



Kazakh, Belarusian presidents agree to enhance long-term trade cooperation



By Elya Altynsarina

NUR-SULTAN – The Presidents of Kazakhstan and Belarus oversaw the signing of five bilateral agreements and held a joint press conference Oct. 25, concluding a two-day official visit by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to the Kazakh capital. Lukashenko's visit was his first to Kazakhstan since the election of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

The sides discussed economic, political, cultural and humanitarian issues. They also discussed foreign policy, including establishing more trade and economic partnerships.

"We are interested in increasing the volume of trade between our states, strengthening ties in the humanitarian sphere, and continuing active cooperation with international organisations," said Tokayev.

Tokayev noted mutual trade had

tripled over the last three years to \$800 million in 2018 while Kazakh imports to Belarus have increased 45 percent. He said mutual trade can be increased and announced an agreement to develop a long-term plan, utilising the Eurasian Economic Union, to increase trade and the quantity of goods supplied.

The two leaders also discussed strengthening industrial cooperation.

"Currently, there are about 340 joint enterprises in Kazakhstan. Eight joint ventures are engaged in the production of large industrial and agricultural equipment," the Kazakh President said.

"If Kazakhstan is a gateway to Asia, then Belarus is a bridge to Europe; our countries are part of the Belt and Road Initiative, and by implementing it we will give a new impetus to our trade and economic ties," Tokayev said.

The United Transport and Logistics Company, in which Kazakhstan and Belarus are shareholders,

increased over the past three years the container rail transport service along the China-Europe-China route almost 6.5 times.

The sides also noted the potential for cooperation in IT through Nazarbayev University, the Astana Hub, and the High-Tech Park in Minsk, as well as in the field of finance via cooperation with the Astana International Financial Centre.

The presidents also discussed developing economic ties in the region and hosting of a forum on interregional cooperation.

Tokayev said the visit will enhance Kazakh-Belarusian strategic and economic cooperation. Speaking at a joint press conference of the two leaders, he said the basis for the countries' strategic partnership was established by Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev and that Lukashenko's visit is a continuation of that partnership.

Tokayev added that Lukashenko is one of the most experienced

politicians in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and noted they have met three times over the past six months.

The Belarusian President also noted the positive state of bilateral relations.

"I want to note that our relations with Kazakhstan are close, our economies are mutually supportive, we always create new opportunities for each other. Everything that we produce in the country, is Kazakhstan needs it, everything that you produce in Kazakhstan, we are ready to purchase with great pleasure," Lukashenko said, adding that the state of relations is the result of years of cooperation.

"Between Minsk and Nur-Sultan, we have gained positive experience of interaction at all levels," he said.

The two leaders issued a joint statement after their meeting, which seeks to intensify cooperation and coordinate actions in the international arena.

Kazakhstan moves up to 25th spot in WB Doing Business Report

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan moved up three spots to 25th on the World Bank Doing Business 2020 report, according to the report published on Oct. 24.

Kazakhstan made improvements in issuing permits, ease of getting a loan and starting a business. However, difficulties in registering property and resolving insolvency remain, according to the report.

"Improving the position of Kazakhstan in the Doing Business rating was made possible thanks to the ongoing systematic work of the government to reform existing legislation, improve the licensing system, simplify business creation

procedures, optimise state control and oversight activities and improve the business climate," according to comments on Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin's website.

The moving up in the ranking became possible as Kazakhstan made starting a business easier by registering companies for value added tax at the time of incorporation. Another improvement was in the strengthened access to credit by automatically extending security interests to the products, proceeds and replacements of the original assets and by giving secured creditors absolute priority during insolvency proceedings, states the ranking report.

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IAEA LEU Bank receives first shipment

By Yerbolat Uatkhayev

NUR-SULTAN – The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Low-Enriched-Uranium (LEU) Fuel Bank in Kazakhstan received Oct. 17 its first shipment of low-enriched uranium.

The LEU Bank is meant to be a supply source of last resort for IAEA member states who have had a disruption in their access to fuel.

"With the arrival of the first shipment, the IAEA LEU Bank is

now established and operational," IAEA Acting Director General Cornel Feruta said, according to an IAEA press release. "It is the first time the agency has undertaken a project of this legal, operational and logistical complexity."

Owned by the IAEA and hosted by Kazakhstan, the IAEA LEU Bank is one of the agency's most ambitious and challenging projects since it was founded in 1957.

"The international project to establish the IAEA LEU Bank in Kazakhstan has been successfully

realised at the initiative of the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country said in its Oct. 17 press release.

"Because of the long journey, it took more than four weeks to transport the LEU to the site. It required coordination among many partners involved in the project. We have gained valuable experience, as well as confidence, that we can use this transport route in case a country requests supply of LEU," the IAEA's Acting Project Executive for the

LEU Bank Marta Ferrari said, according to the IAEA press release.

Acquiring 90 tonnes of LEU from two vendors is the IAEA's largest single procurement in its history.

The project implementation required many efforts, such as negotiating a legal framework with Kazakhstan and its operator – Ulba Metallurgical Plant (UMP), which is situated in the East Kazakhstan Region, – designing and building the storage facility to IAEA safety and security standards.

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EU, UNDP and Kazakhstan launch education programme to train Afghan women

By Amir Khaidar

ALMATY – The European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Kazakhstan launched Oct. 18 an education programme to train and educate several dozen Afghan women in Kazakh universities over the next five years.

The first group of thirty women were selected in September out of 535 initial applicants. The selected women passed a three-stage selection process that included an English placement test and an interview.

On Oct. 18, the Almaty Management University (Alma U), where the Afghan students will get their

foundation training, hosted a reception in their honour with remarks from international and Kazakh officials, as well as some of the students themselves.

Between now and 2025, 50 Afghan students, including 10 women who will study in Uzbekistan, will receive bachelor's, master's and technical degrees in agriculture, applied statistics and mining in universities across Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The Kazakh universities participating in the programme include the Kanysh Satpayev Kazakh National University, the Kazakh-British Technical University and Almaty Management University in Almaty and the Kazakh National Agrarian University in Nur-Sultan. In Uzbeki-

stan, the students are to study at an agricultural university in Termez.

The United Nations Women will organise summer schools that will train the women in entrepreneurship and networking to contribute to their post-study employment and economic empowerment.

Building on its 10-year programme to educate 1,000 Afghans in its universities, Kazakhstan proposed in 2017 to the European Union to launch a new joint programme to educate Afghan women.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini announced in September 2018 in her video message to the regional conference in the Kazakh capital on empowering women in Afghanistan that the EU

will provide \$2.2 million for the programme.

"It is our principled position that Afghanistan should not be viewed as a source of challenges but as a source of opportunities," Kazakhstan's Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko said in addressing the Oct. 18 event. "It is, therefore, critical to integrate the economy of Afghanistan with its neighbouring countries through enhanced interaction and connectivity and investing in and developing regional infrastructure, trade, and transit transportation projects. To achieve this, Afghanistan needs professionally educated human capital, and we are privileged to be able to help."

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Nur-Sultan hosts UN urban tourism summit

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Nur-Sultan hosted Oct. 9-10 the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Summit on Urban Tourism. More than 700 delegates from 30 countries gathered to explore the definition of smart cities and smart destinations and the role of tourism in the development of cities.

The two-day event, which also included the adoption of the Nur-Sultan smart city declaration, reaffirmed the five key pillars that smart cities should develop in their effort to build inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities.

The pillars included sustainability, accessibility, urban management, innovation and technology.

The approach should be holistic and people-centred, going beyond

the frequent association of smart cities with the use of advanced technologies and innovations.

Tourism should also become an integral part of the city's development agenda as a means to make tourism a true contributor to the development of cities.

Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altai Kulginov said globalisation is a driving force to eliminate barriers in mass tourism.

"Cities need to be safe and comfortable to be attractive for tourists. We are working on this at the moment. We use the best practices of Europe's top cities and are developing the concept of smart city focusing on safety, logistics, healthcare, education, housing and public services," said Kulginov.

Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin noted the significant contribution of tourism to global economies.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

One million trees to be planted as part of nationwide campaign

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – One million trees will be planted in Kazakhstan as part of the nationwide environment campaign #Birge #JasylQazaqstan (which means Together and GreenKazakhstan).

The campaign started Oct. 12 and was initiated by the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources and personally Minister Magzum Mirzagaliyev.

"We launch #Birge #JasylQazaqstan campaign. We organise a mass planting of trees Oct. 12. It is planned that almost one million trees will be planted across the entire country," Mirzagaliyev wrote in his Twitter account.

Kazakh President Kassym Jomart Tokayev also took part in the effort Oct. 12 joining capital



Photo credit: Sergey Nagibulin

residents and high-level government officials, including Prime Minister Askar Mamin, in the Botanical Garden. The planting was also organised near the monument in the capital dedicated to

the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence.

Diplomatic missions also joined the Kazakh Foreign Ministry to plant the trees.

"Making our country greener is

an effort of good cause, needed to protect nature. I thank all participants of this event. Our capital should become more comfortable and greener," Tokayev wrote in his Twitter account.

Nearly 740 trees were planted Oct. 12 at the two sites and close to 5,000 are expected to be planted in Nur-Sultan as the campaign continues, eventually reaching one million nationwide.

Among the trees are pine, birch, ash, poplar, linden, lilac, ligature, maple and apple tree.

Along with the tree planting, volunteers organised Oct. 12 a campaign meant to encourage people to stop using plastic bags.

Kazakhstan recently committed to ban the use of plastic bags in 2025 and the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources, Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the Association of

Ecological Organisations signed the memorandum that banned free plastic bags at stores. The Kazakh officials expect the move will reduce the plastic consumption by 30 percent, reported the ministry press service.

Another large-scale environmental campaign preceded the tree planting in July, when a one-day, nation-wide volunteer effort to clean parks, ponds, riverbanks and coastal regions collected 15,044 tonnes of garbage across 4,071 hectares of land. Approximately 197,000 people participated in the clean-up that also rallied in Twitter under the Twitter hashtags #Birge #TazaQazaqstan.

The Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources also organised Oct. 3 an environment hour in the Kazakh schools to commemorate World Nature Day.

The government officials, akims (governors) and prominent public figures told the children and young people about the greater need to protect nature, save water and sort waste.

More than 200,000 trees were planted across the country as part of the environment hour, including 2,500 in Nur-Sultan.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bakhytzhhan Sagintayev met with an Almaty writers' community representative to award grants, reported tengrinews.kz. The grants, determined by the Kazakh Writers' Union commission, totalled 500,000 tenge (US\$1,281). The grants are one of the ways the city akimat (administration) supports the writing community and it also plans to reconstruct the writers union building this year. "For us, as representatives of the people, it is important that the akim hears us, which means that he knows the needs and aspirations of the city's people. For our part, we will do our best to contribute to the development of the urban community," said Kazakh Writers' Union Chairperson Ulykbek Yesdaulet.

Beginning in 2020, electronic prescriptions will be mandatory and the purchase prices of medications covered by government insurance will be reduced, said Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov, reported tengrinews.kz. "A pilot drug labelling project was launched to identify counterfeit medicines. In 2020, electronic prescriptions will become mandatory," he said. Electronic prescriptions and drug labelling are used to combat counterfeit drugs and prescriptions and the pilot project has shown a reduction in the number of complaints regarding medications. The rules regulating prices were approved by the ministry, with costs reduced 40 percent after the single distributors list was formed.

Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altai Kulginov met Oct. 23 with Kazakh NGO representatives and offered cooperation in improving the capital's KSK (apartment owners' cooperatives) and communal spaces, reported tengrinews.kz. The representatives raised problems of accessibility, employing those with disabilities and funding for shelters of survivors of domestic violence. "I am very pleased that each speaker voiced specific proposals and projects. Together, we can do more... Here, we can also work together to improve the work of KSK. After all, KSK is a local government organisation. By using united action, we can achieve significant results. We can also develop urban public spaces together," said Kulginov.

An earthquake was recorded Oct. 25 in Almaty, according to tengrinews.kz. "Upon receiving information, the Department of Emergency Situations of the Almaty Region notified local executive bodies, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the police department, the prosecutor's office and other organisations; the situation was clarified in the territories and there were no reports of destruction and casualties," reported the Almaty Department of Emergency Situations.

Kazakh driving licenses and identification documents will include fingerprints beginning in 2021, reported the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs press service. A chip including the owners' biometrical information will be inserted on the back side of the ID document. The press service also reported the ministry's intention to make IDs from higher quality materials and use better technology in their production. The changes are intended to protect documents from being faked.

As a result of the Stop Tuberculosis project, nine people in Nur-Sultan were diagnosed with the disease, reported Inform.kz Oct. 25. The project, organised by the city akimat (administration), covered 14,000 people. "In particular, shopping centres of the city, markets and housing estates were examined. However, the priority is given to houses on the outskirts of the city... As a result of the project, 75 people who showed symptoms indicating tuberculosis were found. After conducting special examinations, nine people were diagnosed with tuberculosis. Work in this direction will be continued. For those citizens who can no longer be examined on weekdays, inspection and medical examination will be organised on weekends," said Public Health Department Deputy Chairperson Aliya Rustemova.

Saryarqa pipeline finishes, completing first stage of providing cities with gas

By Galya Khassenkhanova

NUR-SULTAN – The last joint of the Saryarqa pipeline outside the capital, also called the "golden joint," was ceremoniously welded Oct. 9, signifying completion of the first stage to provide gas there and to other Kazakh cities, reported inform.kz.

The 1,061-kilometre pipeline stretches from Kyzylorda through Zhezkazgan, Karaganda and Temirtau, ending at the capital. Construction started in March and was finished in a record eight months.

Gas is expected to reach 171 mu-

nicipalities, serve 2.7 million people and create 190 new jobs. The project cost \$685 million, \$261 million of which was loaned by the Development Bank of Kazakhstan and Eurasian Development Bank.

AstanaGaz, a structural division of Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, will oversee the project.

The pipeline was among the Five Social Initiatives announced by First President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his March 2018 state-of-the-nation address. Since the country's independence, he noted gas extraction had increased from eight to 52 billion cubic metres in nine regions. While nearly 50 per cent of the population had access

to gas, those in the central and northern regions did not.

"This [the building of Saryarqa pipeline] is one of the five initiatives of First President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The start was given last December and the in-line part was finished in less than a year. This is one of the biggest infrastructural projects," said Samruk Kazyna Chairperson Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

The next stage of the project is providing gas to the capital, which should be completed by 2021.

"Our objective is to distribute the gas inside the city. The first phase provides for gas supply to gas distribution networks of ther-

mal power plants (TPP) 1, 2 and 3; private residential sectors Koktal 1 and 2; the Zheleznodorozhny settlement and the South East microdistrict. At the end of the first phase, residents of 13,500 houses will be able to get gas at home," said capital Akim (Mayor) Altai Kulginov.

The second phase also involves the Family Village, Garden Village, Internatsionalny, Kuygenzh, Michurino, Prigorodny and Telman housing estates. The third stage will provide gas to the Ilyinka, Ondiris and Shubar residential areas.

Pipeline construction will continue. Plans are to build a \$123.6

million, 276-kilometre pipeline in the Nur-Sultan – Kokshetau direction, followed by the \$48.5 million, 177-kilometre Kokshetau – Petropavlovsk pipeline. The last stage will be constructing the Temirtau and Zhezkazgan compressor stations. Completion of all phases is expected in 2032.

Providing gas to the capital will decrease emissions by 34,600 tonnes per year and reduce the air pollution index by 25 percent due to the switch from coal and wood normally used to heat houses.

"The citizens will feel more comfortable as well. When you heat a house with coal, wood or other solid fuel, it is tremendous work. Our citizens have such difficulties round-the-clock, especially if you consider our long winter period," said Kulginov. "Only some technical work is left, which will be finished in November. In December, the pipe will be full of gas."

Government estimates Nurly Zhol programme will cost \$16.91 billion over next five years

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

Mamin instructed the government to ensure approval of the new programme by the end of 2019.

The new agenda of Nurly Zhol will continue developing road infrastructure. According to Atamkulov, the programme will repair 27,000 kilometres of local roads, reconstruct 10,000 kilometres and repair 11,000 kilometres of national roads.

In addition, the government plans to modernise the Dostyk-Moiynty section and electrify the Moiynty-Aktogay railway sections. The government also plans to build 16 airfields to develop small air lines.

The government plans to build and modernise 133 bus stations and passenger service points.

The new state programme should create 551,000 jobs, of which 48,500 will be permanent and 502,200 temporary. By

2025, Nurly Zhol also envisages investment in fixed assets of the transport industry to triple to 3.4 trillion tenge (US\$8.71 billion).

Government officials also expect rail transit to increase from 18.1 million tonnes to 26.9 million tonnes and road transit to increase from 1.6 million tonnes to 3 million tonnes per year.

The government also discussed the progress of the Nurly Zhol 2015-2019 programme, which received 5.8 trillion tenge (US\$14.86 billion) to develop the transport industry.

A stable transport and logistics system has been formed. As a result, Kazakhstan has become a transcontinental bridge between Europe and Asia. Elbasy's tasks in creating a regional transport and logistics hub and developing the country's transit potential are in an

active stage of implementation," Mamin said.

Over the past five years, Nurly Zhol has created more than 400,000 jobs, labour productivity almost doubled, income from transit increased from 180 billion tenge (US\$461.26 million)

to 782.4 billion tenge (US\$2.00 billion), the share of transport in gross domestic product (GDP) grew to 8.3 percent, total transit of containers tripled to 825,000 containers in twenty-foot equivalent, the transit of goods increased from 1.3 million tonnes to 1.8 million tonnes and the number of air transit passengers increased four times to approximately 1 million.

The programme built and reconstructed 3,000 kilometres of national roads, repaired 15,000 kilometres of regional and district roads, commissioned 1,400

kilometres of new railways, modernised six runways at the airports of Almaty, Balkhash, Kostanai, Petropavlovsk, Semei and Uralsk.

The capacity of Kazakh-Chinese border terminals has been increased to 40 million tonnes per year. The capacity of the port infrastructure on the Caspian Sea has been increased from 17.5 million to 27 million tonnes per year. This capacity growth was achieved with the Aktau port expansion and the Kuryk port construction.

Engineering networks have been elongated to 3,400 kilometres. The freight traffic on inland waterways has grown 86 percent, from 750,000 tonnes to 1.4 million tonnes. The navigation on the Irtysh River has resumed and the quality of navigable waterways has been improved, say officials.

Fifteen countries join Green Bridge Initiative

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Fifteen countries have joined the Kazakh Green Bridge green economy transition initiative, International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects Management Board Deputy Chairperson Gaukhar Beiseyeva told bnews.kz Sept. 30.

"We already have 15 countries joining the Green Bridge partnership programme. I can even list all of them for you now – Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Russia, Sweden and Spain," she said. A total of 16

non-governmental organisations also participate as members. The countries joined both to learn from the Kazakh experience and, more importantly, to share that knowledge and experience with other countries. While technologies are generally protected, when it comes to green technologies, the commitment to reducing carbon emissions obliges states to share their technologies, he noted.

"Ultimately, these states have committed to reduce emissions, to reduce the negative impact on the environment; therefore, in accordance with these obligations, it is already important to talk about what is expensive, what is not expensive – this time has already passed.

Now, we need to talk about what needs to be invested and to invest enough to maintain the ecological balance in our own country, thereby contributing to maintaining the ecological balance of the planet and fulfilling our obligations undertaken under international conventions and agreements, too," he added.

One of the greatest challenges in transitioning to a green economy is in people's economic and environmental consciousness.

"Yes, this is, first, culture, and second, consciousness, such as the economic consciousness of the population. A person always thinks from his own pocket; that is, a person must learn to count

money, to calculate his capabilities. We now have, in general, a slightly different approach for people to [consider] their own pocket – it is very important to have a big SUV with big cubes, and this, as they say, is evidence of status, indicates a standard of living to some kind of degree. This consciousness should gradually change; people should very consciously approach their own expenses, their own capabilities," said Beiseyeva.

She also highlighted energy efficiency and conservation as two pillars for creating the sustainable model of economic development and named the main organisations working on these two aspects.

"We talk about two pillars – energy efficiency and energy conservation – that constitute the basis for creating a sustainable model of economic development. Without these two main pillars, sustainability cannot be achieved... Work in this direction is carried out by the state. I think that we have a company, an organisation called KazEnergy; they are developing this policy and they are developing all these areas. We see our task in attracting technology in this area, searching for investments; we are trying to fulfil our task and we also attract international experience, experts to fulfil these tasks," she added.

EURASIA & WORLD

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan advanced from 28th to 25th place in the latest World Bank Doing Business Report released Oct. 24. The report examined the changes in regulation in 12 areas of business activity, including business incorporation, getting a building permit, getting access to credit and protecting minority investors, across 190 economies. It noted starting a business in Kazakhstan became easier after the country began registering companies for value added tax at the time of incorporation and obtaining a construction permit also became easier by streamlining the expert evaluation of the project and improving the process for procuring a new water connection. The World Bank added Kazakhstan strengthened access to credit and improved access to credit information. In resolving insolvency, however, all creditors still have to vote on the rehabilitation plan, regardless of its impact on their interests, which inhibited Kazakhstan's progress in that particular area.

Kazakhstan's Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and British investment firm Da Vinci Capital agreed to form a \$100 million private equity fund following the Kazakh-British Business Council meeting in London on Oct. 23. Under the agreement, the new fund will invest at least \$40 million in Kazakh companies working in IT and digitisation. The meeting was part of the Kazakh delegation's visit led by Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko. The programme also included the Kazakhstan Global Investment Forum organised by the Financial Times, fDi Magazine, Samruk Kazyna, Kazakh Invest and the Kazakh Embassy in the United Kingdom. More than 200 business executives in the manufacturing, agricultural, chemical, mining, financial, metallurgy, alternative energy, logistics and digital technology sectors attended the forum and were briefed on the extensive business and investment opportunities Kazakhstan can offer. As the country prepares to leave the European Union, UK Department for International Trade Investment Minister Graham Stuart MP noted greater interest by British firms to contribute to Kazakhstan's economic growth and development.

Prime Minister Askar Mamin participated in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Council of Heads of Government Oct. 25 in Moscow. The CIS is composed of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan (as an associated member state), Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The agenda included trade and economic cooperation between the member countries, including implementing the Free Trade Agreement signed in 2011 and discussing the Free Trade of Services Agreement within the CIS. The sides signed the concept on digital development cooperation, road map for its execution and strategy on information security. On the same day, the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council of the Eurasian Economic Union took place. On the fringes of the meeting, a free trade zone agreement between the EAEU and Serbia was signed.

The Kazakh delegation joined representatives of 158 countries and international organisations gathering in Baku (Azerbaijan) Oct. 25-26 for the 18th Non-Aligned Movement Heads of State and Government summit chaired this year by the host country. The movement, the largest cooperative effort of 120 countries after the United Nations (UN), was formed at the height of the Cold War and brought together the countries that did not seek to formally align with either side, but rather remain independent and neutral in their decision making. The organisation, which also has 17 countries with observer status, including Kazakhstan, is an important platform for the nation to promote its initiatives across key aspects of the international agenda, reported the Foreign Ministry press service. The summit focused on issues such as the fight against terrorism, threats to peace and security, UN reform, climate change, sustainable development, economic governance and south to south cooperation.

Kazakh-South Korean relations strengthen after top-level visit, says envoy

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh-South Korean relations have been growing at a dynamic pace since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992. The bilateral relationship was strengthened further following South Korean President Moon Jae-in's state visit to Kazakhstan in April 2019, said South Korean Ambassador to Kazakhstan Kim Dae-sik.

The state visit initiated a chain of visits between the countries' officials, including trips to Kazakhstan by Korean National Assembly Speaker Moon Hee-sang and Foreign Affairs Minister Kang Kyung-wha and trips to South Korea by Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development Roman Sklyar, Minister of Foreign Affairs Beibut Atamkulov and Minister of Justice Marat Beketayev.

The countries work continuously to expand their economic ties, and the increase in mutual trade is indicative of their effort. Kim has witnessed the trade volume double during his nearly three-year term as an envoy to Kazakhstan. According to Korean statistical data, the trade volume reached \$3.1 billion in the first nine months of 2019 compared to \$1.5 billion for all of 2017, he said.



Kim Dae-sik

Kazakh data shows mutual trade was \$4.29 billion in the first nine months of the year.

"Kazakh and Korean statistics always differ a little from each other for some reasons," he said.

The presidential visit also increased Korean interest in Kazakhstan.

"Recently, people from Korean television channels came to Kazakhstan and shot a documentary movie about Kazakhstan, near Almaty. Kazakhstan often appears on Korean television, meaning the Korean interest in Kazakhstan is growing," he noted.

Korean business circles recognise Kazakhstan as a leading economy in Central Asia and, therefore, "when Korean companies want to enter the Central Asian market, they start to try with Kazakhstan."

In other words, Kazakhstan is some sort of a testing board" that measures the extent of their success or failure in the region's market, he added.

Approximately 500 joint companies operate in Kazakhstan, including giants Hyundai, LG, Lotte Confectionery, Samsung, SK and Highvill.

The Korean President's visit also resulted in the Fresh Wind agreement that set "the new tone for cooperation."

"They started to strengthen more, because in the new Fresh Wind programme many new areas of cooperation were signed such as healthcare, medicine, smart factories, smart farms, smart technology, IT, education, the fourth industrial revolution and digitisation," said Kim.

The cooperation offers enormous opportunity for new projects to grow and flourish in the future.

"The bilateral relations could be stronger and better. In my view, there should be one big successful project between the two countries," he noted.

The project should be as big as the recent, although failed, Balkhash electro station project.

"To talk about the spheres where that kind of business is possible, it is probably car assembling, hospital construction, electric station

construction and, maybe even a nuclear power station," he added.

The two countries granted each other 30-day, visa-free entrance beginning November 2014. The following year, more than 50,000 Koreans visited Kazakhstan and more than 35,000 Kazakhs travelled to Korea.

Kim stressed such dynamic cooperation between countries lets some "inevitable negative moments." The visa-free regime opened the way for illegal workers to go to Korea, resulting in stricter control at Seoul's Incheon airport for Kazakh citizens.

"Many people say that because of these small problems the bilateral relationship suffers," he said. "But I think it cannot be judged considering only these small problems. These small problems should not affect the relationship between the two countries. We need to look more widely. These small problems happen with all countries... Nevertheless, I think that with constant dialogue and cooperation we can eliminate all of these problems."

Kazakhs are also very familiar with Korean culture, as it has been well popularised through the K-wave. Many Kazakhs, especially youth, listen to K-Pop music and watch K-dramas.

In addition, Korean cultural

events are becoming more common. The Korean cultural centre is "probably the most active among all cultural centres in Kazakhstan," he noted. The centre's director is also Kim's cultural advisor.

The Korean culture centre in the capital organises more than 20 events and performances each year.

"The centre shows all spheres of Korean culture. It is cooking Korean dishes, learning Korean language, culture and history. There are many events where Kazakhs can be introduced to Korean lifestyle," said Kim.

Kazakhstan and Korea have more in common than it appears. Kazakhstan, for example, is home to more than 100,000 ethnic Koreans.

"They are the connecting bridge between the two countries," he noted. "In 1937, they were all deported to Kazakhstan. Thus, many of them, unfortunately, lost their knowledge of Korean language. But after we signed a diplomatic agreement in 1992, there appeared many areas in which the countries started to cooperate. In the end, it came that ethnic Koreans started to learn more Korean and get interested in Korean culture and lifestyle and many of them send their children for them to study."

The Korean government is eager to welcome ethnic Koreans who serve as a bridge with their historical homeland. It tries to provide more educational opportunities, as well as comfortable conditions, for them to study and work in Korea.

IAEA LEU Bank receives first shipment

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Also, the agency reached transit agreements for the transportation of the LEU to and from the site with China and Russia. The agency also concluded transport contracts with Kazakh and Russian railroad companies.

The first LEU shipment, from France's Orano Cycle, was transported by truck to a French port, by ship to Russia, and by train to Kazakhstan. The LEU was checked by IAEA experts on the ground when it arrived at the facility. The IAEA expects to receive a second LEU shipment from Kazakhstan's Kazatomprom by the end of the year.

"The LEU reserve is not a radioactive waste, does not represent a threat to the people or the environment and is meant to be used in case IAEA member states face the disruption of traditional supplies of fuel for po-

litical motives," the Kazakh MFA explained in its release, adding that thanks to the investment from both Kazakhstan and the IAEA, "the necessary infrastruc-

ture has been established for the safe storage of the material at the Ulba Metallurgical Plant", which has many decades of experience working in this area.



Photo credit: mfa.gov.kz

The LEU Bank is fully funded by voluntary contributions from IAEA Member States and other donors. In total, donors have provided \$150 million which is enough to cover costs for 20 years of operations. Donors include the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a Washington-based NGO whose co-chairman, Sam Nunn, first proposed the idea back in 2006 backed by the financial support from Warren Buffet, as well as the United States, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Norway and Kazakhstan. The latter contributed by hosting the bank.

"I thank the donors for their generous contributions that made this project possible and Kazakhstan, China and Russia for their valuable cooperation," Feruta said.

In August 2017, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano and Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, inaugurated

the IAEA LEU Storage Facility at UMP, following an August 2015 agreement between the country and the agency to establish the facility.

In 2010, the IAEA decided to establish the LEU Bank "as an assurance of supply mechanism of last resort for member states that experience a supply disruption due to exceptional circumstances and are unable to secure nuclear power fuel from the commercial market, State-to-State arrangements or by any other means. It will be a physical reserve of 90 metric tonnes of LEU, the basic ingredient to fabricate fuel for nuclear power plants," according to the release.

There are approximately 450 nuclear power reactors in operation around the world and 52 more are under construction. The current reactors supply approximately 10 percent of the world's electricity and one-third of all low-carbon electricity, according to the IAEA.

EU, UNDP and Kazakhstan launch programme...

Continued from Page A1

Women are central to economic growth and sustainable development, said EU Ambassador to Kazakhstan Sven-Olov Carlsson during the reception in Almaty.

"At the core of the common approach between the EU, Afghanistan and Central Asia, is our firm conviction that investing in education by connecting three countries like Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, we can help strengthening the social and economic linkages among them, thus also contributing to addressing common security challenges and promoting a more peaceful and prosperous world," said Carlsson.

"Promoting women's economic empowerment, ensuring gender equality, and facilitating easy access to education are priorities the UNDP continuously works on around the world. Here in Kazakhstan, we promoted education opportunities for women from Afghanistan in the past as part of the cooperation with the government of Kazakhstan," said UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan Yakup Beris. The UNDP is a partner in implementing the programme on behalf of the European Union.

"We believe that education is power, and we all believe that education is the only tool that can de-



Afghan students and Kazakh and international officials pose for a group photo at the Oct. 18 welcome reception in Almaty.

feat poverty and injustice. Women that are here are not ordinary people, they are extraordinary, these women are intelligent and brilliant, they know how to cope with challenges, because coming here was not an easy part, they faced many challenges, but they never gave up," said one of the scholarship recipients Muzhgan Hussaini.

"Kazakhstan's \$50 million education programme has been successful and it is gratifying that it has now served as the foundation for this new joint programme with the European Union," Omirtay Bitimov, former Kazakh ambassador in Kabul and current chair of the Almaty-based AFGQAZ Association for Development and

Partnership, said in an interview for this story.

Bitimov said some of the almost 900 graduates of Kazakhstan's programme to date now serve in top positions in the Afghan president's office, government ministries, the border guards and police, while others work as respected doctors, engineers and journalists.

A retired general and former head of Kazakhstan's intelligence service who spent 15 years in Afghanistan between several tours, Bitimov highlighted the relative low cost of education coupled with its good quality, the accumulated experience of running an education programme for Afghans since 2010, as well as the overall posi-

tive security situation in Kazakhstan and its proximity to Afghanistan as some of the key factors that conditioned the EU's decision to opt for a joint programme.

The choice of English, which increasingly plays a bigger role in Afghanistan, as the language of tuition, is also attractive to Afghan students in their training in Kazakhstan, he added.

Upon arrival to Kazakhstan, Afghan students participated in an orientation week at Alma U, where they learned about the upcoming training programme and toured the city.

They will now have an eight-month English language course with the subsequent admission to the bachelor's, master's and tech-

nical programmes in the Kazakh universities.

"We prepared a special programme for Afghan women which includes entrepreneurship, leadership, and communications course, because we believe that every woman can be a leader in Afghanistan and when they come back to their own country, they will create new companies, they will be professionals in different spheres," Alma U Rector Gulmira Kurganbayeva told The Astana Times.

Kurganbayeva also explained that her university is even going as far as helping some of the students, who arrived in Almaty with their small children, with placing the kids in local kindergartens and schools.

The initiative is expected to help create new business and employment opportunities for the women and their communities in Afghanistan. It is also expected that the new programme will only be a first phase of a much larger cooperative effort between the European Union, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to assist Afghanistan in educating its people.

According to the 2018 UNDP Human Development Report, 11 percent of all adult Afghan women have reached at least a secondary level of education and only 19.5 percent are employed, while these numbers are 37 percent and 87 percent for men, respectively.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Economy grows 4.3 percent in first nine months of 2019

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstan enjoyed a 4.3 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth from January to September, announced Minister of National Economy Ruslan Dalenov at an Oct. 14 government meeting, reported prime minister.kz. Investments in fixed assets grew 9.7 percent.

The growth mainly accounts for an increase in output of light industry at 19 percent, manufacturing at 18.2 percent, metal ore mining at 16.1 percent, construction at 13.5 percent, trade at 7.6 percent, oil refining at 7.2 percent and transport at 5.5 percent.

The metal ore mining increased as a result of the 18.4 percent growth of non-ferrous metal ores.

From January to August, foreign trade turnover increased 1.8 percent to \$62.1 billion. Exports totalled \$37.6 billion, while import reached \$24.5 billion.

"In September of this year annual inflation was 5.3 percent and is in the planned corridor. In January to August, real incomes increased 6.7 percent," the minister said.

There are positive growth dynamics in the main indicators in many regions.

"According to the results of the nine months on the main basic indi-



Photo credit: primeminister.kz

cators of economic growth, I would like to note the positive work of the akimats (regional administrations) of the Atyrau, East Kazakhstan, Turkistan, Zhambay, Pavlodar regions. This is a good example for other regions. At the same time, some akimats show a decrease on a number of indicators," said Prime Minister Askar Mamin.

The state bodies that oversee the budgetary programmes failed to ensure the timely use of the budgetary funds, according to statements at the meeting. Akimats of Almaty have not used 2.2 billion tenge (US\$5.64 million) of the funds, the Almaty Region – 1.1 billion tenge (US\$2.82 million) and the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources – 1.5 billion tenge (US\$3.85 million).

According to First Deputy Prime

Minister – Minister of Finance Alikhan Smailov, the state budget revenues grew 15 percent, national budget increased 19 percent and local budgets increased 7 percent. The assets of the National Fund totalled 26.45 trillion tenge (US\$67.86 billion), which is an increase of 15 percent year over year.

"At all levels of the budget, high implementation of funds was achieved... The indicators of the reporting period show the opportunities available to complete the financial year at a high level," Smailov said.

The revenues to the national budget totalled 4.82 trillion tenge (US\$12.37 billion). The budget received 61 billion tenge (US\$156.50 million), or 101.3 percent, exceeding the plan, primarily due to the increase in the tax payments.

ECONOMIC NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan has increased its gold reserves, reported the Tau-Ken Samruk national mining company press service. The state balance sheet registered the Gagarinskoye and Shokpar deposits as containing more than 21 tonnes of gold and 135 tonnes of silver. Specialists from Shokpar-Gagarinskoye (a subsidiary of Tau-Ken Samruk) completed exploratory assessments to approve the industrial conditions and reserves estimation of the fields in Zhambay Region. The state commission on reserves approved the Gagarinskoye field reserves in the C1+C2 categories at 2.26 million tonnes of ore, 10,104.3 kilogrammes (kg) of gold with an average content of 4.48 gramme/tonne (g/t) and 84.2 tonnes of silver with 37.31 g/t in average content.

As of July 1, reserve assets (excluding assets of the National Fund) were estimated at \$28.2 billion.

The banking sector's external liabilities decreased \$79.9 million to \$5.7 billion due to an increase in non-resident deposits and spot contracts with foreign banks, which were offset by repaying Halyk Bank Eurobonds and Development Bank of Kazakhstan loans.

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Corporate sector external debt to non-affiliated creditors remained virtually unchanged (an increase of \$99.8 million to \$39.7 billion), as the balance of payment operations (repaying Eurobonds, paying external loans) was offset by an increase in the market value of Kazakhstan's Eurobond issuers.

Intercompany debt, which represents 63.3 percent of external debt, decreased \$810.6 million to \$100.2 billion due to large mining and transportation companies repaying loans from foreign sister organisations.

For analytical purposes, external debt separately distinguishes the external debt of organisations controlled by the state (banks and organisations in which the public sector directly or indirectly owns more than 50 percent of equity), which was \$21 billion as of July 1, having decreased by \$1.7 billion in the first half of 2019.

Kazakhstan's net external debt was \$47.7 billion, an \$806.1 million increase in the first half of the year. The state and banking sectors are net lenders to the rest of the world, while the corporate sector is a net borrower.

From January-September, investments in education increased 3.5 percent per year to 143.5 billion tenge (US\$369.19 million), or 1.7 percent of the total investment in fixed assets. In 2018, educational investments decreased 22.7 percent to 204.9 billion tenge (US\$527.16 million). The investments continued to decline in the first half of 2019 to 75.5 billion tenge (US\$194.24 million), which is 12.2 percent lower than the same period of 2018. In the first nine months, however, public private partnership (PPP) development has gained momentum, especially in education. To date, 558 PPP projects are being implemented in the field, said Minister of Education and Science Askhat Aimambetov at a recent government meeting.

From January-August, local budget revenues increased 18.4 percent to 3.7 trillion tenge (US\$9.52 billion). More than half of the revenues, or 2.1 trillion tenge (US\$5.40 billion), are the result of transfers, a 30-percent increase year-on-year (yoY). Most transfers went to the local budgets of the Turkestan (409.8 billion tenge or US\$1.05 billion), Almaty (191.7 billion tenge or US\$493.20 million) and East Kazakhstan (179.6 billion tenge or US\$462.07 million) regions. Tax revenues, in turn, totalled to 1.6 trillion tenge (US\$4.12 billion), an increase of 7.2 percent yoY.

PM instructs government to prioritise development of PPPs

By Galiya Khassenkhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Prime Minister Askar Mamin directed government agencies Oct. 22 to prioritise the development of private-public partnerships (PPP).

"The development of PPP is one of the priorities in the work of the government. The most significant projects belong to the transport, infrastructure, energy, housing and communal services, education and healthcare sectors," the prime minister said during an Oct. 22 conference call with government officials.

Mamin instructed the officials to continue implementing major infrastructure projects, including transport, energy and utilities. Legislative changes will also be necessary to accommodate the increased focus on PPP projects.

The government has signed 615 PPP contracts worth \$4.1 billion. This figure included \$1.4 billion in attracted investments, which in-

clude \$869 million for national projects and \$543 million for regional projects. Approximately 638 more projects worth \$4.9 billion are in the planning and preparing stages.

Approximately 547 projects worth \$1.2 billion are under operation, of which 541 are regional and are worth \$738 million. Six projects are on the national level totaling \$469 million.

Sixty-eight projects worth \$2.6 billion are in the investment stage and include 65 projects of local significance that cost \$936 million. Big Almaty Ring Road, provision of broadband Internet access in rural areas and a system to collect data about air passengers are three national projects worth \$1.9 billion.

Regional executive bodies signed 127 healthcare related contracts worth \$151 million over the last three years, reported Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov. During the current year, 21 contracts were signed totalling \$59 million. From 2019 to 2024, under the PPP

initiative, the ministry will spend \$2.2 billion to build 16 large hospitals across the country, seven of which started building already.

Minister for Education and Science Askhat Aimambetov reported that his agency is implementing 558 projects totalling \$2.1 billion. Since January 2019, 98 private schools have received a state order based on per capita financing for \$15 million. Forty-seven new private schools opened at the beginning of this academic year and 13 more will open by the end of the year.

Mamin also instructed executive bodies to cooperate with the Ministry of National Economy to develop roadmaps for the development of PPPs in supervised sectors. They will present on the progress at meetings of the Government's Project Office.

"Overall, to ensure the sustainable socio-economic development of the country, we need to build an effective cooperation of the government and private partners," he summarised.

A net outflow of \$3.3 billion was provided for other investments by an increase in residents' assets in foreign accounts and government

A net outflow of \$3.3 billion was provided for other investments by an increase in residents' assets in foreign accounts and government

Country ranks 55th in Global Competitiveness Index

Continued from Page A1

Kazakhstan received its highest assessment in macroeconomic stability ranking 60th with 86 points. The country, which was second after Russia in most competitive economy in Eurasia, placed 95th in health, 57th in skills, 62nd in product market, 25th in labour market, 104th in financial system strength, 45th in market size and 35th in business dynamism.

Kazakhstan fell short in the innovation capability pillar, where it received its lowest score of 31 and ranked 95th.

"Focusing on financial development and innovation capability would help the region (Eurasia) to achieve a higher competitiveness performance and advance the process towards structural change," said the report.

It noted the countries that invest heavily in research and development, enhance the skills base of their workforce, develop new infrastructure and introduce new technologies, are more likely to advance in the competitiveness front.

"The report shows that those countries which integrate into their economic policies an emphasis on

infrastructure, skills, research and development and support those left behind are more successful compared to those which focus only on traditional factors of growth," said World Economic Forum Chair and founder Klaus Schwab in the report.

The gap between countries remains significant and the uncertainty is fuelled by the changing geopolitical context and escalating trade tensions creating "gridlock in the international governance system, which eventually hinders investments and increases the risk of supply shocks," he added.

"Ten years on from the global financial crisis, the global economy remains locked in a cycle of low or flat productivity growth despite the injection of more than \$10 trillion by central banks. While these unprecedented measures were successful in averting a deeper recession, they are not enough on their own to catalyse the allocation of resources towards productivity-enhancing investments in the private and public sectors," said the report.

Countries with greater innovation capacity, stronger human capital and better developed infrastructure are more likely to better

workforce and talent adaptability remains crucial as it "pays to enable the workforce to contribute to the technology revolution and to be able to cope with its disruptions."

The countries should strive towards a "new inclusive and sustainable pathway to economic growth." It is also important for them to balance economic growth and environmental sustainability, which experts note is possible, citing Sweden, Denmark and Finland as examples.

"Accelerating climate change is already affecting hundreds of millions around the world and it is likely that people under 60 will witness its radical destabilising effects on Earth. In parallel, rising inequality, precarity and lack of social mobility are undermining social cohesion with a growing sense of unfairness, perceived loss of identity and dignity, weakening social fabric, eroding trust in institutions, disenchantment with political processes and an erosion of the social contract," said the report.

Countries with greater innovation capacity, stronger human capital and better developed infrastructure are more likely to better

Kazakhstan

Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 2019 edition

Rank in 2018 edition: 59th/141

Performance Overview 2019 Key: ◊ Previous edition ▲ Upper-middle-income group average □ Eurasia average



Kazakhstan's indicators

integrate green energy solutions, though the success is still contingent on policy choices.

More sustainable growth can be generated from countries' openness and international collaboration, carbon taxes and subsidies, incentives from green research and development and green public procurement.

"Economic growth does not

happen in a vacuum. Some basic building blocks are required to jumpstart the development process and more are needed to sustain it. In the current volatile geopolitical context, and with a likely downturn ahead, building economic resilience through improved competitiveness is crucial, especially for low-income countries," said the report.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

FlyArystan, a division of Air Astana and Kazakhstan's first low-cost airline, will launch its inaugural daily international route Dec. 13 from Nur-Sultan to Moscow. The flight will depart from Nur-Sultan Nazarbayev International Airport and arrive at Zhukovsky International Airport. The airline has tried to adjust the schedule to make it as comfortable as possible for tourists and business travellers. One-way tickets will start at 19,999 tenge (\$51), which, according to the press release, is 60 percent lower than the current lowest fare. Tickets are available on [flyarystan.kz](#).

The rating agency QS World University Rankings has listed Almaty Management University (AlmaU) and its Graduate School of Business in its Global MBA Rankings 2020, reported [tengrinews.kz](#). The university is ranked in the 151-200 range and is the only institution from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Among MBA programmes in Asia, AlmaU is in the Top 20, which creates a higher demand for its graduates and recognition of their diplomas around the world. The criteria for university rankings include employability, entrepreneurship and alumni outcomes, thought leadership, diversity and return on investment.

Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin and Mongol Prime Minister Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh participated in opening of the Kazakh-Mongol Business Forum, reported [businessmir.kz](#) Oct. 11. Mamin noted Kazakhstan and Mongolia have great potential for enhancing investment cooperation, especially in mining, transport and logistics, construction and agriculture. He discussed his country's investment climate, urging business people from both nations to establish business contacts, create joint ventures and implement mutually beneficial cooperation projects. More than 200 participants attended the forum, including business persons from both nations, national companies and economics-related government agencies, and representatives signed eight agreements.

The Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and Atameken Academy have initiated the gratis online class Jas Kasipker. The class, with a capacity of 5,000 students, will combine information on one platform for young people who want to start their own businesses. Prospective students need to complete a business plan as a part of their application. Video lessons in Kazakh and Russian will contain ten modules, 20 lessons and online quizzes. Participants will learn how to open a business, the most popular business ideas, how to find funding, the basics of marketing and management and existing legislative regulations. At the end of the course, they will present their business plans in a competition where they can win \$1,300 to develop their project.

WOW!HR, an international HR award, held a conference and award ceremony Oct. 7 in Almaty, reported [kapital.kz](#). Companies receive the award for the best projects on personnel management and external and internal communications. Fourteen companies presented 16 projects in four categories and the audience and participants voted for the winners. The digital solutions category presented projects on IT innovations that help business development, with the award going to Eurasian Resources Group (ERG). OLX won the award in the save category, where companies present cases to improve working conditions and employee wellbeing. Transtelecom was named the best in motivating and educating its employees and Air Astana had the best project for working with students and young specialists.

Spanish start-up courier service Glovo, which began operating this summer in Almaty, is launching in Nur-Sultan. Glovo works in 202 cities in 26 countries serving 1.8 million people around the globe. The unique feature of the app is the ability to order absolutely anything that can fit into a Glovo box. A courier can deliver items ranging from food, clothing and medicines to documents and forgotten keys. The service proved to be popular in Almaty, where 20 percent of users enjoy the feature.

AIFC marks World Investors Week with forum on doing business with centre

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and Almaty Akimat (administration) hosted the Almaty Financial Forum as part of World Investors Week (WIW). The event contributed to increased public awareness about consumer protection in financial services, the basics of investing and conditions for doing business through AIFC.

WIW, an annual campaign held

under the auspices of the International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), involved representatives from 80 countries. AIFC is the Kazakh partner.

The event was organised as presentations and information sessions for the academic and business audiences. It covered six Kazakh cities – Aktau, Almaty, Karaganda, Petropavlovsk, Turkestan and the capital – and reflected AIFC's commitment to the IOSCO standard for consumer protection.

Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bahytzhan Sagintayev and AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov delivered welcoming speeches. Kelimbetov noted joint use of the capabilities of the Almaty and AIFC infrastructure is a good combination that the financial centre could offer the Kazakhstan business and global investment communities.

Forum participants discussed consumer protection, AIFC business opportunities, the peculiarities of issuing green and Islamic bonds, benefits and procedure for registering with AIFC and its educational programmes.

AIFC speakers also touched on the financial centre's interaction with the regions through its site and expertise in implementing Almaty-based projects.

AIFC participants representing large international corporations such as China Construction Bank, the country's largest bank; Ernst & Young; Sberbank, Russia's banking and financial services company, and

Wildberries shared their experience of doing business at the centre.

Student lectures and informational events about the basics of investment were held to develop a financial and investment culture among youth. A special seminar was also organised for civil servants who study at the Academy of Public Administration under the Kazakh President.

IOSCO, an international financial organisation that unites national regulatory authorities, is recognised as the global standard setter for the securities sector. It develops, implements and promotes compliance with internationally recognised standards. The organisation actively collaborates with the G20 and Financial Stability Board (FSB) as part of global regulatory reform.

Air Astana unveils first Airbus A321LR aircraft

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh national air carrier Air Astana unveiled Oct. 9 its first Airbus A321 Long Range (LR) aircraft at the Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport in the Kazakh capital.

According to a company release, Air Astana is the first operator of such aircraft in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the company plans to lease an additional six Airbus A321LR aircraft from AerCap of the United States. The remaining six aircraft are scheduled for delivery in the next 12 to 18 months, depending on Airbus' production capacity in Hamburg.

The new Airbus A321LR aircraft will gradually replace the fleet of Boeing 757s, which have been in operation since 2003.

"The arrival of the A321LR represents another major step in the process of fleet modernisation, with the new aircraft offering the latest technologies, low emissions and noise, operational efficiency and passenger comforts. The specification of the Business Class flat beds, Economy Class slim seats and other cabin amenities will ensure that passengers experience the very highest standards of comfort and

service on routes to Western Europe, Southeast Asia, Moscow, Dubai, Istanbul and Beijing," said Air Astana President and CEO Peter Foster.

The aircraft is configured with 16 business class seats and 50 economy class seats. The aircraft's cabin is equipped with a Zodiac (RAVE) in-flight entertainment system, which is in common with all other Airbus and Boeing aircraft in the fleet. It is equipped with the latest generation Pratt & Whitney engines, which reduce fuel consumption by 20 percent, maintenance costs by 5 percent, carbon emissions by 20 percent and noise levels by 50 percent compared with current generation of aircraft.

Air Astana now has 19 Airbus aircraft in its fleet, including eight A320, four A321, three A320neo, three A321neo and one A321LR. The average age of Air Astana's fleet is 7.1 years, one of the lowest in the industry. Air Astana operates flights to more than 60 domestic and international routes from hubs in Nur-Sultan and Almaty.

The company also recently announced plans to allocate \$20,000 to the National Board of Paralympics to develop Paralympic sports Kazakhstan and train Paralympic athletes participating in international sports events.

Oil companies to launch five renewable energy projects

Staff Report

should attract about \$1 billion to Kazakhstan.

"These are investments that will create jobs, pay taxes and generate green energy. In addition, the effect of these investments is the creation of a new industry and training of Kazakh specialists. Both the KEGOC (Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company) system operator and network organisations are involved here," said Sospanova.

"The oil companies such as Shell, Eni, Total and Irena are developing renewable energy projects, and as early as the next year they will be working in Kazakhstan. This is a good sign for us; it shows that these stable investors, which have 20 years of experience of working in Kazakhstan in the oil and gas sector are willing to come to the renewable energy sector. And we hope that a number of such investors, who know Kazakhstan and our legislation well, will come with open eyes and good knowledge about Kazakhstan and will invest in renewable energy," said Sospanova.

Eni will finish the construction of the wind farm Badamsha-1 near Aktobe. The capacity of the farm is 48 megawatts. For the last two years, Shell has been providing Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools with solar stations as part of a programme between Shell, the Ministry of Energy and the schools.

Also, contracts signed between investors and the Settlement and Financial Centre are approaching 3,000 megawatts. For Kazakhstan, this is a significant amount. Kazakhstan's energy balance will gradually integrate these 3,000 megawatts.

Start-up makes innovative portable preamp and amplifier to sell on Amazon

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh entrepreneur Temirlan Aigozhin's Champloo start-up is set to produce an innovative portable preamp and amplifier. The device is made to sell in Kazakhstan and the U.S., where an agreement has been reached with Amazon reported Forbes.kz Sept. 26.

"It is important for me to create a Kazakh audio brand that will be respected for sound quality, design and for the fact that we do not forget the old school. Because after the disappearance of class A amplifiers, especially tube amplifiers, humanity will lose the ability to listen to music that is close to live. The voices of the departed singers and disbanded groups will be silent forever, because the equipment that is offered to us everywhere is not able to accurately convey what they wanted to perform," he said.

The device is unique by combining a class A tube amplifier, which despite its audio merits is usually large and expensive, with a class D, the most

efficient amplifier on the market. Preamps and amps typically joined same-class systems, which gave class A devices a unique sound but made them very energy-consuming and bulky.

"Class A tube amplifiers exist, but are manufactured by very conservative people. They use an old fashioned design and are not portable, while young people prefer speakers that you can take with you to a party. As a result, class A began to die out. There are separate speakers, too, but there are no complementary preamps of such a high level. No one will think of connecting such different equipment to each other," said Aigozhin.

The idea came to him because of his own experience as a DJ while completing his Bachelor's degree in Engineering at Worcester University (U.K.).

"I always wanted a class A tube preamp for myself, but I did not have money for it and I was not going to spend \$5,000-\$6,000. At the university, I also worked as a DJ and dreamed of a speaker that would be loud enough, but fit in a backpack. I looked some of them

up on the Internet, but they all relied on super bass. I love instrumental music, most of which is played not at low, but at medium and high frequencies," he noted.

Aigozhin developed the device shortly after completing his studies and returning to Kazakhstan. At an alumni meeting he presented his device to one of his professors, who approved it and agreed to sponsor his visa to further develop it in the United States.

The device will be made to sell for \$1,000, with low production costs available due to Champloo's small development team. The first 500-piece shipment is to be sold in Kazakhstan, while the second is slated for the U.S. market through Amazon. The American version will include a built-in Alexa Amazon virtual assistant.

"A friend of one of the Guns N' Roses guitarists once came to us from acquaintances in the USA. He really liked the sound and idea of the product and he introduced us to Amazon representatives. They liked the project so much that they even offered to help financially," said Aigozhin.



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EDITORIAL & OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Digitisation is improving lives, businesses

The digital revolution has transformed our world in just a couple of decades. It has increased economic productivity, enabled new industries to flourish, expanded consumer choice and put more power in the hands of citizens. But profound as the change has been, we are still in the early stages of a transformation so deep it is hard for anybody to fathom its final outcome. The challenge for countries and businesses is to ensure they are not left behind.

Kazakhstan has been the regional leader in this important race. More than 75 percent of the population, for example, have access to the internet, a figure well ahead of any other country in Central Asia. By the end of this year, it is hoped that 80 percent of government services can be delivered digitally. State support and the talent and drive of young Kazakhs have combined to produce an explosion of tech start-ups in recent years.

But in a globalised economy, Kazakhstan is not just competing with its neighbours but countries in every region. If the increased economic competitiveness, rising prosperity and improvements in quality of life of the last two decades are to be continued, it is vital that Kazakhstan accelerates digital progress across the board.

This challenge was embraced by First President Nursultan Nazarbayev when he launched the ambitious Digital Kazakhstan programme in 2017. It had a comprehensive agenda which covered the economy, government and skills with the prediction that it could help increase the economy by up to 30 percent by 2022.

Kazakhstan is already seeing the rewards of this programme, which has the full backing of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev who earlier this month urged the country go further and faster. The Government has, for example, revealed that digitisation added \$578 million to the economy last year while tech hubs are providing a powerful motor for job creation. For example, the Astana Hub, Nur-Sultan's international technopark of IT start-ups, facilitates more than 260 projects involving nearly 1,000 entrepreneurs.

Its impact can also be seen in the continuing improvement of public services as digitisation helps improve access across the country and reduce the divide between urban and rural areas. Remote diagnosis and treatment is enabling all to share in better healthcare and the skills of the country's medical experts wherever they live. Students are benefiting as lessons and materials can be shared to help drive up standards.

Parents can now monitor their child's progress in school online while the e-diary helps reduce the risks of false grades. This is just one of the ways that digitisation is helping make public services more responsive,

transparent and accountable – a major priority of President Tokayev.

But Kazakhstan is not resting on these achievements. The digital revolution, for example, is being extended beyond those industries traditionally thought of as hi-tech. In July, for instance, the Government announced nearly 200 projects to digitise mining and metallurgy enterprises, which would generate, it was predicted, \$5.7 billion in profits by 2025. Over half of these projects will be completed by the end of this year.

Farming, too, is seeing a fresh approach. In April, it was revealed that more than 4,000 farms will benefit from increased investment as part of a larger initiative to digitise the nation's agriculture sector. By helping increase yields and improve the use of resources, the initiative will help achieve the goal of doubling processed agricultural product exports by the end of 2021.

At the same time, there has been a renewed emphasis on developing digital skills and infrastructure. Both are absolutely essential if Kazakhstan is to continue successfully modernising and diversifying its economy and raising living standards. Schools and colleges are helping prepare young people for the opportunities a digital economy is creating. Young entrepreneurs and start-ups are being supported while all parts of the country are being connected to the digital grid.

Despite Kazakhstan's size, the country has the best performing business-to-consumer e-commerce market in the Central Asian region. This is the result of both public and private investments helping to continue the growth of this sector, with the share of business-to-consumer e-commerce in total sales predicted to break 3 percent by 2021.

Kazakhstan is also working to keep up with global trend towards the introduction of 5G. As a first step towards a national roll-out, the infrastructure needed to support networks is already being developed in Nur-Sultan, Almaty and Shymkent. The increase in capacity and speed is expected to spur new projects across the economy and public services while making it easier to deliver the ambitious smart cities initiatives.

Kazakhstan has heavily invested in its own satellite communications system, KAZSat-2, enabling a dramatic expansion of communications services to Central Asia countries. Thanks to the work of the KazSat space system satellites, services are provided to 14 telecom operators, digital television, broadband internet access and data transmission throughout Kazakhstan.

All this work shows Kazakhstan's determination to continue improving economic competitiveness, the effectiveness and responsiveness of government and the quality of life for its citizens. It is a sign of just how seriously the country is taking the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades.

Mahatma Gandhi, A Man of All Times

By Prabhat Kumar

India is commemorating 150th birth anniversary of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as Mahatma Gandhi. Born Oct. 2, 1869, Gandhi overcame the ordinary circumstances of his family, to become the leader of the national movement of India for freedom from the British rule.

The man, who practically invented peaceful resistance and non-violent opposition, influenced almost every sphere of life of Indians and is an eternal inspiration not only for India but for the world. When asked what message he would like to give to the world, he said, "My life is my message."

Mahatma Gandhi practiced and trained the Indian freedom fighters in carrying out a non-violent struggle during a period when the most violent world wars engulfed us. He taught the people of India how to make political and economic progress through practice of passive resistance, civil disobedience and non-cooperation, or Satyagraha, or truth-force, as he preferred to call it.

This teaching has gone a long way in India's emergence as the biggest democracy in the world. The practice of democracy has allowed the people of India to articulate their desire for development and progress through peaceful means and by participating in regular elections to parliament and state assemblies and choosing governments that would meet their expectations. The political parties, which win the elections and form the governments, therefore have the responsibility to implement programmes according to the demands coming from the electorate. The electorate evaluates the performance of the governments through endorsing or rejecting the political parties at the next elections.

Gandhi is relevant today to the world not only for the practice of non-violence, the efficacy of which has been acknowledged by many other big leaders of the 20th century, including the great leader of South Africa,



Nelson Mandela, civil rights leader of the United States of America, Martin Luther King Jr., and Lech Walesa of Poland, but in many other spheres also as he articulated views on ecology and the environment, economy, education and health, which remains a guidance for India and the world. Gandhian views have left their imprint in areas as diverse as economics, philosophy and spirituality apart from politics and conflict resolution.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk."

From 2014, India has embarked upon a cleanliness mission, a cause very dear to Mahatma Gandhi. Called 'Swachh Bharat' or Clean India Movement, the goal is to have a clean and green India, where the citizens can enjoy a healthy life in a clean environment. In our quest for development, sometimes we have ignored the damage being caused to the environment, which in fact is already harming the health of our planet and our own health. Gandhi had realised the problem, which we are now coming to understand and had said 'the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.'

India remains committed to the agreements reached at the 21st Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in 2015 in Paris and is taking decisive action to reach the targets set therein. To encourage and promote the use of clean energy, India, along with France, has also set up the International Solar Alliance (ISA) which encourages the use of clean solar energy. The ISA agreement, which has been open for signature since October 2016, already has 79 members.

The life and work of Mahatma Gandhi will continue to inspire India and the world in the years to come. In this year of his 150th birth anniversary, India is not only commemorating this date but also taking and implementing several policy decisions in accordance with his vision. This is the real tribute to Gandhi.

The Embassy of India in Kazakhstan is also commemorating the 150th anniversary with several programmes to increase the awareness about Gandhi's ideas and vision, which are universal in nature. Among the projects is Gandhi's autobiography – The story of my experiments with truth – in Kazakh language, which will be released soon.

The author is the Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan.

Muhammad Haidar Dughlat, a representative of first generation of Great Mughals

By Bulat Sarsenbayev

Central Asia is known as a crossroads of various cultures, as a land of coexistence of civilisations. The ideas and artistic craftsmanship of its peoples have always influenced other parts of the world, including India.

Historical cultural ties between Central Asia and India originated in the distant past. Despite the mountains separating these territories, a large number of travelers, refugees, traders, artisans, scientists and conquerors flocked to India from time to time. One of them was Mirza Haidar Dughlat (Muhammad Haidar Dughlat), a representative of the first generation of the Great Mughals.

The ancestors of Mirza Haidar were well-known aristocrats, leaders of the Dughlat tribe who lived in the territory of present-

day Southern and Southeast Kazakhstan and Kashgar. More than once they succeeded in elevating the Khans to the Moghulistan throne, meeting their interests. In gratitude for the faithful service, the Genghis Khan dynasty back in the 13th century, during the life of Chagatai (second son of Genghis Khan), transferred to the ancestors of Mirza Haidar Dughlat the territory of Kashgar (in modern day China), where they founded a new khanate. But the cousin of Mirza Haidar's grandfather won the fight for the throne. The loser was forced to leave for Central Asia with his family.

Here, the father of Mirza Haidar, Muhammad Hussain, in approximately 1492-1493, married Princess Khub Nigar, the third daughter of the ruler of Moghulistan, Yunus Khan. In 1499, she bore him a son, Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat. The life of the future scientist and commander came at a time when the present Turkic peoples – Kazakhs and Uzbeks – were just beginning to form as independent ethnic groups...

Paying tribute to the great man, in January 2018 in the city of Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir) the grand opening of the restored grave of Muhammad Haidar Dughlat and the Kazakh-Indian conference dedicated to his legacy were held.

Work on the restoration of the grave in the cemetery of the sultans of the Mughal empire "Mazar-i-Salatin" and the installation of an information plate about him was initiated by the Embassy of Kazakhstan in India, with the support of the Archaeological Survey of India, after my trip to Kashmir in September 2015.

The author is a former Ambassador of Kazakhstan to India and holds PhD in History.

The full story is available online.

New discoveries from Genghis Khan era found in North Kazakhstan

By Lyaili Ismagambetova and Irina Olkova

New scientific discoveries were made recently in the Ualikhanov District of the North Kazakhstan Region. The project that made the discoveries is part of the national Rukhani Zhangyu (Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity) programme.

On Sept. 12, students and teachers of M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan State University (NKSU) together with the representatives of the Margulan Centre of Pavlodar State Pedagogical University went on an archaeological expedition to the Ualikhanov District of the North Kazakhstan Region. There, in the lower reaches of the Seleta River, during the excavations, the ruins of ancient mausoleums with the rulers' burial places and the remains of workshops and kilns where brick and



L-R: Irina Olkova and Lyaili Ismagambetova.

architectural decor was made, were found. Bricks of various sizes, gold

jewellery, ceramic dishes and household items were found in the mazar

(burial mound). In total, during half a month, they managed to examine 100 square metres of the territory.

According to the scientists, the representatives of the ruling house of Genghisides from the dynasty of Jochi Khan (Zhoshi Khan) were buried in the tomb of the medieval mausoleum, dating back to the middle of the second half of the 14th century. In addition to the monuments of cult-memorial architecture during the archaeological exploration of the area and the conducted analysis of satellite images and aerial photographs, numerous traces of ancient irrigation in the form of dams and irrigation ditches were revealed as well as the fragments of ceramic wheels- vessels of water-lifting mechanisms.

According to the head of the archaeological expedition Timur Smagulov, the presence of seven mausoleums of medieval rulers indicate the location of nomadic hordes

in the area and the previously unknown cultural, political and sacred centre of the nomads who inhabited the steppes of North Kazakhstan.

The evidence of developed sedentary farming may indicate the location of settlements and hill forts here, being one of the arguments in favour of academician Alkei Margulan's hypothesis about the existence of monuments of medieval urban culture in ancient times on the territory of North Kazakhstan.

Among the discoverers is NKSU Professor Anatoly Pleshakov, candidate of historical sciences, who called this discovery grandiose.

The archaeological expedition, seeking to study the nomadic heritage of the Golden Horde, with the support of the akimats of the North Kazakhstan Region and Ualikhanov District, will continue its work in 2020. The exploration is to cover the entire valley of the lower reaches of the Seleta River, which is lo-

cated in the administrative borders of the North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and Akmola regions.

The project is aimed at developing the body of knowledge on the history and culture of Kazakhstan, forming historical consciousness and patriotism of schoolchildren, students, as well as their labour skills, and improving the scientific, methodological and cultural-educational level of specialists.

In modern conditions, the role and importance of national history has grown immeasurably. The main tasks of the latter are the preservation of historical memory, the knowledge of the laws of social development and consolidation of society in the framework of the Rukhani Zhangyu programme.

Lyaili Ismagambetova and Irina Olkova are scholars at M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan State University.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Kazakh, British companies, institutions sign agreements

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

LONDON – Various Kazakh and British companies and institutions signed agreements and memoranda Oct. 23-24 during the visit of Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko to London. Vassilenko also participated in the sixth meeting of the UK-Kazakhstan Intergovernmental Commission.

The visit started with the Kazakhstan Global Investment Forum 2019 organised by Financial Times Live, fDi Magazine, Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund, Kazakh Invest National Company and the Embassy of Kazakhstan in the UK.

More than 200 business executives attended the forum, which discussed business opportunities in Kazakhstan and the country's latest political and economic transformations.

Some forum participants noted the strategic location of Kazakhstan between Europe and Asia could allow the country to become an important commercial partner for the UK after Brexit.

"Kazakhstan is the largest economy in Central Asia, accounting for more than half of the region's GDP. We are also widely considered to have the best investment climate in the region, having attracted over \$300 billion in foreign direct investment since independence," Vassilenko stated in his opening address.

He stressed that besides the business climate, foreign investors are attracted by Kazakhstan's political stability demonstrated, among other developments, by the smooth transition of power and the election of the new President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, earlier this year. They are also attracted by a well-educated workforce and access to a fast-growing regional market of 500 million consumers.

Vassilenko also added the Kazakhstan Foreign Ministry, which was tasked at the end of 2018 with attracting investment into the key sectors of the economy, is working to achieve that goal.

The forum's keynote speakers included the Chair of the Board of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund Akhmetzhan Yessimov, Governor of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Kairat Kelimbetov, UK Minister for Investment at the Department for International Trade Graham Stuart MP, UK Prime Minister's



Chair of the Board of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

Trade Envoy to Kazakhstan Baroness Emma Nicholson, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Belt and Road Initiative Faisal Rashid MP and the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Sir Suma Chakrabarti.

Speaking at the plenary session, Stuart said the "UK is now one of the biggest foreign direct investors in Kazakhstan, showing the confidence our firms have in your dynamic economy. Hundreds of British companies have their licenses to operate in Kazakhstan with total trade between our nations worth £2.7 billion (US\$3.5 billion) last year. Now, as the UK prepares to leave the European Union and become truly a global champion of free trade, we want British firms to play an even more central role in helping Kazakhstan grow and develop over the coming decades."

Kazakhstan's Oct. 24 improvement from 28th to 25th on the 2020 World Bank Doing Business report serves as a testimony to the effectiveness of the efforts in improving the country's investment climate, officials noted.

"At the heart of Eurasia Kazakhstan's GDP has expanded four percent in the past two years and it provides a wonderful stable platform for which we are deeply grateful for British companies to access their neighbours in the Eurasian Economic Union, China and Uzbekistan. And Kazakhstan has attracted the lion's share of inward investment into the heart of Eurasia.

And today, the Astana International Financial Centre and many other institutions will show us the potential investment opportunities and perhaps give us more current possibilities of the privatisation programme of state-owned companies," Baroness Nicholson said.

Yessimov said Samruk Kazyna approved a new strategy to diversify income by investing in new industries. He noted that over the next five years, the fund plans to invest more than \$38 billion in those areas, where \$32 billion will be foreign investments of which British companies are expected to be a part.

The AIFC, which operates on the principles of English common law, was said to be an important platform for attracting investment as it has the appropriate financial instruments and provides international level services. Investors operate in favourable conditions, which include an independent regulatory mechanism, a court and an international arbitration centre that meet international standards.

Kazakhstan's participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative attracted attention in terms of the prospects of developing a tripartite partnership between the United Kingdom, Kazakhstan and China on the principles of combining the British project management system, Kazakhstan's resources and Chinese investments.

On the sidelines of the forum, Vassilenko met with top British business executives and the leadership of international organisations,

including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), GlaxoSmithKline, Gap Insaa, Investcorp, Independent Power Corporation, United Green, Worley Parsons and International Development Ireland, Ltd., among others.

The third meeting of the Kazakh-British Business Council, co-chaired by Baroness Nicholson and Yessimov, discussed cooperation in the privatisation programme for Samruk Kazyna's portfolio companies.

Samruk Kazyna signed an agreement with Da Vinci Capital investment company on the creation of a \$100 million joint private equity fund. Under the agreement, the fund is to invest at least \$40 million in Kazakh enterprises in the IT and digitisation sectors to facilitate their development and subsequent IPO.

The fund also signed a co-investment agreement with EDP Renovaveis, the world's fourth largest solar and wind power company, on the joint implementation of renewable energy projects in Kazakhstan. EDP Renovaveis is to implement a project to build a 250-megawatt solar power plant in Kazakhstan.

The event also saw the signing of two memoranda of cooperation. The first was between the QazIndustry Kazakhstan Industry and Export Centre and the International Development Ireland, Ltd. on assistance in attracting Irish investment projects worth at least 50 billion tenge (US\$120.3 million) to the territory of Kazakhstan's special economic and industrial zones. The second memorandum was between the Ministry of Healthcare of Kazakhstan and the Gap Insaa company on the construction of a 350-bed hospital in Aktau using financing provided by UK Export Finance.

The forum also included the awarding ceremony of the Global Free Zones of the Year 2019 prize annually awarded by fDi Magazine to some of the 5,000 free economic zones of the world. The Turkistan Special Economic Zone in the south of Kazakhstan won in three nominations: in the Asia-Pacific region for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, the Ones To Watch editor's choice award and Best Marketing Slogan, "Honoring the past, creating the future."

During the second day of the visit, Vassilenko and the UK Minister of State for Europe and the Americas Christopher Pincher MP confirmed that Kazakhstan and the UK seek to strengthen the strategic partnership in the context of the social and political processes taking place in the two states, such as Brexit and Kazakhstan's political transformation.

Pincher, in turn, praised the dynamics of Kazakhstan's political modernisation and reiterated the UK's commitment to developing the strategic partnership with Kazakhstan. He also said the opening of the AIFC is a significant achievement of bilateral cooperation.

The sides discussed the new draft agreement on strategic partnership and cooperation between the two states, the signing of which is expected after Brexit. Speaking about the situation in the Central Asian region, the sides noted Kazakhstan's efforts to help restore peace in Afghanistan, including the educational project for Afghan women recently launched in Kazakhstan and funded by the European Union.

They also discussed cooperation in defence and security, cultural cooperation, education and science.

Sixth meeting of Kazakh-British IGC

The sixth meeting of the Kazakh-British Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation (IGC) chaired by Vassilenko and UK Minister of State for International Trade Conor Burns MP was the final event with in the visit.

More than 50 British business executives and representatives of both countries discussed the IGC's progress over the past year and outlined areas for multifaceted cooperation, including in oil and gas, finance, education, technology and mining.

Vassilenko urged the two countries to develop a dialogue based

on "commodities-for-technologies-and-investment" exchange that is then to be followed by joint ventures providing value-added services.

"Kazakhstan is precisely the kind of rapidly transforming and diversifying economy that our companies in the UK are aiming for. This government stands ready to offer you the support you need to invest in this flourishing market to partner with Kazakh firms and grasp the ripe opportunities that lie ahead," said Burns.

The IGC session enabled its five working groups to proceed with more detailed discussions on cooperation in oil and gas, mining, healthcare, education and financial services. Corporate management development at the AIFC, new Model Civil Aviation Regulations introduction, the establishment of public-private partnership projects in healthcare, technical and vocational schools and other topics have been tabled for the working groups discussion.

A specific reference was also made to water management in rural areas, animal farming and waste management.

The IGC meeting was topped with the signing of a protocol that secured the shared intention to join forces to push forward strategic partnership in all areas of cooperation.

The meeting also saw the signing of bilateral documents. Officials and executives signed a memorandum on financing investment projects in Kazakhstan with the participation of British businesses between Baiterek Holding and UK Export Finance and a joint venture agreement between Artex Construction, LLP and Independent Power Corporation, PLC (IPC) to create a Clean Energy power development company focusing on a 250-megawatt gas-fired CCGT project in Aktau. They also signed a memorandum of understanding between Artex Construction, LLP and IPC to create a Digital Joint Venture to develop a greenfield data centre in Aktau where clean, uninterrupted gas-fired and renewable energy

is required to meet the needs of Western Kazakhstan. Also signed was an agreement between Kazgeology and Astra Mining on the exploration of three deposits in Kazakhstan. Representatives also signed an agreement between Aurora Mining and RPA Inc. on the provision of consulting services in the subsoil use.

North Kazakhstan farmers harvest first major soybean crop

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN – Farmers in the North Kazakhstan Region have begun harvesting the first major soybean crop under Northern Soybean state programme. Kazakhstan currently imports soybeans from Russia, but thanks to the programme the country will be able to cover its needs in five years.

Regional Akim (Governor) Kumar Aksakalov has repeatedly highlighted the benefits of growing the crop.

"Soybeans are being harvested

in the region. A highly profitable culture will bring significant income to farmers. In the world market, one tonne of soybeans costs 150,000 tenge (US\$380). Fifteen centners of soybeans are equal to 30 kilogrammes per hectare of wheat. This year, according to the Northern Soybean programme, 15,000 hectares were sown. The benchmark for 2020 is 150,000 hectares. Agro-diversification increases the profit of farms and, consequently, increases the income of the villagers," he wrote on his Facebook page.

The Taiyshinsky District, the

largest soybean area in the region, sowed 20,000 hectares this year with the highly profitable crop. In the future, farmers plan to increase the soybean growing area several times. They signed an action plan with the Ministry of Agriculture to implement the programme and both sides have high hopes for cultivation in the region, reported Kazinform.

According to operational data from the ministry, farmers in the region have harvested more than 40 percent of the crop. The average yield is 7.2 centners per hectare.

In July, First Vice Minister of Agriculture Aidarbek Saparov said soybean area will be increased up to 1.5 million hectares to implement the programme in the next five years. Crop yields will increase to 25 kilogrammes per hectare and gross harvest will reach more than three million tonnes.

The ministry, together with regional authorities, completed the preparatory work. More than 2.5 million tonnes of conditioned seeds were prepared, which corresponds to 100 percent of the need for the campaign.

SUEZ set to build two landfills in Almaty Region

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – French company SUEZ and Kazakh Keremet Projects are planning to build two solid waste landfills near Almaty and in the Almaty Region, reported the Almaty region administration press service.

Keremet will oversee all stages of the project, including constructing the landfills. SUEZ, represented in 80 countries, operates 100 municipal solid waste landfills globally.

SUEZ designs and constructs landfills considering all environmental requirements, said Senior Vice President for International Development Timothée Cargill. Leachate neither seeps through the soil nor gets into the groundwater and no harmful emissions enter the atmosphere. The company, which transforms waste products to produce various types of energy for the state and local companies, can also produce biogas and compost.

SUEZ specialises in waste segregation, or dividing it into two groups – waste that can be processed and converted into energy and that which cannot be processed.

The company can process municipal waste into renewable energy. The procedure involves incinerating waste that cannot be processed, including mandatory

smoke purification and producing useful energy.

Almaty Region Akim (Governor) Amandyk Batalov proposed building the landfills as the first stage of the work.

"The first landfill will be built on the basis of the waste facility in Taldykorgan. In cooperation with your company, we will organise waste collection to this landfill from the districts adjacent to the regional centre, the cities of Tekeli and Taldykorgan. We will get about 150,000 tonnes of waste per year. The second landfill will be located on the area adjacent to Almaty. I propose building it in the densely populated Yenbekshikazakh region. The waste will be collected from the Talgar district, partly from the Ili district and Almaty. We will receive more than 300,000 tonnes of waste per year," he said at the Oct. 8 meeting.

Plans are underway to create a group of SUEZ and Keremet representatives and local authorities to work out the project details using step by step technology.

"We are interested in the construction of landfills as the company covers the entire process, starting with the construction of modern landfills using special technology and taking into account all environmental requirements, to waste processing and production of various types of energy. I hope we continue to work in all these areas," he added.

Kazakhstan moves up to 25th spot in WB Doing Business Report

Continued from Page A1

Kazakhstan also improved access to credit information by reporting credit data from retailers, made dealing with construction permits easier by streamlining the expert evaluation of the construction project and by improving the process for obtaining a new water connection.

At the same time, some difficult

ties of doing business in Kazakhstan remain unsolved or exacerbated by new policies, notes the report.

"Kazakhstan also made transferring property more difficult by requiring additional proof of payment of state duties. Furthermore, Kazakhstan made resolving insolvency more difficult by requiring that all creditors vote on the rehabilitation plan, regardless of its im-

pact on their interests," states the report.

In the new rankings, Kazakhstan is ahead of Iceland (26th place), Austria (27th place), Russia (28th place), Japan (29th place), Spain (30th place), Armenia (47th place), Belarus (49th place), Kyrgyzstan (80th place) and other countries.

The top-ranking countries on the Doing Business index are New Zealand, Singapore and

Hong Kong. The World Bank annually publishes the rating of 190 countries on favourable business conditions. The analysis involves 10 indicators, such as the time and money spent on starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes and trading across borders.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Carpets produced in Shymkent gain foothold in int'l market

By Yelena Levkovich

NUR-SULTAN – Carpets from Shymkent are gaining attention in the internal market and entering the international one.

Bal Tekstil, the country's largest carpet manufacturer, began operation in 2013 in the city's special economic zone. Its story began in 1994, however, when Talgat Ishakhov started wholesaling foreign rugs.

With hard work and focused on his main purpose – founding the local carpet industry – Ishakhov gained backing from Turkish



Photo credit: kasez.com

investors. In the next 25 years, the company has earned an excellent business reputation among its clients, who appreciate the high

quality of Bal Tekstil products and terms.

With approximately 300 employees working three shifts, the company manufactures more than five million square metres of rugs annually, a significant expansion compared to its early years. Those figures are expected to increase, as Bal Tekstil will introduce a third line of polypropylene threads, the only company in the country to manufacture such goods.

Carpet production is partially automated using modern equipment from Belgium, but the critical manual work is often over-

looked. Materials are purchased from Bangladesh, India, Russia and Turkey.

Made with great effort, Bal Tekstil carpets can be purchased throughout Kazakhstan, as the company's distribution network has more than 400 points of sale. The names of the collections are easy to recognise – Alatay, Astana Deluxe, Barys, Khan Tengri, Leader and Turan. The company provides 500 different designs which clients may order.

Exports of the domestic carpets began in 2015, initially representing only 12 percent of the compa-

ny's business. Within six months, the figure reached 20 percent and management expectations are for it to increase to 50 percent. Several years ago Bal Tekstil finalised an agreement with IKEA, making its rugs available to European homeowners.

"We have more than 400 reliable clients from Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and even all over the world. Our mission is simple – make people happy, give them our high-quality carpets at a reasonable cost for more comfortable living," Ishakhov said in an interview with Kazakh newspaper Yuzhnyi.

QazTrade unifies support measures for exporters

By Assel Satubaldina



QazTrade Director Arman Abenov.

NUR-SULTAN – QazTrade, established in September under the recently created Ministry of Trade and Integration, seeks to unify all support measures for Kazakh exporters, said QazTrade Director Arman Abenov in an interview with The Astana Times.

Formerly the Centre for Trade Policy Development, QazTrade, will tackle fragmented state support, one of the main challenges faced by exporters.

"The centre is meant to support exporters and improve the system of services, as well as build an effective interaction between exporters and government," he said.

Central Asia's largest economy, Kazakhstan currently sends 800 products to 120 countries. The country exported \$68.3 billion in goods and services in 2018, a 24.2-percent increase compared to 2017.

The European Union is Kazakhstan's largest trading partner, accounting for 51 percent of exports, 88.8 percent of which is oil. Afghanistan, China, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Turkey, the

United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan are also among the main consumers.

Oil represents 61.9 percent of Kazakh exports. The country also ships processed goods including copper, ferroalloys, unalloyed steel flat products, oil products, wheat and sunflower oil.

The government adopted a roadmap in September to boost the country's non-oil exports in a broader effort to move away from the commodity-based exports that have long supported its economic growth.

"The roadmap focuses on domestic and external barriers and,

once eliminated, it will reduce the impact of negative factors that domestic producers and exporters face," said Abenov.

Kazakhstan has targeted boosting non-oil exports one and a-half fold by 2022 and two-fold by 2025, bringing the volume in the category to \$38 billion. The country will focus on its priority export markets, including China, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEAU) and Central Asia.

"Promotion of non-oil exports, which are goods with high value added costs and high-tech goods, is among the country's priorities," he added.

To boost export capacity, QazTrade will soon launch an export accelerator programme, where companies will have the chance to expand their export development opportunities. Programme participants will have access to complimentary intensive coaching from experts and business consultants.

"This is a completely new programme and its efficiency is proved globally. It works in such countries as Canada, Australia, Russia, the United States and Germany," said Abenov.

The centre's website also in-

cludes information needed by current and potential exporters, including material on taxes and custom clearance and review of the Kazakh export market.

The website will also have the registry of Kazakh exporters categorised based on the industries. Such service will allow foreign customers to find local contractors on the website. There will also be information about the Kazakh trade offices abroad," he said.

Abenov noted online trading platforms serve as a new channel to promote goods and services for export.

"The current and potential exporters can expand their geography of supply worldwide through the Internet, reducing their costs. The distinct feature of these platforms is that even small producers, who do not have extensive financial capabilities and competencies, can sell their products to the entire world, thereby avoiding intermediate structures," he added.

The centre, he noted, is currently working to help Kazakh processing industry producers enter the Alibaba Group platform, one of the world's largest business-to-business marketplaces.

The centre also plans to conduct a comprehensive review of all legislative documents that oversee export development and promotion, enhance time-saving logistic procedures and operation processes, upgrade infrastructure through its modernisation and technical equipment and increase the traffic capacity at border points with EEAU countries.

Marketing analysis, he added, also plays an important role in export development.

"The roadmap envisions the marketing analysis to study foreign markets and determine which markets might be interested in Kazakh exports and create recognisable Kazakh brands in key markets, including the single brand 'Made in Kazakhstan'; study preferences of foreign consumers and foreign requirements for product labelling and develop attractive, quality, environment friendly, functional and relatively cheap packaging," he said.

Exporters will also receive financial support, including lower interest rates for export-oriented companies, cancellation of customs duties for exports up to 1,000 euros (US\$1,114) and a simplified procedure for value-

added tax (VAT) return for exports, among other measures.

Promoting services to foreign markets will be possible by forming a country tourism brand and introducing a tax free system to attract more tourists and encourage purchases and a comprehensive analysis on the demand of the Kazakh education services and interests of foreign students.

"We need to highlight some of the biggest problems exporters face; for example, the difficulty to refund VAT. It takes years to return the multimillion-dollar funds of exporters and as a result, they have to face a shortage of capital. Kazakhstan's milling association raised the issue regarding the increase in the import quota of Kazakh flour in China. Food industry companies emphasise the access of Kazakhstan's salt to the Chinese market," said Abenov.

QazTrade is among the latest efforts Kazakhstan has undertaken to help its domestic procedures. In April, the government announced it would allocate 500 billion tenge (US\$1.28 billion) to expand financial and non-financial support for domestic enterprises in the next three years. The Development Bank of Kazakhstan will receive 138 billion tenge (US\$353.6 million) to finance export-oriented projects in 2019 and 41 billion tenge (US\$105 million) annually in 2020 and 2021.

Kazakh shoe dryer interests foreign investors

By Galiya Khassenkhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh entrepreneur Kairat Nurlybekov has signed an agreement with Dutch company KYLLA for a \$5.6 million investment in his invention, a shoe dryer. He will be travelling to the Netherlands to discuss the details of the agreement, including the option of KYLLA purchasing a share of the enterprise.

Preparations are being made to produce the device's fourth model, which, compared to previous versions, is lighter, faster and cheaper.

"Aside from the Dutch, other countries are also showing interest. It is a pity that here in Kazakhstan, it [the device] does not invoke much demand. Investors here prefer the IT sphere where there is no need for large investments," said Nurlybekov.

Zima Clear Sole is easy to use – the person stands on the device and strong currents of warm air blow on his or her shoes for 20-30 seconds removing water, dirt and snow. UV light helps remove light dirt. The dryer is installed in the entranceway or embedded in the floor, occupying a small, under-used space.

"It basically works like a hair dryer," he noted.

Production will be centred at Altai Innovative Technology Park in Almaty's Special Economic Zone.

"We have all the necessary signatures; there are only several

documents left. From the start, I wanted for my invention to be assembled in Kazakhstan and sold around the world with the 'Made in Kazakhstan' label on it," he added.

The idea came to Nurlybekov in 2015 as he considered the capital's long winters and abundant precipitation. In addition to toasty toes, the invention has a practical component, as it prevents footprints on floors and carpets in cold, rainy weather when people enter buildings in wet shoes. The dryer eliminates the unattractive look and need for the cleaning staff to constantly wipe the floor; slippery, dangerous conditions that can cause injury and the constant accumulation of dirt that becomes a fertile ground for infection.

Commonwealth of Independent States citizens typically wear shoe covers which can be uncomfortable, especially for people with disabilities, senior citizens and pregnant women. The plastic covers are also harmful to the

environment. Zima Clear Sole, however, is eco-friendly and even reduces water consumption by 10-20 percent, said Nurlybekov.

"Many business centres have the other kind of shoe cleaners, but they require additional care – filling them with cream, changing brushes. My device does not require that. It is easily transportable and needs to be wiped not more than once a day. It also saves time for the cleaning staff, detergent and water. Plus, your shoes will be clean and warm, which is very important in the winter," he added.

Preparations are being made to produce the device's fourth model, which, compared to previous versions, is lighter, faster and cheaper. The five-person company has received requests from Canada, Spain and the U.S. anxious to see the new model.

"We want to sell the best possible version of our product, so that the advertisement and recommendations would be good," said Nurlybekov.



Photo credit: zimacss.com

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Nation & Capital

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Olga Rypakova wins gold at seventh CISM World Games in China

B7

UNFPA, activists promote “Qyzbolsyn” film to address women’s issues in society

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Nazarbayev University’s E.Quality Talks club initiated “The Power of Girls: Independent and Unstoppable on the International Day of the Girl Child” Oct. 11 in the capital.

A trailer for the upcoming documentary “Qyzbolsyn” (“Let There Be a Girl”), directed by Katerina Suvorova and UNFPA activist Akmarzhan Kushebayeva, premiered as part of the event. The authors wanted to learn more about the lives of women and girls named Ulbolsyn (Let there be a boy) at birth, which means the preference or wish for the birth of a son. The tradition is not unique to Kazakhstan and exists in Central Asian countries and other regions of the world.

“Our film gives an opportunity to hear the voices of women who, perhaps, have never been asked about this. Their answer is very important and interesting to us, no matter what this answer is like, because these names are the essence of the lives of all of us as women of Central Asia,” said Suvorova.

The International Day of the Girl Child has been celebrated since 2012. Its purpose is to demonstrate and find ways to solve the problems that girls face and serve as a reminder of the importance of expanding their capabilities and protecting their rights.

Girls’ movements around the world are helping to tackle issues including unequal access to edu-



Photo credit: UNFPA in Kazakhstan

cation, gender-based violence and self-esteem. Girls overcome barriers posed by stereotypes and exclusion, including those aimed at children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Girls prove that occupations, pastimes, lifestyle, decisions and ways of thinking, traditionally considered to be male pursuits, are equally interesting to them.

“Our future will be increasingly more digital and centred around information technologies. If we don’t re-visit the way we look at traditionally ‘male’ or ‘female’ professions, hobbies, lifestyles and other walks of life and don’t promote girls’ access to education, we risk failing

girls, wasting their talents and failing societies, too,” said KazRobotics Federation of Educational and Sports Robotics President Aizhan Zhekeeva.

Universal access to reproductive health and rights is one of the biggest contributors to gender equality, noted UNFPA Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Special Advisor Pedro Pablo Vilanueva.

“When a woman or a girl can plan her family, she can plan the rest of her life. Protecting and promoting her reproductive rights – including the right to decide whether, how many and when to have children – is essential to ensuring her freedom

to participate more fully and equally in society,” she said.

Vilanueva expressed hope that “Qyzbolsyn” will grow into a larger project where everyone can make a contribution towards promoting gender equality and girls’ opportunities.

Kazakhstan has approximately 75,400 women and girls named Ulbolsyn and its derivatives, more than half of whom live in rural areas. The name has 294 variations with similar meaning.

A slight decrease in the number of women with such names has been observed in the past three decades from 13,803 in 1990-1999 to 12,264 in 2010-2019.

WB data suggests Central Asian poverty rate continues to shrink, pace slowing

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Central Asian poverty levels continue to decrease, but the pace has slowed, reported the World Bank press service in conjunction with the Oct. 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

“The good news is that Central Asia continues to make progress towards eliminating poverty,” said Lilia Burunciuc, World Bank Country Director for Central Asia, reported the press service. “However, poverty reduction is happen-

ing much less quickly than before. Rekindling inclusive growth should therefore be among the region’s most urgent priorities.”

All Central Asian countries had been significantly reducing their poverty rates between 2000 and 2002, but subsequently had a common slowdown.

Poverty in Kazakhstan was lower in the early 2000s and declined at a rate of 4 percent per year from 2002-2009. In 2009, the country had almost eliminated poverty to just 2 percent, when measured with the lower middle-income indicator of \$3.20 per day. The pov-

erty rate reached its lowest point in 2013, when measured with the upper middle-income indicator of \$5.50 per day, at approximately 6 percent. Since then, the rate has been around 7 percent.

The World Bank data found the Central Asian middle class is almost entirely concentrated in and around big cities like Nur-Sultan and Almaty, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and Tashkent (Uzbekistan). This creates a common regional challenge to ensure including all people in the dynamic labour markets.

Higher poverty levels are found in rural and remote areas that lack closer integration with urban growth centres, according to the recently published Poverty Maps for Central Asian countries. This is especially true in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where poverty rates are above 40 percent in most remote districts.

From 2002-2009, the poverty rate reduction slipped an average of seven percentage points per year in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; from nearly 70 percent, the rate fell to 25 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

Continued on Page B5

Experts adopt joint programme to address land degradation issue in Central Asia

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN – More than 70 scientists, politicians and experts from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan developed a common programme to solve problems related to biodiversity conservation, land degradation and climate change at a regional dialogue Oct. 9-11 in Almaty.

Central Asia has arid and semi-arid areas characterised by serious transboundary desertification, reported the press service of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kazakhstan. According to preliminary estimates, 4-10 percent of cultivated land, 27-68 percent of pastureland and 1-8 percent of forest land are subject to destructive processes. The area of degraded land in each country of Central Asia ranges from 40 to 90 percent.

In Kazakhstan, degradation problems affect from 4 to 10 percent of cultivated land, from 20 to 60 percent of pastures and up



Photo credit: UNDP in Kazakhstan

to 8 percent of the forest land. It relates to cattle grazing or non-compliance with norms on grazing areas, insufficient irrigation and irrational use of water. Kazakhstan is almost entirely located in desert and semi-desert zones, so the land is very vulnerable.

“Economy of Central Asian countries are largely based on agriculture, which makes up 10-38 percent of GDP and provides

18-65 percent of the population’s employment, which makes it dependent on natural resources. Desertification affects 66 percent of the land in Kazakhstan. There is an urgent need to take preventive measures to prevent further land degradation and take measures to restore and further ensure rational use of natural resources including land and water,” said National Coordinator of the UN Convention to

Combat Desertification in Kazakhstan Kairat Ustemirov.

One of the priority areas to solve environmental problems is to increase the efficiency of natural resources and support the green economy.

“Kazakhstan is pursuing a state policy in the field of combating land degradation, preserving biodiversity and climate change.

Continued on Page B5

Uzbek ethno-cultural centre is growing

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

Uzbek ethno cultural centre, in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

NUR-SULTAN – The relevance of the Uzbek ethno cultural centre in the capital continues to grow with the increasing number of ethnic Uzbeks living in the city. The centre does its best to help local Uzbeks, especially youth, in preserving their ethnic identity through cultural activities and events.

Ethnic Uzbeks comprise one of the largest ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. At the beginning of 2019, the Kazakh Statistic Committee registered 590,993 ethnic Uzbeks, or 3.1 percent of the country’s population. Of this number, 10,581 live in the capital, a figure which has risen significantly since 1999 when there were approximately only 500 representatives of the ethnic group.

“The Uzbek ethnoses show a steady and noticeable tendency to increase. Currently, the Uzbek group has the highest birth rates. In addition, Uzbeks continue to migrate to Kazakhstan due to economic reasons,” said Sherzod Patalov, Deputy Chair of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) and Chair of the capital’s

Patalov has led the cultural centre for the last ten years. During his term, the centre has formed two creative groups, the Poytakht vocal and instrumental ensemble and Astana Gunchalari dance ensemble, which have been praised by national and city level organisations for their outstanding performances.

In 2015, the centre opened Ziyo Sunday school for children where they can learn Uzbek language, history, traditions and culture. The capital akimat (city administration) began supporting Ziyo two years later by providing space and four qualified teachers at public lyceum No. 53. At present, 57 students attend the weekly classes.

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Khan’s residence gives a unique glimpse into history

Staff Report

was seeking to colonise Kazakhstan lands, it started by building forts on its southern frontier. The forts of St. Peter was built in 1752 on the Yessil River bank because of the establishment of positive political and economic relations between the Russian administration and the khan’s government.

The museum opened in 2008 and is unique because it is the only architectural monument in Kazakhstan related to the khan.

Abylai Khan was a ruler of the Kazakh Khanate in the 18th century. His lineage is traced back to the founder of the Kazakh Khanate, Khan Zhanibek, and further back to Genghis Khan himself. He was a talented politician, a diplomat and a military general. He was able to keep the unity of Kazakh people when the Russian Empire and China were pressing in from both sides and Dzungar tribes were trying to wipe off the population.

According to Qazaqstan Tarihy website, when the Russian Empire replaced it in 1821. A wooden cottage served as a residence for 56 years since 1765 before it, according to one version, caught on fire. A two-storey mansion replaced it in 1821.

The residence, however, is covered in controversies, states mypterkz.kz, a website on Petropavlovsk history and culture. While the building served as an infirmary, rumours circled around that it was once the khan’s residency.

Continued on Page B6

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

BARYS ARENA

Nov. 2 at 5 p.m.

HC Barys – HC CSKA Moscow, KHL

SARYARKA VELODROME

Nov. 4 at 7.30 p.m.

PBC Astana - BC Zenit, VTB league

Nov. 9 at 3 p.m.

PBC Astana - BC Tsmoki-Minsk, VTB league

ASTANA ARENA

Nov. 7 at 9.50 p.m.

FC Astana – FC AZ Alkmaar

ASTANA OPERA

Nov. 9 at 6 p.m.

Rigoletto, opera

Nov. 10 at 6 p.m.

The Pearl Fishers, opera

Nov. 13 at 7 p.m.

Kyz Zhibek, opera

ASTANA BALLET

Nov. 9, 10 at 6 p.m.

Legend of Love

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Pavlodar musicologist owns world's largest collection of gramophone records

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

NUR-SULTAN — Musicologist Naum Shafer, who is also a professor, literary critic, writer and composer, has assembled the world's largest collection of gramophone records (not to be confused with vinyl ones) in Pavlodar. The collection consists of more than 14,000 discs, some of which are the only saved copy in the world.

"Don't divide music into the serious and frivolous. Music can only be good or bad. You can compose a magnificent simple song and trashy opera," he likes to say.

The story began before Shafer was born when his parents received a gramophone and 30 records as a wedding gift in 1930. At the time, the family was living in Bessarabia, in the then Romania (now Chisinau, Moldova). As a child, he was more interested in the gramophone and records than toys.

Soviet troops entered Bessarabia in 1940. The following year, eight days before the war against fascist Germany began in June 1941, the Shafers were among many individuals deported to Kazakhstan. Representatives of the new government allowed each family to take no more than 100 kilogrammes of luggage.

The Shafers included the gramophone and discs among their possessions. Employees of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the name of the KGB in the early years of the Soviet Union, who evicted the family tried to forbid them from including the items. Apparently, they were



L-R: Vladislav Yermachenko and Naum Shafer.

records issued on each continent from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. It contains the sounds of nearly every nation, from folk music to classic symphonies.

His archive of 1930's Kazakh music recorded on gramophone discs is the largest in the country. It also includes more than 10,000 vinyl records, in excess of 1,500 tape reels and compact cassettes. Shafer has written more than half a million cards, one for every song, allowing him to easily find each record.

With the help of local authorities, the Shafer house-museum was opened in Pavlodar in 2002. In addition to the recordings, it consists of more than 17,000 books and 64,000 newspapers and maga-

He listened with pleasure to songs on the gramophone his grandmother sang to him in his childhood. At his initiative, the British Council in Kazakhstan published a booklet about Shafer's house-museum in English. A portion of the information was included in the encyclopaedia of Kazakh museums, which the council also printed.

Collectors around the world have repeatedly appealed to Shafer to sell his collection, offering quite a bit of money for it, and high-level representatives from many Russian cities have offered the best conditions for moving the museum. Each is prepared to allocate a large building for the items and make it the pearl of their urban area's cultural life.

Shafer has collected more than 14,000 gramophone records in 50 years, buying them in stores, corresponding with collectors from many countries and exchanging discs with them. His wife, Natalia Kapustina, has always provided tremendous support.

zines since the 1930s. In excess of 100 issues by Russian writers and poets, printed in the 19th century, are the most valuable among the books.

In 2008, Paul Brummel, British Ambassador to Kazakhstan, visited the Shafer house-museum. He was pleasantly surprised by the presence of English records in the collection, which he had never seen even in the United Kingdom.

The Mikhail Glinka State Museum in Moscow would like to acquire approximately 300 of Shafer's recordings of the composer's works to help complete its selection and museums in countries throughout the world would appreciate getting at least some of the recordings. Shafer loves Pavlodar, however, and wants to save his entire collection in the city for future generations.

Uzbek ethno-cultural centre is growing

Continued from Page B1



Sherzod Pulatov, Deputy Chair of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan and Chair of the capital's Uzbek ethno cultural centre.

stan – My Country national festival, a concert as a part of the Alga Kazakhstan 7th Asian Winter Games, Ulkenge – Kurmet, Ata Zangdaghi Mindet charity event, Alisher Navoi literary and cultural evening and Dostyk Cup futsal tournament.

An array of cultural events awaits capital residents. The centre plans to organise an exhibition of Uzbek national clothing, demonstrate national children's games and conduct master classes of the finest dishes from Uzbek cuisine.

An international literary evening dedicated to Uzbek poet, writer and politician Alisher Navoi and Kazakh poet Abai Kunanbayev is also being planned, highlighted by a youth competition. The centre is also making preparations for the second national Dostyk Cup, as well as the traditional Sumalyak Party and Pilau (Plov) Party – festive events celebrating Turkic and Uzbek national dishes.

"Undoubtedly, we will continue to work in the most active mode; on the basis of continuity, we will continue to transfer the accumulated experience to the younger generation," he said.

Uzbeks are represented in all Kazakh regions, with the majority (87.57 percent) of ethnic settlements in the South Kazakhstan Region, where the two countries share a border. The first Uzbek

ethno cultural centre in the country opened in 1989 in the South Kazakhstan Region.

The three large centres in the region united under the Dustlik Association of Uzbeks in Kazakhstan

in 1995 and currently includes 12 centres. Forty-two other regional, city and district level centres are in operation.

"The activities of all these centres are aimed at preserving and

developing Uzbek language and culture, promoting the policies pursued in our state and uniting all ethnic groups of the country into the united people of Kazakhstan," said Pulatov.



Third 100 New Faces project looks for young, successful role models

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN — The third annual 100 New Faces of Kazakhstan project has changed its application requirements and revised procedures to select the top 100 individuals whose contributions to the country's social life deserve recognition. Application may be submitted through Nov. 1.

The project requires participants to be under age 39 to find role models among younger generations in support of the Year of Youth.

The pool, however, is expected to grow, as the project is open to self-nomination. Previously, one could be nominated only if his or her merit was recognised by another person. Similar to past years, the participant must be a Kazakh citizen, although he or she can have a residence elsewhere.

In addition to selection through the most popular vote tally, pre-selected jury members will finalise the project winners' list. The jury will include renowned artists, athletes, public figures, writers and entrepreneurs such as singer Roza Rymbayeva,

and Olympic champions Serik Sapiev and Alexander Vinokurov, BTS Digital education department head and public figure Sayasai Nurbek and musician and Dimash Kudайbergen's producer Kanat Aitabayev.

The last two years' project winners have joined the Bureau-100 initiative group that seeks new heroes annually.

"This makes us very happy, because, if any project initiated by the state, is picked up by initiative groups and the public, this means it vastly touched the hearts of our citizens," said Minister of Infor-

mation and Social Development Dauren Abayev at a Sept. 30 press conference in the capital, reported inform.kz.

The application form can be completed and submitted on the new website 100janaesim.ruh.kz.

"This is a new site, a kind of encyclopaedia that contains almost all the participants of previous periods. This year, the application process has been systematised. They will be taken in six directions – science, society, medicine, business, culture and sports," said Kazakhstan Institute for Social

Development Board Chair Kemelbek Oishibayev.

After the winners are announced, the rest of the agenda and traditions will be the same.

"As before, we will organise a meeting of the winners with the country's leadership and success stories will be formed on the basis of documentaries and social videos. As before, we will hold their meetings with schoolchildren and students. Of course, we will involve them in the implementation of various projects. Most importantly, we will show how our

citizens can and do a huge number of amazing things for the development of the country," said Abayev.

The results of the project will be announced in December at a presentation involving Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

"We want to show that Kazakhstan is rich in talents in various fields. There are so many success stories, but because of the daily turnover, we do not always notice our heroes. Our task is to find them; we must show that you can be proud of these stories," Abayev told express.kz.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

St. Petersburg Chamber Opera to perform at Astana Opera House

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN — The St. Petersburg Chamber Opera, the state chamber music theatre, will present Giuseppe Verdi's "Rigoletto" Nov. 9 and Georges Bizet's "Les Pêcheurs de Perles" ("The Pearl Fishers") Nov. 10 at the Astana Opera House in the capital.

The theatre will stage the productions with an unconventional interpretation of the stories, colourful, luxurious costumes and excellent acting and musical performances, according to the theatre's release.

"I have a special relationship with Kazakhstan, as I have invested a lot of energy and effort in the development of national opera art. I was directly involved in the opening of Kazakhstan opera houses and staged about 13 productions at various venues, including at the country's main opera stage — Astana Opera. Your audience is very important to me and I would not want to disappoint them. I hope my own team will show its merit," said Director and People's Artist of Russia Yuri Alexandrov.



A scene from "Rigoletto" opera.

a court jester, a hypocrite with a grudge against the entire world," he said, and he offers a new version of the psychological drama where the court jester is neither a hunchback nor an old man, but a sarcastic, intelligent, angry individual.

According to the synopsis, the hump and mask are nothing but a clownish appearance worn only at the duke's court. Moral ugliness, however, cannot be thrown away like a mask. An extraordinary man forced to endure constant humiliation, he entertains himself with intrigues, willingly taking part in all the dirty amusements of his lord and his entourage. The fate punishes Rigoletto for his cruelty, making him kill his own daughter, Gilda.

"Despite the fact that St. Petersburg Opera is named a chamber music theatre and its native stage is very small, we do not limit ourselves to works of small form. This is one of the reasons why we can be considered a unique team. 'Rigoletto' is a truly large-scale production in every sense. In St. Petersburg,

it runs at the Hermitage Theatre and we definitely choose 'Rigoletto' for touring when we have an opportunity to present it at a large venue. Therefore, Nur-Sultan's stage, like no other, is suitable for this production," said Alexandrov.

"Les Pêcheurs de Perles," based on a libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré, takes place on the exotic island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). In the centre of the plot is a love triangle — fisherman Zurga and head fisherman Nadir love the same girl Leila, a Brahman priestess.

"The opera is a beautiful fairy tale for grown-ups, in which there is a place for love, heroic deeds and self-sacrifice. I think that people of the 21st century need such stories in both Russia and Kazakhstan. Our production turned out to be very colourful and emotional and even despite the tragic ending (our version differs from the original libretto), in many countries where we brought it, the audience enthusiastically responded to the performance and left the auditorium in a very positive mood," he noted.

Daneliya Tuleshova becomes UNESCO Club ambassador

By Galiya Khassenhanova

NUR-SULTAN — Kazakh singer Daneliya Tuleshova has been named one of the nation's United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Club ambassadors. She received a badge and certificate to verify her status during the Kazakhstan National Federation of UNESCO Clubs reporting conference, noted inform.kz Oct. 9.

"I was surprised when I found out about the intention to propose my candidacy for UNESCO Clubs. I understand how important that is and I am very honoured and interested. I share the ideals of the organisation and from the bottom

of my heart wish for the world to be more understanding and good," she said.

To become a Kazakh UNESCO Club ambassador, one must be a prominent public figure who engages in social and public activities and whose opinion is important to others. Tuleshova won the fourth season of The Voice Kids in Ukraine, was a finalist and the audience award winner of New Wave Junior 2015 in Crimea and a Kazakh representative on Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2018, where she took sixth place.

The ambassador's mission is to spread UNESCO ideals, augment public awareness of the UNESCO Club of Kazakhstan's purposes

and goals and popularise its movement.

UNESCO Clubs started in Japan in 1947, subsequently spreading to more than 100 nations. The clubs are combined into national, regional and global federations, with the Kazakh Federation founded in April 2009. More than 550 projects and youth programmes involving 55,000 participants from 35 countries have been organised in cooperation with UNESCO Clubs. Kazakhstan has 136 clubs in all regions with more than 9,000 active members.

Among its activities, the Kazakh federation organised The Planet of ART — 2019, an international festival-contest aimed at teenagers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Tuleshova was involved in coordinating and participating in the event, which served to support and create better conditions for gifted children from remote regions and rural areas.

"I believe in the power of art and I hope that as a holder of such high status, I will be able to attract the attention of children like me and interest them in participating in programmes of cultural and artistic education," she said.

For the next two years, Tuleshova will be the official representative of the Kazakhstan National Federation of UNESCO Clubs. The organisation currently is determining the projects and events where she will participate.



Photo credit: Inform.kz

Astana Ballet presents night of one-act plays

By Galiya Khassenhanova

NUR-SULTAN — Astana Ballet theatre presented the one-act plays "Salome" choreographed by Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Mukaram Avakhi and "In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated" by William Forsythe Oct. 12, reported its press service.

Oscar Wilde's unexpected and shocking interpretation of the famous biblical story inspired Avakhi to create the play, which was first staged in February 2018. The ballet uses a graphic plastic style with elements of Orientalism and a variety of performance techniques, including dance on pointe shoes and barefoot.

The plot recounts the tale of Salome, a stepdaughter of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Herod married Herodias, the former wife of his half-brother Herod II, and John the Baptist was imprisoned for criticising the marriage. For his birthday, Herod asked his niece and stepdaughter to dance for his guests and offered her a reward of her choice should she agree. Persuaded by her mother, Salome asked for the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter.

Avakhi presents her play as a constant fight of light and darkness, but allows the audience to determine for themselves who was victorious. It culminates with the Dance of Seven Veils, which Sa-

lome performed for Herod and has been popularised by scores of artists, sculptors and composers.

"Salome" astounded the audience and press in London when it was performed there as part of the theatre's tour.

"It is a pièce de résistance, a stunning work, stunningly performed that could grace any international stage with ease. It's all accompanied by a terrific original



score by Turkish composer Fazil Say, which draws from across the eastern world, its persistent phrases pulling to the inevitable conclusion," noted British ballet website SeeingDance.com.

"In the Middle, Somewhat El-

evated," the second and the most

popular act of the four-act play "Impressing the Czar," is presented as the second part of the evening. Created in 1987 for the Paris Opera featuring ballet stars such as Isabelle Guérin, Sylvie Guillem, Laurent Hilaire and Manuel Legris, the choreography is an endless flow of movements that seem to be made for mechanical muscles rather than a regular human body.

Forsythe's is one of the geniuses of modern choreography who revolutionised ballet and his staging makes spectators question the existence of gravity. Astana Ballet is the first in Central Asia to stage a play in accordance with his standards of style and technique.

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NATION & CAPITAL

COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Ascension Cathedral reopens following major restoration

By Yelena Levkovich

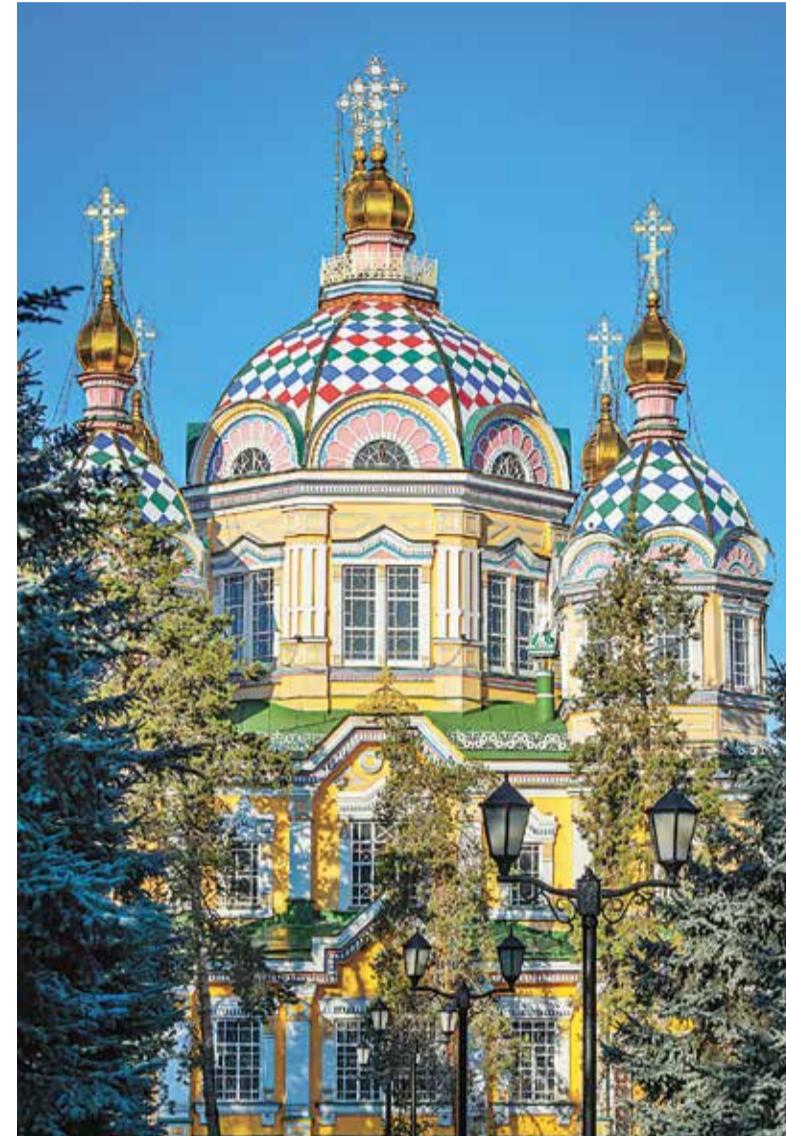
NUR-SULTAN — Almaty's Ascension Cathedral reopened in October following major restoration started in 2017.

Standing under the arches, the Metropolitan of Astana and Kazakhstan Aleksander congratulated the clergy and lay people on the special occasion in the city's spiritual life and held the first divine liturgy for parishioners after presenting the Holy Mother statue.

The event attracted many guests including the Russian Consul General and heads and members of public institutions and ethno-cultural communities.

The reconstruction was the first in cathedral's 110-year history. Specialists restored everything from crosses and fronts to engineering networks, using up-to-date technical solutions to provide utilities and ventilation systems. They also replaced the window frames, installing ones made from high-quality wood while maintaining the historical nature of the cathedral's facade.

The work was completed without state budget funds, as donors assumed all expenses. Local ecclesiastics and restorers had appealed to the Ministry of Culture and Sport for financial aid, but such spending is excluded from



Ascension Cathedral opened after major reconstruction in Almaty.

the national budget, it noted. Almaty city officials have promised to refurbish the surrounding area.

Kazakh architect Timur Turekulov, who served as project supervisor, oversaw approximately 2,000 specialists, including local workers, Russian artists and gilders and German engineers and architects. The main challenge was damage to one of the pillars, which required foreign technicians to develop an engineering solution to avoid disassembling the building.

Relying on old photos and documents, restorers added early lost elements, such as the crosses painted on the cathedral's domes. They also renewed the main crosses, covering them with a layer of gold leaf.

The 56-metre cathedral, the world's tallest wooden Russian Orthodox church, is one of the city's and country's main tourist sites. Begun in 1904 and finished a year later, the church witnessed many historical events. In 1927, it ceased operating as a house of worship at the direction of the Soviet government and subsequently served as a museum, exhibition pavilion and meeting site for public organisations. The cathedral regained its religious significance in 1995 and resumed public liturgies following certain repairs.

Almaty Mayor presents city development strategy through 2050

By Yelena Levkovich

cities and we are not the exception," he noted.

Almaty, similar to other global megacities, could risk an urbanisation crisis, he said. Sixty percent of its annual population growth is due to migration, which leads directly to a social, engineering and transport infrastructure reset.

To avoid such consequences, the city needs proactive planning and projecting, a smart approach to solutions within the entire Big Almaty agglomeration, said Sagintayev.

"City authorities consider that the optimal amount of Almaty inhabitants shouldn't exceed 3.5 million. To keep it at this level after 2030, we ought to develop the city outskirts by creating jobs and social infrastructure and by loading mass public structure," he added.

The younger generation should be the epicentre of all the initiatives and the moving power following the change, he noted. City officials will be helped in realising their ideas by creating an appropriate innovative project ecosystem of youth entrepreneurship.

The first strategic priority is to convert the megapolis into a smart, global city. The bigger Almaty is expected to have a population of five million by 2030.

"Speaking about five million, we are considering only Almaty and its suburbs. Nowadays, three million people live in Big Almaty, so in 11 years there will be five million. The pressure on the local infrastructure due to population growth is the global challenge for all developing

Kazakhstan makes important step towards GRECO membership

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN — The Chairman of the Kazakh Anti-corruption Agency Alik Shpekbayev signed an agreement opening the way for the country to join the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) in Strasbourg on Oct. 15.

"I welcome the signing by Kazakhstan of the GRECO agreement. This is a very important event that makes Kazakhstan one step closer to becoming a full member of the GRECO. This is one of the most developed anti-corruption organisations in the world. We focus on the integrity of the public sector, and our members agree on a common assessment process and collective pressure to improve their ability to fight corruption. Sharing experiences will improve anti-corruption potential at both levels. This is mutually beneficial for Kazakhstan and the Council of Europe," GRECO Executive Secretary Gianluca Esposito told 24.kz.

The Group of States against Corruption, the Council of Europe's anti-corruption monitoring body with its headquarters in Strasbourg, was established in 1999 as an enlarged Partial Agreement by 17 Council of Europe member states. GRECO is also open to non-European states, and out of the 49 current members 48 are European states and the 49th is the United States.

"We expect a speedy ratification of the agreement by Kazakhstan, which is entering this prestigious initiative as the 50th participant," added Esposito.

Signed the agreement signals Kazakhstan's commitment to fight corruption, Shpekbayev told Forbes.kz. After the signing and ratification of the initial agreement, signing of additional agreements will follow. The Oct. 15 agreement provides for the immunities and privileges of GRECO officials as they make visits to Kazakhstan, an important first step for the eventual accession to the group.

"We have the opportunity to participate in a number of expanded agreements that allow us to work together with Council member states on issues of particular interest. Cooperation with GRECO demonstrates the commitment of our country, as a full member of the UN Convention against Corruption, to the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe and our country's intention to improve anti-corruption measures. Joining GRECO paves the way for us to adopt the best European anti-corruption practices," said Shpekbayev.

The two main objectives of the GRECO are the improvement of methods of combatting and the exchange of best practices in the prevention and detection of cases of corruption.

A next step anticipated after the signing of the current agreement is Kazakhstan accepting the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption.

"I am proud of the achievements of Kazakhstan and the willingness to effectively cooperate with the GRECO member countries. We will look forward to the next steps, including your country's accepting of the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption," said the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, who co-signed the agreement with Shpekbayev, according to Forbes.kz.

The two main objectives of the GRECO are the improvement of methods of combatting and the exchange of best practices in the prevention and detection of cases of corruption.

MIA introduces distance learning, online shops and employment to improve convicts' lives

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN — The Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs has improved prison conditions with distance education, online shops and employment, reported Penal System Committee Acting Chairperson Tenizzhan Dzhanibekov.

"We launched a pilot project of online purchases for convicts in Almaty and the Akmola Region. The maximum weight of one package increased from 14 to 20 kilogrammes. We also launched distance education of convicts at higher educational institutions. The work schedule of pay phones was extended until 9 p.m., as previously it was until 6 p.m.," he said.

Orderlies have also been hired to help convicts with disabilities.

"We have 27 inmates with dis-

abilities, including 20 persons using wheelchairs and seven blind persons. They need assistance to get to public amenities such as the healthcare unit, canteen, library and bathhouse," he said.

Prisons will be equipped with video surveillance cameras and staff will use video recorders.

"We also want to develop the programme on the employment of former convicts and their resocialisation in the community. The efforts of interested state bodies, non-governmental organisations and the business community should be consolidated using public-private partnership mechanisms. There is a need to improve healthcare services. We are considering transferring the healthcare service of the penal correction system to the Ministry of Healthcare," he added.

Plans are also under consid-

eration to allow longer visits for prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment, remove the video surveillance system from penal system administration control, create front offices to ensure open and accessible services and provide good conditions for lawyers and inmates awaiting court dates.

A front office operating on the public service centres principle opened Oct. 11 at capital correctional institution 166/1. Similar front offices operate in institutions in the Almaty, Kyzylorda and Pavlodar regions and will soon be opened in other facilities.

Dzhanibekov noted work is underway to improve convicts' legal status. The 2019-2023 roadmap to develop the penal correction system was approved in September 2018. The roadmap also provides measures to improve the penitentiary system and modernise inter-

nal affairs agencies in 2019-2021.

Legislative measures include earned release time (one day of detention for two days in a minimum security institution, one and a-half days in an average security institution and two days serving a sentence with restricted freedom). The time for prosecutors to file petitions for court decisions on convicts' complaints such as sentence execution has been reduced. (The action was not previously provided and is proposed within 10 days.) Complaints and motions are subject to appeal within three days.

"We will take all measures to improve the legal status of convicts, conditions and order of detention, protect the rights of convicts, humanise the prisons, improve the process of execution of sentences and strengthen civilian control," he said.

Karaganda-Balkhash highway to open in 2020

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

NUR-SULTAN — The Karaganda-Balkhash highway will be opened in 2020 and this year, 40 kilometres of the roads will be opened, reported Oct. 8 Primeminister.kz. The Karaganda-Temirtau and Karaganda bypass projects will be completed before the end of the year with the commissioning of 61 kilometres of roads.

Prime Minister Askar Mamin also instructed to speed up the construction pace of roads during his recent visit to the East Kazakhstan, Almaty and Karaganda Regions. The quality of the created transport infrastructure is of great importance, he noted.

"Next year, we should open the roads along the Taldykorgan-Ust-Kamenogorsk and Karaganda-Almaty highways. The infrastructure projects will create additional opportunities for the development of the economy," Mamin said.

The reconstruction of the eastern section of the Ust-Kamenogorsk-Taldykorgan highway and the Usharal-Dostyk highway are underway.

A road with a length of 763 kilometres will be built along the



Ust-Kamenogorsk-Taldykorgan highway in 2020. The reconstruction of the Kalbatau-Maikapshagai highway is underway and 45 kilometres of roads will be completed by the end of the year.

The prime minister also met during his tour with the management of the Aktogai mining and processing plant, which is based in the Ayagoz district of the East Kazakhstan Region. The enterprise is responsible for developing the

Aktogai mine, one of the world's largest undeveloped copper deposits as part of the state programme for industrial and innovative development.

Mineral resources of the field are estimated at 1.7 billion tonnes and the total amount of copper in the ore is 5.8 million tonnes. The plant's capacity is 25 million tonnes of processed ore per year and it is planned to double this indicator beginning in 2021.

The Semei Engineering company plans to open a centre for engineering and technical maintenance, repair and modernisation of heavy military and civilian equipment.

Mamin visited the Centre for Oncology and Surgery, the Centre for Robotic Surgery, Angiosurgery and Transplantology at the East Kazakhstan Regional Specialised Medical Centre.

The Interdepartmental Situation and Investment Centre of the East Kazakhstan region in Ust-Kamenogorsk has the showroom for presentations of the investment potential of the region and the development of digitalisation in the industry.

Zhastar Time, the innovation centre, offers IT courses including 2D and 3D graphics, programming, video creation and other courses at the centre.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Forum examines effective gender equality and sex education for youth

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh public health and family agencies and organisations recently sponsored an event in Nur-Sultan where adults and young people discussed issues of gender equality and sex education.

"We held an important event where we gave our young people votes – people who see the problems of modern society and themselves offer solutions. Sexual education and gender education contribute to the formation of non-discriminatory values among young people, teach them critical thinking and informed decision-making. Therefore, it is important to introduce these areas of knowledge in all schools of Kazakhstan," said UyatEmes.kz sex education website Founder and Researcher Karlygash Kabatova, according to liter.kz.

The event featured the Deputy Head of the Centre for Strength-

ening Public Health of the National Centre of Public Healthcare Kamila Tuyakbayeva, Head of the ZhastyqTalk Public Foundation Balnur Sugirgaliyeva, Thomson Reuters Foundation Consultant Dina Shaikhislam and other speakers.

"In Kazakhstan, thousands of teenage pregnancies, abandoned new-borns on the streets, and cases of sexual and physical violence directed against children and women are recorded every year. In such an environment, young girls and boys need to be able to protect themselves physically and emotionally. They need sexual and gender education in order to have safe sex life, make informed decisions and overcome stereotypes that do not allow someone to say the word 'no' and make someone deaf to the word," said the organisers on the event aims, according to the National Centre of Public Healthcare press service.

The speakers emphasised the urgency of having the conversation on these topics in Kazakhstan.

"In Kazakhstan, one third of adolescents had a sexual experience since they were 14 years old, so it's very important to talk to them about puberty and their sexual and unproductive health. This is the key to preventing so many problems in adulthood," said Tuyakbayeva.

At the end of the event, actors and volunteers of the Y-PEER international network staged a theatrical production, based on real life, which aimed to show the audience how any decision could change their life.

The event was organised by the National Centre of Public Healthcare, an NGO titled the League of Women of Creative Initiative, the Uyatemes.kz project, the Y-PEER Kazakhstan movement with the support of the National Commission for Women and Family and Demographic Policy, the Ministry of Information and Social Development and the Centre for Civil Initiatives Support.



Photo credit: Kazakh National Public Healthcare Centre press-service

Senate proposes electronic hunting ground competitions in 2021

By Yelena Levkovich

NUR-SULTAN – The Senate is proposing e-format competitions to secure hunting grounds and fishery waters starting in 2021 to ensure the procedure is more accessible and transparent.

The chamber previously adopted relevant amendments on agro-industrial sector management.

To prevent the unlawful removal of flora and fauna, officials recommend increased accountability for those who cut, destroy or damage specific trees and woods, as well as punishment for violating special protected natural areas.

The measures will address issues of illegal hunting, fishing and killing other water creatures and unlawful treatment of rare and endangered plant species.



Photo credit: kazpavtodel.kz

Penalties include forfeiting property where the offence occurred and expelling foreigners or stateless persons involved in the accident from the country.

The new demands specify the terms of water resource use by banning pesticide and fertiliser use near the water's edge and requiring notification of hydro-mechanical construction. Otherwise, owners will be subject to administrative liability for "exploitation without dam safety declaration."

Deputies also made adjustments aimed at enhancing control over efficient land management through space-based monitoring (remote sensing data), aerial photography, ground survey and observations especially on agricultural lands, where the processes connected with soil fertility and transforming plant cover feeding grounds are identified.

To continue developing geodesy and cartography, they have included additional provisions on regulating operations involving modern techniques.

Senate members also proposed returning veterinary service control to the approved body authority and altering the service's structure by creating a vertical subordination system. Production control department veterinarians would focus on the notification policy. At the same time, state veterinary sanitary and quarantine phytosanitary control functions at automobile checkpoints across the Eurasian Economic Union customs border would be transferred to animal health and plant quarantine state authorities to strengthen veterinary and phytosanitary safety.

To enable hunting and farming growth, an opportunity exists to use forest fund lands and recreational acreages for wild animal breeding for up to a 49-year term.

The list of harm compensation measures has also undergone changes, as economic entities are now entitled to choose compensatory events through infrastructure construction or reconstructing existing fish stock complexes, as well as by scientific research funding or creating artificial spawning grounds on flood plains and in the marine environment.

It is no secret that today, most of the specialists are middle and senior managers. Therefore, the staffing problem is acute, but we are trying to solve it by involving

National library for visually impaired puts young minds to challenge specialised libraries

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – The National Library for People with Blindness and Visual Impairment gathered young librarians from all regional specialised libraries Sept. 26-27 for its first nationwide meeting in Almaty. The session encouraged participants to share their success stories and exchange experiences on developing library science.

The two-day meeting was composed of lectures, seminars and master classes for young librarians as part of the Year of Youth.

Young people are apparently less interested in pursuing library science as a career. The national specialised library organised the meeting to change this thought and "to encourage and support young librarians in their creative search for new forms of library services for people with disabilities and to provide young librarians with the opportunity to prove themselves in the further development of librarianship in specialised libraries," Zakhra Makhanova, advisor to Library Director Askhat Baiuzakov, told baigenews.kz.

"It is no secret that today, most of the specialists are middle and senior managers. Therefore, the staffing problem is acute, but we are trying to solve it by involving

librarianship youth," said Baiuzakov in his opening speech, reported bnews.kz.

Kazakhstan currently has 16 specialised libraries – nine regional, five city and two branches of centralised libraries. The meeting also addressed ways to achieve better interlibrary integration.

"Each library works at its own pace as usual, but the processes of book exchange and exchange of experience are somewhat lagging behind. We want to update all this work, discuss our problems with you and strengthen interlibrary relations," he added.

The National Library for People with Blindness and Visual Impairments has literature in dot-relief typeface and large print, phonograph, film, tactile, voiced, electronic and relief-graphic editions.

The library fund, with 248,410 storage units, offers wide choices of classical works by domestic and foreign authors, poems, science fiction and fiction, as well as publications in several languages in all educational areas. It has approximately 3,000 visitors per year.

The national library was recently equipped with two audio studios for people with blindness. It will soon also provide access to audio books in official languages.

"First, we will draw up an annual plan taking into account the demand for books, then we will create their audio copies in Kazakh and Russian," said Baiuzakov.



Kazakhstan to introduce 'blind' peer review of textbooks

By Yelena Levkovich

NUR-SULTAN – The Ministry of Education and Science is seeking to improve and renew the quality of school books through a system of blind peer review, reported zakon.kz.

Experts would not know the author's names, freeing them from undue pressure, said Minister Askhat Aimambetov at the government meeting.

He criticised the existing system of issuing school books and proposed a number of measures including author training, reducing the size of educational manuals and textbooks and blind peer review.

"In implementing the state programme, we have changed the approach to the school books' peer review and elaboration. Now, the pedagogical community and experts are involved in discussion on textbooks' layouts in the regions. All the books are placed in the public domain on the Internet for process transparency," he added.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev drew attention to

Experts adopt joint programme...

Continued from Page B1

The UNDP supports the efforts of the Kazakh government to conserve biodiversity through more efficient management of wetlands, pastures, steppe ecosystems and helps to prevent the threats of global warming by promoting energy conservation, rational use of land and water resources. Approximately 50 projects were implemented and more than \$60 million were allocated for these measures," said UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Vitalie Vremis.

Today, desertification and land degradation are a global environmental and socio-economic prob-

lem. Losses of the fertile soil layer and nutrients negatively affect not only the state of natural ecosystems, but also the quality of life of the local population.

According to United Nations' data, arid lands occupy 30 percent of the earth's surface in more than 100 countries where about two billion people currently live. When confirming the scenario proposed by the UN subject to the current rate of desertification, by 2025 every fifth inhabitant of the earth will live in land subject to drought.

"Currently, more than two billion hectares of productive land are degraded around the world, and an additional 12 million hectares annually

continue to degrade. While by 2050, we need to increase food production by 70 percent to ensure global food security, this could lead to hunger. In addition, the loss of productive land drives forced migration," said International Expert of UNDP Global Centre for Policy and Promotion Phillipa Francis Heylings.

The event was organised by the Kazakh Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources on the initiative of the UNDP in cooperation with the Intergovernmental Science-Political Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Pollinator Volunteer Coalition, in partnership with the German Federal Ministry of the

Environment and Nature Conservation.

Promoted by The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net), the triologue format is managed by the UNDP and aims to strengthen national capacities for environmental conservation.

The forum gathered representatives of three professional communities, including governmental agencies, scientists and specialists involved in agriculture and environmental issues in the Central Asian region. According to the organisers, the approaches used in the triologue ensure active interaction between the parties, allow participants to talk about problems and share experiences of successful projects and provide innovative prototypes for best practices in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

WB data suggests...

Continued from Page B1

In the ensuing ten years, their poverty rates have been even slower. On average, Tajikistan's poverty rate has been decreasing one percent per year, from 25 percent to a projected 13 percent in 2019. Kyrgyzstan's poverty rate reduction dropped to nearly zero, "stalling at about 20 percent from

cent of women and 13 percent of men aged 15-24 were unemployed in 2018. In Kyrgyzstan, 15 percent of women and 9 percent of men aged 15-28 were unemployed the same year.

The regional slowdown reflects economic challenges, as well as difficulties for the vulnerable population segment to secure jobs with decent incomes.

The likelihood of being unemployed or receiving low wages is higher for youth and women. In Uzbekistan, for example, 25 per-

In terms of local income, housing in these cities is less affordable than in some of the world's most expensive cities such as San Francisco (U.S.), Sydney (Australia) and Vancouver (Canada).

The World Bank recommends policies that encourage faster wage growth, provide greater employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, remove legal restrictions on domestic migration and expand the availability of affordable housing in growing and prosperous cities.

TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Nur-Sultan, Almaty among 10 most popular tourist cities in CIS

By Yelena Levkovich

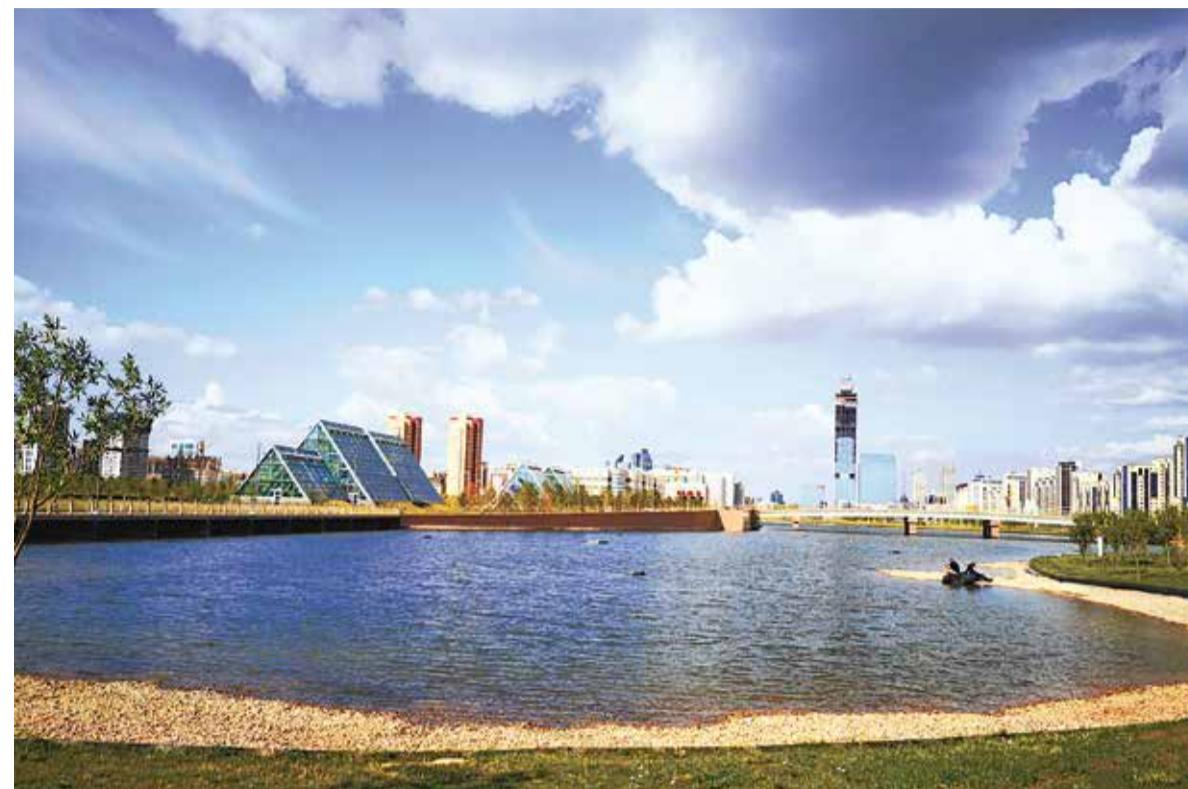
NUR-SULTAN – The capital and Almaty are among the top ten most attractive tourist cities in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), reported turstat.com.

The website ranks the most popular destinations for autumn travellers. The two cities, along with Dushanbe (Tajikistan), Minsk (Belarus), Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Yerevan (Armenia), are the most frequently visited by CIS citizens.

The capital appeals international tourists as a shopping hub. The average tab for a 24-hour-stay, including accommodations and food, is approximately \$70.

The country is becoming more popular among foreign visitors. Two Kazakh travel videos, which received an equal number of nominations at Russia's third tourist festival, show the great interest in the country.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has said Kazakhstan could become one of most inviting places for domestic and foreign tourists while also developing as a global centre of ethno tourism.



The Botanical Garden in Nur-Sultan.

Kazakhstan to introduce tax-free system, bed tax to lure tourists

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – The Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports presented amendments to the law on tourism Oct. 10 at the plenary session of the Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament). The bill includes 60 amendments, including the introduction of a tax-free system and bed tax for foreign tourists.

The introduction of a tax-free system is meant to attract more tourists, particularly from far abroad, stimulate tourist purchasing power and encourage purchases within the country. Kazakhstan studied the experience of European Union countries, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Turkey.

Vice Minister of Culture and Sports Urken Bisakayev, who presented the bill, said the document introduces the term of a priority tourist territory that the bill defines as the "territory with a special potential for tourism development,

included in the list of national objects in the tourist map."

The businesses that occupy these territories and run tourism facilities will be eligible for investment privileges, including tax breaks.

The tourism map in the national tourism development programme adopted by the Kazakh government in May prioritises ten tourist locations in Kazakhstan.

These include Alakol Lake, the Almaty Region mountain cluster, Shchuchinsk and Borovoe resort areas, Bayanaul resort area in the Pavlodar Region, Imantau-Shalkar resort area, Lake Balkhash, development of historical and cultural tourism in Turkestan, the development of beach tourism in Mangistau, the development of MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) tourism in Nur-Sultan and development of the Baikonur tourist zone at the Baikonur Cosmodrome.

The bill also legally defines terms such as medical tourism, social tourism, hunting tourism and tourism infrastructure.

The bill also includes measures to improve the system that guarantees the rights of the citizens in outbound tourism.

A separate set of amendments deals with the development of hunting and support of farm hunting entrepreneurship.

Bisakayev said the current population of many rare species in Kazakhstan is stable.

The licensing of tourism activity in inbound and outbound tourism is expected to switch to notification only.

The Kazakh Tourism national company, established in 2017 and tasked with tourism development, will receive the competencies to implement the tasks in the bill that was developed in line with the instruction of Kazakhstan's First President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in September 2018 during the fourth session of the Kazakh Parliament.

The bill will be discussed by a working group headed by Mazhilis Deputy Taras Khitrov.

Salam Air to open direct flights between Omani capital and Almaty, Nur-Sultan

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN – Omani low-cost carrier Salam Air plans to open Almaty-Muscat direct flights with a frequency of seven flights per week in March 2020 and Nur-Sultan-Muscat in autumn 2020.

Kazakh and Omani aviation authorities inked a memorandum of understanding Oct. 8 that gives the right for air carriers of both countries to operate 14 passenger and 14 scheduled cargo flights per week, reported the press service of the Civil Aviation Committee of the Kazakh Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development.

Kazakhstan introduced a 30-day visa-free regime for Omani citizens, along with citizens of 11 other countries Sept. 30.

The committee expects the

combined effect of direct flights between the two countries, the visa-free regime and favourable climatic conditions during summer in Kazakhstan will increase the number of Omani tourists visiting the country.

Oman considers giving Kazakh citizens a possibility to obtain electronic visas. In the near future, Kazakh citizens will be able to obtain visas to Oman at its airports and other border points.

Kazakh Civil Aviation Committee Chair Talgat Lastayev and Omani Ministry of Transport and Communication's Air Transport Department Director Salim al-Husseini signed the document.

According to the data from the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oman invested \$253.2 million in Kazakhstan between 2005 and 2018.



Kazakh and Omani aviation authorities inked a memorandum of understanding on Oct. 8.

Photo credit: penmedicine.org

Khan's residence gives a unique glimpse into history

Continued from Page B1

Several generations of historians searched for documents that would prove that it, in fact, once was a residence, while others tried to show that this particular building was not, that changes in meanings of words over centuries made people misunderstand the location of the residence.

Historians found documents in 2003 in the archives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such as instructions from the Chancellor of the Russian Empire to Siberian and Orenburg governors "to build Kirghiz-Kaisak [this is how the Russian Empire referred to

the Kazakh people] leader Ablai a wooden house."

Documents had elaborate building plans, which historians and renovators used to restore the residence and replicate the outside design and the inner structure.

Discovery of these documents still did not solve all the controversies. Ablai Khan became a khan only 1771, though he had been a khan of the Small Zhuz, which included the Petropavlovsk Region. For him living in this mansion would be counterproductive to his political actions, he knew that living in a house made by Russians would not gain him points with steppe population. Some history

books state that his son, Uali, lived in the residence.

The museum that is now occupying the residence has a lot more history to offer. They focus on Abylai's life, his career as a politician and the contribution he made to the unity of Kazakh people. Visitors will be able to see documents, traditional clothing, weaponry and decorations, will learn about Abylai's journey to the leader of the nation and see Abylai's statue on a throne.

The entrance to the museum is free of charge. It is located at 1b Sutysheva Street, Petropavlovsk and is open Tuesday-Sunday from 10am to 6pm.



The residence today.

Nur-Sultan hosts UN urban tourism summit

Continued from Page A1

Tourism makes up nearly 10 percent of the global gross domestic product, seven percent of investments, ten percent of jobs and 5 percent of tax payments.

"The Kazakh tourism sector has grown, on average, by seven percent in the last ten years, which is almost three percent higher than in other sectors of the economy. Tourism is also an important part of our diversification," said Mamin.

Nur-Sultan stands at the forefront of the country's efforts to integrate digital and technological solutions, he added.

The concept of a smart destination starts from the very planning of a trip, said Kazakh Tourism company Deputy Chair Kairat Sadvakassov. "We try to take care of it, when tourists plan the trip. We need to use any technology to attract tourists when they only plan or just think about trip, so they know what to expect. When they are here, most important, apart from trying to make them happy, the country should not get oversaturated with tourists. Sometimes tourists face

problems in the country, smart system should be a significant part of planning," he said.

"We border Russia and China and there are a lot of transport corridors. We need to have the opportunity to monitor how many tourists come, where they stay, so we could plan our resources," added Sadvakassov.

Nur-Sultan stands at the forefront of the country's efforts to integrate digital and technological solutions.

Global Head of Advertising and Tourism Organisations at Amadeus Ramon Sanchez said the definition of an ideal tourism destination varies across the country, but right approach to planning might be a solution.

The smart city, he noted, capitalises on three steps of identifying, planning and discovering.

"First, you should determine

Considering the multiplicative effect of the tourism industry, Tokayev noted, the government, with the help of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, must attract businesspeople with new guest houses, accommodations and food in the country's recreation areas.

National tourism growth is one of Kazakhstan's key priorities and the closest goal is the capital entering the 50 most competitive and attractive global travel destinations. In conjunction with the effort, the government plans to engage international companies and organisations to further promote tourism.

Assistance is needed from the legislative base for developing Nur-Sultan and the government is addressing the matter, said Prime Minister Askar Mamin. Preliminary estimates based on state measures project tourism will comprise 8 percent of the country's GDP by 2025.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev instructed at a major Oct. 8 meeting on Nur-Sultan's development to increase the number of international flights.

"It is important to connect the capital by direct flights with the leading cities of the world and international financial centres. It is necessary to open the sky. This is my instruction to the government," he said then.

Salam Air is based and headquartered at Muscat International Airport in Oman. It flies to many international destinations such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, Iran, Nepal, Iraq, Georgia, Bangladesh, Bahrain and Azerbaijan. The airline operates 3 A320-200s leased from South America's LATAM Group.

Photo credit: penmedicine.org

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Olga Rypakova wins gold at seventh CISM World Games in China

By Assel Satubaldina

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakhstani's prominent track and field athlete and London Olympic champion Olga Rypakova claimed gold in the triple jump at the seventh International Military Sports Council (CISM) World Games Oct. 18-27 in Wuhan, China.

Rypakova jumped 14.16 metres. The silver medal went to Ottavia Chesonaro of Italy (13.78 metres) and bronze to Ana José Tima of the Dominican Republic (13.54 metres).

Originally a heptathlete, Rypakova began competing in the triple jump in 2007 with great success.

"Gold is ours! The win in the

games is, too. This medal is really ours and the victory belongs to all of us. Because without my fans, without support and faith, it would be much more difficult for me. It becomes easier not to give up when you know that the country believes in you. I share this success with each of you and once again I say thank you from the bottom of my heart," she wrote on her Instagram account.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev offered his congratulations.

"Our famous athlete Olga Rypakova won a gold medal in the strong competition. Olga's brilliant sports career and her big triumphs can only motivate and inspire. Only forward!" he posted on his Twitter account.

Rypakova thanked Tokayev for his praise.

"I would like to express my gratitude to the head of state for his congratulations. The appreciation of my success from the President of Kazakhstan means a lot. It motivates me to be even stronger, faster and more successful, because I represent our big country at all competitions," she said.

Organised in 1995, the CISM World Games are held every four years. China hosted the games for the first time with President Xi Jinping attending the opening ceremony.

Nearly 8,000 athletes from 109 nations competed across 32 sports, claiming 1,021 medals.

The Kazakh team secured four gold, three silver and five bronze medals, placing the country 12th in the final medal ranking. Ruslan Zhabarov won gold in taekwondo in the 87-kilogram division.

The two additional golds came in boxing. 2018 Incheon Asian Games silver medallist Aslanbek Shymbergenov, 26, won in the 69-kilogram weight division and World Series of Boxing (WSB) team champion Temirtas Zhussupov in the 49-kilogram division.

"I am so happy to win the gold again," said Shymbergenov, reported Xinhua news agency.

"I fought a very technical fight, just as my coach had asked me to do. My opponent had a lot of



Olga Rypakova during the games.

power, but I was able to score with straight punching combinations," he added.

The host nation was first in the

final medal ranking winning 239 medals (133 gold, 64 silver, and 42 bronze), followed by Russia (161) and Brazil (88).

Athletes win two medals at AIBA Women's World Boxing Championship

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh athletes won two bronze medals Oct. 12 at the International Boxing Association (AIBA) Women's World Boxing Championship 2019 in Ulan-Ude, Russia, reported Olympic.kz.

"We can't say that we are satisfied with the performance of the girls, because at the world championship we could not win the gold medals. The team that performed at the world championship gathered experienced athletes who participated in competitions more than once. In addition, they all be-

came the best at the Kazakh National Championship. Since 2016, the women's boxing team has not been able to secure the gold medal at the world championship. Now, we are waiting for a (Olympic) licenses tournament. Before that, we will work on the mistakes and make changes," said Kazakh national female boxing team head coach Erik Algabek.

Milana Safranova, competing in the 64 kilogramme weight category, lost in the semi-finals to Italy's Angela Carini. The fight had a very close call and the Kazakh team filed a complaint about the judgement.

"At the world cup in the semi-

finals of the category up to 64 kilogrammes, Safranova had a wonderful competitive fight. The judges ruled in favour of the rival, but we thought the opposite. We sent a protest, which, unfortunately, did not affect the decision made earlier," he noted.

Dina Islambekova, (over 81 kilogrammes), lost to China's Xiaoli Young to take the bronze.

In the over 81 kilogramme category, Dina Islambekova, who not so long ago moved from the junior level competition, delivered the result. At the world cup, she came in third and I think that this is a good result," he added.

The team's initial favourite, Na-

zym Kyzaybay, lost the first bout to Japan's Namiki Tsukumi. As a result, she did not get any medal in the competition.

"In the weight up to 51 kilogrammes, Nazym Kyzaybay losing the first game was a disappointment for many. She will now throw all her energy into preparing for the (Olympic) licenses tournament. There is a lot of work ahead, including the selection," said Algabek.

Kazakh boxers Akerke Bakhytzhany, Alua Balkibekova, Aizhan Khojabekova, Dariga Shakimova, Fariza Sholtai, Rimma Volosenko and Dina Zholaman also competed in the championship.

Figure skaters win bronze medal, secure spot in World Championship 2020

By Galiya Khassenkhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh figure skaters Maxine Weatherby and Temirlan Yerzhanov took the bronze at the Denis Ten Memorial Challenge, scoring enough points to participate in next year's Four Continents and World figure skating championships, reported zakon.kz Oct 14. Their medal was the only one for the country at the event, which closed Oct 12 in Almaty.

Weatherby and Yerzhanov participated in the Senior Ice Dance category, where they were required to perform a rhythm dance and free dance. They scored 60.49 in the former, a record for the pair, and 95.69 in the latter, totalling 156.17. First place went to Germany's Katharina Muller and Tim Frederik Dieck with 173.07 and second to Adelina Galyavieva and Louis Thauron of France with 165.64.

The scores will allow the Kazakh pair to compete in the two events. To participate, pairs need to score more than 33 points in rhythm dance and 47 points in free dance at an official international tournament in the current season.

"I dreamed of performing in Kazakhstan. Even the walls help when you're at home."

"I dreamed of performing in Kazakhstan. Even the walls help when you're at home."

to, a two-time Olympic, four-time World and three-time European champion.

Weatherby and Yerzhanov have trained together for 14 months, for while working with Platov, he had been unable to find a suitable partner for two and a-half years. Weatherby previously skated singles.

"Temirlan inspired me to dance on ice; now, I understand that dancing on ice is a wonderful discipline. I am honoured to represent Kazakhstan," she said.

The pair will now prepare for the Four Continents Figure Skating Championship, to be held in South Korea in January-February, and World Championship 2020 in Canada in March.

Asia Track Cycling Championship athlete brings 7 medals to Kazakhstan

By Nazira Kozhanova

NUR-SULTAN – Kazakh senior and junior athletes won one gold, three silver and three bronze medals Oct. 17-19 at the Asia Track Cycling Championship in Seoul, South Korea, reported Olympic.kz.

Andrei Chugai took the gold in the timed race, completing the one-kilometre distance in 1.01639 minutes. He was followed in second and third places by Malaysia's Zonis Mohid and China's Lu Tsi, respectively. Kazakh athlete Sergei Ponomaryov was fifth, reported sports.kz.

Alisher Zhumakan won the silver medal in individual pursuit, losing to Senhun Pak from South Korea. Fellow South Korean Ken-ho Min was third.

Artem Zakharov scored 127 points to capture the silver in the omnium competition. Eiya Hashimoto from Japan won the gold with 135 points and Shin Dongin from South Korea the bronze with a score of 121.

Rinata Sultanova took the silver



Photo credit: Olympic.kz

in women's short track, with Hui Shi from Hong Kong winning gold and Yuka Kobayashi from Japan earning bronze, reported hk.sports.appledaily.com.

Zakharov and Roman Vasilenkov received the bronze in the Madison competition. Athletes from South Korea won the race and a pair from Japan took the silver.

Kazakh cyclists also won two bronze medals in team competitions. Juniors Alexander Bekenov, Dmitry Potapenko, Dmitry Noskov and Bauryzhan Zhabaruly took third in the chase race, topped by teams South Korea and China. Similarly, Ulyana Suhorebrik, Kristina Titovskaya, Kristina Stuzhuk and Akpeil Osim took bronze in the junior competition, topped by teams from South Korea and China.

The scores will allow the Kazakh pair to compete in the two events. To participate, pairs need to score more than 33 points in rhythm dance and 47 points in free dance at an official international tournament in the current season.

"I dreamed of performing in Kazakhstan. Even the walls help when you're at home. I felt much calmer and so did my partner. We were a little nervous in training. We are happy with our performance. I hope we deserved the points we were given," said Yerzhanov.

The medal is their first. The pair previously participated in this year's Bavarian Open and Lake Placid Ice Dance International, where they finished eighth and 12th, respectively.

"The first two starts for Temirlan and Maxine were catastrophic,

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CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

President urges acceleration of Nur-Sultan development

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN — President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev outlined the most pressing challenges facing the Kazakh capital and directed city officials and other government bodies to fix them during a major Oct. 8 meeting on Nur-Sultan's development.

Tokayev said investment in Nur-Sultan has declined for the first time in 10 years and instructed the Nur-Sultan Akimat (city administration) and the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs to intensify efforts in attracting the investment to develop the city.

"Nur-Sultan should remain a city with a favourable economic and business environment. One of the priorities is to attract investment. The capital has always been a leader in attracting investment and should remain so," he said.

The President also noted infrastructural problems that slow business development in the capital, including a slowdown in housing construction, reported the Akorda press service. To date, Nur-Sultan has 49 problematic buildings and 13,500 stakeholders waiting for housing projects to be completed.

Tokayev also pointed to delays in the construction of energy facilities, including the thermal power station No. 3. The facility began construction in 2010 and was sup-



posed to be completed this year. However, the completion date has been pushed back several times and design and estimate documentation have become outdated during this time. The project cost has also risen to more than 40 billion tenge (US\$102.62 million).

The capital city's lack of readiness to connect to the Saryarka gas pipeline is another example of delayed infrastructure, said Tokayev. The pipeline should have already replaced coal as a source of energy and, as a result, improved the environmental situation in Nur-Sultan and along the pipeline route, which runs through the Zhezkazgan, Karaganda and Temirtau regions.

"This is generally an incom-

prehensible question. How did this happen? 2.7 billion tenge (US\$6.93 million) envisaged for this year will be redistributed to other regions. This is despite the fact that you should first of all think about the gas supply of the capital, since in winter, you know what the picture looks like — the city is in smog," he said.

Business development has also slowed down with problems associated with connecting to utility networks.

"Often land is put up for auction without technical conditions to connect to communications. Or the previously prescribed technical conditions during the construction are changed to others. This is an

unacceptable situation. Allocated sites should be with ready-made connections to all networks," the President said.

Tokayev also stressed that the share of non-cash payments of only 9 percent "not only causes inconvenience to residents and visitors of the city, but also leads to the growth of the 'shadow economy'."

"The Ministry of Finance, together with the city akimat, needs to take under strict control the presence of cash registers and card terminals at retail outlets in the outskirts of the city, including the service sector," he said.

In addition, he said, the capital's food stores set high prices for groceries, which "testify to the weakness of the infrastructure and food belt of the city and the shortage of trading places."

Tokayev tasked the Nur-Sultan Akimat and the akimats of the nearest regions, Akmola, Karaganda and Pavlodar regions, to establish direct contact between producers and distribution networks.

Tokayev also addressed the social well-being of capital residents, saying the capital's population growth and influx of new residents are burdening current social infrastructure as well as primarily educational and healthcare institutions, he said.

The Central Railway Hospital, for instance, has not been renovated in 60 years and is in urgent need of repairs, he said.

He also stressed the importance of involving more private partners in the construction of schools and preschool institutions to eliminate shortages.

Tokayev also directed officials to repair and build new sports facilities.

The capital should also develop a "city without outskirts" principle, he said. This would mean building and repairing roads, enhancing central communications and ensuring street lighting on the outskirts of the city, including the Michurin, Internatsionalnyi and Saryarka residential districts.

Tokayev also criticised transportation within the city. The most pressing problem is light rail transit (LRT) construction, he said. Although the President said in July that the project has a high risk of burdening the state budget, the LRT construction cannot be terminated at the point.

"The first thing that did not allow suspending this project was international obligations. The contracts are signed, there is arbitration. Arbitration is already the obligation of the state. The consequences will be much more serious in terms of financial obligations. Therefore, we went for optimisation, renounced a loan from the Chinese Development Bank," said Nur-Sultan Akim (Mayor) Altay Kulginov on the sidelines of the meeting, reported tengrinews.kz.

In addition to this, he directed city officials to better manage the capital's transportation system and to solve Nur-Sultan's traffic congestion problem. In particular, he said the city needs to ease traffic congestion on Saraisky and Saryarka streets. He also urged officials to build a bridge across the Yesil River to Tauelsizdik Avenue.

Nur-Sultan should also continue to develop the availability of public services in English on the one window principle for foreign experts and investors, he said.

"For this, the akimat needs to use the resource and experience of the Expat Centre of the Astana International Financial Centre," he said.

Tokayev also instructed the akimat and government to examine building codes to improve the safety of citizens.

"Since the beginning of this year, there have been 14 accidents related to the fall of children from windows and balconies. I consider it necessary to strengthen specific safety parameters in building codes," he said.

ASA Charity Bazaar brings Kazakh capital spirit of goodwill

By Aidana Yergaliyeva

NUR-SULTAN — Are you excited about exploring new cultures? Do you like to help charities? The Association of Spouses of Ambassadors (ASA) welcomes everyone to do both in one day Dec. 1 during the 12th Christmas Charity Bazaar at the Radisson Hotel Astana in the capital.

The ASA's annual event is a fest where one can get a taste of the multitude of cultures represented by the embassies in the country. The bazaar is accompanied by the Grand Raffle, where visitors can win prizes such as traditional baskets donated by embassies, jewellery, watches, electronic appliances or restaurant gift certificates, as well as trips to popular holiday destinations or even a car.

The bazaar's main contribution is its help in improving the lives of everyday Kazakhs who find themselves in difficult situations.

In 2018, the bazaar raised nearly 38 million tenge (US\$97,692) that helped the association complete 50 projects. The works covered small settlements, villages, towns and other regional cities in tackling a range of typical problems. ASA redirects funds to projects that solve challenges for individuals, com-

munities and organisations and help low-income families, as well as institutions, fulfil their basic needs.

"We were happy to work in many different fields ranging from daily basic needs to educational ones which we pioneered," Maria Kivikoski, ASA Charity Committee Chair and spouse of the Finnish ambassador, told The Astana Times.

ASA members involved in the charity often try to visit families

and organisations themselves to connect with people and have a better understanding of their challenges. The trips represent the voluntary work that association members do in their free time.

"I find that it is not always that we are giving and they are receiving; it is two directions. We are also receiving a lot from them," she said.

"It is very rewarding to see parents of handicapped children when ASA can help them to buy some



L-R: ASA Charity Committee Chair and spouse of the Finnish ambassador Maria Kivikoski, ASA President and spouse of the Swiss Ambassador Luzia Sebesta Schmid, Charity Committee member and spouse of Czech ambassador Dáša Hyklová.

equipment. You can see those happy faces when a child who was sitting on a wheelchair is now standing thanks to this equipment," said Charity Committee member and spouse of Czech ambassador Dáša Hyklová. "As Maria mentioned, it is both ways; we got huge inspiration from people who work in this area, not only parents, but also physiotherapists, nurses or volunteers."

"We come from these visits and we are full of emotions. For newcomers, it is not easy the first time you go and see these people. It is very emotional, but also inspirational," she added.

The seemingly simplest and smallest things can be life changing to many people.

"Two years ago when I was on the committee, it was so impressive for me. The association for people who are blind and short sighted asked for 80 pairs of glasses, but I didn't realise this made such a big difference for the people. If you don't have money to buy glasses, you can't cross a street. Just get glasses for your eyes and you are more independent and you can go and do the shopping yourself; you can cross the street but without these, you have to stay at home. It made such a big impact; I was impressed to realise. It is really

astonishing," said ASA President and spouse of the Swiss Ambassador Luzia Sebesta Schmid.

The ambassadors' spouses have an average four-year term in the country; therefore, the charity management rotates constantly. This, in turn, always brings new ideas to improve its work.

"It is also about exchanging opinions. We can learn from (an analysis of) how they do it here, how we do it back home and (how it is done) in other countries," said Kivikoski.

The charity committee also tries to encourage bigger projects that bring change to larger communities.

"Those projects are very interesting, [such as] when a teacher asks for some kind of special device and it will help more students who use and develop through it. But we don't judge if one thing is more important or not," said Hyklová.

In addition, the association encourages people to be more environmentally conscious. The coming charity bazaar, in particular, will be as green as possible.

"This year, we will make sure that our bazaar is as eco-friendly as possible. With this aspect in mind, we are currently looking for projects which would, for example,

encourage people to recycle and to make eco-friendly choices in their everyday lives. We feel privileged to contribute in this way to this beautiful country in which we live for a while," said Kivikoski.

The annual bazaar's "problem was always the plastic bags," said Schmid. This year, ASA will try to replace them entirely with cotton or paper.

"Last year, we already had 800 cotton bags that the British embassy sponsored. This year, we will get 3,000. The first ones who visit us will get a free bag," she noted.

The Czech embassy initiated the first Christmas Charity Bazaar in Kazakhstan in 2008. The idea was to start a tradition in the capital, which has been present in many European countries for many years.

"The first charity bazaar was very successful, also thanks to the big support of the Radisson Hotel... While there were 15 stalls at that time, through the years the interest of different embassies to participate in the bazaar has grown to the current 50 national stalls and 10 more from various schools and organisations. This is an opportunity to present their charity work and also to sell self-made products. It earns additional money for their needs," Schmid added.

Astana Hub, UNICEF launch Social Innovation Lab to solve children's social problems

Staff Report

NUR-SULTAN — Astana Hub and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have launched Social Innovation Lab, which will create favourable conditions for supporting and developing projects aimed at children and their interests.

"The goal of the lab is to pilot projects that will solve children's social problems using IT innovations. We focus on this. IT solutions allow broader coverage of the issue because the main problem is people's ignorance of social support methods and children's problems," said Social Innovation Lab head Asset Dossymkhanov.

The lab will give the government, corporate and commercial sector partners, civic initiatives and scientific circles the opportunity to implement innovations and create user-oriented design. The projects will provide children and

youth with access to governmental services, attract their attention to projects and give them a chance to express their national interests in forming public policies.

"While the start-ups will devise a prototype or modify their projects, our objective is to provide them with technical specialists and mentors who will educate them on business matters. We appreciate Microsoft's participation because they have the technologies and the competency," he noted.

The lab, which currently has 30 partners, will allow them to incubate, develop and modify publicly available products and services for kids using a large amount of data. They will also be able to use artificial intelligence, computer training, virtual and augmented reality technologies, block chain and other methods.

"We have a project that will provide consultations for mothers. We can make a similar application for children and distribute it in schools. Moreover, for example,

we have a legislative restriction that teenage girls cannot go to a gynaecologist appointment without their parents. In such cases, the girl can ask questions through an app or other digital means," said Dossymkhanov.

He gave another example of a project that will collect data on child abuse and notify relevant government agencies.

"This is one of the solutions that will help collect data from all schools in one place and quickly work on such cases. Children do not always call hot lines in such situations; they do not wish to disclose their identity. That is why it is important to keep it anonymous," he added.

UNICEF representative in Kazakhstan Arthur van Diesen spoke about an epidemic that spreads through social contact and provided reasons why it is important to track children's movements.

"Everything is online now; that is why with the help of technolo-

gies we can track people's movements and take preventive measures so that viruses will not spread. This is one of the examples when digital innovations and technologies can help children. Regarding

Kazakhstan, we need to determine what the exact problems are and work on them," he said.

He noted children face many challenges in today's world.

"With Astana Hub, we promote



UNICEF representative in Kazakhstan Arthur van Diesen (C) with the participants of the event.