

Tokayev outlines Asia strategy, promotes multilateral approach to global issues

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – Positioned as a transit and trade bridge between Europe and Asia, located at the crossroads of Islamic, Confucian and East Christian civilizations, Kazakhstan plans to optimise the opportunities coming up with the age of Asia, said Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, outlining core economic and foreign policy trajectories of his country at the Valdai Talks, Sept. 3 in Sochi, Russia.

The Valdai Club is an annual event where experts, international officials and public figures discuss global political and economic processes. The topic for this year's gathering was "The Dawn of the East and the World Political Order," dedicating the agenda to the East in a broad sense.

"The Great Silk Road, the Golden Horde, Eurasianism are important threads in the cultural code of the Kazakhs," said Tokayev, noting he has observed the growth of the mega-continent during his 11 years of diplomatic service in Asia.

According to the Kazakh President, the population growth rate, gross domestic product, trade, industrial and high-tech production rates in Asia confirm the forecasts.

With 60 percent of the world's population, 21 out of 30 of the world's largest cities on the continent, 210 of the world's 500 largest companies by income and 36 percent of world production, Asia is ahead in digital technologies and in the number of patent applications. More than 50 percent of GDP growth is accounted for by Asian countries, which stimulates international trade and investment.

Kazakhstan has formulated its infrastructure strategy to embrace these opportunities.

Kazakhstan's Nurly Zhol infrastructure programme, closely linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative and considered part of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) transit space, positions the country as a transit and trade bridge between Europe and Asia.

Over the past decades, Kazakhstan has invested more than \$30 billion in transport infrastructure,



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building more than 2,000 kilometres of railways, reconstructing 7,000 kilometres of highways and increasing port capacities at the nation's Caspian shores to 27 million tonnes annually. Today five railway and six international highways pass through Kazakhstan. The country plans to invest an additional \$20 billion in transport and logistics projects by 2025.

"We stand for the openness of our space for new viable transport and logistics solutions," said Tokayev.

Along with revenue from natural resources, Kazakhstan sees transport and logistics services as a priority area and is planning to gain over \$5 billion in next two years.

Tokayev said he also recognises the challenges and number of alarming trends presented by intensifying competition in the global arena.

The first challenge is the globe's numerous conflicts, including those on the Korean Peninsula, in the South China Sea, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone and the situation around Iran.

"The intensity of confrontational rhetoric, the intensity of proxy hybrid wars, the arms race, including nuclear, have reached a critical point," he said.

The second problem arises

from a lack of trust and dialogue between powers that revive the memories of the Cold War. He said Europe created the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to ensure the inviolability of borders while Asia has never had strong border agreements. There are multiple bilateral and regional alliances in Asia, but without outlining the universal goals, it may lead to fragmentation of security on the continent. He promised that as the chairman of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) beginning in 2020, Kazakhstan over the next two years will intensify contacts with other multilateral institutions.

Trade interests and the struggle for leverage over the future economic order represent another challenge. That is a challenge where breakthrough technology, such as 5G, artificial intelligence, big data and the internet are the main levers and tools; sanctions, trade, currency wars, investment restrictions and technological espionage are also used.

The fourth and major issue is climate change, which may put enormous pressure of competition over fresh waters in Asia. The issue has long been among the potential factors of destabilisation in the Central Asian region.

"In this difficult situation, Kazakhstan relies on consistent joint work with the regional states, with international organisations in order to prevent conflicts. In doing so, we proceed from a clear assessment of our capabilities and international resources," he noted.

Kazakhstan is to continue promoting a pragmatic agenda in Central Asia, which is becoming an important factor in pan-Asian cooperation and security. In this, due to historic and economic closeness, Russia "should play a leading role," Tokayev said. He said there are clear signs of expansion of the network of EAEU trade partnerships from Singapore to Serbia.

Following the 13 rounds of Syrian talks in Kazakhstan that brought certain positive results, Kazakhstan will continue supporting peace efforts, and will further advocate for assistance to Afghanistan.

As a follower of preventive diplomacy and disarmament measures in foreign policy, Tokayev suggested to transform CICA into an organisation.

"Without a comprehensive solution to the multifaceted security challenges, (...) without collective efforts, instead of the Asian age of prosperity, we risk to get Asian troubled times with gloomy consequences for the entire world," said Tokayev.

In this, working with the Western world is indispensable.

The common actions could be organised around fight against terrorism, extremism, organised crime and illegal migration and drug trafficking, while jointly fostering the development of human capital, the introduction of best practices in public administration, the building of innovative potential and the efficient use of water resources.

During the gathering, presidents of Russia, Azerbaijan, Philippines and the King of Jordan have also presented their views of the national development in the context of the topic.

At a bilateral meeting, the leaders of Kazakhstan and Russia discussed preparations for the 75th anniversary of Victory in World War II planned for May.

Situation of children: a lot of progress but more to be done, says UNICEF representative

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – In her recent open letter to the world's children, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Henrietta Fore stressed the need to work with today's children and young people "on twenty-first century solutions to twenty-first

century problems." She shared her thoughts on the new set of challenges that children face globally and reflected on what gives her hope as she seeks to address them.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 25th anniversary of its ratification by Kazakhstan.

Continued on Page B5

Jewellery designers make women feel unique with "affordable luxury" products

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – AZEL Urban & Unique Jewelry is the fashion project of two creative friends, stylist Asel Junus and architect Zauresh Kazybayeva. The duo created the line "for active and bright women who want to emphasise their individuality and lifestyle," according to the brand's motto.

"AZEL is not for income – it is for pleasure. We like doing giveaways and charity; we like seeing how we can make people happy," said Kazybayeva in an exclusive interview for this story.

Junus and Kazybayeva started the brand in October 2018 when both were on maternity leave. The main philosophy is "affordable luxury," with prices for individual pieces starting at 6,000 tenge (US\$15.49). The brand's key feature is baroque pearls and high-quality fittings made in South Korea. In addition to a wide variety of jewellery sets and accessories, they make custom items and recently began producing scarves using Italian silk.

"Asel is a professional personal and jewellery stylist; she studied styling in Istanbul, Turkey. I have always loved art; I have always done bead weaving, creating brooches and jewellery. I also liked drawing, oil paintings, crafting and floral design. Then, I started making blueprints when I started studying architecture. This was fol-

lowed by years of science. I've received my PhD in Teaching Architecture from Nazarbayev University and I finally went on maternity leave last year and started AZEL," she added.

The brand was created spontaneously.

"Asel did not have matching earrings to wear to a wedding in October (2018), so I offered to make them for her, since I already knew how to make jewellery and where to buy the fittings. It was sensational! Many people at the wedding asked Asel where she got the earrings. We created an Instagram account with Asel's name and instantly received 11 orders to make the same earrings she wore to the wedding," said Kazybayeva.

From the start, the pair has valued communication with their customers. They held a competition among their Instagram followers to come up with a name for the brand, with the winner getting a set of their pearl earrings.

"We combined the two best ideas out of the more than 150 offers we received. The first is AZEL, which is a combination of our names, Asel and Zauresh, and means 'Eternity' in Arab. Urban & Unique is a pun. It's a double U; two 'you's, or in other words, 'to you.' So, you can think of the name of our brand as actually meaning 'Eternity to you,'" said Kazybayeva.

Continued on Page B3

Golovkin defeats Derevyanchenko, wins IBF and IBO championship titles

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh boxer Gennady Golovkin won Oct. 6 a fight for the IBF and IBO middle-weight champion titles against the Ukrainian boxer Sergei Derevyanchenko. The fight took place in the Madison Square Garden in New York City.

"Thanks to my opponent, respect for his team. Sergey is a very strong opponent. After the first round, I realised that it would be a hard fight. Physically, I feel good. I feel that today was not the best day for me. But I got a lot of experience from it. Now I know what I need," said Golovkin, reported Vesti.kz.

Golovkin won all twelve rounds with 115-112, 115-112 and 114-113 scores from each of the three referees. He knocked down Derevyanchenko in the first round.

"Knockdown? Yes, I slightly lost focus because of him. It was not an easy battle. Respect to Sergey. He showed real courage. The best fight, clean and without dirt. Am I ready to give him a rematch? Of course, if this is a big fight

for DAZN and the fans, then I'm ready," said Golovkin. Derevyanchenko expressed his willingness for a rematch as well.

Golovkin also said that he is ready to fight the Mexican boxer Saul "Canelo" Alvarez. "Everyone is ready. If he says yes, then let's do it. I am open to all. There

are many great champions," said Golovkin.

This win is Golovkin's 40th in his career. This is his second world champion title, as he won his first one in 2010.

Golovkin received congratulations from Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

"I congratulate Gennady Golovkin on his brilliant victory in the boxing match for the IBF and IBO world champion titles. (Golovkin) once again demonstrated his high sportsmanship and unbending will to win. Kazakhstan is proud of you!" wrote Tokayev in his Twitter account.

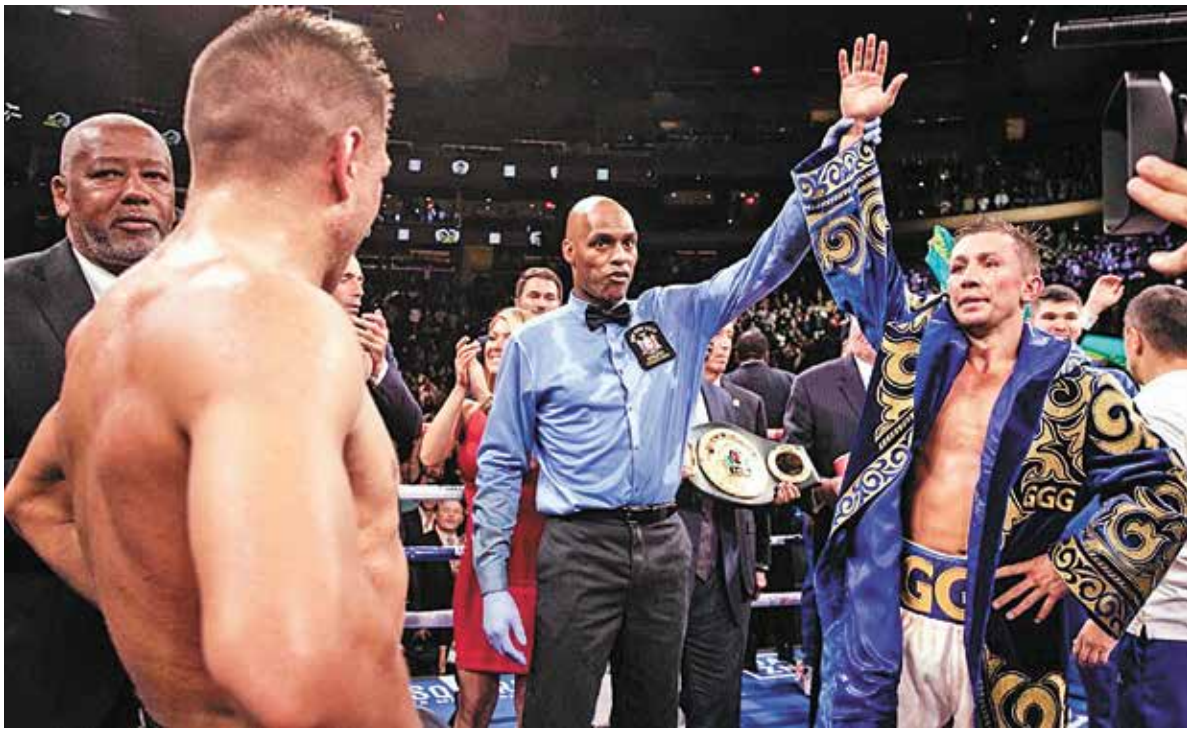


Photo credit: Gennady Golovkin's official vk.com page.

INSIDE

NATION

Airlines carry 5.6 million passengers in first eight months of 2019 **A2**

AIFC report indicates key achievements, projects **A2**

ECONOMY

ADB celebrates 25 years of partnership with Kazakhstan, invests over \$5 billion **A4**

Government alters procurement processes to focus on domestic suppliers **A4**

EDITORIAL

Kazakh President affirms support for multilateralism in 'a world of disquiet' **A6**

BUSINESS

KazEnergy Eurasian Forum discusses energy market in face of global financial challenges **A5**

AIX lists Russia's most traded exchange-traded fund **A8**

NATION&CAPITAL

Capital Rotarians open second inclusive playground **B1**

Kazakhstan is best for pilgrimage, cultural-historical and gastronomic tourism in autumn, says travel blogger **B6**

Airlines carry 5.6 million passengers in first eight months of 2019

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh airlines carried 5.6 million passengers in the first eight months of 2019, showing a 1.8 percent increase over 2018, said Kazakh Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Beibit Atamkulov at an Oct. 7 government session, reported primeminister.kz.

The growth is attributed to the launch of new routes and of the FlyArystan low-cost airline.

Kazakh airlines have also expanded the geography of their international routes. Among the latest additions were flights to Tokyo, Prague and Ulaanbaatar from Nur-Sultan operated by Shymkent-based SCAT airlines.

“Kazakhstan has direct flights to 26 countries and 99 international

routes. This is 430 flights per week operated by 26 foreign and three Kazakh air carriers. Several years ago, three foreign airlines (Austrian Airlines, Czech Airlines, KLM) suspended their flights to our country due to commercial reasons,” said Atamkulov.

Atamkulov noted Qatar Airways, Emirates, China Eastern and Ural Airlines plan to launch routes to Kazakhstan next year. The ministry continues working to make the country more attractive to foreign air carriers, he added.

The number of transit passengers also reached 642,000 in eight months and is expected to reach 1.6 million by the end of the year.

For short-haul domestic flights, Kazakhstan launched the FlyArystan low-cost airline in May.

The airline sold more than 450,000 tickets since its launch.

Close to 60 percent of the tickets were sold at the airline’s lowest tariffs below 10,000 tenge (US\$25.7).

FlyArystan will open new routes to Pavlodar, Semey and Shymkent with the fares starting at 5,999 tenge (US\$15.4). It also plans to launch routes to all regions in Kazakhstan and its first international route to Moscow before the end of 2020.

The launch of FlyArystan, a subsidiary of Air Astana, was meant to “respond to the societal needs.”

“Every citizen can afford using the services of the new airline. If currently there are two aircrafts in the fleet, the fleet will include 10 modern aircrafts in 2020,” said Air Astana President Peter Foster.

He said the airlines are expected to sell 520,000 tickets at prices lower than 15,000 tenge (US\$) in 2019. The number, he noted, will grow five-fold in 2020.

The new airline, said Foster, generated the surge in air travels. In eight months, the growth was more than 142 percent in Taraz, 44 percent in Karaganda, 41 percent in Pavlodar, 27 percent in Shymkent and 22 percent in Uralsk.

Atamkulov said the fuel production increased to 694,000 tonnes, a 1.8-time growth over 2018, and, if needed, the production volume can be increased to 850,000 tonnes.

The modernisation at the country’s two major oil processing plants in Atyrau and Pavlodar allows to meet the domestic demand for jet fuel.

The share of imported air kerosene in the country will decrease from 60 percent in 2018 to 4 percent in 2019.

Prime Minister Askar Mamin urged during the government meeting officials to accelerate work to

launch routes to Shanghai and Singapore in 2020 and complete the accreditation procedures that will allow Kazakh airlines fly to New York. He also instructed to finish the reconstruction of a runway at the Kostanai and Balkhash airports and the construction of an airport in Turkestan and a new terminal in Shymkent.

To bolster regional and domestic connectivity, Mamin set the task to ramp up procedures to launch the open skies regime for foreign air carriers.

Atamkulov said the ministry is also considering introducing the regime, which was first launched at the capital airport during EXPO 2017, at the airports in Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Shymkent, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Pavlodar, Kokshetau, Taraz, Petropavlovsk and Semey.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Up to one million trees will be planted in Kazakhstan as part of the national tree planting campaign, reported the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources press service. The campaign was launched in all schools Oct. 3 and will be launched throughout the country Oct. 12. Prime Minister Askar Mamin and Minister of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources Magzum Mirzagaliyev planted trees in an alley in Turkestan during their working visit to the Turkestan Region. An environmental hour was also held in all schools with the participation of local authorities.

A roadmap for supporting entrepreneurial activity was adopted in the Aktobe Region, reported the regional press service. All systemic problems are listed in a single register, which includes 619 questions. Currently, 489 issues have been resolved, 28 are at the solution stage and 102 are at the discussion stage with state bodies. More than 58,000 small and medium-sized businesses operate in the region, a 10.6-percent increase compared to last year. One third of the population is employed in small businesses.

A rice processing plant with approximately 80 employees was launched Oct. 2 in the Kyzylorda Region. The facility, with a capacity of more than seven tonnes per hour, is adapted to waste-free production. The company invested its own funds to purchase and install modern equipment. “Due to state support, farmers have received a high rice crop in recent years and are making a significant contribution to increasing the country’s grain reserves. This year, farmers cultivated 88,000 hectares of agricultural land. Harvesting activities are in full swing,” said regional akim (governor) Kuanyshebek Iskakov.

Kazinform reports 7,277 individuals took part in the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship state programme for 2017-2021 in Nur-Sultan. Approximately 5,000 people were subsequently employed and 550 participated in short-term vocational training. State support of 100 or 200 monthly calculation indices (MCI) will be provided for start-up businesses for those who have not previously received financial support. Microloans will also be issued in rural and urban areas to start-up entrepreneurs with agricultural cooperatives whose members have not reached retirement age, as well as to peasant and farm enterprises.

Air Astana, Kazakhstan’s national carrier, has completed the International Air Transport Association’s Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) for the seventh time, reported the company’s press service. The next audit is scheduled in 2021. The airline was first audited in 2007 and reaffirmed its commitment to safety standards every two years. The audit programme is an internationally recognised and accepted evaluation system designed to assess an airline’s operational management and control systems. “The IOSA programme adopts all applicable International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) safety requirements from the annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. During an audit in May 2019, documentation and implementation of nearly 1,000 IOSA standards were verified on all aspects of the airline’s activities. These included organisation and management, flight operations, operational control and flight dispatch, engineering and maintenance, cabin operations, ground handling, cargo operation and security,” reads the release.

The Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) project office is offering free tours every Wednesday to seven historical sites in Nur-Sultan, according to the city administration press service. All the sites are on the Sacred Geography of Kazakhstan list, which includes the ALZHIR Museum and Memorial Complex, merchant Vasily Kubrin’s house, Matthew Kubrin and Sons trade house, merchant Silin’s house, former Islamic school building, city government buildings and a gymnasium built in the late 19th century.

AIFC report indicates key achievements, projects

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) yearly report presented Aug. 29 reviewed the centre’s key projects and achievements for 2018-2019.

Among the key projects, the report listed the privatisation programme used by the government to reduce its share in the country’s economy to 15 percent. The first example was the Kazatomprom IPO.

ment, AIFC has managed to build a strong relationship with leading Chinese institutions, international development banks and major financiers of Belt and Road investments, such as the partnership with Shanghai Stock Exchange, Silk Road Fund, China Development Bank and China Construction Bank, to name a few,” it added.

The AIX was launched in November 2018. Global financial industry leaders such as the Nasdaq Exchange (U.S.), Shanghai Stock Exchange, Silk Road Fund and Goldman Sachs, the largest U.S.



Kairat Kelimbetov

Photo credit: government.kz

“In November 2018, the successful placement of 15 percent of Kazatomprom shares owned by the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund worth \$451 million took place on the London Stock Exchange and the Astana International Exchange (AIX). Demand exceeded supply by 1.7 times. The number of shares/global depository receipts (GDRs) placed was 38.9 million, of which about 7.8 million were offered on the AIX. Kazakh investors acquired

investment bank, have become strategic partners and shareholders, providing access to investment liquidity in these regions, said AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov at the Aug. 28 government hour.

Other key achievements include a project to further develop Kazakhstan’s market and e-residency and e-justice projects that allow AIFC services to be used remotely.

The number of enterprises working with the AIFC increased to 235 companies from 26 countries, including financial institutions such as the China Construction Bank, China Development Bank and CICC (Hong Kong) and Wood & Co (Czech Republic), the largest investment banks. By the end of 2020, the number is projected to increase to 500, said Kelimbetov.

The report noted the AIFC includes 156 registered companies, 24 recognised non-AIFC members and other companies. Thirty-five companies are included on the official AIX list.

In less than a year of operation, the AIX has raised more than \$70 million in capital equity. For the first half of 2019, its total capitalisation was \$1.9 billion, he added.

Nur-Sultan, where the AIFC is based, ranks 51st of 102 in the 2019 Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 25), climbing 37 positions in the past year since its launch. The ranking explores financial centres around the world by making an analysis of areas such as business environment competitiveness, human capital, infrastructure, financial sector development and reputation, as well as the level of diversity, speciality and accessibility, according to the report.

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Rakhat Company has continued to maintain its leadership in the Kazakh confectionery market in the first half of the year, modernising internal policy and entering new markets. Export growth in 2019 has reached 9.9 percent.

“The first half of the year was an active period of growth and transformation for Rakhat. Thanks to the launch of a new production line in Shymkent, we have already increased our product output capacity by 2,400 tonnes this year. Rakhat remains the industry leader by strengthening the position of existing product lines and entering new sectors. We continue to monitor trends and respond as quickly as possible to consumer mood,” said company chairperson Konstantin Fedorets.

The company maintained its leading position in the main confectionery product categories with 24 percent of the total market share in the country and continues to grow (0.25 percent compared to the previous year in monetary terms). Its eight-month revenue increased by 7.5 percent compared to 2018.

Rakhat is also continuing expan-

sion into foreign markets, as export growth in value terms was 9.9 percent. Russia is the leader in export volume and the Chinese market is actively developing. Iraq is on the list of partner countries; the first shipments have already been made. Ukrainian representatives are also interested in selling Kazakh sweets in their market. Products are also sold in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan.

Fedorets highlighted growing consumer interest in tiled chocolate as one of the confectionary market’s trends. In the past five years, the company experienced significant growth in market share that segment and has continued long-term growth. In the last six months, the category grew by 7 percent compared to the same period in 2018.

Rakhat launched a new product, tiled chocolate with crispy filling, this summer. It then resumed production of porous chocolate and in September, presented an updated line. Packaging design was developed by well-known cartoonist Murat Dilmanov.

In January, Rakhat signed an agreement to purchase electricity from Talgar Hydroelectric Power Station and is currently the largest consumer of green energy from hydroelectric

power stations. In seven months this year, the factory purchased more than six million kilowatts of electricity worth 95.6 million tenge (\$246,000). At present, the Almaty-based company has transferred 30 percent of its usage to a renewable energy source.

With more than 4,200 workers, the factory remains one of Kazakhstan’s largest employers. New jobs are becoming available and 90 first-time employees were involved in producing 1.6 million pieces for New Year’s gifts.

Rakhat, formerly Alma-Ata Confectionery, was established in 1942. The company was renamed 50 years later and in 2013, South Korean LOTTE Confectionery acquired the main stake. LOTTE Confectionery is a subsidiary of South Korea’s fifth largest conglomerate, the LOTTE Group, and is headquartered in Seoul. LOTTE Confectionery owns 95.57 percent of Rakhat.

The factory, the market leader with a well-established distribution network, produces more than 400 high-quality confectionery items. The company’s assortment includes chocolates and jellies, caramel, toffee, chocolate bars, cookies, waffles, marshmallows and candy dots, some of which have no counterparts in the Kazakh market.

97 percent of rural settlements to have broadband internet access by end of 2022

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Ninety-seven percent of rural settlements or more than 5,000 villages will gain broadband internet access by the end of 2022 and satellite technology will be technically feasible for the remaining 3 percent, reported Minister of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry Askar Zhumagaliyev at an Oct. 1 government meeting.

“Internet access in rural areas is a basic element in the implementation of projects as part of the Digital Kazakhstan state programme. This will provide access to obtaining electronic public services, healthcare services, education and e-commerce. This will reduce the digital divide between the city and the village and provide residents with the opportunity to use digital technologies and give an impetus to the development of the economy,” Zhumagaliyev said.

The country has access to broadband internet services in 117 cities and 3,324 rural settlements. They are provided with various technologies, including networks of fibre optic lines, 3G and 4G.

Kazakhstan ranked 21st in the world by the number of mobile subscribers in 2018. The number of internet users was 81.3 percent in 2018 and Kazakhstan ranked 45th in the world ranking.

The government plans to build fiber-optic lines and LTE networks (4G) to further provide rural areas with internet in 2018-2021.

According to the plan, fibre-optic lines will be built in 1,250 rural settlements. As of the first half of 2019, fibre-optic lines were connected to 83 settlements, including 85 healthcare and 76 educational facilities. Some 685 villages will be connected to internet by the end of 2019 and 509 villages will be connected in 2020.

The ministry will work to identify unstable communication in the regions. Additional base stations will be installed in cooperation with local authorities and telecom operators. For example, entrepreneurs built special facilities and mobile operators will install its stations in the Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort area. The same facilities will be installed in Almaty and the Pavlodar Region.

“The ministry is also working to introduce a 5G network in Kazakhstan. The road map has been approved. The 5G network tests were conducted in Almaty and Nur-Sultan. A test is planned in Shymkent this October,” said Zhumagaliyev.

A 5G network will be launched at Nazarbayev University and the EXPO 2017 area until the end of 2021. In 2022, a network will be introduced at the capital airport, train station, shopping centres and venues. Then, it will be introduced in regional centres since 2023.

Zhumagaliyev noted that switching to 5G networks will not lead to tariff increase.

The 5G technologies will provide higher bandwidth compared to 4G technologies. It ensures greater availability of mobile communications, the use device-to-device modes, ultra-reliable large-scale communication systems between devices, a shorter delay time, internet speeds from 1-2 gigabit per second and lower battery consumption compared with 4G equipment.

This October, the International Telecommunication Union will discuss the impact of 5G networks on human health at a meeting in Egypt.

“The specific standards will be developed at the meeting. The final approval of the standard is expected in 2021... All health issues will be analysed based on tests. The adoption of a standard will be based on the impact on health. No one is interested in introducing technologies that will then negatively affect health,” he said.

Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin instructed at the government meeting to ensure the development of 5G projects and a more rapid completion of connections to high-speed internet in rural areas.

The modernisation of social and engineering infrastructure in rural areas is being implemented as part of the initiatives outlined by the Nur Otan ruling party.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Deputy Prime Ministers of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Singapore signed the Free Trade Agreement and Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states and Singapore Oct. 1 in Yerevan, Armenia. The agreement aims to strengthen existing trade relations and expand cooperation opportunities. It provides duty-free trade of all goods excluding the list of sensitive goods. Singapore will abolish all customs duties as the agreement enters into force and the EAEU countries will provide full liberalisation in stages. Singapore is a key partner for Kazakhstan in Southeast Asia, said Kazakh Minister of Trade and Integration Bakhyt Sultanov. The agreement will diversify exports and serve as an additional incentive to increase production volumes of export-oriented products.

Kazakh Invest and Apex-Brasil, the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, signed a memorandum of cooperation at the Sept. 30 Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP) Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry international summit in São Paulo. The document will become a roadmap for mutually beneficial partnership, information exchange and experience. Kazakh Invest strategic analysis department director Zhandos Temirgali discussed investment cooperation in agriculture and machine building with Brazilian multinational corporations including Embraer, JBS and Minerva Foods. “JBS is the second largest food producer in the world with 235,000 employees in 22 countries and 350,000 customers in 150 countries. JBS processes beef, pork, lamb and chicken and produces value-added and processed foods. We have about 400 production facilities worldwide and we are planning further expansion. Kazakhstan has great potential in the agricultural sector. Following the presentation on Kazakhstan’s investment potential, we are interested in cooperation in the field of meat processing,” said JBS Executive Director Pedro Bordon.

Kazakh publishing companies participated in the Tashkent Book Fest international book exhibition and fair, which attracted 16 publishing houses from different countries, reported Kazinform. Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports Language Policy Committee chairman Galymzhan Meldeshev noted Uzbekistan pays special attention to developing a reading culture and distributing books. There is a need to develop similar events in the future to exchange experiences and ideas between book industries from different countries. The event also included book presentations, intellectual games, literary quizzes, meetings and roundtables with writers.

Astana Opera House will present Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s “Eugene Onegin” as part of the first Dmitri Hvorostovsky International Festival Oct. 23 and Oct. 25 in Krasnoyarsk, Russia, according to the theatre’s press service. The company will also perform a symphonic concert with the works of 20th century Kazakh composers Oct. 24 at the Krasnoyarsk Regional Philharmonic big concert hall. Astana Opera Principal Conductor Alan Buribayev said they will present a new interesting and symbolic production of the opera. Hvorostovsky previously performed the title role at the world’s best venues and it will be a great honour for Kazakh baritones to offer their vision of the part. The tour will contribute to expanding cultural ties between Kazakhstan and Russia.

Kazakh artists took part in the eighth Beijing International Art Biennale at the National Art Museum of China, reported Kazinform. The list of works included Asemkul Beibit’s painting “Graphic Brothers,” Gulmaral Tatibayeva’s “Aigolek,” Aransha Sharzhanov’s “Spring” and Zhanibek Sulet’s “Traffic Regulations.” Sharzhanov’s work was on display at a separate exhibition of the works of artists from Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member states. This year, the biennale demonstrated 640 works by 595 artists from 113 countries. The main topics were nature, life and the common fate of mankind.

President Tokayev calls for removal of trade barriers within EAEU, as union signs FTA with Singapore



Photo credit: akorda.kz

By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called for a removal of trade barriers within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) during the Oct. 2 Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Yerevan, Armenia. “In difficult global conditions it is extremely important for us to support sustainable economic growth of our nations. This is possible only through real and mutually beneficial cooperation, integration and cooperation so our countries should continue to remove barriers in the common domestic market,” Tokayev told

the gathering, which included the leaders of Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. President Igor Dodon of Moldova, the EAEU observer country, President of Iran Hassan Rouhani and Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong also attended as guests. Tokayev told the group that in the midst of growing global competition, trade wars and protectionism, “the Eurasian Economic Union has become one of the important links in the development of world trade.” The Kazakh President also said the Eurasian Economic Commission (EAEC) should work closely to monitor national legislation and develop

tools to better explain the laws governing the EAEU. The Kazakh delegation also urged the EAEC to accelerate efforts to create a common transportation system and establish conditions conducive to innovation. The Kazakh delegation also noted that transit volume has been increasing on the China-Europe-China route and that the transcontinental Vietnam-China-Kazakhstan-Europe railway route has been launched and offers exporters access to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) markets. This transport corridor could be an alternative to sea transportation and would allow goods from Southeast Asia to be delivered to

Europe through EAEU member states in the shortest time. Also, during the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council meeting, EAEU members signed a free-trade agreement with Singapore. The agreement opens EAEU countries access to a large ASEAN region with a population of 600 million people. In this regard, Tokayev said it is important to develop trade and economic relations with growing markets. “A promising trend is seen in building ties between the EAEU and major international organisations, such as ASEAN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation... Singapore, along with

Vietnam, is the second country with which the EAEU will have a respective [free trade] agreement. An important issue is the development of trade, economic and logistics cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Tokayev said. In total, 20 documents were signed during the meeting, including a document on the formation of a common EAEU financial market and the organisation’s 2020 budget. Tokayev also met on the sidelines of the council session with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko and leader of Iran Hassan Rouhani.

Kazakhstan, Rwanda need direct flights that can strengthen bilateral relations through trade, industry, says envoy

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The relatively young diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Rwanda have a great potential to flourish and materialise in mutually beneficial agreements in trade, industry and tourism once a direct air route is established, said Williams Nkurunziza, the Rwandan Ambassador to Kazakhstan with concurrent accreditation in Azerbaijan, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Rwanda were established May 10, 2012. “That is a very young relationship, but I think it’s a relationship that started on a very high note,” Nkurunziza told The Astana Times. Rwandan President Paul Kagame’s visit to Kazakhstan in September 2015 “made the game fast” for the two countries, he noted. He was the first African leader to visit the Eurasian country and both delegations expressed their interest in developing bilateral relations.



Williams Nkurunziza

“We are a relatively young country, which is just beginning to establish relations with African states,” said Kazakhstan’s then President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, during the visit, reported the Akorda press service. Nkurunziza presented his credentials in 2016. During the three years of his diplomatic service, he has observed “an increase in the level of conversation, the discussions.” “Now, we are beginning to look at the areas of collaboration. For example, we have already submit-

ted an air services agreement that we want to negotiate with Kazakhstan so that we can sign it and create a framework for collaboration between your air services and our air services industry,” he said. The agreement is the latest big step to create a stronger bilateral relationship. The document should establish a direct flight between the countries, which “is going to promote greater people-to-people engagement, tourism and different activities,” he noted. “Once we have air transportation connection and that becomes the bridge between economies, you can move people, you can move goods and services,” he added. During his September visit to Kazakhstan, Nkurunziza was expected to meet with the government in Nur-Sultan and private sector in Almaty – all to strengthen the bond. This will be his first trip to Almaty, the nation’s cultural and business centre, “to find out how our two economies can collaborate in the private sector,” he said. “We are happy with the state of affairs in our relationship. We

think we can do much more and that is why I am here – to explore how we can strengthen the relationship between us,” he added. Rwanda, for example, is interested in Kazakhstan’s experience and “strength in the energy sector, mining sector and in the agriculture sector” and wants to find “possibilities of exploring synergies, sharing experience, sharing technology, opening up markets,” he noted. At the same time, Rwanda can offer Kazakhstan “tropical fruits and vegetables you can’t grow in Kazakhstan that you might be interested in. We grow coffee; we grow tea. We know that people in Kazakhstan, at least the little experience that I’ve seen, you enjoy your coffee. Why can’t we sell you Rwandan coffee? There is a lot that can be done,” he added. At present, two Rwandan students are studying in Almaty and the country “expects there will be more” such cultural exchange opportunities. “We expect Kazakh people come to Rwanda as tourists, students, researchers, investors and

businesspeople,” said Nkurunziza. Kazakhstan-Rwandan relations seem unusual at first glance, but might grow into a mutually beneficial situation as both countries show interest in cooperation. “As Rwanda, we are very committed to this relationship; we want to see it strengthened. Particularly, we would like to see greater engagement within the economic space in terms of trade and business between Kazakhstan and Rwanda. We are extending an invitation to the great people of Kazakhstan to come and explore the wonders of Africa,” he added. Rwanda, with a population of 12.5 million, is located on 26,338 square kilometres in the eastern portion of Africa. Its gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated at \$9.5 billion and it is the second fastest growing economy in Africa (7.5 percent growth per annum since 2007) and the most improved nation in human development in the world. Similar to Kazakhstan, it has a young and growing population, as approximately 70 percent is under 30.

Kazakhstan grants visa-free status for 12 more countries to attract investment, tourists, businesses

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan has granted visa-free entrance to 12 additional countries – Bahrain, Colombia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, the Vatican and Vietnam – for up to 30 days. “Based on the political, economic and investment feasibility, as well as other interests of Kazakhstan, the list of countries

with visa-free entry to Kazakhstan has been expanded. An additional 12 countries are included in the list of 45 states,” said Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Secretary Aibek Smadiyarov at the Sept. 30 briefing. According to ministry data, Kazakhstan attracted \$876.3 million of foreign direct investment (FDI) from the countries between 2005-2018. Eighty-five percent of the funds came from four nations – Oman (\$253.2 million), Indonesia (\$216.5 million),

Liechtenstein (\$170.0 million) and Saudi Arabia (\$106.1 million). In addition, Kazakhstan and these countries “effectively cooperate in multilateral and bilateral formats and closely coordinate their actions to resolve pressing international problems,” he noted. “The abolition of visa formalities aims to increase the number of foreign investors, businesspeople and tourists. Simplification of the visa regime will con-

tribute to the creation of a favourable investment climate in Kazakhstan,” he added. According to Henley Passport Index (updated Oct. 1), Kazakhstan rose one position to 68th place in the fourth quarter of this year. The number of visa-free countries for a Kazakh passport remained at 75 during the last three months. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev earlier tasked the ministry to intensify work in expanding the list of countries Kazakh citi-

zens can visit without obtaining visas. The Henley Passport Index ranks all the world’s passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa. The ranking is calculated with exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which maintains the world’s largest and most accurate database of travel information, and enhanced by ongoing research by the Henley & Partners research department.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

ADB celebrates 25 years of partnership with Kazakhstan, invests over \$5 billion

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – As the Asian Development Bank (ADB) celebrates 25 years of its partnership with Kazakhstan, the bank has invested more than \$5 billion in sovereign loans, non-sovereign loans and guarantees to support the country’s development since its independence. These include nearly 30 projects in sovereign loans, ten projects in the private sector and nearly 100 technical assistance grants worth close to \$50 million.

ADB activities have been changing and expanding with the country’s needs, said ADB Country Director for Kazakhstan Giovanni Capannelli in an interview with The Astana Times.

Kazakhstan became a member of the ADB in 1994, and the first ADB office opened in Almaty in 1998. The bank was the first multilateral development institution that moved to the new capital, then Astana, following the Kazakh government.

The current work is directed by the ADB Country Partnership Strategy for 2017-2021 that covers three strategic pillars – economic diversification, promoting sustainable and inclusive growth, and achieving sustainable development.

Supporting small- and medium-sized businesses that have been steadily growing in Kazakhstan in numbers is a significant part of the ADB’s activities in Kazakhstan.

The bank has been partnering with Kazakhstan’s Damu Business Development Fund for eight years to provide financial and technical assistance to businesses, both in big cities and regions that received more than 70 percent of the ADB loans.

It also seeks to support female entrepreneurship with free seminars and trainings, primarily in regions and rural areas.



Giovanni Capannelli

The bank partnered in May with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs to train female entrepreneurs in financial, legal and business literacy in five Kazakh regions, and similar workshops will reach nine other regions by the end of the year.

Capannelli noted the importance of addressing major barriers that businesses face, including access to finance and ensuring collateral.

“We provided more than \$500 equivalent million in local currency to help SMEs have access to concessional loans, to cheap loans and recently we also extended that to micro enterprises,” he said.

To address the lack of the data and foster business creation, the bank launched a pilot project in the Kostanai Region to compile a database on the SMEs in the region as well as provide technical assistance and analytical support to local officials. The project is being done with Nazarbayev University and is expected to cover 3,000 firms.

“If I ask anybody else in Kazakhstan, do you really have a close understanding and strong command on what is going in the region with SMEs, understanding the database, do you understand how many are active and in what sectors, do they use government programmes and are they effective,

do they really have access to loans from banks, I always got very approximate answers, but never very specific ones,” he said.

The ADB has been gearing up its support for the country’s renewable energy sector to help Kazakhstan achieve its key national targets to increase renewable energy’s share in the country’s energy mix to 30 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050.

“We see the potential and necessity for Kazakhstan to move very seriously into renewables,” he added.

In March, it signed a \$11.5 million loan agreement with Baikonur Solar to build a 50 MW solar power plant in the Kyzylorda Region in the south of the country, the first solar project for the ADB not only in Kazakhstan, but in Central Asia.

The latest project was with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to loan \$30.5 million to M-KAT Green to build and operate a 100 MW solar plant in the country’s southeast near Shu in the Zhambyl Region. The plant will be located on 500 hectares and is scheduled to launch by the end of this year.

Capannelli said the country should unlock its geothermal potential, primarily in the southern regions.

“Geothermal has tremendous potential in Kazakhstan. If you go to the south, you see that locals have already started capturing some of its potential. In the Almaty Region, after Talgar towards Kolsai Lakes, geothermal comes naturally as a spring into agriculture. Most evident is in the south towards Taraz and Shymkent, where there are a lot of greenhouses and spas that are warmed up with these geothermal sources,” he said.

With the World Bank, the ADB is considering launching a geothermal project in the Turkestan Region.

Capannelli noted the big poten-

tial the agricultural sector presents for the Kazakh economy. Eighteen percent of the country’s working population is involved in the sector.

In September, the bank approved a \$249.8 million equivalent loan in local currency to Kazvodkhoz, a state-owned enterprise overseeing water facilities, to help rehabilitate and improve irrigation networks across 171,000 hectares in the East Kazakhstan, Karaganda, Kyzylorda and Zhambyl regions.

“One of the landmark projects that we are doing now is in the Akmola Region, being identified as a pilot project to help conduct a natural resource assessment of soil, water and climate change to help have very high quality data today for agriculture development both in livestock industry and crop development. This kind of knowledge support is very important for attracting foreign direct investors. Without providing specific names, there are now a lot of large private companies in the agriculture sector which are now seriously considering entering Kazakhstan’s agriculture,” he said.

The ADB urged the government to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals in the country’s medium- and long-term goals.

For Kazakhstan, he added, environment-related goals present the biggest challenge.

“We strongly believe this is a way to go for the country. Kazakhstan is such an ambitious country that wants to become one of 30 most developed countries by 2050 and now it is facing a number of challenges to embrace green growth. We embrace this sustainable development agenda very seriously and we work in partnership with the United Nations agencies. We suggested to the prime minister to adopt a new SDG architecture, and we are happy to know that our suggestion was put into action,” he said.

The bank’s strategic pillars

closely link to achieving the SDGs.

“If you look at the spectrum of SDGs, you also find that economic diversification, production and consumption is very much covered by SDGs. Inclusivity also translates to reducing inequalities, including special inequalities that exist in Kazakhstan between large cities and the rest of the country, which are huge. As we continue implementing our strategy in Kazakhstan, we help Kazakhstan achieve its SDGs targets, but focus has to really be on environment related aspects,” he said.

The bank is also committed to growing knowledge partnership with the government, local experts and think tanks through its Knowledge and Experience Exchange Programme across many sectors, including private sector development, agriculture, transport and healthcare.

Kazakhstan, noted Capannelli, needs to push for structural reforms.

“It is in the system, in the institutions, in the incentives structure, that’s where structural reforms are really needed. The society is still very vertical, when one just waits for an order that comes from the top and executes it, while the horizontal approach is needed. This is how society pushes us but does not push us to coordinate. Frequency of rotation of people in charge of programmes is also quite high. Kazakhstan has the financial means, but institutions still remain weak,” he said.

In terms of economic growth, the country requires “serious economic diversification and bold policies.”

“There need to be very bold policy for developing agriculture, including the financial aspects. The system for sustainable finance is needed. Kazakhstan has always been a forerunner, but it also has to be at the forefront of innovation,” he said.

Accounts Committee proposes reducing air, railway transportation subsidies

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The Accounts Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Budget recommends reducing the subsidisation of air and railway transportation in the draft national budget for 2020-2022, said Accounts Committee Chair Natalia Godunova during the Sept. 12 presentation of the budget in the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament).

The draft budget allocates 19 billion tenge (US\$48.97 million) for 2020-2022 to subsidise air transportation.

“We evaluated transportation subsidies. We have never done it before... (From the 2020-2022 budget,) we suggest optimising eight billion tenge (US\$20.62 million). In 2020, we suggest reducing it by 2.3 billion tenge (US\$5.93 million),” said Godunova.

The aircraft workloads are lower than the money directed to subsidise air travel, she said. According to the committee’s data, there

were 103 flights with less than 10 passengers in 2018. These include flights from Almaty and Nur-Sultan to Balkhash, Urjar, Usharal. Two flights were carried out without passengers, Almaty-Urjar and Nur-Sultan-Usharal.

“Here we see the main problem in the absence of flexibility in subsidising scheduled flights, which leads to budget expenditures with low and zero workload of the aircraft, especially on tourist routes, which are subsidised. We have the top ten tourist routes, for some reason they are subsidised starting in May, which is logical, but until December. You can look at the loading of aircraft in September, November and December. What do we subsidise?” she said.

The accounting committee, therefore, proposes to distribute subsidies depending on demand with the ability to revise the number of flights during the year.

Optimisation may also affect railway subsidies.

“I won’t stop on subsidising the railway transportation, the prob-

lem is the same. We estimated it (the national budget) at 100 billion tenge (US\$257.74 million). We suggest optimising 12 billion tenge (US\$30.93 million) for areas of low demand,” the accounts committee head said.

According to the accounts committee, Kazakhstan subsidises 80 percent of its rail transportation. Ineffective subsidies include routes with a low wagon population of less than 20 people per wagon. The national minimum average is 32 people. Such routes include Almaty-Altyntkol and Astana-Ridder.

Godunova suggests hiring more competent management to evaluate the need for transportation subsidies.

“It is recommended to put into practice operational management, responsive to demand management, with the ability to review the number of flights during the year, direct them to the actual need by changing the frequency of flights and fares. That is, we need flexibility to save budget funds,” said Godunova.



Government alters procurement processes to focus on domestic suppliers

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Construction, IT and electronic materials for government use will only be available after a pre-selection stage, said First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov on Sept. 23. The changes are designed to ensure procurement sustainability and give an edge to Kazakh domestic businesses.

The amendment regarding construction materials became active Sept. 1. The main condition for pre-selection is the financial stability of procurement candidates.

The amendment regarding construction materials became active Sept. 1. The main condition for pre-selection is the financial stability of procurement candidates.

“In this case, the criterion is an indicator of financial stability. Given that this indicator is formed according to the information of state revenue bodies and only for Kazakhstan taxpayers, this norm will also support domestic business,” he said.

The IT and electronics amendments will become effective Jan. 1. The changes relate to the way products will be registered and will only be available to domestic developers.



Alikhan Smailov

“The main criterion for entering the preliminary qualification selection is the presence in the register of trusted products, which includes only domestic developers,” said Smailov.

Similar measures will be applied to quasigovernmental procurement procedures.

“Since we are coordinating Samruk Kazyna’s procurement rules, we will initiate the establishment of the same measures there,” he added.

As a part of executing the head of state’s order next year, centralising public procurement has been introduced in pilot mode, which provides for transferring all public procurement to single organisers at appropriate levels.

“After testing and editing inaccuracies, this model will be distributed throughout the republic. The number of (procurement) organisers will significantly decrease. Administrative work will be simplified and this will effectively regulate domestic products in public procurement,” said Smailov.

He noted the new bill includes a proposal to raise the threshold for public procurement to 5 million tenge (US\$12,889) where trademarks are permitted. This norm will allow customers to indicate Made in Kazakhstan brands and products.

ECONOMIC NEWS IN BRIEF

The gross output of agriculture, forestry and fisheries for the first eight months of 2019 increased 3.6 percent to two trillion tenge (US\$5.15 billion) year-on-year (yoy). Production growth is mainly due to a 4.7-percent increase in livestock and poultry slaughter, 3.9-percent increase in crop production and 3.2-percent increase in raw cow milk yield. Agriculture represented 2.4 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) at the six-month mark compared to 4.4 percent at the end of 2018. The industry share has declined for the third year in a row, yet investments in agriculture are growing year to year. From January-August, investments in fixed assets were 263.7 billion tenge (US\$679.53 million), a 50.1-percent increase yoy.

Small Kazakh enterprises provided 8.5 trillion tenge (US\$21.90 billion) in manufactured products and services in the first half of the year, a 16-percent increase year-on-year (yoy). The most profitable areas are car and motorcycle trade and repair (943.2 billion tenge (US\$2.43 billion)), financial and insurance activities (397.7 billion tenge (US\$1.02 billion)) and the mining industry (236.3 billion tenge (US\$608.93 million)). Real estate operations had the largest annual growth at 52.9 percent, up to 405 billion tenge (US\$1.04 billion). Small enterprises involved in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning grew 52.8 percent, up to 209 billion tenge (US\$538.58 million). Administrative and auxiliary services businesses experienced 51.4 percent annual growth, up to 298.7 billion tenge (US\$769.73 million). The total profit of small enterprises is estimated at 2.6 trillion tenge (US\$6.7 billion), a 77.1-percent increase yoy.

From January-August, air fares increased 8.4 percent year-on-year (yoy). Ticket prices rose 24.4 percent in the Mangystau Region, 19 percent in Zhambyl Region and 16.9 percent in the Atyrau Region. Prices also increased in Almaty (9 percent), Shymkent (7.7 percent) and Nur-Sultan (6.7 percent). According to the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development, the main reasons for the high cost are the shortage of carrying capacities (lack of the required number of aircraft to meet the existing demand) and the high cost of jet fuel. Air carriers transported 5.6 million passengers in the eight-month period, a 1.9-percent increase yoy.

Kazakhstan’s trade turnover was \$53.8 billion January-July, a 3.6-percent increase year-on-year (yoy). Trade growth accounted for an 11.7-percent increase in imports to \$20.9 billion, a 38.8-percent share in trade turnover. Exports of goods and services, however, decreased 3.7 percent per year to \$32.9 billion. In 2018, exports of goods and services were \$61 billion, with 26.1-percent in annual growth. Natural resources products, at \$23.8 billion, comprise 72.3 percent of all exports; \$21.9 billion is fuel and energy products, or 66.5 percent of the total. Metals and their products accounted for 14.6 percent, or \$4.8 billion. Animal and vegetable products and processed food products made up 5.7 percent, or \$1.9 billion.

During the first eight months, gold ore extraction increased 19.3 percent per year to 16.4 million tonnes, an 11.8-percent increase year-on-year (yoy). In addition, the country mined 218,000 tonnes of gold-bearing concentrates, which also represented an increase in production. The output of unprocessed and semi-processed gold was 65.6 tonnes, a 5.4-percent increase yoy. Refined gold production increased 8.9 percent per year to 35.9 tonnes. Kazakhstan ranks 14th in gold reserves in the country’s foreign exchange reserves and its share of gold exchange reserves reached 63 percent.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

BUSINESS
NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan has terminated the contract with Spanish investor Talgo at the Kazakh plant that produces train wagons, Vice Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Berik Kamaliev announced Oct. 3, reports inbusiness.kz. The Kazakh government is considering three potential companies to run the plant. Relying on some initial price-quality assessments, Kazakhstan plans to purchase and test wagons from the Russian Transmashholding plant in Tver in 2020. This is done to replace worn-out wagons and move away from coal to electric trains. Kazakhstan has already received 63 Russian wagons through BRK-Leasing, which were put on the Aktope-Mangyshlak route. The government has requested an additional 18.7 billion tenge (US\$46.26 million) through BRK-Leasing. These trains will circulate on routes Almaty-Mangyshlak, Aktope-Mangyshlak and Nur-Sultan-Saryagash.

The Kazakh Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development plans to increase the attractiveness of flights to Kazakhstan and a number of foreign carriers plan to enter the Kazakhstan's market, said Minister Beibut Atankulov at the Oct. 7 government meeting, reported inform.kz. There are plans to open for the airlines such as Qatar Airways (Doha, 2020), Emirates (Dubai, 2021), China Eastern (Shanghai, 2021), Ural Airlines and Pobeda Airlines. At the same time, Kazakh carriers plan to open flights to large cities such as Shanghai (2020), Singapore (2020) and New York (2021).

In the North Kazakhstan Region, the Bio Operations plant (formerly known as Biohim) installs the second line for gluten production, North Kazakhstan Region Akim (Governor) Kumar Aksakalov told inform.kz. This should double gluten production and processing to 250,000 tonnes per year. In addition to this, in December, the enterprise will start production of bioethanol, which is an alternative liquid biofuel. The plant is expected to create up to 500 jobs. Aksakalov proposed to export bioethanol to Afghanistan. Bio Operations also produces starch, Distiller's dried grains with solubles (DDGS) feed and bioethanol products and delivers them to Almaty, Kostanai and Uzbekistan.

Mambetov and K company launched a modern dairy farm in Minkeser village in the North Kazakhstan Region, the regional akimat (administration) press service reported. The farm is equipped with modern European equipment. The farm created 35 permanent jobs. Additional four modern dairy complexes will be launched in the region by the end of the year. This will increase milk production to 11,000 tonnes. Four farms were built in 2018 and ten more will be built in 2020.

The Kazakh government has prepared a set of reforms to improve the business climate and attract investors. As explained by Vice Minister of National Economy Zhaslan Madiyev at a meeting of the interdepartmental commission, the draft law consists of five main blocks: facilitation of work with tax authorities, opening of public access to information, corporate governance and work with shareholders, simplification of procedures, elimination of anti-competitive norms and development of competition. In facilitating the work with tax authorities, for example, the registration as a value added tax (VAT) payer will be done only online and will take one day to process. In total, the document should change and introduce additions to 11 codes and 43 laws. The draft law was developed in line with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's Sept. 2 state-of-the-nation address on intensifying the work to attract foreign direct investment.

KazEnergy Eurasian Forum discusses energy market in face of global financial challenges

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The 12th KazEnergy Eurasian Forum opened Sept. 26 in Nur-Sultan with discussions on the future of energy and the role Kazakhstan will play in that future.

"In fact, energy is undergoing a certain transformation at the planning level. Today, the structure of global consumption is changing, which requires changes in the industry," said Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin at the official opening ceremony.

"Something new is required of us. This is a clear message within the framework of how the world is developing today in order to ensure sustainable development. Today, the pace of the global economy is developing in the face of fierce competition. The biggest falls are in the financial sector, and in the industry. Regional instability is increasingly becoming a recurring phenomenon," he said.

The stability of the energy market is the key focus for Kazakhstan, said Mamin.

"At the same time, we must maintain stability and predictability in the energy market. In this regard, the role of Kazakhstan amid changes is becoming increasingly recognised. We are becoming a regional leader due to the stability of energy supplies. Astana EXPO 2017 has become



L-R: OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo and Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin.

an excellent platform and an opportunity to discuss new sources of energy. Since then, we have carried out certain activities in terms of implementation and preparation for a green economy," said Mamin.

Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev said financial market uncertainty has reached a new high.

"From five to seven million barrels of oil were withdrawn from the market. Oil prices soared more than 7 percent. This is the largest volatility we have seen in the last 30 years. And also five to seven million barrels were lost literally in one minute, this is the biggest loss in several decades," said Bozumbayev referring to the recent incident at Saudi Aramco facilities.

The Organisation of the Petrole-

um Exporting Countries (OPEC) Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo agreed that global uncertainty is one of the key factors shaping the global economy, and that OPEC tries to deal with it.

"The uncertainty of the past few months has hit the global oil market. Saudi Arabia has almost completely restored the volume of oil supplies. OPEC still aims to stabilise the market," said Barkindo.

Bozumbayev said Kazakhstan would continue to work within the OPEC agreement.

"We will stay in the corridor that was guaranteed to our colleagues. We hope that the transaction will continue in the future, because this is a very correct initiative," said Bozumbayev referring to OPEC+ arrangement between OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers including Kazakhstan.

Photo credit: primeminister.kz

growth of 0.8 percent in thermal electrostation energy consumption, while the renewable energy sources remained about the same. This trend, said Korotetskiy, lags behind global numbers.

What gives an additional impetus to Kazakhstan in switching to sustainable energy sources is in carbon taxes and carbon tariffs and quotas for non-carbon neutral companies and countries entering the international discussion, said Korotetskiy, adding that access to western markets for developing countries that are not able to decarbonise could be restricted.

To avoid that, financial instruments are needed to be used along with governmental policies in Kazakhstan. Korotetskiy listed green bonds, household and business energy efficiency incentives, digitisation and energy accumulation tools as ways to address sustainability in Kazakhstan's energy sources.

Giovanni Capannelli, country director in Kazakhstan for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), emphasised the work the bank does regarding geothermal energy in Kazakhstan, as well as work for decarbonising Kazakhstan. Also, the bank works closely with the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) in introducing green taxonomy that will help attract investment in the green sector. Kazakhstan has already set high targets in Central Asia in sustainable development promotion, said Capannelli.

US-based Valley Irrigation expands to Kazakhstan

Continued from Page A1

"We need to help and try to develop the country completely. We have several field days, teaching days at different universities to make sure people understand what irrigation is and that this is not only a company focus, but that it is important for a farmer to understand the education behind irrigation, how to make sure that you have the benefit in the future," said Claas.

The government should ensure farmers have a stable water supply.

"It is very essential that the government helps to ensure that surface and underground waters are available for farmers at the place where they need it and only due to the help the government can give, the farmer will be capable of irrigating," he added.

The goal, he noted, is to assist Kazakhstan in ensuring the correct use of water.

"We have put the government in touch with the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska and the University of Mississippi which are all doing the research to ensure that the water, underground water and surface water, are used in the right way to ensure the most and best usage for the country not only for the short term, but for the future to make sure the resources are not taken away, but continuously used," said Claas in an exclusive interview for this story.

"They are looking for pilot projects for canals, refurbished canals, specifically in the south. We are trying to help to bring our expertise and also to bring in other people from outside to ensure you have the experts who are capable of restoring these canals to make sure the water is not drifting away. At this point, these long canals which are coming from Uzbekistan use a lot of water on their way, so the majority of the (money for the) water that Kazakhstan is paying to Uzbekistan is not used for growing crops, but is just lost on the way through evaporation," he added.

The company will introduce a centre pivot and linear irrigation system, which ensures an 85-95 percent efficiency level.

"We have a lot of different technologies on how to use water the most efficient way. When you look at different irrigation meth-



Ruediger Claas

ods, you have the flat irrigation method, which is the worst. There are a lot of disadvantages; one is you are just flooding the area and you have a lot of evaporation. You are closing the soil due to the fact that the soil can come up and you are just destroying the soil," he said.

Drip irrigation is also unsuitable, as it can only be used on small fields and specific crops.

"You place pipes in the roots. It is a lot of plastic on the ground and at the end of the day it is a lot more expensive, so the feasibility is not even close to what centre pivot irrigation can do," he added.

The system will also enable local farmers to reduce the number of chemicals used to grow plants.

"You can inject directly into a plant which is capable of direct intake and you are not draining any of these inches on the ground. So, the plant is getting a small amount, but exactly what it needs and you can grow the plant more efficiently with less fertilisers used over the year," said Claas.

Kazakh agriculture will also benefit from satellite imaging that will provide a more detailed digital mapping of the land. The software and satellite data involved in space monitoring are provided by Kazakhstan Garysh Sapary and the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

"They can give you the status of the field, what crop is at what stage, so that you know exactly where you need to apply more fertilisers and in combination with the irrigation system, you can bring the new technology that has taken 50 years in America and in a very short step to the country of Kazakhstan," said Claas.

Kazakhstan presents huge opportunity for the company.

"You have a lot of surface water available. We have seen over the last year a good stable business for

us to sell our irrigation equipment. We do expect Kazakhstan will increase the amount of systems in the country due to the need of food," he noted.

The irrigation systems in place will also boost farming growth.

"That's where irrigation comes in the perspective, due to the fact that you can raise the number of animals in Kazakhstan. Irrigation gives you an opportunity to grow your food a lot more efficiently. If you look at

corn, potatoes, I would even say in the droughty areas of Kazakhstan, without irrigation you cannot grow them. It is very difficult to quantify how much more you can grow with the irrigation systems," he added.



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EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

Kazakh President affirms support for multilateralism in ‘a world of disquiet’

The opportunity for global leaders to meet as they did in New York at the United Nations (UN) last month is always significant. But what made the formal and informal discussions at the General Assembly even more vital this year was the backdrop which UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres characterised as ‘a world of disquiet.’

It is a world more riven with tensions and suspicions and, as we have said before, when the will to work together to overcome challenges seems weaker. There is a desperate need to find ways to stop this slide to division and instability.

In his first address to the UN General Assembly (UNGA), President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev did not pull his punches over why there was so much anxiety or what needed to be done. He talked about the “alarming new global reality” and challenged his fellow leaders to think afresh about why people were so worried about the future.

In a world of anxiety, of course, the threat from nuclear weapons inevitably looms larger. At worst, there is a fear that disputes might lead, perhaps by mistake or through misunderstanding, to

In his first address to the UNGA, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev did not pull his punches over why there was so much anxiety or what needed to be done. He talked about the “alarming new global reality” and challenged his fellow leaders to think afresh about why people were so worried about the future.

these terrifying weapons being used. At best, this uncertainty encourages countries to try to add these weapons to their arsenals and can dissuade states which already have them from carrying



Photo credit: akonika

through commitments to reduce their number. We are seeing signs of these disturbing trends today. President Tokayev appealed to countries not to give in to these fears but to work instead to eliminate nuclear weapons. This goal, he said, remained his country’s main foreign policy priority. He called on the UN’s other 192 members to commit themselves to achieving it. He singled out the creation of the nuclear weapons-free zone in Central Asia as the type of practical initiative which can provide key building blocks towards the overall ambition.

It was a speech, too, which confirmed Kazakhstan’s strong support for the UN and its values. While other countries and their leaders can at times seem to doubt the role that the UN and multilateralism can play in the world today, they are not shared here. It is clear that Kazakhstan believes a strong, modernised UN remains indispensable for peace, security and development.

This belief was confirmed by the offer to host a new regional UN Centre for the sustainable development goals in Almaty, which is becoming an increasingly important hub for international organisations. His appeal for the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), an initiative first proposed by First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, at the UNGA 27 years ago, to now be turned into a fully-fledged regional security and development body, also demonstrated the deep commitment to cooperation and

dialogue as the only way forward for the world.

It was why President Tokayev committed his country to do everything possible to help build confidence, resolve conflicts and reduce tensions. Again, he gave the practical example of the Astana Process on the Syrian conflict to show what could be achieved in even the bitterest of disputes. These discussions, which many feared were doomed to failure, have helped pave the way for a cessation of hostilities and the safe return of refugees.

His words about mediation in conflicts were couped in New York with a strong plea for the world not to forget about the plight of Afghanistan. He called for global support for the country’s people and democratic process so Afghanistan could take its place within a prosperous, secure and stable Central Asian region.

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria, along with others, have inevitably helped fuel an increase in the threat from violent extremism. President Tokayev called for greater cooperation to tackle this globally, under the umbrella of the UN. But there was an important human side to this determined campaign against terrorism. He offered, too, to share Kazakhstan’s experiences at re-integrating its citizens who had moved abroad after being seduced by the false appeals of foreign extremism. It is a programme that has won international attention and approval – and another example of an approach which, as well as identifying challenges, also offered solutions.

Modernising sanitary, phytosanitary standards offers opportunity to expand food trade

By Lilia Burunciuc

Agriculture and livestock exports present huge opportunities for countries in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan, already one of the world’s largest wheat exporters, selling over nine million tonnes annually, has the potential to become a global beef and mutton exporting powerhouse. Uzbekistan also has a large crop production base and has steadily grown its agricultural exports since 2017. The Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan boast rapidly growing dairy and beef sectors, which increasingly target export markets within and outside Central Asia.

Kazakhstan, already one of the world’s largest wheat exporters, selling over nine million tonnes annually, has the potential to become a global beef and mutton exporting powerhouse.

However, countries in the region face significant problems related to sanitary (animals) and phytosanitary (plants) standards, which currently do not meet the quality-control requirements of many countries.

Outdated legislation, poor laboratory capacity and lack of coordination between border controls are among the reasons that create vulnerability to transboundary pests and diseases and constrain the potential of Central Asian nations to expand agricultural food trade.

Rising incomes and more demanding consumer preferences in target export markets are making product quality and safety a key determinant of export success. This is not just the case for OECD markets, but also for the markets in emerging Asian economies such as China, Vietnam, and Thailand. In these countries, the number of quality-conscious and increasingly wealthy middle-class consumers is growing every day.

In light of this, countries around the world are investing in infrastructure that assures better quality and safety of their agricultural products. For example, investments made by Uruguay to improve its animal health led to



more than tripling of its share of China’s beef import, from 5 percent to 50 percent in just eight years.

Many other countries report similarly positive results after improving the sanitary and phytosanitary standards of their exports.

In Central Asia, improving the implementation of sanitary and phytosanitary standards can also hugely benefit food trade and support the region’s export market expansion. Regional cooperation in this area can help unlock the countries’ potential even more, enhancing efficiency and lowering costs.

Coordinating consumer protection standards

To grow their agricultural and meat exports, Central Asian countries need to establish world-class plant- and animal-product safety standards. By working together, countries could achieve significant results. At the World Bank, we see several areas for potential regional cooperation in agriculture and livestock.

Such cooperation could start with countries exchanging information about their plans for modernising national plant- and animal-product safety standards and protocols, so that reforms could be synchronised. Making national standards more compatible with global practices —World Trade Organisation standards, for example — would also help.

At the same time, we recognise that introducing new standards for products and processes and increasing the focus of food oversight programs on quality and safety will be costly and time-consuming. Cross-country coordination could help reduce this cost.

Preventing animal diseases

Animal diseases do not respect borders. They can spread quick-

ly from one country to another, creating food safety and health emergencies, and causing staggering economic losses.

For example, the current African Swine Fever outbreak in China is expected to reduce the country’s pig population by a third in 2019. The fever has also spread rapidly to Mongolia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong, devastating their pork industries and destroying the livelihoods of many of these countries’ poorest people.

Better national veterinary services and regional cooperation might have reduced the fallout from this outbreak.

The best way to keep local outbreaks of African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza, Foot and Mouth Disease and other diseases from mushrooming into devastating cross-border problems is coordinated regional investment in disease detection and eradication efforts.

Countries could also work together to strengthen their food safety laboratories. The goal is consistent testing and analysis based on best global practices in animal health and disease prevention.

Sharing commercial corridors and export logistics

Modern crop- and meat-product logistical facilities, rail hubs, and dedicated infrastructure at border crossings between Central Asian nations could also help increase their exports to China. Co-investing in this infrastructure would save time and money. As would synchronising procedures for moving commodities and products across Central Asian countries’ regional borders and into China.

Central Asia’s future as a supplier of agri-products and livestock will depend on how food producers and processors in the region respond to the increased quality and safety demands of consumers, and on how well countries coordinate with each other.

At the World Bank, we will continue to support the efforts of Central Asian countries to improve standards and expand agricultural food trade, with the overall goal of boosting economic growth and citizens’ standards of living.

The author is the World Bank Country Director for Central Asia.



Photo credit: blogs.worldbank.org

Food processing plant in Samarkand Region, Uzbekistan.

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BUSINESS

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Hong Kong business delegation visits Shymkent, expresses interest in partnerships

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – A business delegation of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council visited Shymkent, Kazakhstan’s third largest city, Sept. 18-19 to set up partnerships and expand bilateral ties.

The companies are leading producers of electronic goods, household appliances, interior design, cosmetics, health products, food and chemical goods. Hong Kong is ranked among the top three global financial hubs behind New York and London.

The visit included business-to-business meetings where the sides discussed opportunities for coop-

eration and sought ways to enter the leading market in Asia.

The delegation also visited industrial facilities and special economic and industrial zones where they witnessed industrial processes and technologies. Some technologies, they noted, can compete with those in China.

The environmentally friendly nature of agriculture and food products produced in Shymkent is a competitive advantage. The businesspeople expressed their willingness to buy the products.

“Cooperation with your region is very important for us and we hope for long-term relations,” said Hong Kong Chamber of Economic and Trade Promotional Association Head Wilson Lam.

Shymkent, he noted, is a trade hub presenting significant opportunities.

“It is a competitive border region that stands at the crossroads of the Silk Road that is on the Western Europe – Western China transcontinental road route. There are many resources and areas where to make investments,” he said.

The main goal is to deepen bilateral ties between Kazakhstan and China.

“We would like to take part in the development of the Kazakh industry and invest in it,” said Lam.

During the visit, the Hong Kong Association and Shymkent Business Chamber signed a memorandum.

Shymkent Business Chamber

Head Nurlan Kabishtayev said any economic relations start with trade operations.

“Therefore, at the first stage we are talking only about trade. We need this cooperation more because we are interested in supplying our products to the world’s largest market with very high purchasing capacity. We have strong businesses who might be interesting for Hong Kong businesses,” said Kabishtayev, referring to the larger China’s market which can be accessed from Hong Kong.

The city could offer light industry, agriculture and food industry products, he added.

“We are ready to learn from their experience, advanced technologies in the production of packaging ma-

terial. Our cooperation will give us a clear understanding of what the Chinese market is about, because what we might consider of high quality could be perceived differently there and vice versa. Therefore, it is important for us to start trade cooperation now,” he said.

The same day, the business delegation attended a roundtable in Almaty that gathered representatives of the Almaty Business Chamber and the business community.

Lam noted such events link Hong Kong companies with the world.

“We are very pleased that 13 delegates from 10 Hong Kong companies are present here. They represent a wide range of sectors from electronics to metal, silicone

and rubber products. They all have serious intentions in Kazakhstan and are interested in cooperation. Today, they are exploring a new potential, expanding their business ties and building partnerships,” said Lam.

Almaty Business Chamber Head Nariman Abilshaikov said there are more than 185,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises registered in Almaty that make up 40 percent of the gross regional product.

“The trade and service sector are leading economy sectors in Almaty. The chamber works to improve the business climate, attract new investors and develop the export potential of local producers,” he said.

Karaganda Region launches third solar power plant

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The Karaganda Region recently launched a 50-megawatt solar power plant in the village of Agadyr, Shetsky District.

The Karaganda Region has become a leader in introducing renewable energy sources and the 50-megawatt plant is the region’s third solar power plant.

“We have one goal. This is the instruction of Kazakhstan’s First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to increase the share of alternative energy in Kazakhstan up to 30 percent. And we are confidently moving towards this. Today, we are launching the third large solar power station in the region. This project is very significant for the development of industry in our region. By developing solar energy,

we not only overcome the shortage of capacities, but also solve environmental issues,” said Regional Deputy Akim (Deputy Governor) Almas Aidarov.

The solar plant occupies 125 hectares. Powerful substations and 150,000 solar panels were installed here. The construction of the Akadyr solar plant was financed by private German investor Solamet Investment GmbH and supported by the regional akimat (administration) and Kazakh Invest. The project’s cost is \$60.2 million, Kazinform news agency reports.

“This is the second solar power station that we are launching in the Karaganda region. These projects were made possible thanks to the joint efforts of German investors, the regional akimat and Kazakh Invest,” said the main investor, Joachim Goldbeck.

He said that already the capacity of the solar plant is 25 megawatts per hour. And a corresponding agreement was reached to expand the solar plant’s capacity up to 76 megawatts.

At the beginning of this year, the Karaganda Region signed a memorandum with European investors on the development of alternative energy. In the future, this will provide another 500 megawatts of solar energy and \$548 million of foreign direct investment.

In the Karaganda Region two solar power stations are already operating in Saran and the village of Gulshat. Now all three sources can deliver almost 200 megawatts of green energy.

Solamet Investment GmbH is an international company specialising in the turnkey construction of photovoltaic plants at the commercial, industrial and large-scale level.



IT community to discuss ecosystem at Digital Bridge 2019 forum

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Leading IT specialists and technology entrepreneurs will take a comprehensive look at Kazakhstan’s digital ecosystem at the Oct. 24-25 Digital Bridge 2019 international technology forum in the Kazakh capital.

“This year we planned the concept of the forum this way: Digital Bridge will be a great umbrella event for all discussions that relate to the digital ecosystem in Kazakhstan. We want Digital Bridge to truly become a bridge that brings together different audiences – businesses, start-ups, the (Kazakh) government, corporations and others who are involved in promoting digital ideas and intend to solve problems in this area or implement projects that will bring real result,” said Zerde National Infocommunication Holding Deputy Chair Pavel Koktyshhev. Zerde is helping organise the event.

The key event at the forum will be Next Tech Entrepreneur Forum

session. Session participants will discuss subjects, such as education of the future, venture capital financing, cybersports, business incubation and digital media.

“We will make a big emphasis for the business environment: in a separate location we will organise a platform where start-ups, investors, entrepreneurs, IT companies, specialists and the media will be able to find each other in one place and discuss specific issues in an informal setting without ties,” added Koktyshhev.

Representatives from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will also offer a roundtable on digitisation.

The forum will also arrange business-to-business meetings for the participants.

Five digitisation vice ministers and chief digital officers will answer questions about Kazakhstan’s planned projects on digitisation of healthcare, education, labour and finance at five CDO Open Talks Oct. 25.

The Astana Hub will coordinate its traditional Astana Hub Awards

for contributions to the development of the IT industry in Kazakhstan and Astana Hub Battle, which is a competition between technology start-ups. The competition will accept applications until Oct. 15.

The Digital Bridge will also host the ceremonial opening of Astana IT University and Alem programming school as well as a demonstration of Digital Public Service Centre.

The forum is being held at the initiative of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to support young IT-specialists in Kazakhstan.

The event organisers are the Kazakh Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry with the participation of Zerde National Infocommunication Holding and Astana Hub international techno park of IT start-ups. Kazakhtelecom, Eurasian Resources Group (ERG) and BTS Digital support the forum.

Digital Bridge is the largest event for the IT community in Kazakhstan. It held its first forum in 2018. For more information, one can visit digitalbridge.kz.

Lukoil opens lubricant production plant

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Lukoil, the Russian multinational energy corporation, has invested more than \$9 million to construct a lubricant production plant in the Almaty Region. The company plans to sell products not only in the Central Asian region, but also export to Afghanistan, China and Mongolia.

“The largest Russian company Lukoil is not only an investor in Kazakhstan, but it is also a strategic partner. This is clearly evidenced by the fact that since 1995, the company has invested 9.5 billion tenge (US\$24.4 million) in the domestic economy. With the participation of Lukoil, we are im-

plementing a series of large joint projects. All this is the result of a bilateral fruitful partnership,” said Prime Minister Askar Mamin during the opening ceremony.

The new plant is located in the Ili district. Production capacity will reach up to 100,000 tonnes of finished products per year, reported BNews.kz.


“All production processes are automated and meet the necessary international standards. In total, about \$9.4 million was invested in the construction and commissioning of the plant. The conveyors of the enterprise will produce up to 800 names of finished products that meet all international quality standards. For example, the worldwide, well-known brand of Lukoil,


Genesis Engine Oil, will be produced here,” reported the Almaty Region akimat (administration) press service.

The new facility will employ more than 250 people, half of whom are expected to be local residents and narrow-profile young specialists.

The plant’s advantageous geographic location along the Western Europe – Western China Highway will provide access to export markets. The company and regional akimat highlighted the importance of the project.

Lukoil is one of the world’s largest publicly traded, vertically integrated oil and gas companies, accounting for more than 2 percent of the world’s oil production and approximately 1 percent of the proved hydrocarbon reserves. Consumers in more than 100 countries use its products, power and heat. Lukoil employs more than 100,000 people.

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

First President’s Foundation, government outline renewable energy project plans at Renewable Energy Summit

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – The First President’s Foundation will support green economy development in Kazakhstan by implementing new renewable energy projects such as wind and solar-powered stations, training specialists to develop new standards for energy preservation and establishing a green thinking mentality, said First President’s Foundation Executive Director Asset Issekeshiev at the third International Renewable Energy Summit Sept. 25 in the capital.

The purpose of the summit was to discuss the pros and cons of using renewable energy sources, as well as implementing the best ideas and most effective solutions designed to contribute to building a green future for Kazakhstan and the entire world.

“We see that solar and wind energy as an alternative is developing primarily in developed countries. For example, in Germany, renewable energy sources make up 32 percent of the total. Kazakhstan has enormous potential in this area,” said Issekeshiev.

He noted green economy is one of the country’s key economic growth directions.



“Most people think that ‘green economy’ is solar and wind power, but it’s more than that. Green economy is a different stage of development and a different way of life. It includes ecological transport; correct and economical usage of water, heat and electricity; the introduc-

tion of new construction approaches; the correct attitude to the collection and disposal of garbage; new approaches to the formation of a green atmosphere in cities, such as parks and squares, and green agriculture. All of this has a huge effect on nature and on preserving both

the physical and financial resources not only of the country and city, but also of every person,” he added.

Issekeshiev emphasised the importance of developing energy-saving standards and creating a “green culture and green thinking mentality,” which includes

respect for nature and saving resources.

“For the successful implementation of the principles of green economy, there is a need to institutionalise our legislation and train specialists. It is very important to create groups of highly effective specialists who are able to develop new standards and ensure the transformation of industries in terms of introducing new technologies,” he said.

To date, Kazakhstan has 81 renewable energy sources with a capacity of more than 900 megawatts, representing 1.3 percent of the nation’s energy balance.

Vice Minister of Energy Murat Zhurebekov noted the country has developed an objective for the transition to green economy, where the main plan is to increase the share of renewable energy in total electricity production to 3 percent by 2021, 10 percent by 2030 and at least half of total energy consumption by 2050.

Kazakh Association of Renewable Energy General Director Arman Kashkinbekov talked about which steps have been and will be taken to move closer to that goal.

“Very large solar stations of 100 megawatts are operating in Zhualynsky District of the Zhambyl Region and in Kapchagai, Almaty Region. Even in the city of Saran,

Karaganda Region, the Germans built a solar station,” he said. “Currently, the largest wind station with a capacity of 44 megawatts is located in Ereymentau, a town in the Akmola Region.”

He noted solar stations need to be installed throughout the country.

“Large projects will be launched very soon in the Aktobe Region, where an international oil company invested in a 48-megawatt wind project which will be launched in just a couple of months. Also, wind projects are being implemented in the Zhambyl and Almaty regions,” he added.

More than 300 delegates from 20 countries – Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, the U.K., the U.S., Ukraine and Uzbekistan – participated in the event.

The summit was organised by the Kazakh Association of Renewable Energy, a non-profit organisation uniting companies interested in green economy development, and the Foundation of the First President of Kazakhstan. The event was held as part of the Kazakhstan Energy Week 2019 project implemented by the KazEnergy Association with government support.

Kazakhstan plans to apply tax incentives to develop print media

By Yekiterina Yeliseyeva

NUR-SULTAN – State Politics in Mass Media Department Director Bahniyaz Karashina announced the state plan to apply tax incentives to develop Kazakh print media at the Sept. 27 Ministry of Information and Social Development public council session.

“The amendments to the tax code provide for zero-rate Value Added Tax (VAT) for print media scheduled for a 10-year period starting in 2021. In order to stimulate the

development of print media and promote content on the Internet, a zero rate will be provided with an online version being compulsory. In addition, this norm provides an additional source for developing the content of domestic print media and will give a massive start to the transition of the media to the digital format,” she said.

The amendments to the mass media law provide for removing the regional state information order from the public procurement system and forming uniform rules and methods for making state information orders

public at the national and regional levels.

“The status and powers of the national and regional commission on the formation of state information policy will be legally enforced. There is also a proposal to introduce a number of new concepts, such as the Internet portal of open dialogue, the listening state and public interest as part of the amendments to the law on access to information. The bill provides for amendments related to providing access to information for people with disabilities,” she said.

Karashina noted the bill involves

introducing five key norms – tax incentives for print media, developing a unified system of state information policy, lifting the ban on advertising a trademark on beer and wine in domestic media, establishing an authorised body competence to determine the language of television and radio channels broadcasting with state participation and improving the legislation on access to information.

“The bill is currently open to discussion. We have already introduced it to state bodies; there are certain nuances. Since we are amending the tax code, this requires a confirmation from the National Budget Commission. Therefore, the introduction of the bill into the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) is scheduled for the end of this year to the beginning of the next, after all the procedures are gone through,” she added.

“At the moment, design estimates have been developed and are under examination. It is expected that before the end of this year, an agreement on the implementation of the project as part of a public-private partnership will be signed. In 2020, land works will start immediately on the shore protection of the Ural in the Makhambet district. We hope that these initiatives will become an impetus for the implementation of other projects,” he added.

Approximately 4.5 kilometres of the shoreline will be protected. Tokyo Rope has experience with similar jobs. Earlier this year, the company reconstructed a two-kilometre stretch of the Esentai River embankment in Almaty using heavy gabions for channel protection.

Founded in 1887, Tokyo Rope is a global manufacturer of high-tech steel ropes, cable-stayed cables for bridges, steel cord for tires and various types of wire. The company has factories in China, Japan, Russia, the United States and Vietnam.

Japanese company to help protect Ural River bank in Atyrau Region

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Japan-based Tokyo Rope International Inc. recently opened a representative office in Atyrau. The company will begin protecting the Ural River shore next year and also plans to construct a medical centre.

At the opening ceremony, Tokyo Rope President Sato Kazunori emphasised the importance of cooperation between the Japanese investor and Kazakhstan. The company implemented its first project in Almaty, then became interested in projects in Atyrau, reported the region communications service.

“We analysed the economic poten-

tial of the Atyrau region. This is a developing region. We are interested in attracting our high technologies and implementing several projects. The first of them is shore protection. The second project is a medical centre for cancer patients. Everyone knows that high-tech medicine is well developed in our country,” he said.

Atyrau Region Akim (Governor) Nurlan Nogayev thanked Kazunori and expressed hope for long-term cooperation.

“A company with a century of history is known worldwide for its advanced technologies. I would like to recall that the First President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev met with the heads of Tokyo Rope during his visit to Japan and invited

Japanese business to come to our country. The company successfully implemented its project in Almaty; today, a representative office is opening in Atyrau. In the near future, we jointly plan to implement projects that are significant for the region. This is shore protection work and the opening of a medical centre while there is also interest in the engineering sector,” he said.

Nogayev highlighted the importance of strengthening work to attract investments, noting funding increases the economic potential of the region and the country as a whole.

The announced projects will begin next year, said Kazakh Invest Regional Representative Yerzhan Kolbayev.

EBRD expands funding for renewable energy programme

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will provide additional funds of up to \$328 million to support Kazakhstan as a regional leader in the development of renewable energy through the second phase of its renewable framework, reported the bank’s press service.

The framework programme supports the implementation of projects in the field of solar, wind, hydro and

biogas energy as well as electricity distribution and transmission projects. The projects are expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by at least 500,000 tonnes per year.

“The EBRD Board of Directors approved the extension to the existing framework, which has been almost fully utilised. The first phase supported the creation of 262 megawatt of renewable power-generation capacity across the country, attracted four private international investors and supported a grid-strengthening project,” reads the bank’s release.

Also, the framework programme will be supported by concessional financing from the Green Climate Fund (GCF). It will be supported by comprehensive technical assistance to support competitive tendering for wind energy projects, the development of carbon markets and promotion of gender equality in the renewable energy sector.

The Kazakh Ministry of Energy and the EBRD confirmed in September the bank’s commitment to supporting renewable energy projects in Kazakhstan “focusing on

financing competitively tendered renewables projects.” The renewables framework in Kazakhstan will help achieve its 3 percent renewable energy targets by 2020 and 50 percent by 2050 and fulfil its obligations as part of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Overall, the EBRD has invested more than \$9.1 billion through 262 projects in the Kazakh economy. More than \$2.2 billion were allocated for Green Economy Transition (GET) projects. The GET approach was launched to assist countries where the bank operates to build low carbon and resilient economies.

The EBRD is the largest international investor in the country’s economy outside the oil and gas sectors with a wide presence in Kazakhstan with two offices in Nur-Sultan and Almaty and five local offices in remote regions.

AIX lists Russia’s most traded exchange-traded fund

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana International Exchange (AIX) listed Russia’s oldest and most traded exchange-traded fund (ETF) Sept. 24 and two days later, Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund sold 9.86 million global depositary receipts (GDRs) through the London Stock Exchange (LSE) and the AIX. The fund, ITI Funds Russian Equity (RUSE), replicates the return of the Russian Trading System (RTS) Index, the country’s largest index. It invests in 40 major shares traded on the Moscow Exchange (MOEX), providing diversified exposure to 12 industries.

AIX experts highlighted the strong demand through the exchange from both local and international investors. Samruk Kazyna has sold an aggregate of 9,863,021 GDRs (each representing interests in one ordinary share of Kazatomprom) at \$13 per GDR.

“We continue to look to expand the range of products for our retail investors and today they have received yet another investment option. Exchange-traded funds (ETFs) offer many benefits and, if used wisely, are an excellent vehicle to achieve an investor’s objectives,” said AIX CEO Tim Bennett.

“We are very pleased to launch the second ETF on AIX. One click allows any investor to have exposure to 40 Russian equities with expenses as low as 0.65 percent annually with an entry ticket as low as \$28. We believe that both our funds – equity ETF RUSE and Eurobond ETF RUSE – are robust investment products and they should find their place in the long-term portfolios of every investor. Our funds make investment available to anyone coupled

with immediate liquidity, portfolio transparency and low cost,” said ITI Funds CEO Gleb Yakovlev.

The offering is the second ETF of ITI Funds listed on the AIX. Earlier this year, AIX listed and admitted ITI Funds Russia-focused USD Eurobond Undertaking for Collective Investment Scheme (UCITS) ETF.

Local investors bought \$43.7 million in the secondary offering compared to \$63.8 million in Kazatomprom’s IPO in November 2018.

“This is a significant achievement and it reflects the good progress being made in developing the local investor base,” added Bennett.

ITI Funds ETF is domiciled in Luxembourg and UCITS V qualified. Only physical replication is used and dividends are paid annually. Units of ITI Funds ETFs will be traded under the RUSE ticker with quotation and settlement in U.S. dollars and will be fully fungible between LSE, MOEX and AIX. AIX trading in these units began Sept. 26.

J.P. Morgan Securities acted as a sole global placement coordinator and joint bookrunner in connection with the LSE placing; Halyk Finance assumed the same responsibilities for the AIX placing. Renaissance Capital acted as joint bookrunner for the LSE and AIX placings, all of which were responsible for arranging the offering for both international and domestic investors.

ITI Funds is a fund platform combining the interests of investors and portfolio managers. It provides portfolio managers with the infrastructure to establish funds quickly and reduce operating costs and offers a range of products to private and institutional investors. More than 10 funds currently run on the ITI Funds platform.



PEOPLE

Chechen-Ingush ethno cultural centre assists all minorities in preserving their identity

B2

CULTURE

Astana Opera presents “Don Carlos” opera for first time

B3

SPORTS

Athletes win four Asia Championship medals in trap shooting

B7

Capital Rotarians open second inclusive playground



By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan William H. Moser cut the red ribbon Oct. 3 to officially open Kunshyaq, the capital’s second inclusive playground accessible to children with special needs.

“Since 2015, the start of Rotary Club activities in Nur-Sultan, our

club has been actively trying to make our city a better place. This playground is an indicator of us doing our best. Thanks to our sponsors and contributors such as the U.S. Embassy, which donated money; the organisation Total S.A.; the city akimat (administration), which provided us with this large area; Yessil District Akim (Mayor) Berik Zhakenov and others, the opening of the playground

today was possible,” said Lyazzat Alshinova, Rotary Club in Nur-Sultan former president, current member and project initiator, at the opening ceremony.

The project cost was 15.5 million tenge (US\$39,900), of which the U.S. Embassy donated 9.5 million tenge (US\$24,455). Rotary Club Astana, the Yessil District akimat and Total S.A. contributed the balance of the needed funds.

“All of us (sponsors, contributors) are a great united family. Everything that we do, including opening this playground, is for the happiness of our children today. Our motto is ‘Children are both our present and our future,’ which is why we need to create such an environment and conditions so that every child has full and equal opportunities,” she added.

Continued on Page B8

Courses on learning process from renowned US author, professor are available in Kazakh

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – More than 1,000 people in Almaty and the capital attended public lectures and participated in training on the way neurobiology is changing the learning process conducted last month by Oakland University Professor of Engineering and New York Times bestselling author Barbara Oakley.

In a recent interview with The Astana Times, she spoke about her collaboration with Kazakh developers, why her course is in demand and how to deal with procrastination.

“Learning How to Learn,” created by Oakley and Salk Institute for Biological Studies Professor Terrence Sejnowski, is Coursera’s most popular offering. Approximately 1.8 million students from 200 countries have taken it.

Oakley became widely known in the country in May after her course was available for free in the Kazakh language on the udemy.com and academia.kz websites. Its translation was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the e-learning company Edgravity and the academia.kz pedagogical skills’ virtual laboratory.

The project began after Togzhan Kassenova, one of Edgravity founder Aigerim Khafizova’s former professors, introduced her to Oakley. They decided to adapt the course for the Kazakh audience.

Oakley noted working with the creative group in Kazakhstan was a rewarding experience.

“Their sets of videos are more creative – better acting, better in every way than the English version. I think it’s a tribute to how creative people are here. It’s been a pleasure and a treasure for me to work with the Kazakh team. They’re really educated. They have good hearts and they’re trying to help others. There’s just a societal love of people that [they] grow up with. It’s wonderful work-



Philip and Barbara Oakley at the Astana Hub in Nur-Sultan on Sept. 29.

ing with them because there’s also a deep sense of integrity and vision for the future. There’s excitement and enthusiasm here about the future,” she said.

She and her husband Philip enjoyed staying in both cities.

“The capital city also surprised us. The city is amazing, especially its architecture. I love the natural beauty of the country, but the people are just absolutely extraordinary,” she said.

Oakley immediately attracted the audience’s attention by noting she and her husband met while both were working at the South Pole Station in Antarctica. She joined in the U.S. Army after high school and received her first degree in Slavic Languages and Literature.

After the army, she received a second degree in Electrical Engineering, then worked as a Russian translator and an instrumentation and controls engineer. Later, she began consulting and attending Oakland University, receiving a Master’s degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering.

The question and answer sessions were the most exciting parts of the lectures. Participants asked questions related to the diet for cognitive health, how to relax while learning and how music affects the brain.

“People here are so creative that their questions are like paintballs,” noted Oakley. “The questions come from different directions and you can never predict where they’re going to come from. This means that people are not thinking in the same lines. Society here is more creative.”

She believes online education cannot replace classroom education, because universities will fight to prevent that from happening.

“Indeed, there is a place for universities. I think that face-to-face presence can help in some cases, but I do believe that learning is migrating towards online. For example, I know a professor who was such a great teacher that everyone loved his classes and they became so large that he was teaching 3,000 students in one class.

They told him never take your class online, because you are too good in person. But he decided to experiment and put this class online and within two years, no one was taking his face-to-face class any more. Why? Because it’s so convenient to learn it online,” she said.

Oakley noted her course on memory techniques dealing with procrastination and effective practices to master difficult subjects through useful storytelling has received many positive reviews.

“People were surprised to know these insights, which they had never heard before. They are presented in a video that attracts attention. We start with the foundation of known science and then use metaphors and analogies to build on that and to help people understand these new ideas that they often have never heard before,” she said.

She admitted procrastination is a real challenge for nearly everyone and advised using the Pomodoro technique to train the brain. The strategy, developed by Francesco Cirillo, helps one work and break at set intervals. It recommends concentrating on work for 25 minutes by removing all distracting objects and thoughts, then taking a five-minute break to listen to one’s favourite song or drink a cup of tea. The technique “trains your ability to focus and reinforces that relaxing at the end is critical to the process of learning.”

“The Pomodoro technique is the most effective. We have nearly three million students in the course and we get thousands and thousands of replies that they love the Pomodoro technique. There’s little direct research on the Pomodoro technique, but there’s a lot of research that shows if you focus without being distracted that that is extremely helpful. Other research shows that if after a little bit you take a break and relax, that’s really effective,” said Oakley.

Kulanshi gallery hosts exhibition of Soviet-era art

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kulanshi Forte Bank Nur-Sultan art gallery launched Sept. 26 an exhibition of restored Soviet-era paintings dating to the 1950s and Soviet posters from the 1970s and 1980s.

The exhibition presented the works of many artists, including Salikhiddin Aitbayev and Abdulkhak Abdullayev.

“The core of the exhibition is the works of Salikhiddin Aitbayev. This is Sovietism, a sort of fauvism of the Soviet period, with large forms, monumental, tough. There are paintings of other genres: realism, classicism, abstractionism – all at one time. We presented 20 paintings and about 50 production posters. Art never dies, it will still break through time,” said Kulanshi Art Gallery Curator Leila Makhat.

The paintings shown at the exhibition were found recently in a half-abandoned Hall of Culture buildings. The works went through a lengthy restoration process, with Abdullayev’s paintings alone requiring one year to restore, said the exhibition organisers at the opening ceremony.

“So many people came to see the exhibition today. It is especially pleasing that there are many young people among the visitors. This suggests that we value art and culture,” said Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altai Kulginov, adding he would like to see more exhibitions at the Palace of Peace and Harmony.

The exhibition also featured Soviet posters with caution warnings that could be found in Soviet enterprises in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

“Posters are from the private collection of Dostan Bissenov, my graduate student. He bought them from a friend who used them as a fuel for the stove. The first time we did an exhibition of posters was about ten years ago. Nowadays, there are wall posters as well. But these are just beautiful pictures. And the (Soviet) posters had to carry some kind of industry message and please the eye. Therefore, they have an abyss of humour. When you carefully examine them, you open a lot of allegories, associations that passed through the artist’s brain, you notice a lot of details and meanings,” said Makhat.

Infrastructure work complete at Zhambyl Region ski resort

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Water, gas and electrical access work, as well as construction of the entrance highway, have been completed at Karalmy Resort in the Zhambyl Region. The project was presented Sept. 29 to Akim (Governor) Askar Myrzakhmetov, reported Kazinform.

Additional facility work and cableway installation are underway. After examining the progress, Myrzakhmetov noted most of the construction has been completed and the remainder will be done on time.

Finishing the infrastructure has provided the future resort with access to drinking water, gas and electricity. The broadband highway from the entrance to Tattibai village to the foothills has also been completed. Work on the service facilities and a cottage town are being finalised. The cableway equipment has been delivered from Austria, and installation will be carried out by Russian specialists, he said.

A 30-kilometre scheme of cable cars and ski slopes was developed earlier and four cableways measur-

ing 9,150 metres will be installed. Mountain peaks range from 1,400-3,200 metres above sea level; the highest point is Mount Kamalgan at 3,200 metres.

Myrzakhmetov praised the geographically favourable location of the future resort, the possibility of long slopes and development prospects. He not only supported the idea of a ski resort in the Zhualy District, but, as an amateur skier, suggested which slopes are best suited for descents.

The Zhambyl Region has a wide range of health, ethnic, sightseeing and ecological tour opportunities, reported Kazinform. The region has 44 travel agencies, 150 hotels, a yurt town, eight recreation areas, 10 children’s health camps and five spa resorts with unique healing mud and mineral waters.

Karalmy’s landscape is appropriate both for winter skiing and summer horseback riding. The summer climate is moderately hot and dry with temperatures of approximately 30 degrees Celsius. The thermometer dips to minus 15-20 degrees in the winter, with 1.2 metres of snow from December-March.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA ARENA

Oct. 10 at 8 p.m.

Kazakhstan – Cyprus, UEFA EURO Qualifiers

Oct. 13 at 7 p.m.

Kazakhstan – Belgium, UEFA EURO Qualifiers

ASTANA OPERA

Oct. 11, 13 at 7 p.m., 6 p.m.

Don Carlos, opera

Oct. 18, 19 at 7 p.m., 6 p.m.

Swan Lake, ballet

Oct. 26, 27 at 6 p.m.

Le Corsaire, ballet

ASTANA BALLET

Oct. 12 at 6 p.m.

In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated

BARYS ARENA

Oct. 24 at 7 pm.

Charity match with Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

Chechen-Ingush ethno cultural centre in Semei assists all minorities in preserving their identity

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Vainakh (Our people) Chechen-Ingush ethno cultural centre in Semei helps all ethnic minorities to preserve their traditions and identity, said leader Sultan Kartoyev.

Under the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK) initiative, Vainakh centres throughout the country have been registered since 1995. The centre in Semei was created in 2013.

As a representative of an ethnic group, Kartoyev has always been a member of APK.

“Somebody needed to operate the ethno cultural centre; somebody needed to represent the Chechen-Ingush people,” he said.

The centre in Semei, however, is different to other Vainakh communities, as it practices multicultural spirit in everything it does and represents.

“Initially, I had an idea to create a single national centre for the people of Caucasus that we have in town. There are, for instance, 200 Georgians, 200-300 Azerbaijani, 250 Chechen-Ingush people. I thought of uniting all of them and creating a single centre... Then, when the representatives of these ethnic communities – Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijani and others –gained the necessary experience, each of them could



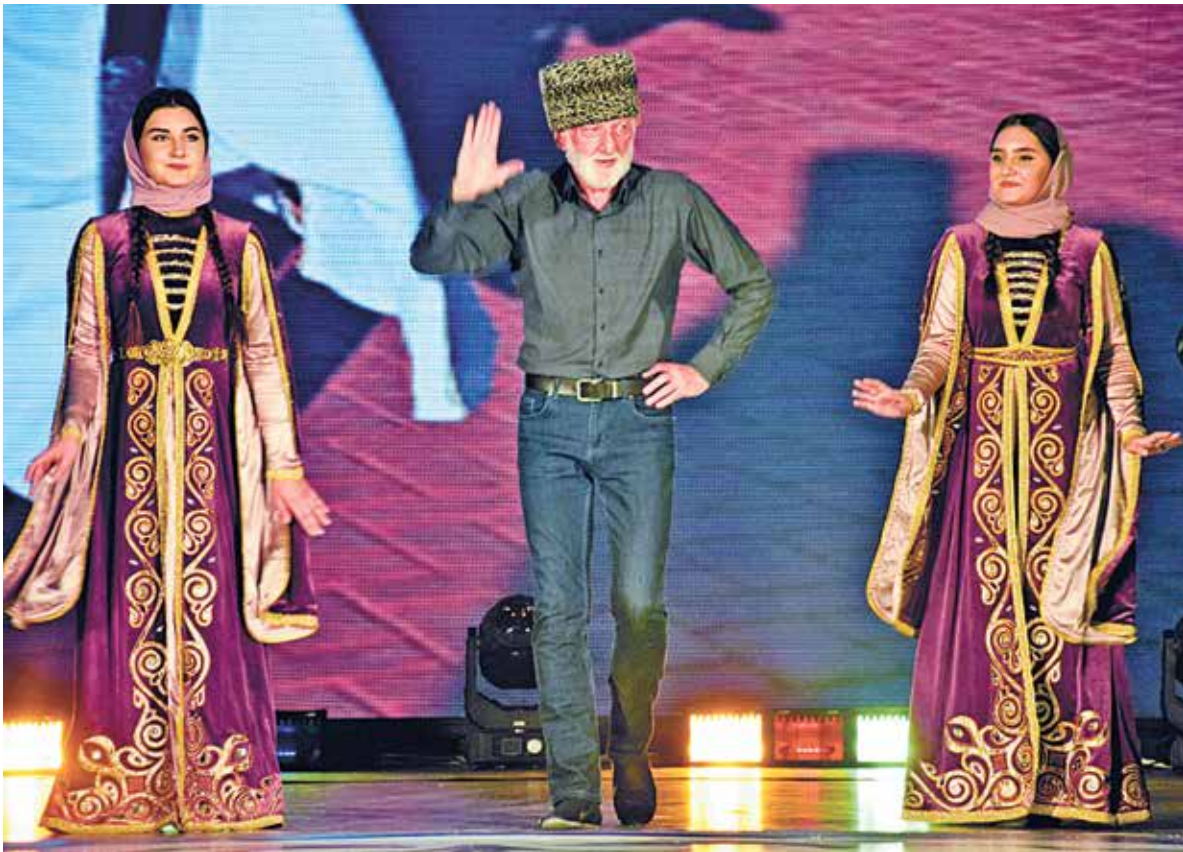
Sultan Kartoyev

open a centre for their own communities,” he noted.

Kartoyev was not permitted to register such a community for Caucasus people and was advised to start with the smaller Chechen-Ingush community. Although the centre bears the name Chechen-Ingush, it maintains Kartoyev’s original concept.

“I want to say that in the board of my centre there are Azerbaijani, Kabardian, Chechen and Ingush people. I preserved my initial idea of making a single centre for all these ethnic groups in another form,” he said.

The centre participates in celebrations of all national holidays. Its members dance lezginka (North Caucasian dances), gather around the dastarkhan (dining table) and support each other.



The first concert of the creative team of Vainakh Chechen-Ingush ethnocultural centre in Nur-Sultan.

“I thought that someone must represent their interests. The Chechen-Ingush centre never rejects the representatives of other ethnic groups, especially the people from Caucasus, who should be represented in the regional assembly,” he said.

While Kartoyev identifies as

ethnic Ingush, it is even more complex. Born and raised in a family with many intermarriages in its history, he favours a “tradition of multinationalism, friendship between nations and not the division to ethnicity, but division to single Kazakh people I had from my childhood.”

“More than ten nationalities mixed in our family,” he said. “I also identify myself more as a Kazakh or Russian, as I was born to an environment as this, but I want people to remember Ingush traditions.”

Kartoyev’s definition of those traditions stretches far beyond

language, customs and holidays.

“I show the Ingush national tradition through my own behaviour and the behaviour of my children, my wife. The respect to people, hospitality, support and assistance to people, aspiration to knowledge, patience. I teach this in my centre. In Semei, regardless of ethnic association, the tradition is the most important to me,” he said.

Kartoyev, who has engaged his life in social works and politics since 1989, was part of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk international anti-nuclear movement, which he noted was the first non-governmental organisation to be registered in independent Kazakhstan. Ever since, he has vowed to be “loyal to the country and serve till the very end” and his service to society continues through the centre.

He has asked for financial assistance for ethnic cultural centres such as Vainakh.

“If there is no financing, then any work will fail, because we will need stationery, to pay bills and welcome guests,” he said.

The lack of funding also reduces the appeal for people to join, in particular youth who should continue the centre’s work.

“Sometimes, I think about the future and see that the younger generation has no interest in continuing and developing such ethno-cultural centres,” he noted.

Person with visual impairment dedicates life to helping others

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – The founder of an organisation that assists people with visual impairment, such as himself, meet the challenges of everyday life has been named one of Kazakhstan’s 100 New Faces.

The 100 New Faces programme is a government project highlighting the personal stories of inspirational Kazakhs from all walks of life.

100 New Faces laureate Vladislav Trifonov is the founder of Community Fund for People with Disabilities and an advisor to the Mangystau Region Akim (Governor). Trifonov was born in 1972 and had a childhood dream of becoming a military pilot. At the age of 15, however, Trifonov began to rapidly lose his sight. He graduated from the Shevchenko Secondary Vocational School No. 6, with a qualification of controls and instrumentation and automation mechanic but was unable to work due to his blindness. So, he began taking courses in massage and then enrolled in Aktau Medical College Meridian in 1998.

“For the first several weeks, I kept receiving bad grades at college. It was only because I couldn’t receive information through my eyes. Then, something happened – I reconsidered and reevaluated things. I realised that if I don’t have eyes, I still have my ears, my hands and memory. A person can compensate for his disabilities with other things. And so, I graduated from college with high distinction,” said Trifonov in an interview with 24.kz.

He graduated with a paramedic degree and has worked as a manual therapist for many years. He continues to receive feedback to this day from the people he had helped during his career.

Trifonov said that although his medical practice had been successful, it did not bring him complete satisfaction.

He started studying law at Aktau State University, and in 2006, Trifonov opened his own law firm, as well as the Community Fund for People with Disabilities, a public foundation specialising in staff recruitment, which worked for several years in the region before being transformed into the Alas Legal Support Centre, the aim of which is the protection of human rights with



Vladislav Trifonov

a focus on representing the interests of people with disabilities.

After graduating in 2008, Trifonov also began working as a lawyer in five state healthcare institutions, where his medical experience was useful. He has also worked as a lawyer in the Ministry of Healthcare’s Mangystau Region Departments of the Committee for the Payment of Medical Services and of the Committee for the Control of Medical and Pharmaceutical Activities.

Trifonov was named in 2014 the Mangystau Region Akim (Governor) advisor in charge of ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities. Trifonov is also the head of the representative office of the National Chamber of Mediators in the Mangystau Region, as well as of the National League of Consumers.

He continues to educate himself in order to continue contributing to society. In 2016, he graduated from the Metropolitan business school with a degree in Public Sector Management. In 2017, he received a Master’s of Business Administration from Synergy University in Moscow.

In 2018, Trifonov began to develop projects for the prevention of disabilities in the Mangystau Region and to open rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities in the region.

“If talking about long-term goals, then, of course, I want and intend to act as an expert (in the support of people with disabilities) and reach a higher, international level. There are international organisations where there are commissions in which I would like to participate and where I would consider many issues on a global scale,” said Trifonov.

Since the launch of the 100 New Faces project in 2017, the project has featured inspirational stories of more than 5,000 Kazakhs who have been nominated for the national selection.

Google employee named one of 100 New Faces

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Kuat Yessenov, a Kazakh now living in the United States and working for Google, was recently named one of Kazakhstan’s 100 New Faces for his extraordinary intellectual achievements as a child.



Kuat Yessenov

The 100 New Faces programme is a government project highlighting the personal stories of inspirational Kazakhs from all walks of life.

Yessenov was an extremely gifted child. He learned to read at age three and all school subjects came to him quite easily. From ninth-11th grade, Yessenov won

six gold, one silver and one bronze medals at international mathematics competitions, reported BNews. His victories placed him in the Guinness Book of World Records as the child with the most mathematics Olympiad medals.

“The boy was gifted by nature,” said David Ganelin, one of Yessenov’s teachers.

A graduate of Pavlodar’s school-lyceum No. 8 for gifted children, Yessenov gained fame for his numerous victories in the International Mathematical Olympiad. He earned his first medal in Scotland in 2002 as silver medalist. He won the gold among young intellectuals from around the world a year later in Japan and again in 2004 in Greece. Journalists nicknamed him the Golden Boy.

After he graduated from high school, Yessenov entered Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States. Now he lives

in the United States and works for Google but represents the Pavlodar Region as one of Kazakhstan’s 100 New Faces.

“I really love my country. I come from Kazakhstan. I never forget about it. If I answer the question of what I miss in America, I’ll honestly say that I don’t have Kazakh hospitality and horse meat,” he said.

Yessenov advises young people who dream of working in foreign companies to start by learning English. He also believes the internet has the ability to provide everyone with an education.

“If your task is to get a job in a foreign company, then first of all you need to know English and have modern technology. The world has become open. In principle, all information is available; it can be found via the internet, it can be done both here and abroad. It’s all about motivation,” he said.

Tajik Language and Culture Centre opens at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Tajik Language and Culture centre opened Oct. 1 in the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. Tajik Consul General Bakhodur Nazir and the Kazakh National University Provost Tlekkabul Ramazanov spoke at the centre opening ceremony, reports mir24.tv.

The Tajik language and culture centre includes a library and a reading room. Its main goal is the further development of co-operation between Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, whose peoples are united by “common customs, religion and lifestyle,” the organisers noted. This is the first such project in the history of independent Tajikistan.

Students of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University quoted excerpts from the works of the founder of Persian-Tajik literature Abuabduullo Rudaki. Also, they performed a concert celebrating Tajik culture.

The opening of the centre is



L-R: Tlekkabul Ramazanov and Bakhodur Nazir.

meant to contribute to the development of Kazakh-Tajik studies as an integral part of Iranian studies. The centre founders hope the study of the history and culture of Tajikistan will significantly enrich Kazakh oriental studies, reports kaznu.kz.

The organisers of the opening ceremony presented the best works of Tajik literature and the portraits of medieval Persian-Tajik clas-

sic poets that were subsequently hanged on the Tajik cultural centre walls.

The event was attended by the head of the United Nations regional office in Almaty, Vlastimil Samek, Consul General of the Russian Federation Valentin Kolyasev and Consul General of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abror Fathullaev.

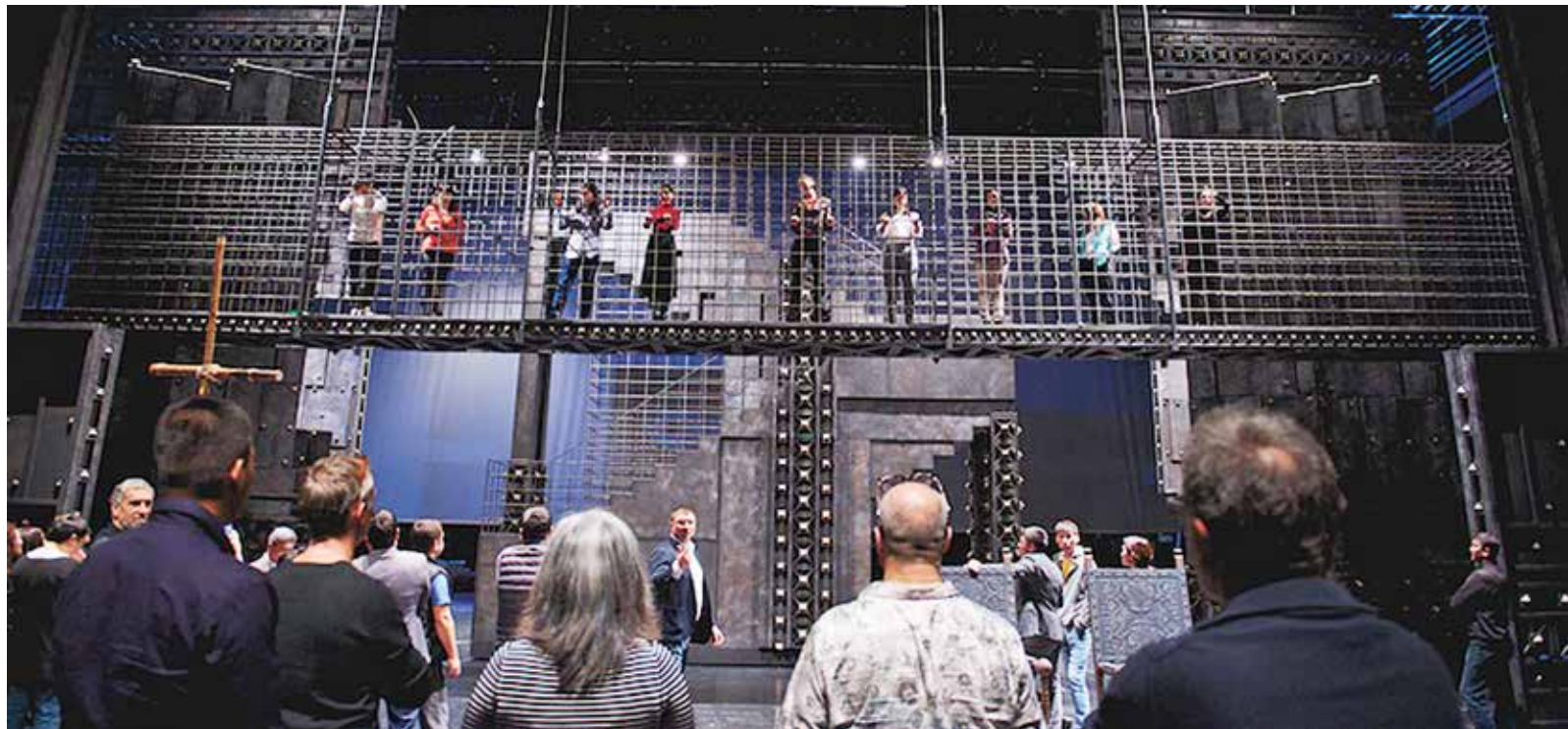
Currently, more than 80 Tajik-

Kazakh enterprises and companies carry out activities in Tajikistan. Interactions between the two countries are carried out on the basis of more than 70 signed documents aimed at developing cooperation in trade, economic, investment, banking, military, military-technical and other fields. Currently, the countries are strengthening cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries, reports avesta.tj.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

Astana Opera presents “Don Carlos” opera for first time in Nur-Sultan



By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana Opera will present for the first time Oct. 11 and Oct. 13 “Don Carlos,” a five-act grand opera composed by Giuseppe Verdi based on the eponymous drama by Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, according to an Astana Opera press release.

The opera will be staged at the Astana Opera Grand Hall and the creative team includes conductor Alan Buribayev as the music director of the production and Italian director Davide Livermore as the stage director. Designers Sofia Tasmagambetova and Pavel Dragunov created the costumes, and Cristiana Picco prepared the stage decorations.

“This is the third opera by Giuseppe Verdi in the Astana Op-

era’s repertoire. Our repertoire already features the wonderful operas ‘La Traviata’ and ‘Aida’ by this great Italian composer. ‘Don Carlos’ is a monumental opera that is difficult to perform but easy to perceive. There is no doubt that the production will be spectacular, because the music itself is vibrant and full of historic imagery. Opera houses do not stage ‘Don Carlos’ often because this opera requires a large cast of highly professional singers. The Astana Opera has strong principal soloists including prominent sopranos, tenors, baritones and basses. All of them have already begun rehearsals,” said Astana Opera Director Galym Akhmedyarov.

Verdi composed the opera to a French-language libretto by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle. The libretto is based on conflicts in

the life of Carlos, Prince of Asturias, the eldest son and heir-apparent of King Philip II of Spain. Despite being betrothed to the French Princess Elisabeth of Valois as part of the peace treaty ending the Italian War of 1551-59 between the Houses of Habsburg and Valois, he demanded that she be married instead to his father Philip II of Spain.

“The opera ‘Don Carlos’ stands out from the whole context of Verdi’s body of work yet remains one of his greatest creations. It marks a turn in the composer’s creative work. The music of this opera is characterised by brilliant simplicity and resonance with rich melodic overtones. Currently, French and Italian versions of the opera are featured in world’s leading opera houses,” reads the press release.

Medet Chotabayev, the leading

soloist and tenor of Astana Opera, will play the role of Don Carlos. He holds the prestigious Order of the Star of Italy, the highest Italian award for foreigners for his contribution to cultural cooperation between the two countries.

On different days, Yevgeniy Chainikov, Astana Opera soloist, and Barseg Tumanyan, Armenian opera singer (bass), will perform the part of Philippe II, Maira Mukhamedkyzy, the leading female soloist of the opera, and Zhannat Baktay, soprano and honoured artist of Kazakhstan, will be Elisabeth of Valois. The performances will also feature the Astana Opera Symphony Orchestra and Choir.

The production, slated for 7 p.m., Oct. 11, and 6 p.m., Oct. 13, will premiere under the auspices of the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Madrid hosts Spanish-language presentation of Kazakh literature anthologies



By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – The Cervantes Institute recently hosted a presentation of anthologies of modern Kazakh prose and poetry published in Spanish at its headquarters in Madrid, Kazinform reports.

The anthologies were translated into Spanish as part of the Contemporary Kazakh Culture in The Global World project, under which modern Kazakh literature anthologies, which feature works of 60 Kazakh poets and writers, are being translated into the six official languages of the United Nations: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

“My colleagues and I understand and support the desire of Kazakhstan to introduce its culture and literature to the world... I am sure Kazakh readers are familiar with our great writers, poets and artists, we work hard so that the whole world knows about them. However, in order to establish a true friendship and understanding, the cultural exchange must be reciprocal. Therefore, the publication of such serious collections is of great importance to us. This is the true interpenetration of cultures,” said Head of the Cervantes Institute Rosa Leon at the presentation.

Assistant to Kazakh President and Secretary of the National Commission for the Implementation of the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme, which seeks to preserve and popularise the country’s historical and cultural heritage, Aida Balayeva, Kazakh Ambassador to Spain Konstantin Zhigalov, Executive Director of the National Translation Bureau Raun Kenzhekhanuly and Deputy Chairman of the Writers Union of Kazakhstan Akberen Yelgezek attended the presentation.

“The task of the Contemporary Kazakh Culture in The Global World project is to present modern Kazakhstan to the whole world through its culture. Therefore, the most important thing for us was to achieve a high artistic quality of the translation, which would enable us to reach the hearts of Spanish readers. For this, the Spanish translators visited Kazakhstan, met with the authors, with our country and culture. They have become carriers

of our friendship. We hope such cooperation serves to further bring the Kazakh and Spanish cultures closer, strengthen relations between our countries,” said Balayeva.

The Ministry of Culture of Spain was a partner on the Kazakh project, which is being implemented

There are 10,000 copies of the Spanish translations of the anthologies, which will be distributed among libraries, educational institutions and academic centres of Spain and 18 Latin American countries.

as part of the Ruhani Zhandyru programme, whereas the Cervantes Institute functioned as the creative consultant. The Visor Libros publishing house has been selected to carry out the literary translations, printing and distribution of the two modern Kazakh literature anthologies in Spanish.

María Sánchez Puig, the Spanish royal family translator, doctor of philology and professor at The Complutense University of Madrid presented the anthology of Kazakh prose to the Spanish reader by translating it and being the author of the introduction. Modern Kazakh poetry was introduced to the Hispanic world by the Spanish poet, writer, philologist and professor at the Royal Spanish Academy, Luis Alberto de Cuenca.

There are 10,000 copies of the Spanish translations of the anthologies, which will be distributed among libraries, educational institutions and academic centres of Spain and 18 Latin American countries. The publications will reach more than 600 million people.

The British Library in London and the City Hall of the first arrondissement of Paris also recently presented the anthologies of modern Kazakh prose and poetry in English and French respectively.

National Museum presents masterpieces of ancient and medieval art in Kuala Lumpur

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh National Museum opened Oct. 1 “The Great Steppe: History and Culture” exhibition at the Department of Museums of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. The presentation is part of the Altyn Adam (Golden Man) Procession through the World’s Museums project.

The mission of the exhibition is to present the rich historical and cultural heritage of Kazakhstan to foreign audiences.

The exhibition features 346 items, including the Golden Man armour, unique archaeological finds from the Saka mounds of Taksai in the West Kazakhstan Region, Taldy-2 in the Karaganda Region and Berel in the East Kazakhstan Region, a silver bowl

with an inscription made in runic writing, which was found in the Issyk mound. It is one of the oldest written monuments found in this area. The jewellery items dating from the 15th century from the Sairam treasure demonstrate decorative animal images.

“The reconstruction of the Golden Man in clothes embroidered with gold plaques, in a special conical headdress decorated with gold plates in the form of gold arrows, snow leopards, argali, horses and birds are available at the exhibition. The visitors can also see the collection of archaeological finds from the early Iron Age century (5th-4th centuries BC) that accompanied the burial of this noble Saki young warrior. According to archaeologists, he was 17-18,” reads the release.

The Golden Man, or Altyn Adam, is perhaps the most famous

and significant archaeological discovery in Kazakhstan to date. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, archaeologist Kemal Akishev found the remains of the Saka king – the Golden Man, which later became the symbol of Kazakhstan, in the Issyk mound near Almaty. The priceless artefact was named Kazakh “Tutankhamun” and recognised as the discovery of the century. The gold jewellery in the form of winged horses from the crown of the ancient ruler of the steppes became part of the national coat of arms and the sculpture of the Golden Man was installed on Independence Square in Almaty.

More than 4,000 gold items were found in the mound as well as the details that decorated clothes, jewellery and household utensils. The researchers recreated the appearance of an ancient warrior

after studying the objects found in the burial.

Previously, the exhibition was presented in Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, North Macedonia, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

The exhibition will run until Oct. 31.

The Golden Man Procession through the World’s Museums project is implemented as part of the Ruhani Zhandyru (Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s Identity) programme initiated by First President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The exhibition is also scheduled in museums in the United States, Italy, Austria, France and Germany in 2020. The project will also be presented in the exhibition halls of the Association of National Museums of Grand Palais in France and in the Art Museum of Austria in 2021.

Jewellery designers make women feel unique...

Continued from Page A1

“Our customers like us for being so open. We carry out charitable activities. We donate a good share of what we earn at our jewellery exhibitions. For instance, after our first exhibition, we bought sports equipment for a school for children with disabilities. After the second one, we helped prepare children from low-income families for school,” she noted. “With the money we earn at the next exhibition, we want to help women with financial difficulties realise their creative start-up ideas.”

They exhibit their products at the capital’s fashion events – Astana Fashion Festival at MEGA Silk Way, POP UP SHOP in Keruen shopping mall and the showroom at Eurasian Fashion Week. The brand also coordinates with many other Kazakh showrooms, as well

as popular designers and stylists.

“We collaborated with LAIMA Co.’s designer Alfiya Ispergenova in May. Ispergenova had her models wear our accessories on the runway during VISA Fashion Week in Almaty,” said Kazybayeva.

The same month, AZEL’s founders wanted to create a jewellery collection with Kazakhstan’s top stylist, Zhanna Akhmetova.

“We were very glad that she accepted our offer and in July, we presented our co-collection at the First Garage Sale, where we were very successful. According to Akhmetova’s idea, the jewellery from the collection was to symbolise tenderness and brutality at the same time. We developed unique transformer chains as an example of mindful consumption,” she noted.

“In August, Akhmetova introduced us to Kamilya Suleimenova,

the founder of the Dani Kazakhstan brand, an innovative ethno-style designer whose specialty is using felt pom-poms for her creations. She suggested developing accessories for Suleimenova’s show at Eurasian Fashion Week. The accessories created for the show received high reviews and interest among customers,” she added.

They started selling their products at TWELVE showroom in the capital, which features fashion products made in Kazakhstan, in December. Their jewellery is now available in nine showrooms throughout the country such as Fashion Park, the largest Kazakh designer showroom, and Lenazh. AZEL jewellery can also be viewed and purchased online on the store’s official Instagram account @azel_jewelry or at any of the locations indicated on the page. Until recently, Kazybayeva and

Junus assembled all the jewellery pieces themselves, but have now hired an assistant. The duo also holds master classes for 15,000 tenge (US\$38.70) to teach their jewellery assembly skills. Participants receive information on how and where to purchase fittings and how to start a business. Even if students are not interested in pursuing a jewellery career, they can create their own pieces to take home “or simply unwind.” Four students have already become successful designers.

“In the near future, we plan to expand the range of our jewellery and accessories, introduce vintage jewellery from Europe, hold more master classes and continue to actively engage in charity. We also plan to attract interesting media personalities from the fashion industry to create new collections,” said Kazybayeva.



L-R: Assel Junus and Zaufresh Kazybayeva.

Government allocates record amount for social assistance



Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan increased social spending 28 percent in the first eight months of 2019 over the same period 2018, reported Ranking.kz.

The country spent 2.3 trillion tenge (US\$5.9 billion) on social programmes from January to August and spent 1.8 trillion tenge (US\$4.6 billion) during the same months of 2018.

As of August 15, 1.8 million Kazakh people received social assistance. The largest number of beneficiaries live in the Turkestan Region at 498,700 people. Approximately 225,400 people received assistance in the Almaty Region and 216,300 people received assistance in Shymkent.

Approximately 42 percent of beneficiaries are urban residents and 58 percent live in rural areas. As of August 1, 103 billion tenge (US\$246 million) had been allocated for social benefits. The average payment per family was 86,000 tenge (US\$222) per month, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population.

Meanwhile, authorities continue to identify those who illegally receive social assistance. The concealment of income and re-receipt of social assistance by registering at a temporary place of residence were named among the most common violations.

Overall Kazakh government spending has also increased in 2019. The expenditures of the National Fund increased 17.6

percent over the last year to 8.4 trillion tenge (US\$21 billion). Last year, state budget expenditures were 7.1 trillion tenge (US\$18 billion) with a decrease of 16 percent.

“Most of the funds, or 27.3 percent of the total costs, were allocated for social assistance and social security. This indicator was 25.1 percent a year earlier. A considerable allocation is also provided for education at 1.5 trillion tenge (US\$3.8 billion), or 17.6 percent, and for the healthcare sector at 787.4 billion tenge (US\$2 billion), or 9.4 percent,” reads the ministry press release.

The five priority areas for state budget expenditures also included debt servicing at 538.3 billion tenge (US\$1.4 billion), or 6.4 percent, and transport and communications at 521 billion tenge (US\$1.3 billion), or 6.2 percent.

As of the end of the second quarter, the share of the population with income below the subsistence level was 4.3 percent, according to the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy.

The share exceeds the national average value in six regions. For example, the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level is 11.2 percent in the Turkestan Region and 5.8 percent and 5.1 percent in the Zhambyl Region and the North Kazakhstan Region respectively.

Five years earlier, the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level was 2.9 percent.

Turkestan to add smart bus stops, open air movie theatre

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Smart bus stops, an open-air movie theatre and glass police booths will be installed in Turkestan by 2020-2021, Akim (Mayor) Rashid Ayupov told tengrinews.kz Sept. 23. The new flower-shaped singing fountain, Arbat Street (walking alley) and Nazarbayev Street construction projects were completed this summer.

“At each (smart bus) stop, WI-FI will be connected; the structure itself will be made of anti-vandal material. Inside, there will be CCTV cameras and public washrooms. It is very hot in Turkestan in the summer and sometimes it is difficult for people to wait for transport. By the way, funds for this project come from investors,” he said.

To date, 35 bus stops are planned for installation, with the majority to be situated in the city centre.

“These are all investors, not a penny from the state budget. We plan to install more than 30 stops

and for this, all conditions have been created,” he added.

Ayupov also shared the city’s plans for using a large LED screen in the open-air movie theatre.

“On the future square of Turkestan, we will install a large LED screen where you can watch movies in the open air. We hope it will create favourable conditions for tourists and residents of our city,” he said.

The clear glass booths symbolise the transparency of police work, a priority for the Turkestan akimat (local administration). Construction will hopefully be completed by 2020, with a late deadline in 2021.

“We have already begun to introduce them, similar to Georgia. We are putting in glass police stations so that everyone can see what is happening inside the station. I really hope that we will be able to complete all the work before the end of 2020,” said Ayupov.

The Turkestan akimat is also organising a major national food festival hosting Kazakh as well as international chefs.

Kazakhstan receives ICAO award for progress in resolving aviation security

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan received Sept. 25 International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Council President Certificate for progress in resolving aviation security and oversight deficiencies at the 40th ICAO assembly in Montreal, Canada.

The ICAO council recognised Kazakhstan among 17 countries with the biggest aviation safety progress in 2019.

“These awards, established by the ICAO Council in support of our ongoing No Country Left Behind initiative, have been developed in order to more publicly acknowledge and encourage States’ commitment and progress in making our global network even safer and more secure than it is today,” said ICAO Council President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu.

ICAO Commission evaluates

countries’ results of the recent years in aviation security development and how well they meet ICAO standards and recommended practices (SARPs), policies, plans and programmes.

The Kazakh Ministry of Industry and Infrastructural Development’s Civil Aviation Committee has done comprehensive work in aviation security development.

According to an ICAO November 2017 audit, Kazakhstan shows high results at 83 percent, which is 11 percent higher than the global average for aviation security. Kazakhstan improved 21 percent compared to the 2009 audit.

The Kazakh government improved legislation and ensured timely implementation of ICAO SARPs in aviation security. The government decree developed and approved the National Aviation Security Programme with all the latest SARPs. In 2018

and 2019, the Kazakh government revised and amended three resolutions and eight orders of the minister in charge of aviation security.

The Civil Aviation Committee collaborates with the aviation authorities of neighbouring countries. From 2017 to 2019, Kazakhstan has been organising experience exchange programmes with Georgia and Uzbekistan and providing consulting assistance to Tajikistan. The committee regularly organises trainings for specialists from countries of Central Asia and Caucasus in Almaty.

The committee participated in international conferences and seminars held under the auspices of ICAO Regional Aviation Security Bureau.

The ICAO assembly is the organisation’s sovereign body that meets at least once every three years. ICAO’s 193 member countries and a large number of

international organisations are invited to the assembly, which establishes the worldwide policy of the organisation for the upcoming triennium.

The Kazakh delegation and Canadian aviation authority also discussed Sept. 27 bilateral cooperation in international air transportation, the agreement on air traffic between the two parties and the matters of an agreement between their air carriers on air transport cooperation during a meeting in Montreal.

The Canadian delegation included representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Transportation and the Canadian Transportation Agency.

The Canadian aviation authority plans to visit Kazakhstan to improve the process of sharing experience and working methods in October.

Online document processing, soft loans, preferential lending expected to boost domestic businesses

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – Online document processing, soft loans and preferential lending are some of the measures introduced by the government to stimulate the country’s businesses.

Signing documents to subsidise and guarantee loans online started Sept. 22. Rather than the previous 40 days, processing time has been reduced to three. Since its introduction, the business process automation project has allowed concluding approximately three dozen online contracts just in Uralsk.

In addition, using the Business Road Map initiative alone, entrepreneurs in the West Kazakhstan region received more than 1.5 billion tenge (US\$3.6 million) in assistance this year. Soft loans were also issued under new programmes such as the Economics of Simple Things and Nurly Zher.

One example of such support is the 65 jobs created at a recently-opened cable and wire production plant. The factory expansion supports high quality and low prices, two pillars of the import substitution campaign announced in Kazakhstan.

“The state has set the task of

import substitution of basic consumer goods by encouraging local entrepreneurs to produce these goods. Stimulation is carried out through preferential lending. At this moment, this programme provides for subsidies of up to 9 percent, so the loan rate for the final borrower goes down to 6 percent,” said Small and Medium Business Support branch director Asset Tlemissov.

Eight business projects have already been approved, and subsidy agreements signed in three, under the Economics of Simple Things programme. Production of up to 500,000 environment-friendly pa-

per cups per month, items which previously could only be imported from Russia, is an example of one new project.

“There is no such production in Kazakhstan at all; we will be the only ones in Kazakhstan and I hope we will take a leading position. In Russia, where these paper cups are mainly bought, on average, the price of one cup is seven rubles (US\$0.11); ours will be 15-20 percent cheaper. This will allow us to enter the market not only in the West Kazakhstan Region, but throughout Kazakhstan,” said factory deputy director Alexandra Usova.

More than 20,000 people sign petition demanding closure of Almaty Zoo

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN – More than 20,000 people have signed an online petition at change.org demanding the Almaty Zoo be shut down.

The petition is titled “We demand to close the zoo in Almaty. Animals are neither a thing nor a source of profit” and was launched by Batyrkhan Togaibayev.

Togaibayev addressed Almaty Zoological Park officials in a message posted with the petition in July saying too many animals die in the zoo’s care.

“At least five animals have died in the Almaty Zoo over the past month: a giraffe, two young lionesses, an elk; they’ve also euthanised a tiger. Many animals have also died in the zoo before that. Before Vyacheslav Banshchikov became the director, a zebra died, and an Amur tiger, as the former Director Yerzhan Yerkinbaev said, was sent to the ‘most terrible zoo of Karaganda’,” said Togaibayev.

Togaibayev asserted in the petition that the goal of Kazakh zoos contradicts with world standards.

“The aim of zoos in developed countries is to save species from extinction. A zoo can contain and study rare and endangered species of animals to create artificial populations in captivity. A zoo should be a genetic bank for the conservation of rare and endangered species of animals by keeping specific individuals for posterity and further developing their populations,” reads the petition.

Togaibayev says proponents of



Photo credit: Almaty zoo Instagram page

closing the zoo will no longer negotiate with zoo executives. The activists are requiring a complete closure of the Almaty zoo.

“We do not demand the zoo executives negotiate with the eco-activists. We do not call for modernisation, or to improve the conditions of the detention. We have already witnessed how these requests are answered simply with unfulfilled promises both verbally and on paper. We call for the complete closure of the zoo,” wrote Togaibayev in a message on the change.org website.

The petition suggests where the

animals currently kept in the Almaty Zoo could be relocated.

“Animals can be sent to more modern zoos, such as those of New York and London. We could give them either free of charge or on a paid basis, and send the proceeds to Kazakh national reserves,” reads the petition.

Almaty zoo executives oppose closing the zoo, reports Tengrinews.kz. Almaty Zoo Head Zootechnician Agybay Azhibayev has called the petition “nonsense” and assured that improvements are being made.

“Maybe it will sound rude, but

to put it mildly, this is nonsense. From year to year, the number of zoos in the world is only increasing. It seems to me that closing the zoo would be wrong. Our zoo is the best in the country. There are only three state zoos in Kazakhstan. And regarding those shortcomings made by the previous executives... work is currently underway in that direction. Now, an aviary for wolves is being built, an aviary for bears has been reconstructed. All are following European standards. A saiga aviary is under construction,” said Azhibayev, as reported by Tengrinews.kz.

Kazakhstan to increase support for volunteers in 2020 Year of Volunteer

By Yekaterina Yeliseyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Aliya Galimova, Chair of the Committee on Civil Society Affairs of the Ministry of Information and Social Development introduced the draft action plan for the Year of the Volunteer at the ministry's Sept. 27 public council session. The draft outlines seven directions to develop favourable conditions for volunteer activities and she emphasised the experiences will be taken into consideration when calculating seniority increments.

The ministry began working on the action plan after President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed the decree Aug. 27 declaring 2020 as the Year of the Volunteer.

"The first area is the development of an enabling environment for volunteer activities. In regards to this area, there are plans to develop an appropriate draft law. We created standards for accounting for volunteer activity when entering colleges and universities and we will work out the norm for including volunteering experience as part of seniority. A methodology will be developed for assessing the contribution of volunteering to the country's socio-economic development for its subsequent inclusion in statistical reporting," said Galimova.

The second direction is creating a volunteer activities infrastructure and increasing the potential of its participants.



"There are plans to create a volunteer council with the participation of Kazakh and Russian volunteer organisation leaders. This idea, which the President

supported, was proposed by the volunteer organisations themselves. We are planning to create a single project office for the overall coordination and effective

implementation of the volunteer project programme. The office will deal with the coordination and monitoring of volunteer projects planned as part of

the Year of the Volunteer," she added.

Galimova noted the government will expand the work of existing youth resource and civic

centres in each region by adding volunteer support centres. People will be trained in each region to continue coordinating volunteer activities beyond 2020.

"The third area is the expansion of citizen participation in volunteer activities. We will continue our joint project with the Ministry of Education and Science to provide social loans for university students involved in volunteer activities. It already started Sept. 1 based on the website that our ministry created," she said.

Kazakh students can register on the website volunteer.kz, where they will be compensated for their volunteer hours either with money or study credits.

Kazakhstan is planning to launch a joint project with the United Nations to increase its citizens' representation as volunteers in foreign countries.

"This is a new project; never has one like it been implemented in Kazakhstan. Approximately eight volunteers will be sent. We are currently solving all procedural issues with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other agencies," said Galimova.

She noted more than 170 volunteer projects, part of the new Zhana Bastama programme, will be offered in the country by next year. The government will cover all expenses required, such as transportation for search teams and payments for any necessary materials, although volunteers will not be reimbursed.

NU hosts ClimateLaunchpad 2019 national finals



One of the winners, HydroPlat team and their project.

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Nazarbayev University recently hosted the national finals of the ClimateLaunchpad 2019 green technologies entrepreneurship ideas international competition, reported sciencefund.kz.

"ClimateLaunchpad provides a great opportunity to get the knowledge needed for the development of new cleantech ideas into successful business projects. Participation in ClimateLaunchpad will help entrepreneurs to check the feasibility of their ideas and to develop an ability to communicate it to potential investors and prospective customers," Yelena Shevchenko, Kazakhstan's ClimateLaunchpad national lead, told climatelaunchpad.org.

The competition's goal is finding the best green technologies ideas and helping to develop them into sustainable start-ups.

The committee considered 80 applications and selected 11 teams. The groups enrolled in boot camp classes July 15-16 to prepare them for the finals. Taking part in the event helped participants become acquainted with projects aimed at reducing negative impact on the environment and climate by introducing developments in renewable energy, sustainable food production and technology, as well as waste processing and environmental protection.

The two teams selected will be entered in November's international

finals in Amsterdam. First place was awarded to the HydroPlat project, which works to obtain nanomaterials needed to produce hydrogen cars. The dECO project, which develops a platform for the creation and subsequent sale of unique items made from used ones, took second place.

The TopyraQ project team proposed an idea for processing food waste and turning it into compost. The project was involved in an on-line poll with other selected participants from 55 countries.

"ClimateLaunchpad provides a great opportunity to get the knowledge needed for the development of new cleantech ideas into successful business projects."

The international competition winners will receive cash prizes to develop their projects, as well as opportunities to accelerate their business ideas.

The competition's main organiser is Climate-KIC, a European Union initiative regarding climate and innovations. The Kazakh National Final organisers are Astana Business Campus, NU Green Campus and Science Fund.

Situation of children: a lot of progress but more to be done, says UNICEF representative

Continued from Page A1

"There's a lot that has been achieved over the past few decades in Kazakhstan. It's remarkable how the government has managed to improve the living environment for children," UNICEF Representative Arthur van Diesen said in an exclusive interview for this story.

Infant and under-five mortality rates have reduced fivefold. Nearly every child is in school or has access to education, starting from early ages; the pre-school attendance level has doubled and is now among the highest in the region. The average number of years children are in school has increased and is now among the highest in the former Soviet Union.

"We are using this opportunity of the anniversary of the convention both to celebrate progress, but also to call attention to the challenges that are still ahead of us," he added.

Children with disabilities deserve more attention

Although progress is good for the majority of children, some are at risk of being left behind.

"We see real efforts made by the Kazakh government to make schools more accessible. It has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. But there are still too many children with disabilities who are not learning at all or they may be learning at home or in a special institution not really mainstreamed in the education system. The society is not yet fully embracing children with disabilities. We need to start building a truly inclusive society that focuses not so much on the disability, but actually on the ability of children," said van Diesen.

Every child has certain abilities and it's the duty of service providers and adults to make sure there is an environment in which every youngster can thrive.

"The government has that commitment to truly build an inclusive society. Aruzhan Sain was recently appointed as the Children's Rights Ombudsperson. She is focused on the wellbeing of children with disabilities.



Arthur van Diesen

ilities. I am hopeful that together we can really make progress," he noted.

Violence against children

Unfortunately, Kazakh children are still subjected to many forms of violence. UNICEF statistics show approximately 40 per cent of parents at times use some form of physical violence towards their children. Nearly three-quarters of adults think it's normal to use corporal punishment if a child misbehaves or doesn't obey.

"Violence has a very profound effect on children. It's an effect that can really last a lifetime. It can lead to mental difficulties and depression. The presidential address with an intention to strengthen the laws around violence against children is important. That is a welcome initiative on behalf of the President. Stronger laws, stronger punishment. But in addition, we need to make sure that it becomes less acceptable for violence to be used," he said.

Children are also subjected to violence outside the home, including in schools, where bullying is frequent. Van Diesen recently shared his personal story of bullying and the reaction was surprising.

"I found that many colleagues started opening up around us, saying that something similar happened to them and how this impacted them. Children, parents and teachers have the power to

put a stop to bullying and to make schools safer and kinder," he said.

Mental health

Kazakhstan is also facing somewhat of a crisis regarding children's and adolescents' mental health, noted van Diesen, as the country is among the top in the suicide rate among the latter. UNICEF and the government successfully piloted a suicide prevention project in Kyzylorda.

"We've been working with teachers and psychologists in school [not only] to build their awareness of mental health issues, but also to equip them to then talk to young people about this, to work with young people to raise awareness. This approach was piloted in a number of schools. It showed really good results and government is now in the process of scaling up this kind of programme," he said.

Skills for the future

Artificial intelligence and robotics are changing the way people learn and work.

"There's a lot that has been achieved over the past few decades in Kazakhstan. It's remarkable how the government has managed to improve the living environment for children."

"What's becoming more and more important is not so much knowledge and technical skills, but it's more life skills; it's more innovative problem-solving, knowing how to communicate, knowing how to work with a broad variety of people," he said.

UNICEF has initiated Generation Unlimited, joining with other UN agencies, the World Bank and private sector entities to ensure young people's voices are heard and that they are properly trained for future employment.

"The question is – are we doing enough currently to equip young people with these life skills? The education system we have is still focused on filling young people with knowledge and giving them technical skills and we see it in Kazakhstan as well, when young people come to the labour market. Many of them actually struggle to find that first job. There's a lot of training we need to do because they know certain things, but do not how to work together, how to build a team, how to really analyse a problem and address it," he said.

Plans are underway to collaborate with education authorities and the private sector to prepare young people with the skills needed for the future and the role they will play in the economy.

Climate change

Climate change is causing a significant ecological crisis in the world which will increasingly affect Kazakhstan.

"This is one area where children are paying for the sins of our generation and the generations before us. We overexploited natural resources. We need to work with young people and the government to get serious about the impact of climate change to see how we can reduce the use of fossil fuels and how we can address air pollution, which has such a huge impact on child development as well," he said.

Van Diesen is optimistic about the future, as he believes there are many young Kazakhs who have good ideas and the energy to change life for the better. Most importantly, he urges parents to be there for their children and spend more time with them.

"I'm talking here specifically to fathers. We are so busy with our careers, with our jobs, with our mobile phones and our gadgets and whatever is in our heads that worries us that it's often very easy to be in the same space with your children but not to be present with your children. Let's simply spend more time together and it will [not only] give great benefits to the children, but also to us as fathers. It's an enriching experience," he said.

NATION&CAPITAL

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

Kazakhstan is best for pilgrimage, cultural-historical and gastronomic tourism in autumn, says travel blogger

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan is a country where one can experience all four seasons, yet many tourist resorts and activities are only available in summer or winter. What if one’s only option is to visit during autumn? Go to the southern regions for a pilgrimage and cultural-historical and gastronomic tourism, said travel blogger Nurzhan Algashev in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

Many tourist sites such as Alakol, Balkhash and Burabai rely on revenue from May-September. In autumn, hotels, guest houses, small cafés and entertainment spots start to close and freeze their business till the following summer. If one plans a vacation in autumn, he or she should explore the southern part of the country to have a wonderful time.

“Of course, it is also possible to travel in autumn,” he said. “This is especially true about the south of Kazakhstan, where warm days last longer. I would recommend visiting more southern regions exactly in the period when it gets colder in the north.”

In the Turkestan Region, Algashev suggests travelling to Khoja Akhmet Yassawi mausoleum, Ak Meshit cave, Arystanbab and the ancient cities such as Otyrar and Sauran.

In the Zhambyl Region, it is Aisha Bibi mausoleum, Karakhan mausoleum and Akyrtyas city, destinations for pilgrimages and cultural-historical and gastronomic tourism.

“It (autumn) is very suitable for



Travel blogger Nurzhan Algashev near Toraigyr Lake in Bayanaul National Park.

pilgrimage tourism. These are holy places,” he said. “You can easily visit them in the fall, because in the south it is a bit warmer. The weather allows it.”

Autumn is also a good time for people who prefer a detox programme, rehabilitation sessions from stress and exhaustion and medical procedures in one of the country’s many sanatoriums that operate year round.

“The sanatoriums function not only near big cities. For instance, Rakhmanovskie Kliuchi (Rakhmanov’s Springs) is located in the most eastern part of Kazakh-

stan... You can both get treatment and enjoy nature,” he said.

The flora covering the East Kazakhstan and Pavlodar regions becomes especially bright and colourful in the beginning of the season. If not viewing the display from a sanatorium, tourists can visit national parks for similar scenes, he said.

Adventure seekers are also treated to many options.

“Adventure tourism, by the way, is claimed to be one of the potentially interesting ones for Kazakhstan in terms of the positioning of our country. (This is) eco-tourism, adventure tourism,” said Algashev.

Kazakhstan has a “very beautiful nature that varies from forest to mountains, glaciers, deserts, canyons and other landscapes” and many areas offer camping, hiking, trekking and climbing. The Alatau Mountains in the Almaty Region, for example, have very popular routes for one-day trips or trips that last several days.

Climbing is very popular near Almaty. Locals usually “go to mountains and climb them with equipment and, in the evening, go back to the city,” he noted.

The country has options for climbers, both amateur and profes-

sional. Inexperienced individuals can hire a qualified instructor and scale category 1A and 1B peaks, Russian grades for easy roped climbing.

“For beginners, it can be Maloalmatinsky gorge and Bolshoe Almatinskoe gorge. There is Kok Zhailau, famous Kim-Asar gorge or trekking to Bukreyev Peak,” said Algashev.

Tourists can trek in the east in the Altai mountains or the west to see the “unbelievable Marican scenery on Ustyurt Plateau.” Climbing in the west is a tough trip, however, due to the lack of water. For a more enjoyable experience, he recommends several-day expeditions by four wheel drives .

“Cycling tours are getting more popular, also in rough terrain such as in Assy Plateau, mountains and foothills of the Almaty Region. The same can be done near the capital in Burabai,” he said.

Some enthusiasts enjoy horseback riding or rafting. The latter is available in the mountains of the Almaty and East Kazakhstan regions.

“I think these are the most popular activities to do in Kazakhstan... I think adventure tourism has a big potential in our country. The main thing is to want it,” he noted.

Algashev specifically highlighted the tourism potential of the Almaty Region.

“First of all, it is a modern megapolis that can offer anything. The second, it is near mountains. In other words, the nature component cheers you both in summer and in winter. In winter, Shymbulak mountain resort works, while in summer tourists can go trekking

and do other activities. A few hours’ ride will take you to Charyn Canyon, Kolsai Lakes and other tourist attractions,” he said.

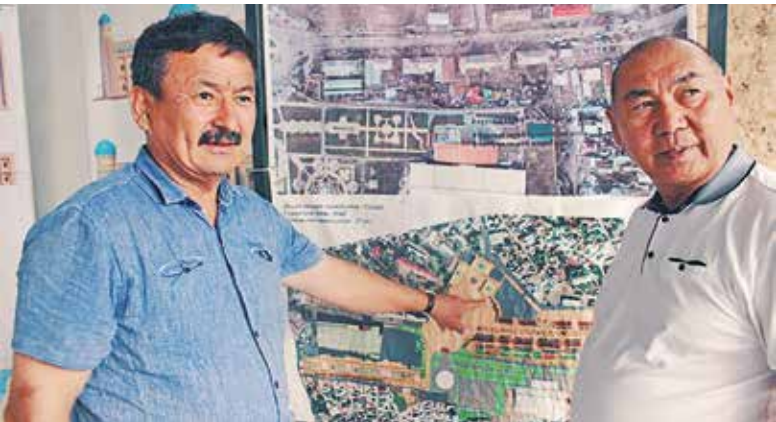
Mangystau Region is another area with booming tourism opportunities.

“It is the only place where we have our own ‘sea.’ The Caspian Sea might be a lake, but it is a big water reservoir. (There are also) Bozzharya, Sherkala, Tuzbayir and Chinki canyons and Ustyurt Plateau – fantastic places,” he added.

In promoting tourism and developing its potential, the Kazakh government and experts frequently discuss the idea that Central Asia should position itself as one destination and introduce a new Silk Road visa.

“I am very happy that there is an understanding of this question in our government and, maybe, in other neighbouring countries... It is very right to introduce one Silk Road visa. It will be a very good step. Why? Because of foreign tourists. If we look at ourselves as tourists, we travel to remote places such as European countries, South Eastern Asia and North and South America. Accordingly, if we visit those continents, we try to visit as many countries as possible. This is the nature of a person, that a tourist wants to see the maximum, have more experiences, visit more countries and places. A visa always stays as a barrier. When a tourist visits our region, for example, Uzbekistan, and if he has an opportunity to visit Kazakhstan, why wouldn’t he or she use it? If not all, but half of tourists take the opportunity, then it is already a very big plus, a very big flow,” he said.

Taraz administration to build tourism and history centre



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The Taraz akimat (city administration) is building what will be the largest tourist centre in Kazakhstan.

The city administration is building the Shakhristan historical and tourist centre, which together with the existing Ancient Taraz archaeological complex, will be the country’s largest tourist centre.

In 2011, Taraz central market was moved to another location and archaeological excavations of the ancient settlement were started on the market grounds. Archaeologists have discovered about 50,000 artefacts of the sixth-seventh centuries, a medieval citadel, a mosque of the eighth and ninth centuries, an altar of Zoroastrians, a prison called zindan, the embankment of the ancient riverbed of the Talas river and the foundations of residential buildings.

The cost to build the Ancient Taraz historical and archaeological centre is 2.5 billion tenge (US\$6.5 million). The centre is located on 20 hectares with an entrance arch, an observation tower, an ethnic and cultural centre with the House of Friendship and a congress hall. It also includes Taraz Sazdary stela, Mynbulak square and a museum.

According to Rakhmankul Baiteliev, the adviser to head of construction department of the Zhambyl Region’s akimat (administration), there is a working group on the construction and design of the Shakhristan ethnic and cultural centre.

“The Shakhristan project consists of seven buildings made in the oriental style, constructed of bricks

using Samarkand technology. The centre includes a local history museum, the Rukhaniyat centre, a craft gallery, a local history museum, an art gallery, an exhibition pavilion and an amphitheatre where retro festivals will be held. A stela with a clock tower will be installed on the nearby Zhambyl Square,” he said.

Shakhristan will host exhibitions of works by contemporary artists and sculptors and will be used to implement the long-awaited Taraz project – City of Artisans. City of Masters is an event where local artisans will be able to manufacture and sell their products.

“Today, 200-250 people work at the Shakhristan site. But as the front of work opens, we will additionally attract people. According to the plan, 450-500 people can work here during rush hour. The peak of work is ahead, we work according to the schedule of work. The dates are indicated, and we must meet them,” Baiteliev said.

“All construction work will be completed before the start of events dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the Zhambyl region, which will be held in November. There is a shortage of workers and experts. The problem is that the prices for construction work nearby in Turkestan and Tulkibas are higher, and workers prefer to work there. But we will get out of the situation, we will invite workers from other regions. Builders will work in two shifts, a special schedule has been drawn up, which will allow to accelerate the pace of construction. The tasks have been set – it is necessary to fulfil them,” Taraz Deputy Mayor Beisenbek Zhanbosynov said.

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan to cooperate in developing pilgrimage tourism

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will cooperate in developing pilgrimage tourism, Uzbekistan Tourism Development Committee head specialist Saidkomil Khalkhidjayev told 24.kz. Specifically, new roads and airway routes will be created as a part of the Silk Road tourism project.

“The history of the ancient Turks is interesting not only to their descendants, but also to tourists from all over the world, particularly the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmet Yassawi. This is a building with a religious meaning and is the site of religious people’s annual pilgrimage. We hope that the relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will expand,” said Khalkhidjayev.

The common plan includes implementing the Silk Road tourism project, with guided tours and visits to ancient holy places.

Uzbekistan has more than 7,000 cultural and historical sites, approximately 200 of which are in four ancient cities included on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage sites list and protected by UNESCO. Kazakhstan has three cultural sites on the list and the countries share the Silk Road site.

Developing airway and road links between the nations is aimed at increasing tourist flow. One such connector route, the 84-kilometre Beineu-Akzhigit-Uzbekistan highway, part of the Tashkent-Samarkand-Bukhara-Nukus-Beineu-Atyrau-Astrakhan international transit corridor, opened July 17. It provides easy access to the Caspian region and European Union countries, according to media reports.

Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin stressed the importance of opening a new highway “for the development of the Central



Asia transport infrastructure, increasing trade volumes and realising the transit potential.”

Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov noted “the new highway is of a great importance for the further intensification of trade

and economic relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.”

According to January-July data, Kazakhstan ranks third (8.1 percent) in Uzbekistan’s foreign trade after China (18.5 percent) and Russia (14.6 percent).

Government to improve, expand Karaganda Region tourism facilities

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh Government plans to build new resorts in the Karaganda Region as well as improve the Balkhash Resort and other priority tourism areas in the region by 2020, Head of the Entrepreneurship Department of the Karaganda Region Akimat (regional administration) Tatiana Ablayeva said at a Sept. 27 region maslikhat (local assembly) meeting.

“Three main locations for the tourism development have been identified in the region – the resort area of the Balkhash coast, the historical and cultural centre of Ulytau and the resort area of the Karkaraly

District. The Balkhash resort area was included in the top 10 objects of the national tourist map, and a master plan for its development was already developed. It includes the cities of Balkhash, Priozersk, the villages of Torangalyk and Chubar-Tyubek, Aktogai District. Today, it has 53 accommodations, which serve about 80,000 tourists per year,” said Ablayeva.

Tourism in the region is increasing with the latest numbers being 280,000 visitors per year. The Balkhash resort area is one of the most promising areas, says Ablayeva, as it has the potential to increase the tourist flow 400 percent by 2030 and increase the volume of tourism services approximately 600 percent. Officials believe im-

proving infrastructure will help meet those growth goals.

“The plan for the development of the tourism state programme implementation includes the construction of power lines, a landfill for solid waste, utilities for water supply, as well as the arrangement of beaches, the construction of an embankment, and new facilities. A roadmap for their implementation has been developed, and a regional project office has been formed. According to the plan, by 2020 it is expected to launch 13 recreation areas. All projects are being implemented according to the schedule, two of them have been launched ahead of schedule, the Cote d’Azur and Bernadsky resorts,” said Ablayeva.

One of the key infrastructure de-

velopment priorities is improving the capacity of the local airport, said Ablayeva.

“At the Balkhash airport, that is privately owned by the Kazakhmys Corporation, it is necessary to carry out repairs in the amount of 1 billion tenge (US\$2.5 million) so that it can accommodate comfortable aircraft. So far, only the AN-24 with 48 seats flies there, and we sent this issue to the central project office. Airplanes with a small capacity of 40-45 seats fly to Balkhash, their number must be increased to two times a day from Nur-Sultan and Almaty, as well as from Karaganda to Balkhash – for seven months in the summer, plus once a day for five months in the winter,” said Ablayeva.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2019

Young runners debut at start of annual Almaty Women’s Race



(27:58) and Yekaterina Shatnaya (30:24). The organisers also identified the fastest woman in each age category. Polina Repina was first among those age 15-29, Svetlana Alekhina (30-39), Almira Kusainova (40-49) and Zanfira Chernukhina (50 and over). All results are available at almaty-marathon.kz. Approximately 450 runners were involved in the race and all who completed their distances received participation medals at the finish line. Participants competed for creative costumes, as the women’s race is distinguished by its bright outfits. The main colour at the children’s distance was yellow; seven kilometres, white. The race was also open to Nordic walkers. Nearly 30 women in bright pink lined up at the start. The next big race will be the Oct. 13 Almaty Half Marathon, which will gather approximately 5,000 runners. Organisers of the competition are Smelost byt pervym (Courage to Be the First) corporate fund, the World Class Almaty Fitness Club and Yessenov Foundation, with support from the city akimat (city administration) and #Drugoity (Other You) project.

Staff Report
NUR-SULTAN – Girls 10-14 debuted at the start line Sept. 28 of the annual Almaty

Women’s Race in Atakent Park. Rima Grankina took the top spot among the 32 children in the age group, running the three-kilometre distance in 11:24. Seconds behind her were Dariya Medush-

enko (11:46) and Nina Gladkaya (11:51). The older participants ran seven kilometres. Tatyana Neroznak crossed the finish line first in 26:31, followed by Dana Gusarova

More than 500 cross-country runners compete in Race Nation Burabay

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova
NUR-SULTAN – More than 500 cross-country runners from Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey and Tajikistan participated Sept. 29 in the Race Nation Burabay at the ski-jumping complex in Shchuchinsk, in the Akmola Region.

Race Nation Burabay or the so-called Race of the Nation is a cross-country race with man-made obstacles. This year, the event was part of the Four Seasons project and was dedicated to the International Tourism Day, reported the Akmola regional press service. “The four seasons concept is being implemented to attract more

tourists to the Burabay resort all year round. We also want to attract an additional flow of sports tourists. Our main task is to make the resort area not only a tourist centre, but also a symbol of a healthy lifestyle,” said Deputy Akim (Governor) of the Akmola region Marat Igali. Nail Bashmakov, Yevgeny Velichko and Dmitry Kolomeets won the men’s race and Daria Ryazko, Irina Bykova and Anna Melnik won the women’s race. In the team standings, the Ski Shchuchinsk team won first prize, the Pro Team was the second and Shrek Run was the third. They also received cash prizes and free participation in the Race Nation Kazakhstan 2020. A five-kilometre track contained 27 obstacles including monkey bars, traverse, climbing over walls, carrying heavy objects and crawling under barbed wire. The race has become a real challenge even for participants with marathon, triathlon and CrossFit experience. According to the organisers, this year the set of obstacles was updated by 85 percent so that people, who previously participated in the race, were interested to return to the competition. The obstacles vary by complexity.

“Nevertheless, all the elements are tested and suitable for any level of physical training. Some participants were able to overcome the obstacles quickly and someone had to work hard,” said Director of the Extreme Athletics company Timur Artyukhin. The start of the race included open, team and elite categories. Professional athletes took part in the elite category and amateur participants were in the open category. Team participation in the competitions was also popular. Winners of the Race Nation Kazakhstan 2019 Kolomeets and Melnik will take part in the Obstacle Course Racing World Championships, the only independent global championships for the obstacle course racing sport, October 11-13 in London. The event was organised by the Extreme Athletics team and supported by the akimat (regional administration) of the Akmola region. The Extreme Athletics team that organises and conducts amateur races for more than 12 years, also initiates the Tengri Ultra Great Steppe Marathon, one of the most popular sporting events in the country.



Athletes win four Asia Championship medals in trap shooting



By Nazira Kozhanova
NUR-SULTAN – Four Kazakh athletes won medals in trap shooting Sept. 24-25 at the 9th Asia Championship in Baiserke village near Almaty. Two medals were won by Kazakh athletes in individual competition and two medals were won in team competition by both senior and junior athletes, reports Olympic.kz. Assem Orynbai won a bronze medal. Meng Wei from China and Isapara Impraseruk from Thailand won gold and silver medals, respectively. Orynbai, as well as Kazakh athletes Olga Panarina and Angelina Mischuk came in third in the team competition. Similarly, in the individual competition, athletes from China took home gold and athletes from Thailand silver. The Kazakh junior female trap shooting team also won Sept. 25 a bronze in the team competition. Athletes from China and India won gold and silver, respectively. Another junior athlete Eduard Yeschenko won silver in the discipline. Singh Sikon from India won gold and Xiajun Yuan from China took home the bronze medal. According to trap shooting federation representatives, hosting a competition of the scale of the Asian Championship would provide a major impetus to the development of target shooting in Kazakhstan, reports Olympic.kz. The Asian Championship is attended by shooters from 14 Asian countries, including 250 athletes, including 32 athletes of the national team of Kazakhstan and 150 officials. As part of the Asian Championship, 132 sets of medals will be awarded in the skit, gangway, double-gangway, and gangway mix exercises. The Asian Championship in Almaty is not yet a qualifying championship for the Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. This competition provides a chance for athletes from Asian countries to test themselves in the competitive environment, reports Olympic.kz. The final selection of shooters who will go to the summer Olympics in Tokyo in 2020 will be held at the World Championship in Doha this November.

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Ambassadors Spouses Association vice president to host charity auction

By Diana Vassilenko

NUR-SULTAN – Ambassadors Spouses Association (ASA) Vice President and wife of United Nations Resident Coordinator Hitomi Shimomura will host the JP to KZ (Japan to Kazakhstan) charity event Oct. 13, 2 p.m., at the Rixos President Astana Hotel.

“There are two things I want to accomplish with this event. The first is to support children in Kazakhstan who need medical treatment by conducting a silent auction of kimonos and the other is to introduce Japanese culture to people in Nur-Sultan,” she said in an interview for this story.

Shimomura, along with other ASA members, has been involved in organising the capital’s Christmas Charity Bazaar for the past three years. The work has allowed her to recognise both the importance of such activities and interest in Japanese culture. As a result, she has been eager to hold a charitable event on her own.

“The idea to conduct a silent auction came up when I was talking with my children. My daughter Reika was inspired when she read the biography of Princess Diana, who sold her dresses at an auction to raise money for charity, and we thought it was a great idea to do something similar,” she said.



Shimomura siblings with Korkem-Ai Mukhamejanova (R).

Shimomura will sell more than 20 kimonos, as well as three kimono coats, six kimono obi (sash belts) and four pieces of kimono fabric, from her own collection.

The starting bid for the kimono will range from 10,000 tenge (US\$25.80) to 30,000 tenge (US\$77.39); the coat, 5,000 tenge (US\$12.90); the obi, 4,500 tenge

(US\$11.60) and the fabric, 35,000 tenge (US\$90). As an additional way to raise money, entrance tickets will be 1,000 tenge (US\$2.58) and free for

children up to age 11. The fee will include complimentary refreshments.

Raffle tickets will be available for “a charming and attractive price of 3,000 tenge (US\$7.74),” she said. Among the numerous prizes will be a kimono, Japanese sake, jewellery and possibly a direct flight ticket to Japan.

As part of introducing Japanese culture, the family will have special tables to try Japanese calligraphy, taste matcha (Japanese green tea) and wagashi (Japanese sweets), read manga (Japanese comic books), attempt ikebana (Japanese art of flower arrangement), fold origami and play kendama (cup-and-ball) and with other traditional Japanese toys.

Shimomura’s 11-year-old son, Kensei, will help with the entertainment by assisting with the tea ceremony and hosting the manga table.

Her 14-year-old daughter, Reika Shimomura, along with her friends, is heavily involved in the event’s planning and management.

Korkem-Ai Mukhamejanova, her classmate, is helping to translate documents and emails from English to Russian. Naira Yessengaliyeva created the event’s logo. Mikoto and Makoto Nakamura created the event’s Instagram account @jptokz.

“I am planning to also show

how to play Japanese games at the event, such as daruma otoshi, a game where you have to hit out dolls consecutively from the bottom of a stack of them without letting the top ones fall,” said Reika.

The family is also organising a food and drink table.

“I am very pleased to be working with Hitomi Shimomura, who decided to support Asyl Bala’s activities. Asyl Bala is a voluntary association created in 2015, the aim of which is to coordinate the activities of charitable organisations working in the field of child welfare,” said Gulnara Shakirova, one of the Asyl Bala association founders who is helping organise the event.

“I want to say a special thanks to Rixos Hotel for providing us with the great opportunity to make this charity event possible, to Asyl Bala and to my daughter and all the children who are involved in making this charity event a great success and who want to support children in need in Kazakhstan!” said Shimomura.

“It will be both a very fun, educational and tasty event. You will, of course, be helping children in need by simply attending it. Come and join us to feel good and do great! We are looking forward to seeing you at Rixos Hotel, Oct. 13!” she added.

Akimat adds lighting, other infrastructure

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The Nur-Sultan Akimat (city administration) over the past few months have added new streetlights, courtyards, playgrounds and other public facilities to many parts of the capital city.

“All that we do, we do for people, for a comfortable and safe living. We periodically go around all areas of the capital, meet with residents and eliminate problems raised. It is necessary to remove barriers around social facilities, equip house territories, install street lighting in the first place near all educational institutions,” Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altay Kulginov said during a Sept. 24 meeting of the city akimat.

The Baikonur District’s 30 courtyards have new playgrounds, street sports equipment and football fields.

Sponsors will also fund next year a hockey-football court and a playground in the courtyard of Ondiris housing area along Akbidai Street.

More than 4,000 lights were installed on city streets over the summer and 400 older lamps were replaced with energy-saving lights.

The Yessil District already had 85 percent of its yards in satisfactory condition. The main work was done on sidewalks, squares and in repairing sculptures. The akimat also fixed yard lighting in 38 houses. Dismantled luminaires were installed in

the Vostochnaya Ilyinka housing area on unlit streets.

The Akimat had to take care of only 10 percent of the yard areas, which meant 42 repair and restoration works. The elements of improvement can be seen on the banks of the Akbulak River, in Studencheskii, Zheruiyk and Presidential parks, in Momyshty and Pushkin squares and on the boulevard along Abylai Khan Avenue. Ten fountain complexes were also installed. All the yards of the district now have lights.

In the Saryarka District, the akimat have done works in 40 courtyards, brought lights to the yards of 370 houses and paved entrance areas to social facilities.

“Before the cold starts (it is necessary to) set warm bus stops. By spring, you need to prepare trees to plant. On Nurzhol Boulevard, Nur Astana Mosque, trees took root well, on hot days people sit in the shade. In winter, they will protect from the winds. It is necessary to continue this practice,” Kulginov said.

In the summer of 2020, the capital akimat plans to equip more than 200 courtyards, build sports facilities and 130 kilometres of bicycle paths, replace LED lamps with energy-saving lights, modernise housing and communal services of at least 20 residential complexes, open parks and squares and pave access roads to social facilities and sidewalks.

Capital to buy 100 electric buses

By Yerbolat Uatkanov

NUR-SULTAN – The capital akimat (administration) will be purchasing 100 new electric buses from the joint venture between Chinese Yutong and Kostanai-based SaryarkaAvtoProm. The buses will save money due to low electricity consumption costs and reduced air pollution.

“One hundred new electric buses will appear in our capital. This means that we will reduce the bus deficit and renew the bus fleet with new comfortable silent buses. The interval of bus arrival will be significantly reduced, which means that the waiting time at stopping points will also be reduced,” said Astana LRT Chairperson Bekmyrza Igenberdinov.

The buses will be purchased through DBK Leasing as part of the state programme to upgrade the fleet with domestically produced equipment. The seven-year lease has an interest rate of 7 percent per year, reported Kazinform.

“This is the lowest rate for leasing transactions in Kazakhstan. Leasing financing will be made in tenge, which guarantees stability in modern realities,” he added.

Implementing the project will increase cash revenues to the local budget through tax payments and create additional jobs both in bus production and operation. The vehicles’ environmental friendliness, as well as their economic operation, are particularly important, as this will allow the fleets to save about 80 percent on fuel compared to diesel buses.

Yutong is equipping the electric buses with high-capacity lithium batteries, which increase their range without recharging. The design requires charging only once a day – at night – and the approach will significantly reduce investment in infrastructure.

In February, the city fleet completed its first test of a domestically made electric bus. The trial was conducted at the lowest possible winter temperatures (up to -38 degrees Celsius) and electricity consumption was 0.91 kilowatts per kilometre.

SaryarkaAvtoProm together with the Atyrau bus fleet conducted tests in the climatic conditions of the West Kazakhstan Region, as well as trying the batteries over long distances along the Nur-Sultan-Ko-

stanai-Nur-Sultan route. According to the results, the buses showed positive results. All necessary conditions for operation on the city routes of the capital were taken into account as part of the test.

A cost analysis was completed while the akimat chose a supplier. The minimum price for a Heuliez Bus GX 337 Electric, a French 12-metre electric bus, is \$503,000. German MAN Lion’s City E bus prices start at \$635,000. German Mercedes eCitaro buses begin at \$558,000.

Another important factor for selecting a supplier was considering a domestic producer. SaryarkaAvtoProm met all the necessary requirements with its Yutong ZK-6128BEVG electric bus costing 146.7 million tenge (US\$378,000). The localisation level to produce the vehicles is approximately 27-32 percent and the plant will manufacture motor and interior parts.

Capital Rotarians open second inclusive playground

Continued from Page B1

The playground is designed to help children with their physical, mental and social development. The capital akimat allocated an 800-square metre area in Central Park near the Atyrau Kopiri pedestrian bridge and St. Regis Hotel. The site includes 15 pieces of equipment, including wheelchair-friendly game sets, safe swings for children with special needs, adapted sandboxes and special tactile panels.

“One of the main priorities of the U.S. Embassy is supporting anyone regardless of their capabilities. We are proud to support such projects as part of our yearly grant programmes. Each of the projects has a long-term positive effect on the community and is a step towards a society that supports equality and justice,” said Moser. “In the modern society, everyone has to ensure that no one is left behind. This is particularly relevant when speaking about children, who are responsible for the future of our country.”

“We are happy to be a part of this project, which provides children with disabilities more opportunities. We are looking forward to seeing the positive impact this

playground will have on society,” he added.

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 Akimat district akimat.

“I am very grateful to the Rotary Club for its activities and support. I think it’s very important to take part in these kinds of smooth and systematic activities that are part of the governmental programmes in order to support our children, children who particularly need attention and support. We will be attentive to their needs as much as

we can, so that they can be as comfortable and happy as possible,” said capital Deputy Akim Bakhtiyar Maken.

“We will strive to create more inclusive parks and public places, enabling our city to flourish and become the best capital in the world,” he added.

Arsenal Cinema and Marwin store representative Venera Bayzilyeva presented children at the ceremony with illustrated books and invited them to visit the cinema. The event was followed by an entertainment programme featuring children from Zamandas 21, a family outdoor club in the city which played compositions on the dombyra (Kazakh traditional string music instrument), showed a dance and had the audience participate in a flash mob. City bakeries provided visitors with complimentary snacks and beverages.

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