-130, N-145, and Mi-8AMT brand helicopters are produced in the country. A plant to assemble and maintain Kazakhstan Engineering helicopters opened in 2012. The plant is owned by Kazakhstan Engineering and the French-German company Eurocopter.

“The plant is equipped with workshops for mechanical unit maintenance, repairing sheet metal products, repairing electrical equipment and on-board electronics, repairing products made of composite materials and blades, as well as a workshop for repairing engines, hydraulic equipment, facilities for maintenance and painting, an autonomous boiler room, and warehouse premises,” the MIID press release informed.

The plant’s production capacity is up to 10 helicopters per year.

One helicopter was sold to Kyrgyzstan in 2018. Currently, a contract is being concluded with the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs for the purchase of five light N130 helicopters in 2019.

The plant maintains helicopters in Kazakhstan and is a regional hub in Central Asia for the maintenance of Airbus Helicopters and pilot and technician training.

Organisations in both countries are also considering participating in the implementation of projects for the Baikal and L610 aircraft production in conjunction with Russian Helicopters.

Earlier the MIID press department reported that the large assembly of Mi-8AMT and Mi-171 helicopters would be established in Kazakhstan. The main purchasers of Mi-8AMT and Mi-171 helicopters are governmental agencies and airlines.

Kazakh Invest initiates four projects worth \$217 million in first half of 2019

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh Invest supported implementing four projects worth \$217 million and construction and installation works for 12 projects worth \$1.7 billion in the first half of 2019.

Thirty-four projects worth \$7.1 billion have entered the execution phase, the company’s press service reported Sept. 2.

“It is also expected to assist in the commissioning of 30 projects worth \$2 billion and to launch the construction and installation works of 35 projects worth \$4 billion. Approximately 40 percent of projects planned for commissioning are related to renewable energy and information and communication technologies,” according to the company press release.

This year, the company is planning to help open 400 megawatts of solar power plants, 90 megawatts of wind power plants and 25 megawatts of hydro power plants. The total cost is \$680 million.

Kazakh Invest organised the third annual Global Investment Roundtable (KGIR-2019) in May. The event attracted more than 1,100 participants from

41 countries, including international experts, representatives of international and state organisa-

investors Aug. 13 based on the one window principle and interaction rules. The mechanism is

Kazakh Invest operates according to the one window principle. The company conducts systematic work to clarify local laws and procedures, provide transparency on decision-making and reduce the administrative burden.

tions and the heads of the largest local and world companies including AGCO Corporation, Cisco, CITIC Bank Corporation, Nokia, Tyson Foods, Valmont Industries, WILO SE Group and Yildirim Group. KGIR-2019 resulted in signing 41 agreements worth \$8.2 billion.

As a single negotiator with investors on the government’s behalf, Kazakh Invest operates according to the one window principle. The company conducts systematic work to clarify local laws and procedures, provide transparency on decision-making and reduce the administrative burden. It serves as the solo coordinating centre for the nation’s special economic zones.

The government approved a new procedure for working with

built on three stages – front offices at the external, central and regional levels.

The unified national interactive website invest.gov.kz is available in English, Kazakh and Russian. It provides information about the investment climate, opportunities in priority sectors and projects requiring investment and allows sending requests.

A round the clock call centre for investors (+7 7172 620 620) has provided more than 1,200 consultations this year.

As part of the Investment Ombudsperson activities, the company received 35 requests regarding investment activities, seven of which received positive resolution, two were clarified in accordance with current legislation and 26 are in progress.

Experts predict shrinking smartphone sales will recover in Kazakhstan, globally by 2020

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Smartphone sales declined in China, Kazakhstan and the United States in the second quarter of the year, reported Finprom.kz. Experts expect a recovery in global sales in 2020.

Global smartphone shipments totalled 644 million from January-June compared to 673.9 million in the same period last year, reported the International Data Corporation’s (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker.

Global smartphone shipments totalled 644 million from January-June compared to 673.9 million in the same period last year,

reported the International Data Corporation’s (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker. Notably, shipments reached 333.2 million from April-June, 2.3 percent less than last year, when shipments were 341.2 million.

The sharpest quarterly declines were observed in China and the United States. The decline in the former was less severe than in “the second half of 2018, suggesting some recovery is underway in the world’s largest single market,” reported IDC.com.

Conversely, shipments in the Asia-Pacific region, excluding China and Japan, were up more than 3 percent in the second quarter. This was “fueled by growth across India and many Southeast Asia markets,” the document added.

Through August, Kazakhstan had 25.8 million mobile cellular subscribers, 5.1 percent fewer than the 27.2 million a year earlier. Approximately 14.8 million of those subscribers had Internet access, 4.5 percent more than the 14.1 million the previous year. In the same time period, the density of mobile cellular subscribers was 140 per 100 individuals; those with Internet access, 80 per 100.

The five largest smartphone suppliers, Samsung, Huawei, Ap-

ple, Xiaomi and Oppo, accounted for 69 percent of the total global market volume in the second quarter. In Kazakhstan, Samsung had a 42.55-percent market share in August, Apple (19.99 percent), Xiaomi (12.06 percent), Huawei (11.01-percent) and Oppo (1.81 percent).

“Demand for high-end smartphones has slowed at a greater rate than demand for mid-range and low-end smartphones. To try to boost smartphone replacements, we’ve seen manufacturers bringing premium features such as multilens front/back cameras, bezel-less displays and large batteries from their flagship smartphones into lower-priced models,” said Gartner Senior Research Director Anshul Gupta on Gartner.com.

“A key driver in the second quarter was the availability of vastly improved mid-tier devices that offer premium designs and features while significantly undercutting the ultra-high-end in price. Combine this with intensified and generous trade-in programmes across major markets and channels and upgrading now makes more sense to consumers,” said IDC’s Worldwide Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker Research Manager Anthony Scarsella on IDC.com.

Kazpost launches online chatbot to assist customers

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – The Qpost postal operator’s first online chatbot recently began helping customers on the post.kz website and Facebook page. On Aug. 28, it also appeared on the instant messenger Telegram.

“Our new virtual assistant that was developed by using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and algorithms is able to quickly and efficiently track mailings and report their whereabouts in real time, provide information on posting and delivery rates and advise on all issues related to receiving mail services,” the press service of the Kazakh national postal service Kazpost reports.

Previously, the company received requests from customers via eight communication channels. This significantly increased the time to pro-

vide answers. Now, all the calls will have one input channel, which, in addition to the chatbot, will be handled by live operators, and answers to customers’ questions will be provided instantly.

If the chatbot can’t answer a question, the client’s chat will be transferred to one of Kazpost’s operators. The online assistant will improve and learn how to provide high-quality service in the process. As it possesses artificial intelligence, the more requests it processes, the faster and better its answers will be.

With time, the chatbot will handle not only postal services issues, but also financial requests, online payments and purchases of train tickets, lottery tickets, receiving loans from major Kazakh banks, and even deposit money. The chatbot operates in Kazakh and Russian.

This month, Nur-Sultan postal

workers were also provided with electronic scooters.

“The postal digitisation has also affected our postmen. They started using electronic scooters. This innovation significantly decreased the time of letter deliveries and is beneficial for the health of our postmen,” Kazpost wrote Aug. 20 on its Facebook page.

“Before, I had to get to my destinations by foot, thus, I experienced pain in my legs and I would deliver my last letter for the day at 4 p.m., now I can finish my delivery services by 2 p.m.,” said a capital postwoman in a 24.kz video report.

Kazpost is following the state programme adopted in 2017 Digital Kazakhstan, the aim of which is to create smart cities, by doing things such as automating public services and integrating smart street lighting systems.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

Sisters seek to instil love of art with Instagram-based business

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – Two sisters, Arna Jan and Dana Sarsenbayeva, launched in August the Instagram-based brand Uncool.Store, which promotes art appreciation and freedom from societal boundaries.

“We labelled our brand as uncool because people are often ignorant of art or simply negatively react to it. It might be a question of religious tolerance or intolerance, for that matter, but some people start criticising us for promoting Christianity, saying they can't wear our caps since Jesus is depicted on them. You see, many of our caps have prints of famous paintings with Jesus Christ, such as Leonardo DaVinci's Last Sup-

per. Wearing a piece of art, however, is not a religious promotion; it is the promotion of aestheticism and we want our people to understand that,” said Jan.

She has always had an entrepreneurial mindset – she was the first to sell flowers in hat boxes, which is now a common practice in the city, and had a business selling watches. That outlook, combined with a profound appreciation for art, gave birth to the idea of starting a business where it can be promoted.

Uncool.Store currently sells made-to-order caps in different colours with prints of famous artwork by Salvador Dali, DaVinci, Henri Matisse, Michelangelo and Edvard Munch. Soon, the sisters plan to sell kimono-like coats and

turtlenecks. The collection will be named MusicArt with the theme of internationally acclaimed Kazakh musicians, such as NAZIMA and Scriptonite.

“I want people in Kazakhstan, and around the world, to start thinking art is cool. We provide free worldwide delivery, 24/7. The price for one cap is \$25; that is because we use high-quality technologies to make our printed images lasting. We care for the quality of the images; we want them to be as detailed as in real life,” said Jan.

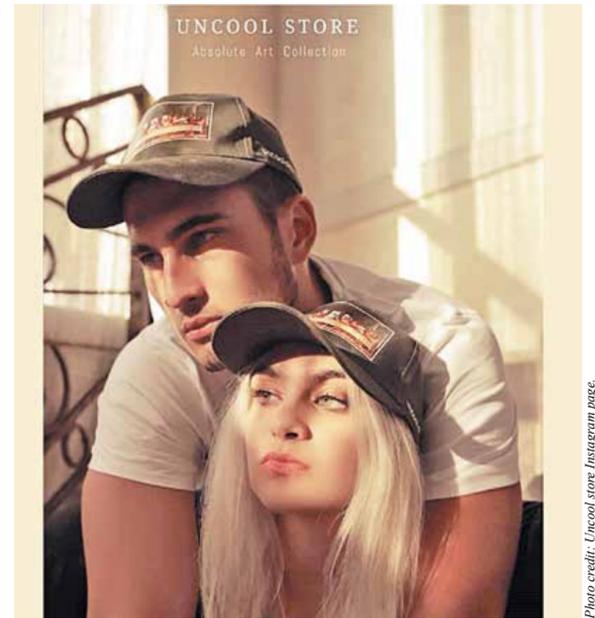
She travelled to Italy to photograph of some of the masterpieces, including the Last Supper, to use for the prints. She then used Photoshop to edit the pictures and complete the design for the caps.

“A cap is a free-size and unisex

item. Everything we make and will make is going to be universal; we want to promote the idea of things being sex-free. The kimono we want to make will also be a free size. If objects have no boundaries, maybe people will start thinking that people shouldn't be labelled either,” said Jan.

Both sisters draw and paint. Sarsenbayeva's creations are abstract. She decorated Na Kryshe, a restaurant in the capital with large paintings on the walls. Jan prefers academic drawing and digital art. In December, they plan to host a gallery of their artwork together with a branded fashion show.

Updates about future events and their products can be seen and ordered at their official Instagram account @uncool.store.



Caps from the Absolute Art collection with The Last Supper.

Photo credit: Uncool store Instagram page.

International rideshare company Bolt launches operations in capital

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Bolt, a major European transport platform, began operating Sept. 4 in the capital. Several thousand drivers have already started working.

“More than 25 million users in more than 30 countries use Bolt services. Now, the European quality of Bolt taxi service is also available in Kazakhstan. We are convinced that happy drivers are the key to the best service; therefore, we offer more favourable conditions for cooperation for drivers who continue to join Bolt in Nur-Sultan,” said founder and CEO Marcus Willig.

The minimum trip fee is 500 tenge (US\$1.30). Landing costs passengers 330 tenge (US\$0.85), with additional fees of 40 tenge (US\$0.10) per kilometre and 10 tenge (US\$0.026) per minute of travel.

Bolt provides discounts of up to 50 percent to everyone who downloads the application. By using the app, for example, a trip from Baiterek to the EXPO 2017 location will be approximately 400

tenge (less than US\$1). Users will be able to see the exact price when ordering a vehicle.

The launch of Bolt is a great event for Nur-Sultan. We tried to meet the needs of city residents in a comfortable taxi for a reasonable price. We are pleased to start our work in Kazakhstan precisely from the capital and we hope that new Bolt users will appreciate our service.

The commission for Bolt drivers is much lower compared to the 12 percent for other taxi services. The company, however, offers additional benefits such as driver

travel guarantees with fixed rates, a branding programme and daily bonuses.

“The launch of Bolt is a great event for Nur-Sultan. We tried to meet the needs of city residents in a comfortable taxi for a reasonable price. We are pleased to start our work in Kazakhstan precisely from the capital and we hope that new Bolt users will appreciate our service. In the near future, we plan to start work in other cities and we are also considering the possibility of launching other Bolt services in the country, including renting electric scooters and food delivery,” said Bolt Representative Office in Kazakhstan head Arai Bekembayev.

Bolt will face challenges in the market, regional manager Juris Kruminis told The Astana Times, but the company has overcome similar tests in the past. The capital transportation market has intense competition and Bolt will face strong rivals such as Yandex. Combined with lower commission for drivers, the company will seek to provide very comfortable conditions and offer sessions and support in Kazakh and Russian.

Kazakh renewable energy and tin industries are ones to watch, says Norwegian study

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh renewable energy and tin industries are potential growth sectors and oil and gas are still a safe bet for investors, according to the latest Norwegian International Business Project report. The report provides potential investors with an overview of Kazakhstan and its most promising industries.

“Significant progress has been made with a vision to turn Kazakhstan into the region's most investment friendly country. Former President (Nursultan) Nazarbayev laid out a strategy, the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, calling for better governance, improvement of the welfare and tax systems, support for small and medium-sized businesses and development of infrastructure to transform Kazakhstan into one of the 30 most advanced nations by 2050,” notes the report.

According to the report, de-

spite global challenges caused by an oversupply of U.S. shale oil, the oil and gas industry still is the key industry for investors interested in Kazakhstan. Even with the shift to renewable energy sources that is planned in Kazakhstan, natural gas is forecast to be a “bridge fuel,” so investing in it would be a safe choice, as Kazakhstan's gross natural gas production has been on the rise in recent years up to 46.4 billion cubic meters (Bcm) in 2016, according to the report.

As for the renewable energy sector, since the transition towards green energy in Kazakhstan is in its early stages and growing, the potential for the renewable energy sector is bright. With increasing expertise, regulatory and further financial incentives, the market barriers will further decrease and attract more private investments, says the report.

The minerals and mining industries are also expected to be strong. Aside from more well-known ura-

nium, for which Kazakhstan is the number one producer and exporter in the world, the tin industry is also reported to be on the rise. With Japanese and Chinese electronic industry demand for tin, there is a shortage in the world market. Kazakhstan is reported to have the largest underdeveloped tin depositary in the world, Syrymbet.

The authors note that due to Kazakhstan and the Central Asia region being relatively uncharted territory, it is particularly attractive for potential investors and entrepreneurs.

The International Business Project, which employs graduate students attending the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) and BI Norwegian Business School (BI), was founded and has been supported by Innovation Norway since 1984. The report is available at <http://www.ib.no/news/2019/06/report-available-on-the-business-opportunities-in-kazakhstan/>.



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Tokayev declares 2020 as year of volunteer



Photo credit: alborit.kz

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed the decree Aug. 27 declaring 2020 as the Year of the Volunteer.

Speaking at the May 29 Kazakh-Russian Youth Cooperation Forum in Kostanai, Tokayev noted the volunteer movement is necessary for the country, reported Zakon.kz. There is a particular need to develop digital volunteer initiatives.

“I see that many civic initia-

tives, volunteer and social projects originate in social networks. Interested people with an active lifestyle offer socially significant ideas and projects. We must pay attention to them and strongly support them,” he added.

The state needs to develop education centres for volunteers, a better information policy and volunteer infrastructure within social networks. Tokayev noted the government and akims (governors) must offer their support to potential young volunteers by encouraging constructive youth initiatives and controlling problems

of access to education, training, employment and quality leisure.

The proposal to declare 2020 the Year of Support for the Volunteer Movement was initially voiced during the forum by National Volunteer Network Chairperson Vera Kim. Tokayev then supported the idea by paraphrasing Viktor Tsoi’s “Zvezda Po Imeni Solnce” lyrics as “volunteering is the work of young people, a cure for wrinkles.”

In July, the Ministry of Education and Science supported students by offering to pay part of their tuition in exchange for vol-

unteering with one of the social organisations.

More than 200 volunteer organisations currently operate in Kazakhstan, with more than 50,000 people involved in the movement. Last year, 25 projects aimed at increasing volunteer potential and training and attracting individuals and volunteer organisations for social projects and events were implemented within the state social order in the regions. The Qazvolunteer website was launched in May to make volunteering more accessible for Kazakh youth.

Kazakhstan to develop New Professions Atlas

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh Ministry of Labour and Social Protection confirmed the decision to create a New Professions Atlas (NPA) during the Aug. 28 meeting of the National Council of Qualifications in the capital. The listing will create industry credentials and professional standards.

Sayasat Nurbek, BTS Digital educational centre director, noted the company, a partner of the Eurasian Resource Group (ERG), presented the project outlook in cooperation with the ministry, reported the latter’s press service.

“The atlas is a map forecasting promising industries and professions for the next 10-15 years. It will help us understand which areas will be actively developing,

which new technologies, products and management practices will appear within them and which new specialists will be required by employers,” he said.

The NPA is needed as there is no alternative applied product used throughout the country. When choosing a profession, many citizens are guided by the wishes of their parents, internal prejudices and subjective trends.

Nurbek identified a number of system prerequisites and challenges that require adequate human resources for the economy and affect the quality of life and individual economic situations in connection with the overflow of labour resources and workers layoffs. He classified the main factors into two categories.

Continued on Page B5

Almaty graffiti artists draw attention to Kazakh history and culture

By Saltanat Botuev

NUR-SULTAN – Almaty graffiti artists Yerzhan Tanayev and Ali Zakir, known as Tigrohaud Crew, have created dozens of murals throughout Kazakhstan as well as India, Russia and Turkey. Most of their works are portraits, including historical figures, in a mixed style and authentic ethnic atmosphere.

The duo, created by two fellow students from Almaty College of Decorative and Applied Arts, initially expressed their interest in the art form in 2006 after seeing graffiti artists at the annual SNICKERS URBANIA festival. The following year, they decided to participate themselves.

“At that time we were still in college where we studied easel painting and we decided to participate next year. In 2007, after preliminary drawing on the walls, we decided to participate. There were four of us, then only two of us, Ali Zakir and I, continued (to paint graffiti),” Tanayev said in an interview for this story.

“Back then, we often drew hip-hop characters like Tupac and Notorious B.I.G. and then we realised: why not draw, glorify our heroes? We began to draw historical figures such as Abai Kunanbayev (Kazakh poet, composer and philosopher), Dinmukhamed Konayev (Kazakh Soviet politician), Abilkhan Kasteyev (Kazakh painter) and Al-Farabi (Oriental philosopher),” he added.

To date, Tigrohaud Crew has created works in Aktau, Aktobe, Almaty, Karagandy, Kostanai, the capital and Taldykorgan. The murals are a mixed style that includes photorealism, Kazakh traditional patterns, geometric elements and other components.

“Our style can be called qu-raq korphe (a quilt, the front side of which is sewn from colourful pieces of fabric). We collect our work from pieces of different colours and then every colour, every spot should play its role... Some of our works are very difficult to understand at close range. It seems that there are some kind of chaotic

colours, but when you step back, the work is becoming holistic,” said Tanayev.

The team also creates paintings and shows as part of exhibitions across the country. They are inspired by world graffiti artists and painters, music and nature.

“I get inspired by foreign artists’ works; for example, Arys, Marat Morik. Music is also inspiring. In general, modern art inspires me, and not only street art,” he added.

One of the pair’s recent works is a mural in the capital dedicated to Qurmangazy Sagyrbaiuly, a Kazakh composer, instrumentalist and folk artist.

“I painted a modern image of Qurmangazy. As far as I know, there are no reliable photographs of him. They are drawn from stories... Then why not create his modern portrait. The result was a geometric and monumental work,” he said.

The team creates complimentary murals as part of street art festivals and commercial ones, such as the work for a photo studio in Almaty.

“Young people found us and offered to paint the studio building’s wall, saying they will buy paint for us. We decided to help, experiment and paint something interesting. The mural is a portrait of a boy by Zakir. He had portraits (in the past) of people with realistic style head and small body with gloves. I created the background in wild style graffiti,” said Tanayev.

The team’s prominent works are portraits of Kasteyev (graffiti in Almaty), cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov (mural in Taldykorgan), labour leader Kamshat Donenbayeva (mural in Kostanai) and Kunanbayev (mural in Kostanai).

“In the work process, many passers-by stopped and said that Konayev was a great man. Even an elderly lady came up and said she had personally seen him and described what a wonderful person he was,” he said.

The artists’ works can be found on their Instagram pages @zakir_tigrohaud and @tanai_tigrohaud as well as at behance.net/ilovetig



Photo credit: Yerzhan Tanayev

Graffiti with a portrait of Abilkhan Kasteyev in Almaty.

French family tours world in campervan, enjoy Nur-Sultan’s people and architecture

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – A family of three from Normandy, France sold everything they owned to go on a trip around the world in a campervan they lovingly named Le Daciél Tour. Like true nomads in a mobile house not unlike the yurt, the Pereira family travelled around the south of Kazakhstan on their way to Mongolia, and on their way back from Russia they decided to see the north of Kazakhstan, including its capital.

“The first two letters in DACIEL stand for David, my husband, CI stands for Cindy, that is me, and EI stands for Eloise, our daughter,” explained Cindy Pereira.

The Pereira family embarked on their journey in April this year, starting with a tour around Belgium followed by Germany, Poland, Italy, Estonia, and Russia.

“We visited Saint-Petersburg, Moscow, Novgorod, Volgograd, after Astrakhan, we came to Kazakhstan. We visited Aralsk, Shymkent, Almaty, and Semey. Afterwards we went all the way to Mongolia, travelled around the Gobi Desert. Setting forth in the northern direction from there, we reached Baikal, then Novosibirsk, and now we are here, in Nur-Sultan,” said Pereira. The family arrived in the capital Sept. 8.

“It is a very good city, the people here are very happy, always smiling, and really friendly. It is my favourite place in Kazakhstan so far. The nature, the interesting design of the buildings, the architecture, is all very fascinating. There are many kids’ parks, too. We have Kazakh friends in Nur-Sultan, they treated us to Kazakh food,” said Pereira.

Continued on Page B2

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- Sept. 11 at 7 p.m. Giselle, ballet
- Sept. 18 at 7 p.m. Eugene Onegin, opera
- Sept. 19, 20 at 7 p.m. The Silken Ladder, opera
- Sept. 22 at 12 p.m. Musical Tale about the Sacred Bird Samruk, concert
- Sept. 22 at 6 p.m. Mikhail Fokine’s ballets

KAZAKHSTAN SPORTS COMPLEX

- Sept. 11 at 7 p.m. HC Nomad - HC Yugra
- Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. HC Nomad - HC Sokol
- Sept. 25 at 7 p.m. HC Nomad - HC Rostov

BARYS ARENA

- Sept. 14-21 at 11 a.m. World Wrestling Championships 2019
- Sept. 22 at 3 p.m. World Wrestling Championships 2019

ASTANA CONCERT HALL

- Sept. 21 at 7 p.m. Byron Angel and Outcast, dramatised concert

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

People should be faithful to their motherland, country of residence, says Cossack community leader

By Saltanat Boteu

NUR-SULTAN – People should be faithful to their motherland and country of residence, said Kazachya Volnitsa Cossack community leader Semyon Rakov. After serving in the Kazakh Armed Forces for 12 years, he settled in Karagandy and became the group's head in 2001.

"We urge every member of our community to love and respect the country we live in. I believe every person should be a faithful son or daughter of his or her motherland and country of residence," he told assembly.kz.

"I do not consider myself a stranger in Kazakhstan. I am very comfortable here and I love everything. My ancestors used to take part in battles in the Kazakh land. My mother and my brothers are now living in Omsk. My decision to stay in Kazakhstan was accepted positively. I have never regretted this decision," he added.

Rakov is proud of his multinational family.

"My family is multinational. My spouse is Korean and my daughter's spouse is Belarusian. We even have a bridegroom from Congo. All of my relatives built an international family. We are never separated; we live in a full-fledged understanding. It's great!" he said.

The regional Cossack community in Karagandy, opened in 1996, has 53 members.



"Our aims are strengthening the unity of the people of Kazakhstan; preservation of interethnic and interconfessional consent in society; assistance in formation of Kazakh patriotism, moral and youth's spiritual development; preservation of historical heritage for the further development of national identity and traditions of ethnic groups' interaction," said Rakov.

Community members are engaged in reviving Cossack tradi-

tions and customs. The Kazachya Volnitsa ensemble was established in 2000.

"They are well known in the region. We performed in the Pavlodar and Kokshetau regions. We went to Almaty and Barnaul. We have a Grand Prix. Every year, the festival Song of the Nation is held in Kokshetau with the support of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Over the past two years, our team has won its main prize," he added.

At the same time, the community works closely with youth. The children's group meets every Sunday, where members attend master classes and competitions at the House of Friendship.

The community's other creative groups perform concerts for children from orphanages, hold regular events such as the Maslenitsa traditional holiday in Karagandy central park of culture and recreation and organise New Year activities.

Kindergarten for children with special needs seeks support

By Diana Vassilenko



NUR-SULTAN – A kindergarten in the nation's capital for children with special needs, including those on the autism spectrum, is appealing to the public for funding to stay open.

The kindergarten opened in 2018 and teaches 75 children, 20 of which are on the autistic spectrum. The kindergarten includes six educational groups, of which three groups are inclusive and one is correctional for children with mental retardation and speech development delay.

School Director Zhannel Shaimardanova opened the kindergarten after her son was diagnosed with developmental delays.

"Because of the diagnosis, no kindergarten wanted to accept him. I had to ensure my son passes a rehabilitation programme with expensive specialists in private centres, where I paid 150,000 tenge (US\$385.6) per month for a half-day stay. That is when I had the idea to open a special kindergarten that accepts children with autism," explained Shaimardanova on her Facebook page. "I managed to work at EXPO, which was a pivotal point for me in deciding to open the kindergarten, because the embassies being grateful for my work donated the pavilions' equipment and property. I found a room that I rent to this day, brought furniture there and found teachers."

The project is unique in that children without disabilities are brought up together with children who receive special care of the same quality as in rehabilitation centres. The centre has 21 employees, including teachers, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a neurologist and other specialists.

"In the summer, we developed a new occupational therapy method we called 'Greenhouse in Rehabilitation' for the development of social, communicative and motor skills, as well as for the improvement of understanding nature and establishing a relationship with it; this helps ordinary children growing up in urban conditions," wrote

Shaimardanova on her Facebook page.

The centre received a three million tenge (US\$ 7,711.35) grant from the Road Map 2020 state programme and donations from foreign embassies in the Kazakh capital to help with startup costs. The school is also competing to receive additional state funding. But Shaimardanova says she is no longer able to pay the 600,000 tenge (US\$1,542) per month rent and other monthly expenses herself, reports elorda.info.

"I cover all the main expenses myself. I have already sold my car, and I am currently looking for sponsors. I am an engineer with seven years of experience in the oil and gas sector, nevertheless, I enrolled in a clinical psychology degree at the National Research Institute of Continuing Professional Education in Moscow, because it is both necessary and important for me to know how to work with my son. He is already six years old," Shaimardanova said.

"Sponsorship funds are necessary, firstly, to repair the boiler room, to buy a heating boiler and to buy coal. We also need to repair the electric cable," she explained. "We are looking for funds to purchase technical equipment and to equip the correction rooms, and to develop a methodological plan for preschool organisations, since officially, apart from laws, we still do not have a methodological protocol on how to create a necessary inclusive environment or how to introduce special children to the educational process."

In addition to caring for the kindergarten attendees, Shaimardanova supports her employees, among whom are mothers of large families and people with disabilities.

"I really hope there are people who will help us overcome our temporary difficulties. If you decide to support our inclusive kindergarten, please send funds to our official bank accounts below, or repost it. Thank you," she concluded in her Facebook post.

One can email business.zhan-nel@gmail.com for more information.

French family tours world in campervan, enjoy Nur-Sultan's people and architecture

Continued from Page B1

The family was initially planning to stay in the city for another day before embarking to Uralsk, where they also have friends waiting for them, and stopping in Aktobe on the way. However, the Astana Convention Bureau employees on behalf of the Nur-Sultan akimat (city administration) welcomed the travelling family and presented them City Pass tourist smart cards for visiting the attractions and landmarks of the city, tour guides and books about the history of Nur-Sultan and Kazakhstan. So, the family decided to stay in the city for two more days and fully experience the capital life.

"It is known that there are many countries outside France where life never stops. The shops, businesses, banks and others are open seven days a week, some 24/7. Constructions go on non-stop, but workers here are a



thousand times less stressed than in life, in general," commented David Pereira.

"Nur-Sultan, the host of EXPO 2017 is incredible, so grandiose. The shopping centres here are of an extraordinary dimension," wrote David Pereira on Facebook. The family was also impressed by

the size of all the attractions, and the vastness of the city.

Cindy Pereira said that before starting to travel, they sold everything they had including the house, their cars, all of the furniture, and even their clothes. It was a necessary sacrifice for the unforgettable adventure, she explained.

"It has always been our dream to travel around the world. It's a very amazing experience for us, for the kid," Cindy Pereira said.

The Pereira family is not planning to end their adventure with the Eurasian tour. They are planning to go all around Africa and the Americas, and South Asia in the near future.



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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

Artist exhibits Tengrianism-inspired paintings

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh artist Nazym Rakhimberdiyeva presented her Tengrianism-inspired (ancient Turkic faith) paintings Aug. 20 at her individual “Tengri of three worlds” exhibition in Almaty, reported mix.tn.kz.

“I got interested in Tengrianism when I was wondering what our deities looked like. But it turned out that this is an obscure topic; artists rarely depicted them and the images of the gods that I imagined reading legends spun in my head. I also relied on Chinese and Russian studies. Inspired, I began to visualise them. So far, I have completed 15 paintings,” she said.

Rakhimberdiyeva graduated from Tansykbaev College of Decorative and Applied Arts in Almaty, then continued her studies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Missing home motivated her to study Kazakh history and reading about the past inspired her to devote her next series of paintings to her motherland. Returning from Malaysia, she brought her plan to life.

The paintings have a black background to focus on divine images. Rakhimberdiyeva uses a variety of techniques, incorporating painting, graphics and 3D effects in her toolkit.



“When viewing a picture from different angles, you can see 3D effects. Images seem vibrant and voluminous; these are not flat drawings. For example, in water I transmit a wave; attentive viewers can see the swaying wind and convex snow mountains,” she said.

Rakhimberdiyeva noted that an-

cient Turkic symbols are a central theme of her paintings. She was particularly inspired by the characteristics they ascribed to wolves.

“Among the ancient Turks, the wolf was considered a sign of strength, valour and honour. When the leader won the battle to be distinguished among the military, he

was presented with a wolfskin hat. So, people understood that this is a hero with whom the soul of Bozkurt (heavenly wolf) resides. And Bozkurt is an integral part of Tengri; he is like his son on earth... I portrayed Tengri wearing a wolf cloak to show their connection,” she added.

Emerging artists display works in Nur-Sultan apartments

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Emerging Kazakh artists exhibited their works Aug. 20-24 in capital apartments. The Tribute Album exhibitions series project, first conducted in 2017, was organised by Platforma projectroom group.

“We hold informal exhibitions in apartments and workshops, where we will have the opportunity to be the first to get acquainted with the work of the authors! ‘Hard’ or ‘funny’ everyday life, the pangs of creativity, thoughts about reality and maybe even the most secret secrets and thoughts of the artist are revealed in the zone of everyday ‘living’ of the creators!” said exhibition organiser and art curator Aigul Ibraeva on Platforma projectroom’s Instagram page.

The artists provided exhibit visitors with the exhibition locations, giving them the chance to not only view the works but also interact with the artists and see where the art was born.

The series opened Aug. 20 with the Animal Human exhibition featuring artists Al-Mina, Aigerim

Ospan, Maya Sagymova, Madina Sargali, Aisulu Shaikenova and Auzhan Zhumabek. They were invited to reflect on the similarities and differences between animals and humans with Zhumabek’s new media art installation featuring blood and flesh and Sagymova

offering visitors the opportunity to drink tea with her as a part of the installation.

The exhibition continued the following day with Crazy Games presented by Meirman Ilyasov and Danila Lebedev. Their works celebrated female beauty by featuring

portraits of women who don’t consider themselves to be beautiful. They also provided guests with the opportunity to see the rest of their works in the basement.

Day three featured “To the road!” with works by Anastasiya Zharko. She presented her recent wall mosaic project and hosted a discussion on mosaics in Soviet and contemporary monumental art.

Apple Orchard, featuring Aidana Kulakhmetova’s works, was presented Aug. 23. She hosted a discussion on bees and their role in preventing possible environmental disasters, played her favourite vinyls and offered guests an apple pie to commemorate the topic.

The series wrapped Aug. 24 with a showing of short movies by emerging directors hosted by the Art family studio art space. Kadmymy Kyzyl featured “The Silence of the Steppe. S.O.S.” on developing the Kazakh civil society. Sanzhar Amansugurov showcased his two recent films, “Aiya” and “Leya.” Yelizaveta Novikova presented “Mandarinki” and Alibi Mukushev showed his “Once upon a time in the N city.”



The Animal Human exhibition.

Kazakh National Museum invites guests to experience history in 3D

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh National Museum opened a 3D multimedia hall Aug. 29, the eve of the nation’s Constitution Day, to enhance visitors’ impressions of the history of the Great Steppe.

The 240-square metre hall includes tours with a virtual guide,

spherical 3D panoramas of sacred places and interactive books featuring historical exhibits and unique cultural monuments.

“In this area, there are a special display and also a touch pad. They are connected between each other and show most of the jewellery made of gold and silver, bronze, iron and paintings, as well as a 3D-tour of Kazakhstan’s historical

sights,” museum excursion guide Madina Ybraim told kazakh-tv.kz.

“We have such special jets; that is, such cars with helmets in which you can conduct a tour of virtual reality. Then the final part, a technology called keif. It broadcasts a special video on the surface of the walls,” she added.

The new hall was built to increase interest in Kazakh history

among younger generations and foreign tourists. Guided tours are available in English, Kazakh and Russian and the space is available for exhibitions, educational programmes and research initiatives.

The National Museum, opened July 2, 2014, is a scientific and cultural centre and the largest museum in Central Asia. As it celebrates its fifth anniversary, it is planning ad-

Ukrainian archaeologist solves mystery of ancient silk cloth



Ukrainian archaeologist Tatyana Krupa.

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – A Ukrainian archaeologist recently solved the mystery of an ancient silk cloth from the era of the Golden Horde found in 2008 on the site of an ancient necropolis near Ekibastuz.

“Judging by the type of gold threads that were used in the embroidery of the fabric; it comes from the Eastern Mediterranean. The style of the embroidery itself also corresponds to the Middle East. That is, it’s Damascene work. From the text, we can conclude that the artefact is related to the Mamluk sultans, who ruled Egypt and Syria from 1250 until 1517 and to the steppe nobility of the middle reaches of the Irtysh River,” said Ukrainian archaeologist Tatyana Krupa. Krupa was invited by Margulan Centre scientists at Pavlodar State Pedagogical University to help solve the mystery, Tengrinews.kz reports.

Krupa is a specialist in ancient and medieval fabrics and conducted her research using scanning electron microscopy methods. Krupa predicts the person who presented the cloth as a gift lived after Caliph Abu Bakr, who was born in Mecca in 573 AD and died in Medina in 643 AD.

“Such gifts were given primarily for military assistance. Perhaps someone from the local nobility of that time received a large award for military merit and a military campaign,” she said.

“At the end of July this year, I deliberately made a visit to the National Museum to look at the fabric

again. I collected some microsamples. I was interested in its place of origin. After all, the presence of the Arabic inscription itself with such a serious text indicates that what we are working with are high status textiles,” Krupa.

The words “Gift of the Sultan to the Greatest” are embroidered in Arab on the fabric in gold. The artefact is currently displayed in the National Museum of Kazakhstan in Nur-Sultan.

Krupa and the Pavlodar scientists are also studying an old female headdress found near Shiderty Village in the Pavlodar Region. The burial in which the headdress was found dates back to somewhere around the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries. The scientists are convinced, however, that craftsmen made the item before the Genghis Khan era.

“The female headdress has iconographic images. They are similar to the patterns of the people from the Polovtsian part of Southeastern Europe. The same kinds are found in Ukraine. So far we have attributed the dress to the Kimek-Kipchak type. It appeared about a hundred years before the burial in which it was laid. That is, it’s clearly from a pre-Mongolian time. And it’s a great success for us, because there are no such headdresses in the world. Everything, including the fabric, the birch bark design, the leather details, the silver trim, is well preserved. Most likely, this headdress belonged to a woman of an honourable age respected by the society,” Krupa said.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

President to increase teachers' salaries twofold to improve education quality

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – Teachers' pay will be raised twofold, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced at the August teacher conference. Educators will no longer need to go to school on Saturdays, which they were required to do despite the new five-day system. Tokayev also forbade akimats (city governments) from involving educational institution employees in their events.

"Despite the declared increase in teachers' salaries today, many surcharges are deducted from their base salary. Therefore, 500,000 teachers in the country will not feel any significant increase. We must make that clear. Moreover, teachers' wages make up only 65 percent of the country's average wage. We will not put up with this. Therefore, I entrust the government to attract qualified workers to the education system and to raise the status of teachers and thus to double their salaries within four years," he said, as reported by Tengrinews.kz.

According to one of the teach-

ers at the conference, a kindergarten teacher receives 76,000 tenge a month (US\$195) and an assistant, 67,000 (US\$173); taking into account all possible reimbursements, a young educational worker can expect a maximum of 94,000 tenge (US\$242). By contrast, a university student earns 150,000 tenge (US\$387) as a regular café waitperson while completing his/her studies, said the teacher.

Tokayev noted enacting the teacher status law will lead to significant changes, and the government will be charged with ensuring all accepted standards are executed in a practical manner.

"It is important to implement a real increase in the status of a teacher. Everything we are talking about now directly depends on the teachers. To increase the competitiveness of the nation, we need our teachers to achieve a high status. The bill 'On the status of a teacher' provides comprehensive support measures, such as the reduction of a teacher's burden, the guarantee of protection of honour and dignity and material provision. The most important measures are

doubling the payment for classroom management and checking notebooks, increasing the period of leave for all teachers up to 56 days, renumeration for a master's degree and others," he said.

"The vicious practice of local akimats often abusing their powers, using teachers for administrative purposes and various kinds of events that have nothing to do with the education system, is not ceasing. I have instructed the government to take urgent and drastic measures," he added.

According to the legislative amendments and additions introduced June 13 regarding teacher status and reducing student and teacher workload, a fine will be charged for taking advantage of teachers and forcing them to complete work not related to their professional duties.

"Obviously, a teacher should not be loaded with unrelated work; he/she should work with children, not papers. The teacher should not work for someone solving akimat problems. The task of the ministry is to fully give the teachers this opportunity. The ministry is paying attention to this, which is very good,"

said one of the teachers at the conference.

Tokayev also instructed the Ministry of Education and Science to develop and launch special programmes to overcome the academic gap of children from low-income families and schools in socially troubled areas that display poor results. There should be no difference in education between urban and rural children, and he noted it is vital to overcome any educational inequality.

"Regional akims (governors) should fundamentally deal with this issue. It is their direct responsibility to create all the necessary conditions for children in the country. What quality of education can we expect when one teacher is forced to teach several subjects in the majority of small schools in rural areas? I instruct the regional akims to provide grants to attract the best managers and teachers to schools in the regions," he said.

Earlier this year, Tokayev also called for radically strengthening the quality of pre-school education and the need to revise the pay scale for early education teachers and kindergarten aides.

Bill will incentivise teacher development

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – The draft laws On the Status of the Teacher and On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts on the Status of the Teacher and Reducing the Workload of Students and Teachers were approved at an Aug. 27 government meeting chaired by Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin.

The draft laws, presented by Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Askhat Aimagambetov at the government meeting, was submitted for consideration at the Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) Sept. 1.

The laws were developed on the initiative of Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and address the tasks set by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on boosting the status of teachers to improve the education system.

"We plan to create conditions for teachers' professional growth and boost their competitiveness," said Mamin. "The task is to also establish incentives for teachers and boost the prestige of the profession."

The laws draw on international experience and more than 18,000 suggestions from teachers in Kazakhstan.

The draft law On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts on the Status of the Teacher and Reducing the Workload of Students and Teachers will introduce amendments and additions to three codes and 15 laws if adopted.

The draft law On the Status of the Teacher features 19 articles, including financial and non-financial incentives for teachers' professional growth, and aims to provide teachers with more opportunities for creativity and self-development in their profession.

Teachers will be rewarded for taking on additional duties, such as mentoring, and earning higher qualifications, such as master's degrees. They will also see increased wages and paid leave. Akims (governors) of regions will have the au-



Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Askhat Aimagambetov.

thority to independently distribute financial support for teachers according to their regional budget.

"The main financial incentives were additional pay for classroom management, coursework grading, additional pay for learning new teaching skills, an increase in the period of paid leave to up to 56 days and additional pay for a master's degree and mentoring," said Aimagambetov.

Teachers' professional rights will be expanded so that they will be able to develop and apply copy-righted teaching methods and aids, use information resources more freely and have more autonomy in choosing how to boost their qualifications.

"There will also be new norms to reduce the workload placed on teachers by establishing a ban on engaging them in non-typical functions, excessive reporting or unreasonable audits," said Aimagambetov on non-financial incentives for teachers' growth.

"For the first time, a law will clearly state that a teacher should primarily teach and educate children," said Nikolskaya Secondary School Teacher Nesken Kuttybayeva. "For the first time, mentoring was singled out as a separate direction for teacher development. We really hope that the adoption of the law will attract young and talented professionals, which schools desperately need."

Government to improve conditions in penal colonies by 2023

By Yekaterina Yeliseyeva

NUR-SULTAN – No Kazakh correctional colony meets international standards and measures will be taken to improve conditions, said Deputy Prosecutor General Marat Akhmetzhanov at an Aug. 28 roundtable in the capital. He suggested completely modernising the colonies within the Development of the Penal Correction System Road Map for 2019-2023. The proposal was submitted by the Prosecutor General to the government and the President.

"After the events of torturing prisoners in a correctional colony in Zarechny, we carried out checks. We detected 2,500 violations ranging from unsanitary conditions of detention to ill-treatment of convicts. We received 28 complaints and initiated pre-trial investigations. Also, the inspection indicated that not a single colony met international standards. They have a barracks structure; 40-

80 prisoners are kept there. Therefore, so-called 'activists' are recruited and used to control them," said Akhmetzhanov.

The road map plans show building 12 individual cell units for 1,200 people by 2023.

"But this is only 5 percent of the total demand. In this regard, the government made a recommendation to continue the full modernisation of the colonies throughout the country. The President of the country was also informed about this," he added.

Earlier this year, a video uploaded on YouTube, which captured unlawful employee actions towards convicts at the LA-155/8 institution in Zarechny near Almaty, instantly became viral. The footage, recorded with a hidden camera, showed colony officers twisting a prisoner on the gym floor. In the next room, three uniformed workers hung another person from the ceiling by his arms as one worker hit him on the head with his knee. Other prisoners, as

well as security guards, were present in the video.

"The convict wrote a complaint to the prosecutor about the illegal actions of the administration of the institution and this is how the administration of the institution treated the prisoner," wrote the author in the description.

After clarifying all the circumstances and proceedings, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) reported the colony head and his two deputies were released from their duties. In total, 14 employees were prosecuted.

One of the measures to improve the colonies will be installing information terminals for convicts, said Vnimaniye.kz project author and coordinator Beibut Shazhimbayev at the roundtable.

"We have developed the hardware and software complex 'Information terminal of the convict' which we plan to install in the institutions of the Kazakh Penal Correction System (KPCM) of the MIA. The device al-

lows you to make video calls to people from the socially important list – these are parents, wives. There is also access to an online store. It sells all non-prohibited items. The items are delivered by Kazpost; they are our partners. The prices and products are from the two largest retailers of the country," he added.

Shazhimbayev noted 14.5-kilogram parcels are sent to all KPCM institutions, then distribution proceeds according to detention conditions.

"A convict can buy goods every month on a light detention regime and on a regular basis once every two months; if the prisoner has strict conditions of detention, he can buy them once every six months. The device costs about \$1,300 and it is made of domestic materials; only the sensor is foreign," he added.

He noted two such devices will be installed in the Almaty Region colonies this month as a pilot project. In the future, terminals will be installed in all KPCM institutions.

Ministers present information on new pro-teacher laws on Knowledge Day

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh ministers celebrated Knowledge Day Sept. 1 by visiting schools to speak about the new bill on the status of the teacher and patriotism in schools.

Prime Minister Askar Mamin participated in the inauguration ceremony of the capital's new school-gymnasium number 87 named for Abai Kunanbayev.

"Dear teachers, parents and students! I wholeheartedly congratulate all of you on this wonderful holiday, Knowledge Day... The new school will open its doors in the new academic year. It will be named after prominent thinker and poet Abai Kunanbayev. As you know, next year we will mark the 175th anniversary of Abai," he said.

Mamin also addressed the new bill on the status of the teacher and the impact it will have on educators' work and salaries.

Deputy Prime Minister Berdibek Saparbayev traveled to Arshalinsk district of the Akmola Region to visit the school named after Imanzhussup Kutpanuly. During the visit, he inspected classrooms and talked to children, congratulating them on Knowledge Day.



Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin (centre) and Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altai Kulginov (R).

Saparbayev also spoke about the teacher status law, stressing every country's development largely depends on the level of education, culture and upbringing of its citizens.

Minister of Culture and Sports Aktoty Raimkulova congratulated students and teachers at school-lyceum number 72 in the capital. In her remarks, she emphasised teachers' salaries will be doubled in the next few years, hoping it

will have a positive effect on the quality of education in the country.

During his visit to secondary school number 5 in Akmol village in the Akmola Region, Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atankulov extended his best wishes to the children, teachers and parents on the start of the new academic year. In his remarks, he paid special attention to the importance of patriotism and thirst for knowledge,

while presenting a set of books to the school's library.

Roman Sklyar, Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development, presented an open class on patriotism at the capital's school-gymnasium number 31. He talked about Kazakhstan's latest achievements, friendship and tolerance, as well as the country's role in the global community.

Minister of Information and Social Development Dauren Abayev, accompanied by deputy akim (governor) Marat Igalii, visited a school in Kyzylsuat village in the Akmola region. In extending his greetings, he stressed knowledge and health are of paramount importance for the next generation of Kazakhstan citizens. Abayev also encouraged parents to be patient with their children and praised the great role teachers play in the youngsters' lives.

The bill on the status of the teacher, approved by the government Aug. 27, states educators will no longer be responsible for administrative work, focusing solely on teaching instead. At the same time, measures to increase teachers' salary and extend vacation days will be implemented. The bill now goes to Parliament for consideration.

Adult population vaccination against measles begins

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan will begin to vaccinate the adult population against measles in September, announced Lyudmila Byurabekova, the chairperson of Committee for Quality and Safety of Goods and Services of the Ministry of Healthcare, at an Aug. 28 press conference in the Central Communications Service.

The ministry has seen a high incidence of measles among people 20 to 29 years old.

To date, 147,000 children and 72,000 medical workers have been vaccinated.

"We have decided to conduct additional vaccination against measles and rubella in this age group. The vaccine has been purchased for now. This is the WHO-qualified (World Health Organisation) Serum Institute of India vaccine. The vaccination will start in September. These measures will help stabilise the measles situation," Byurabekova said.

The Ministry of Healthcare purchased two million doses of the vaccine. Vaccinations of adults of

other age groups will also be carried out.

According to Byurabekova, to date, the Ministry of Healthcare has registered more than 10,326 measles cases in all regions of Kazakhstan. The largest number is registered in Nur-Sultan (more than 3,000 people) and in Shymkent (more than 1,000 people).

The ministry monitors the incidence of measles in the country. Children are the most vulnerable to infectious diseases due to reduced overall body resistance, the chairperson said.

"Epidemic measures are being carried out in the foci of infection. Approximately 17,000 contact persons have been vaccinated. Considering that unvaccinated children younger than one year old are more prone to get sick, children from nine months old have been vaccinated since April," the chairperson said.

To date, 147,000 children and 72,000 medical workers have been vaccinated.

Vaccination is carried out in order to produce specific antibodies in the body, thereby enhancing the body's protective function (immunity) to diseases such as pertussis, tetanus, diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio, measles, rubella and mumps. The only effective measure of protection against measles is vaccination, said the chairperson.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

New compulsory medical insurance to expand healthcare access, says expert

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's compulsory medical insurance system, which will come into force Jan. 1, 2020, will provide everyone with sufficient medical care, noted Tatyana Tsechoyeva, the Central Railway Hospital deputy director for medical and preventive work.

"Today, unfortunately, patients are increasingly faced with the need to pay for medical services and, by the way, it should be noted that prices in private clinics are sky-high. Therefore, today there is a need to develop two packages of medical services – a package of guaranteed volume of free medical care (GOBMP) and a package of compulsory social health insurance (OSMS). The population will be able to receive services not included in the guaranteed volume of health insurance within the framework of the OSMS by becoming a member of the Social Health Insurance Fund (FSMS)," she said, as reported by elorda.info.

Discussions about compulsory health insurance regarding the OSMS system started in 2017, although its launch was postponed from January 2018 to Jan. 1, 2020. Many were not convinced of its need.

Tsechoyeva noted many people hold the popular opinion that it is unfair to pay a monthly fee if one rarely visits the hospital. Yet four out of every five causes of death in Kazakhstan are chronic diseases which could have been prevented or controlled with early detection. Insurance might motivate people to have check-ups and, therefore, improve the statistics.

"You will probably agree with me that prevention is much cheaper than treating advanced diseases and that only 15 percent of your health depends on medicine. The rest is the lifestyle of citizens," she added.

GOBMP will allow all citizens, oralspersons (repatriates), stateless individuals and foreigners permanently residing in Kazakhstan to receive medical care. It is the type of insurance that will provide as-

sistance in emergency situations and control diseases that are significant for the entire society.

"There is a number of services in the GOBMP package like fluorography, blood analysis, cardiography and examination by the therapist. A healthy person must undergo these simple procedures to understand what is happening with his/her body. This is the very necessary minimum. If there are any deviations, then the guaranteed volume of free medical care allows the state to receive services free of charge," said Tsechoyeva.

Another advantage of state versus private medical insurance is that it allows patients to receive treatments even if the cost exceeds their accumulated personal account.

"The public system is equally reliable and beneficial for all citizens, regardless of the size of their contributions and income. First, when choosing this model, payers in the health insurance fund are all parties – and the employer, the citizen himself and to a greater

extent the state, all of them are jointly responsible for a person's health," she added.

Introducing insurance medicine will significantly boost the competitive environment in the medical services market.

"During the current procurement of medical services, it turned out that 45 percent of the entire list of potential providers of FSMS are private medical organisations. These are the private clinics where many of our patients prefer to go to find more qualified specialists, lack of queues and high-quality service. Over time, the competition will select the best providers of medical services who can provide the population with high-quality and affordable medical services," said Tsechoyeva.

To ensure a smooth transition to the OSMS system, the government will provide minimum social guarantees or limited GOBMP to uninsured citizens from the state budget for 2020-2022. FSMS will finance the insured population segment to receive an expanded package of medical services.

Caravan of Kindness contest seeks to award most caring people



By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – The second annual national contest Caravan of Kindness began Sept. 2 its search for some of Kazakhstan's kindest people.

The contest awards those who have done charitable works and is accepting applications for the awards from Sept. 2 to Nov. 29.

"We are looking for kind people again... The competition aims to popularise moral values, ideas of charity and humanism," Igor Rogov, deputy executive director of the Foundation of the First President of Kazakhstan – Elbasy said at the Central Communications Service press conference.

He added that a spirit of charity is inherent in Kazakh people and that the contest is meant to strengthen people's sense of mercy and caring. Contestants are given the title of laureates.

"This (competition) is not a search for people to whom we want to give grants or prizes, which we obviously will. Our task is much deeper – often it is very difficult for a person to ask for help. But, unfortunately, sometimes people get into difficult situations. And when someone else, not necessarily close to you, can help you, this happens. There are a lot of such people in our country," said Rogov.

Participants may be either individuals or legal entities who help to solve social and public problems. The winners of the competition will be awarded depending on the type of charitable activity they participate in.

"A girl named Karina Khayrudinova lives in North Kazakhstan. She has had a disease since childhood. She could not fight it. It was hard for the family. Our colleague Alexandra Kandratova works in North Kazakhstan, she writes about this story. She writes so well that she reaches the souls of people. They acknowledge Karina's suffering and responded; the necessary amount of money

was collected – that is 70,000 euro (US\$77,572.6) for her treatment in Germany. Now, the girl is getting better. And Alexandra Kandratova became the winner of this competition. Isn't it great?" said Yerlan Bekkhozhin, chairman of the board of Khabar Agency about last year's competition winner.

The Asar ("together" in Kazakh) nomination is awarded to the laureate, whose charity involves folk customs and national traditions and contributes to their conservation. The Tughan Zher ("motherland" in Kazakh) prize is awarded to the laureate who provides charitable assistance to his country in the field of education, ecology and landscaping, restoration of cultural objects and others. The prize in the Batyl Zhurek ("brave heart" in Kazakh) category is awarded to the laureate for their heroic courage and dedication. In this nomination, a winner may be selected among emergency workers, such as workers of the Emergency Department, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the ambulance and others more. The award in the Meyirym Zholynda ("along the kind path" in Kazakh) category goes to the laureate, who provides constant gratuitous assistance for an established period of time. Finally, the Kaiyrymdylyk tarikhy ("charitable history" in Kazakh) category is awarded to a journalist and creative team for the best coverage of charitable activities in the media, for publishing materials that draw public attention to social problems.

The Foundation of the First President, the Kazakhstan Association of Business Women, Khabar agency, KTK TV channel and Okzhetpes health and fitness centre are organisers of the competition. The Executive Committee accepts and reviews applications, verifies the accuracy of documents confirming charitable activities and submits documents for consideration by commissions. The commission consists of prominent public and state figures, philanthropists as well as representatives of science, culture and the media.

Kazakhstan to develop New Professions Atlas

Continued from Page B1

"The first includes objective global trends that challenge and change the nature and the speed of the changes in training requirements, such as the growing speed of technological changes and end-to-end digitisation, which lead to the emergence of new professions, the change of some and the disappearance of others. The second category represents the negative consequences caused by the inability to respond to the manifestations of the first category factors, such as the lack of a forecasting system for staffing needs, the imbalance of qualifications, the mismatch of labour skills and classical educa-

tion with the demands of the labour market," he said.

The research methodology to develop the NPA will be based on the skills technology foresight developed by the International Labour Organisation, Russian Agency for Strategic Initiatives (ASI) and Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO. The ERG company is already mapping new mining professions for the atlas.

"In January of this year, the ASI trained the first Kazakh team of BTS Digital experts. In May, a pilot foresight study was conducted based on the Don Mining and Processing Plant in Khromtau of Aktobe Region. Based on the results, we identified 45 trends that transform the enterprise and the

industry, seven disappearing professions, 13 changing ones and 26 new professions. The results of the study will be used for the mining industry NPA," said Nurbek.

The NPA will be based on nine prioritised economy industries: mining and metallurgy, oil and gas, agriculture, transport and logistics, engineering, information and communications technology (ICT), energy, tourism and construction. The mining NPA will be created in December and the ministry and World Bank plan to launch a joint project to create NPAs for the remaining eight industries.

"As part of the joint project, there are plans to develop an interactive website and a mobile app of the Kazakh NPA in order to make

the instrument widely accessible by the public. In addition, recommendations will be made for the legislative consolidation of the technological foresight competency methodology. BTS Education, being the only carrier and holder of the technology foresight methodology in Kazakhstan, is ready to act as a partner in providing methodological support free of charge when creating the Atlas of new professions in all nine designated industries," he added.

The meeting also included a presentation by the Development of Labour Resources (CDLR) project office created on instructions of Deputy Prime Minister Berdibek Saparbayev.

CDLR President Tamara Duyseynova reported the new office will work on implementing projects to develop the social and labour sphere in four main areas – the National Qualifications System, productive employment, targeted social support and digitising the spheres.

"It is obvious that this kind of trajectory that employs project management will enable us to create a clear system of the interaction between all the participants, as well as to quickly resolve emerging issues in all areas," she said.

Following the meeting, Saparbayev instructed the ministry and central government agencies to develop an NPA roadmap by Oct. 1 and determine the qualification requirements for experts who will participate in the process.



Government provides compensation to thousands of nuclear weapons tests victims

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Approximately 3,000 compensations have been paid to Kazakh nuclear test victims since the beginning of the year. They were provided by Government for Citizens, a single public service provider akin to Canada Service and Centrelink (Australia), which integrates all public service centres into one system.

"Today, through the Government for Citizens state corporation, Kazakh people who suffered from nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site can receive registration services, payment of one-time state monetary compensation and the issuance of a victim's license," according to its press service.

Aug. 29 is International Day against Nuclear Testing, according

to a UN General Assembly resolution proposed by Kazakhstan and universally adopted by the assembly in 2009.

"Nuclear weapons tests in Kazakhstan and around the world have caused untold suffering," said nuclear test victim, anti-nuclear weapons activist and The ATOM Project's Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov. "The suffering of these victims continues today. Their struggle cannot be forgotten. It is a great honour for me that my country urged the United Nations to declare Aug. 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests."

The day raises awareness and educates about the harmful effects of nuclear testing. Seventy years ago, on Aug. 29, 1949, the Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear weapons test at the Semipalatinsk Test Site. It was the beginning of 40 years of continuous nuclear

testing, which caused irreparable damage to people and the environment. The consequences are still felt today by those who lived in the affected regions or were born long after the tests ended, in the form of birth defects, debilitating diseases and early death.

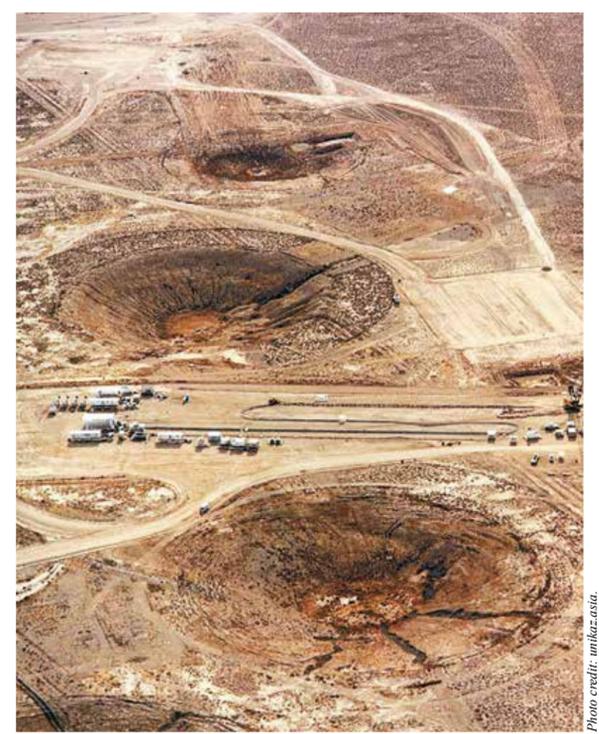
The government is offering compensation to nuclear weapons testing victims as International Day against Nuclear Tests reaches its tenth anniversary.

"Since the start of the year, 2,924 compensations have been awarded to victims of nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. More than 5,700 people received a victim's license," noted the press release.

To receive service at the centre, applicants must have an identification card, a document confirming their registration at the place of residence and bank account in-

formation, as well as some type of paperwork confirming the fact of residence on the Semipalatinsk test site territory in the period from 1949-1990. Evidence sources can include archival certificates, employment records, graduation certificates or other documents. The amount of the one-time monetary compensation depends on the radiation risk (such as maximum, emergency, or increased) of the zone where the victim resided.

In addition to the one-time compensation, victims receive certain benefits, such as train ticket discounts. Since August, those with disabilities pay only half-price when travelling to and from locations from the list of the socially significant passenger interregional communications. Issuing a discount on commercial routes for people with disabilities is at the discretion of the carrier.



NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

Government to allocate nearly \$59 million to develop Imantau-Shalkar lake resort

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN –The Kazakh government is planning to direct 22.8 billion tenge (US\$58.73 million) to develop the Imantau-Shalkar mountain lake resort in the North Kazakhstan region, said Entrepreneurship and Tourism Department head Kuralai Zharova at the Aug. 27 North Kazakhstan Region akimat (administration) meeting.

The state's tourism development programme estimated the resort, included among last year's top 10 priority tourism projects, has the potential to attract 400,000 vacationers a year. The state programme expects to build modern recreation centres that will operate year-round.

The government has designed 56 activities to develop the areas, reported the akimat press service. The agenda includes constructing engineering infrastructure, main and access roads; projects to ensure environmental safety; attracting investors and marketing and promotion.

Approximately 273 kilometres of roads have been repaired in the

Imantau-Shalkar resort area in the last three years, helping tourist flow increase 40 percent. In the first eight months of 2019, nearly 63,000 guests visited resort area, including 11,000 foreign tourists. By comparison, only 45,000 people visited in 2018.

"This is the result of comprehensive work to improve infrastructure," said North Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Kumar Aksakalov.

In 2018, the four-fold increase in road repair funds totalled 3.7 billion tenge (US\$9.53 million). The government also allocated 3.8 billion tenge (US\$9.79 million) this year.

"There are many funds. You need constant monitoring. Facts became known that some contractors do their job in a low-quality way. Everyone who wins contests should know that there will be constant monitoring of their work. We'll take a sample at every kilometre; we bought speciality laboratories," he noted.

Approximately 170 kilometres of roads are still in need of repair. Constructing the highway in Kokshetau State National Natural Park along Lake Shalkar is among the

main problems, said Zharova. Aksakalov charged the regional administration with finding a solution within a week.

The state programme has designated five major projects this year to develop Imantau-Shalkar resort area. The first, Izumrud recreation centre, now operates year-round. The regional administration will work on the remaining projects worth more than one billion tenge (US\$2.58 million) by the end of 2019.

Next up is restoring Shalkar-su sanatorium, which should offer year-round spa treatments.

"We agreed with the investor that he is repairing the building. We, in turn, will lead the way and we will ensure the load of this sanatorium with the union vouchers throughout the year. Investors need to hurry," said Aksakalov.

Other projects underway are building the Botai Museum-Reserve and a visitor centre to orient tourists, as well as constructing an embankment on Imantau Lake's shore, improving horse and bicycle trails and adding a viewing platform. Recreation areas in the region



The Imantau lake.

often offer limited tourist comfort conditions and service.

"Many, if not most, do not even meet elementary requirements... Billions of tenge will go to the development of the resort area. Investors must build facilities that will meet all modern requirements," he

added. The Imantau-Shalkar resort area is being promoted on social networks and YouTube and presented at international and regional tourist exhibitions in Almaty, Kostanai, Omsk and Tashkent. Its recreation facilities will be added to Yandex maps.

"Shalkar and Imantau as a resort area once sounded (like something) remote from reality, but projects will be implemented and such funds will come. Now, we see that everything moves from a dead point," said Aksakalov.

Jongar Gate preserves Eurasian history's chronicles

By Saltanat Botev

NUR-SULTAN – Jongar Gate, two highlands and a narrow, long, flat plain at the junction of the Turkic and Mongolian steppes, is a mountain passage that for centuries determined civilisations' fate.

Trade caravans and steppe armies of Huns, Genghis Khan and Jongsars historically passed through the hallway-like opening.

The gate, between the Jongar Alatau in the west and Birliktau and Mailitau ranges in the east, connects Balkhash-Alakol basin and Jongar plain. The flat corridor, measuring

approximately 10 kilometres wide and 50 long, passes along the border between Kazakhstan and China, notes tarih-begalinka.kz.

At the entrance are Alakol Lake on the north and Ebi-Nur Lake to the south. Zhalanashkol Lake, a small waterway nearly nine kilometres long and a maximum of

six wide, sits to the north. Kazakhstan's Dostyk Railway Station is in the central area and the Chinese Lanzhou-Xinjiang railway's Alashankou station is to the south.

The winds through the gate are among the most powerful in the Commonwealth of Independent States, blowing at a speed up to

70 metres per second. Due to its shape, Jongar Gate forms a natural wind tunnel where the air compresses and accelerates causing hurricane winds. The strong wind is called Ebi or Saikan, which is translated from Chinese as Lord of the Meadows, or, according to another translation, Blood Wind, a wind-destroyer.

From ancient times, Central Asian nomads used Jongar Gate as a transport route. The Great Silk Road passed through it; at the beginning of the 13th century, Genghis Khan used it to conquer Central Asia. The gate was also the site of the legendary Anyraqai battle between the Jongsars and Kazakhs.

According to Kazakh history, during the Jongar raids, a large Kazakh army had been travelling to the place of the upcoming battle, but arrived a few days late. As a result, Sartai, a 15-year-old boy, gathered a detachment of thousands of teenagers to oppose the large Jongar army. The young militia members, named in history as

The gate, between the Jongar Alatau in the west and Birliktau and Mailitau ranges in the east, connects Balkhash-Alakol basin and Jongar plain. The flat corridor, measuring approximately 10 kilometres wide and 50 long, passes along the border between Kazakhstan and China.

Myn Bala (Thousand Boys), died in an unequal battle, but held back the onslaught until the main forces headed by Abulhair Khan arrived. In 2011, Kazakhstan released the film under the same name drawing attention to the historic battle.



Jongar Gate.

Social media sensation and pink-coloured lake is just two hours from capital

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – Social media is flooded with images of Lake Kobeytuz, which has turned pink. The waterway is conveniently located two hours of driving from the capital and visitors cannot get enough of it.

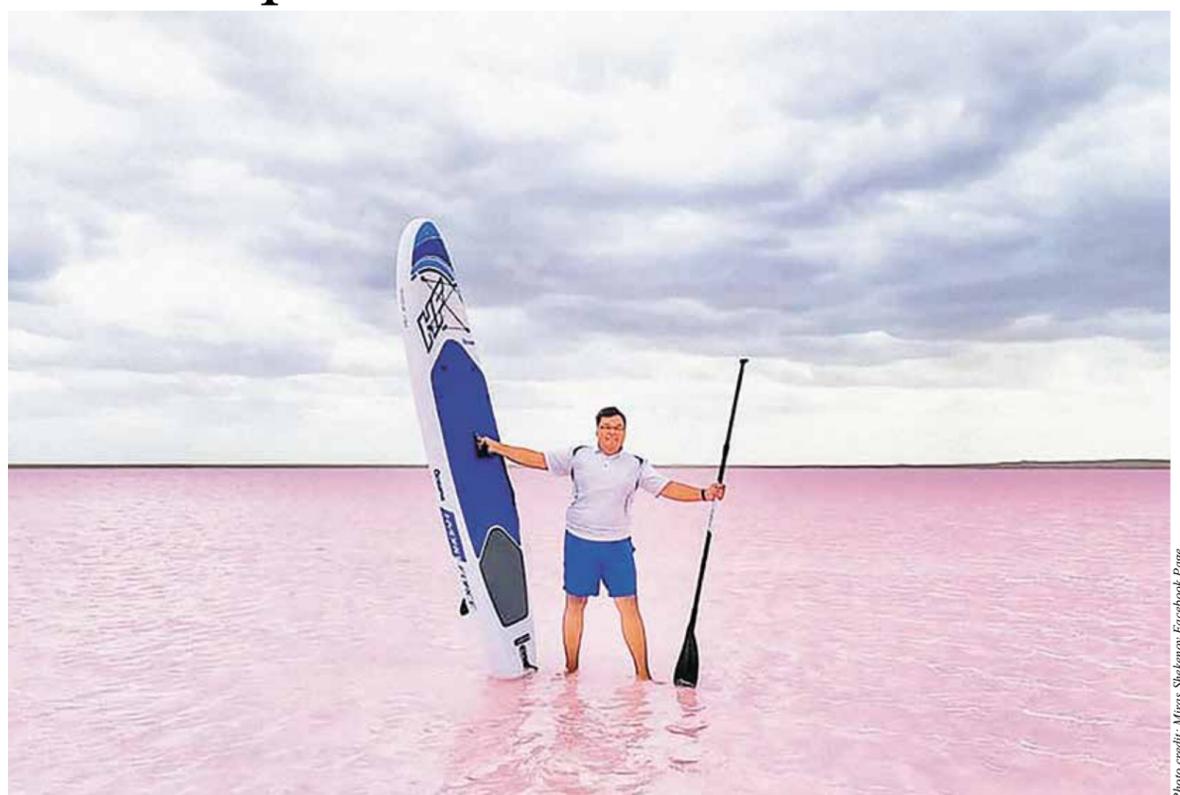
Famous for its healing mud and colour change every several years, Lake Kobeytuz is a landmark of Ereymentau, a city in the Akmola region Kazakhstan. Scientists have been trying to solve the mystery behind the metamorphosis for years and have finally learned the culprit is dunaliella salina, a type of halophile green micro-algae especially found in sea salt fields. Due to the ability to create large amounts of carotenoids, it creates a reddish hue. People use D. Salina in cosmetics and dietary supplements for its antioxidant activity and taking baths in the waters also has beneficial effects.

"The aqueous solution of this lake, the so-called brine, is saturated saline. A similar example is the Dead Sea. The colour is caused by the fact that in hot years and years with light rains, good conditions are created for the development of extremophile microorganisms that can survive in difficult conditions. They reproduce well in such years

and such a saturated pink colour appears – the population of bacteria increases enormously. Next year, this may not be the case – I remember it turning this colour only once, maybe eight or ten years ago; afterwards, it was just gray. So, we do have unique places. Travel around Kazakhstan, love your homeland," Maslikhat (local representative body) Deputy Miras Shekenov wrote on his Facebook page.

Australia's famous pink saline Lake Hillier gains its colour due to D. Salina as well as red halophilic bacteria present in the salt crusts. While the best way to view the lake is by air and most people can take photos only from above, Kazakhs are lucky their pink natural beauty is easily accessible by car.

One way to reach the lake and meet up with other travel enthusiasts is by using the services of a travel company. Kompas.asia, which organises weekend tours from the capital, is forming a 7,000 tenge (US\$18) day trip to the pink lake on Sept. 15. The price includes transfer to and from the city, a guided walking tour and photo report. The lake is only knee-deep, making it perfect for those hunting for unusual pictures. Interested visitors may check the company's Instagram account @kompas.asia to discover other interesting, budget-friendly trips.



Maslikhat (local representative body) Deputy Miras Shekenov at Lake Kobeytuz.

Photo credit: Miras Shekenov Facebook Page.

NATION&CAPITAL
SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2019

Kazakhstan's e-sports AVANGAR CS:GO team wins \$150,000 and second place at Berlin Major



AVANGAR at the StarLadder Berlin Major 2019.

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's AVANGAR Counter-Strike team finished in second place at the StarLadder Berlin Major 2019, having lost to Denmark's Astralis 2-0 in the Sept. 8 grand final.

"One step from the main goal. This time we finish second, but we're really proud of our boys and (the) performance they did during the whole #BerlinMajor. Thanks for cheering for us, we'll come (out) stronger next time!" the Kazakh professional e-sports club tweeted.

"@astralisgg played super well, shoutout to them. Deserves (its) win! We'll keep working and we will try (to) show our best for the next one. And big thanks to @StarLadderCSGO for this awesome event," said AVANGAR player Dauren "AdreN" Kystaubayev in a Tweet.

The StarLadder Berlin Major 2019, the 15th Counter-Strike: Global Offensive Major Championship and this year's second major, featured 24 teams and a \$1,000,000 prize pool. AVANGAR won \$150,000 for second

place and an invite to the next major championship's New Legends Stage.

Earlier, in the Aug. 23-26 New Challengers Stage, the team beat Complexity Gaming 16-13 in the first round, HellRaisers 16-8 in the third round and Syman Gaming 2-1 in the fifth round, losing to Mousesports 19-17 in the second round and NRG Esports 2-0 in the fourth round. Emerging as a top-eight team after five rounds, they proceeded to the Aug. 28-Sept. 1 New Legends Stage of the tournament.

"For us, it was a feeling like we had nothing to lose," AVANGAR player Alexey "qikerty" Golubev told Hltv.org on facing long-time rival and fellow Kazakh team Syman Gaming in the New Challengers Stage's fifth round. "Our team is already used to playing important games, and I think it is what brought us to victory. We never lose important games."

The team lost to ENCE 16-5 in the first round of the New Legends Stage, beating Renegades 16-13 in the second round, Team Liquid 22-18 in the third round and G2 Esports 2-1 in the fourth round.

AVANGAR then proceeded to the Sept. 5-8 New Champions Stage as a top-eight team once more, where they took down Team Vitality 2-1 in the quarterfinals and Renegades 2-0 in the semifinals.

"RNG (Renegades) were very close to winning the first map, Mirage, but the Kazakh team managed to tie the game at 15-15 and won the second OT (overtime) 22-19. On the next map, Dust II, AVANGAR crushed Renegades 16-6 following their dominance on the T side, where they picked up

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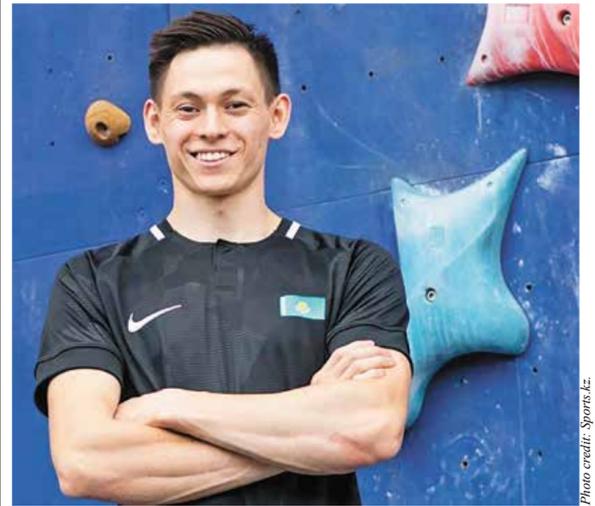
10 rounds. Dzhami 'Jame' Ali was the most valuable player of this match as he had 1.41 KDR (kill to death ratio) (51-31 K-D)," Starladder.com described the semifinal match.

AVANGAR's young line-up of 19-29-year-olds features Dzhami "Jame" Ali, Golubev, Sanjar "SANJI" Kuliyeu, Kystaubayev and Timur "buster" Tulepov. The team ranks 15th in the Counter-Strike: Global Offensive world ranking.

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Next up for AVANGAR is the BLAST Pro Series Moscow 2019 CIS Play-In and European Champions Cup Sept. 13 and Sept. 16, respectively.

Khabibullin gets bronze at IFSC Climbing World Championships



By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh mountain climber Rishat Khabibullin won a bronze medal Aug. 21 at the 2019 International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) Climbing World Championships. The third-place finish made him the 12th of the nation's athletes to qualify for the 2020 Olympics, reported Olympic.kz.

"The main goal for me was to win an Olympic licence and get into the top 20. I fulfilled my goals, fulfilled the standard for participation in the Games and also became the third in the all-around. And, at the moment, I am very pleased with these achievements. I'm satisfied with my result," said Khabibullin.

Eight athletes competed in the world championship, with Khabibullin the only Commonwealth of Independent States country representative. The fight for medals took three forms – speed, bouldering and complexity. The results in each carried a certain number of points, which were then multiplied.

Khabibullin was first in the speed competition, nearly reaching the world record set by Iran's Reza Alipourshenazandifar in 2017. Khabibullin's time was 5.915. Alipourshenazandifar's, 5.48.

Khabibullin was eighth in the bouldering competition and fifth in complexity, resulting in his third

place finish. Japan's Tomoa Narasaki won gold and Austria's Jacob Schubert took silver.

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"The World Cup was held at the highest level. I am very glad that I was able to take part in it. I note that the competition programme and days of rest were correctly set. In general, I liked everything," said Khabibullin.

To date, #TEAMKZ (Kazakh Olympic team) has 11 licenses to participate in the Tokyo Games. In addition to Khabibullin, Olympic standards have been met by Dmitry Balandin (100 and 200-metre breaststroke); Olga Rypakova and Georgy Sheiko (track and field); Yevgeny Gidich (cycling road race), men's classic archery team, whose representatives Denis Gankin, Ilfat Abdullin and Sanzhar Musaev will also perform in personal competitions, and Vitaliy Khudyakov (open water swimming).

WBA restores Shumenov's World Champion title



Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh professional boxer Beibut Shumenov (18-2, 12 KOs), a multiple-time world champion in two weight classes, has regained his previous world champion standing according to the updated cruiserweight class ranking published by the World Boxing Association (WBA). He was previously considered "a champion on vacation."

Shumenov had his last fight in July 2018, resuming his career with a victory in the ninth round over Turkey's Hizni Altunkaya (31-3, 18 KOs). According to

the fight were not met, reported sports.kz.

The WBA therefore had chosen to deprive Shumenov of the WBA regular title, transferring it to Goulamirian without a fight. The French boxer, who won his last fight in October 2018, has risen from temporary to super champion.

Other Kazakh boxers have also improved their WBA standings. Heavyweight Ivan Dychko, a two-time Olympic bronze medalist, is ranked 13th. Super middleweight and WBA Middleweight Champion Aydos Yerbosynuli rose from sixth to fourth. Welterweight and WBA Inter-Continental Welterweight Champion Nursultan Zhanabayev advanced from ninth to seventh.

Former World Middleweight Champion Gennady Golovkin, formerly first in the WBA middleweight rating, is no longer among the top 15.

Golovkin has defended his WBA title 20 times, losing the title in his most recent fight to Canelo Alvarez. The next fight with the vacant International Boxing Federation (IBF) title at stake will take place Oct. 5 in New York. Golovkin's rival will be Ukrainian Sergiy Derevyanchenko.

Vinokurov wins Ironman 70.3 World Championship division in Nice

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan's Olympic cycling champion and Astana Pro Team General Manager Alexander Vinokurov won the Ironman 70.3 World Championship in the 45-49-year division in Nice. The triathlon competition was held Sept. 7-8 on the French Riviera, bringing nearly 6,000 athletes from all corners of the globe.

The athletes tackled the 1.9-kilometre swim in the Mediterranean Sea, a challenging 91.3-kilometre

bike course that included multiple passes and head-to-head racing and a 21.1-kilometre run along the city's historic Promenade des Anglais waterfront.

Vinokurov, 45, finished the race in 4:28:47. He completed the swim in 33:55; the bike race in 2:24:21 and the run in 1:25:05.

Vinokurov's first-place finish surpassed 507 athletes in the category. In the overall ranking, he was 92nd of nearly 3,500 male athletes registered for the event.

It was "the victory for the entire Kazakh triathlon," he said follow-

ing his win. More than 200,000 athletes aged 18-80 competed in more than 100 Ironman 70.3 events worldwide to qualify for the world championship. Vinokurov won the BI Ironman 70.3 competition in July in the capital.

He is now preparing to compete in the 140.6-mile (226.2 kilometre) Ironman World Championship long course race slated for Oct. 12 in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. Organised in Kona since 1978, it is one of the world's most physically and mentally demanding one-day sporting events.



Alexander Vinokurov shortly after finishing the race.

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Nur-Sultan Makeathon to build tech for people with disabilities

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Creative innovators will attempt to solve challenges set by people with disabilities in just 72 hours at the capital's Tikkun Olam Makers (TOM): Nur-Sultan Makeathon Oct. 25-28, reports the Nazarbayev University press office.

TOM Makeathon is a 72-hour marathon that unites makers, such as engineers, programmers, craft-people and doctors, to develop assistive technology solutions for 'need knowers', people with disabilities. It has been brought to the capital by the Nur-Sultan Akimat (city administration), Nazarbayev University's Fab Lab (fabrication laboratory), Tel-Aviv University Friends Association and Astana Jastary.

Teams of makers will meet with need knowers to brainstorm ideas for an innovative solution to an everyday problem at PreTOM Sept. 20. The teams will finalise their chosen idea over the next month by consulting with experts. They will develop and present their prototypes during the 72-hour marathon Oct. 25-28.

The hope is that TOM Makeathon participants will also go on to have careers where they will apply the knowledge and skills gained in designing with and for people with disabilities. For example, a team created a suspension system



TOM Makeathon in Nur-Sultan in 2018.

for rehabilitating people with musculoskeletal disorders at a TOM Makeathon in Karaganda and later installed it in the city's rehabilitation centre LUCH.

Launched in 2014 in Israel, TOM aims to improve the lives of 250 million people in the next decade. Kazakhstan's contribution to this vision has grown since its first TOM Makeathon in Pavlodar in 2017.

Since then, a soft exoskeleton for rehabilitating people after a stroke was created in Pavlodar, a device assisting people with paralysis to conduct hygiene procedures was created in Nur-Sultan, a device for calling the attention of people with hearing impairments to prevent street accidents was created in Almaty and a white cane for people with

vision impairments that costs a mere 10,000 tenge (US\$25.78) was created in Karaganda.

Individuals or teams of three to five people of any age and profession from Nur-Sultan may apply to participate in the TOM: Nur-Sultan Makeathon at www.kazakhstan.tomglobal.org Aug. 15-Sept. 15. The selected applicants will be announced Sept. 17.

Health programme improves indicators

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Thirty-five of 39 target indicators of the 2016-2019 Densaulyk (Health) state programme were met in the capital from January-June, said the city's Public Health Department Deputy head Aliya Rustemova at an Aug. 21 meeting on implementing the programme.

Life expectancy has increased in the capital in recent years and mortality from leading causes of death, such as tuberculosis, malignant neoplasms and circulatory system diseases, has decreased. The outcomes are indicative of the city's progress in providing affordable, high-quality healthcare.

Improving emergency medical services should help improve life expectancy.

The state programme aims to improve people's health and ensure the nation's sustainable socioeconomic development by gradually implementing Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) healthcare standards. Its main target indicator is to improve life expectancy, which was 71.1 years last year, to 73 years by 2020.

"The implementation of all areas of the Densaulyk state programme is highly important because it is meant to ensure people's welfare. Taking care of people's health is a key factor for everything," said capital Deputy Akim (Mayor) Baktiyar Maken at the meeting.

The Public Health Department's new measures to reduce maternal and infant mortality in the city will include combining single-discipline clinics, such as City Hospital No. 1 and Perinatal Centre No. 2, into a multidisciplinary hospital to provide timely, specialised and emergency medical care for pregnant women, those in labour and postpartum. A 250-bed obstetric unit will also be built.

Improving emergency medical services should help improve life expectancy. Notably, more than 300,000 calls have been received by the city's ambulance service this year.

"The ambulance plays a special role in ensuring the timely provision of medical care. Given the (increasing) annual population growth in the capital, the number of 103 calls (for the ambulance) has also increased," said Rustemova.

Half of the capital's ambulance car fleet has been updated in the past four years to meet the increasing demand for emergency services. Fifty-two ambulance vehicles, including 25 reanimobiles, will be purchased this year.

Rotarians need \$15,445 to complete second inclusive playground

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Rotary Club of Astana hopes to finish building the second Kunshyaq inclusive playground in the capital by the end of September and is seeking six million tenge (US\$15,445) to finish the project.

The playground is on an 800-square metre parcel in Central Park near the Atyrau Kopiri pedestrian bridge and St. Regis Hotel. The designers created a space that integrates harmoniously into the existing landscape, preserving all trees.

"We don't have (anything) analogous to such a children's playground. We have very limited places where people with special needs, children in particular, can spend their leisure time. Therefore, we launched this project," Rotary Club President Bayan Toikebaeva told The Astana Times.

The project cost is 15.5 million tenge (US\$39,900), of which the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan has donated 9.5 million tenge (US\$24,455). The club is continuing to collect the remaining six million tenge (US\$15,445) to complete construction.

The Rotary opened the first playground in 2018 near the Kazakhstan Sports Palace on the Akbulak River embankment. The club worked on construction with the

Almaty district akimat (administration).

The 1,382-square metre site includes 42 pieces of equipment for sports and entertainment. It has complexes for children in wheelchairs, safe swings for those with disabilities, adapted sandboxes, tables and special tactile panels.

The inaugural playground allows children of all abilities to socialise. The place is full of laughter as they play, communicate and make friends with each other.

The first project cost 28 million tenge (US\$72,079) and the Rotary collected part of the amount through charity events. The project received support from many companies, small and medium-sized businesses and public associations, as well as capital residents and individuals from other countries who transferred their contributions to a specially created account.

The positive result and public engagement inspired the club to open the second playground.

"We saw the big demand. There are always many children on this site. It is always full," said Toikebaeva.

Construction at the new site started July 30. The land has been prepared and the equipment is on its way from Moscow, which club members will begin installing next week, she added.

Contributions to complete the playground may be made to the

Rotary Club of Astana Public Association account. Donations are accepted both in tenge and U.S. dollars. Bank details can be found on its Facebook page @Rotaryclubastana.

Toikebaeva and former presidents are available to answer any questions about the project or other Rotary activities. She may be reached at +7 701 527 8483, 2018-2019 President Marat Raimkhanov is available at +7 700 272 1058, 2017-2018 President Lyazgat Alshinova is reachable at +7 701 999 3643 while founding member Assem Malgeldinova can be reached at +7 701 610 0303.

The club is planning to dedicate its next project to supporting women who have experienced or are experiencing violence either through providing assistance to the existing crisis centre in the capital or opening a new one.

Rotary International is a global network of 1.2 million friends, neighbours, leaders and problem solvers who come together to create positive change in communities around the world. The capital club is seeking new members who would like to contribute their time.

"Rotary Club invites all who want to engage in a charity and want to help on a permanent basis... We invite them to come and see the projects that the club does and who attends the club," said Toikebaeva.



The project design.

Industrial production grows 17.5 percent in January-July

By Dilshat Zhussupova

NUR-SULTAN – Industrial production in the capital grew 17.5 percent in January-July, including a 16-percent increase in manufacturing, said Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altai Kulginov at a Sept. 3 meeting on the tasks set by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in his Sept. 2 state-of-the-nation address.

Tokayev's address provided instructions to government officials and legislators to strengthen civil society and social security, support domestic businesses and develop the economy.

"The head of state gave a number of instructions on the development of the country's economy. Nur-Sultan is one of the largest cities and drivers for the development of Kazakhstan's economy," said Kulginov.

The akim aims to address "a lag in the volume of construction work, housing commissions and investment in fixed assets" by the end of the year.

"There is a steady increase in the main indicators for socioeconomic development in the capital, but there is a lag, too, which we must work on," he said.

The gross regional product (GRP) in the capital in January-March was 1.2 trillion tenge (US\$3.1 billion), and the share of small- and medium-sized businesses in the GRP was 58.8 percent. Kulginov affirmed the capital will implement the President's directions to exempt small- and medium-sized businesses from inspections for three years and micro and small businesses from taxes on core activities for three years.

The development of a favour-

able business climate and special economic zones Nur-Sultan – New City and Astana-Technopolis in the capital will also contribute to economic growth. Importantly, Nur-Sultan's first industrial park is almost full with special economic zone projects in information technology, engineering and medicine, and a second industrial park is being developed. The akimat (city administration) plans to allocate more than 400 hectares for the second industrial park.

"We plan to expand all types of activities (in the new industrial park). Twenty-six types of activities have been suggested, and we plan to implement a large number of projects," Astana-Technopolis Deputy Board Chairman Mukhtar Ibrayev told Kazakh-tv.kz, noting the key criteria for projects are to be high-tech and innovative.

Capital to host October 2019 World Cancer Leaders' Summit

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh Institute of Oncology and Radiology (KazIOR) will host the 2019 World Cancer Leaders' Summit Oct. 15-17 in the capital, reported uicc.org.

"Reducing the number of premature deaths caused by cancer requires addressing inequities in access to cancer services to achieve the universal health coverage (UHC) vision of health for all," adds the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) website.

With cancer and UHC as the main theme, the summit seeks to focus attention on expanding access to quality cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and care. Current issues to be examined include perspectives on the relationship between strong, sustainable and 'people centred' health systems and the effective prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), promoting health equity to access cancer services and setting priorities as part of the progressive UHC realisation.

Other topics to be discussed are the availability of essential medicines and technologies; Big Data, advanced analytics and personalised cancer care; investing in the health system and communicating effectively in culturally diverse settings.

"We are delighted to have the Summit in our country," said the Director General of KazIOR Dilyara Kaidarova during a meeting with a UICC team in Nur-Sultan last July. "I am looking forward to solution-oriented discussions that will help guide the fight against cancer in Kazakhstan and in many countries around the world."

Approximately 350 global influencers and leaders in cancer control and public health from across governments, UN agencies, academia, non-profit organisations and private sectors will consider the ways in which cancer detection, treatment and care contribute to achieving UHC.

"The agenda is demanding and inspiring," explained Jessica Mathieu, Head of Congress and Events at UICC. "We want to pro-

vide participants with fresh perspectives and new insights and at the same time harness their collective intelligence. Feedback about past summits has always been very positive."

The list of forum speakers includes Princess of Jordan and President of the Union for International Cancer Control Dina Mired, Kazakh First President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov, World Health Organisation Communicable Diseases and Non-Communicable Diseases Assistant Director General Ren Minghui, International Agency for Research on Cancer Director Elisabete Weiderpass, International Atomic Energy Agency Acting Director General Cornel Feruta, Cancer Research UK CEO Michelle Mitchell and Kazakh National Bank Governor Erbolat Dossaev.

The summit is open to UICC full members, partners and select leaders from global health and cancer communities. Attendance is by invitation only, with no entrance fees.