

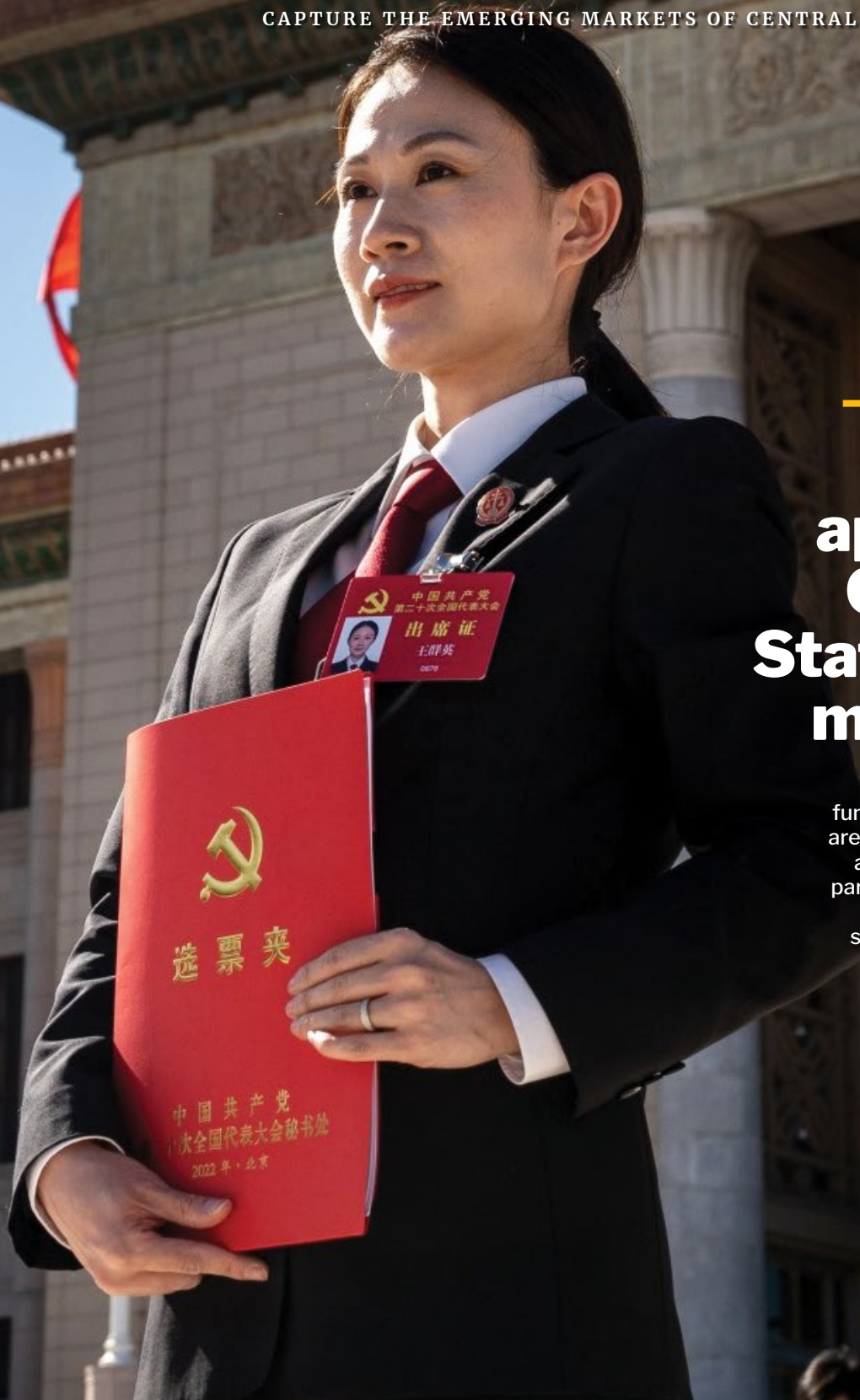
# Business Central Asia

CAPTURE THE EMERGING MARKETS OF CENTRAL ASIA

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## Party approves China's State Council members

China's most fundamental institutions are totalitarian, reflecting and reproducing the party's monopoly control over every facet of society, including the economy.

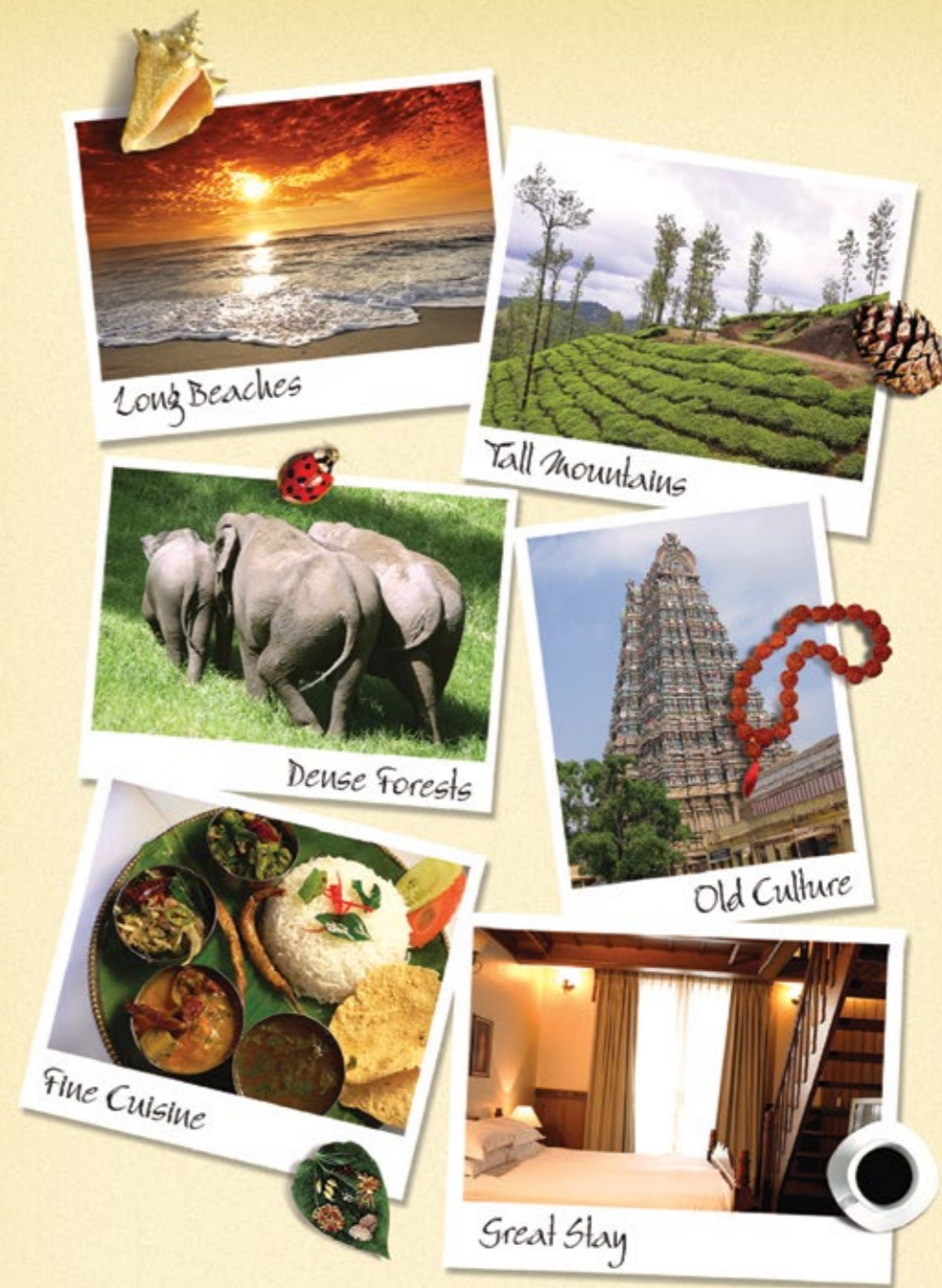
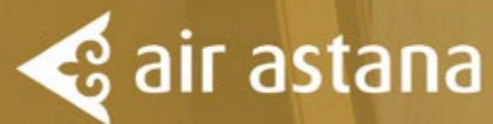




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The first written mention of Turkmen carpets was left by the Italian traveler Marco Polo, who made a trip along the Great Silk Road. An excerpt from his notes reads: "The thinnest and most beautiful carpets in the world are woven here, as well as rich fabrics of red and other colors".

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### On the cover

A delegate poses for a photo at the end of the closing ceremony of the congress in front of the Great Hall of the People.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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**New Delhi has been vociferous in giving voice to the aspirations of the Global South, at a time when few global powers have neither the time nor resources to cater to the most vulnerable, occupied as they are with their own domestic woes.**



▲ Delegates walk past flags of participating countries at the venue of the second meeting of the G20 Finance and Central Bank Deputies in Bengaluru on February 22, 2023.

India's commitment to international collaboration, inclusive development, financial stability, and sustainable growth is consistent. According to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "India is taking this presidency at a time when there is a crisis in the world. The conflicts are going on and economic uncertainty remains on a large scale. The corona pandemic and now the Russia-Ukraine war has had a global impact. Due to this, crisis like food grains, fertilizer, energy, debt, obstruction in supply chain have arisen. India will work on the principle of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" during its chairmanship. India will ensure that the G-20 remains true to its original mission of addressing the financial and economic challenges."

**THE MOST POPULAR PHRASE** among the elite world society is "We need global cooperation, not conflict." That sounds good. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the global multilateral system as "the process of organizing relations among groups of states bound together by their common interests, reciprocity, and common values or ideology." After World War, the Group of Seven, which included the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan, created this definition. This multilateral world order was designed around three sets of institutions: the United Nations (culture, food, se-

curity and well-being such as health), the World Trade Organization (trade), and the Bretton Woods twins of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (finance). Since rebuilding the world economy was a priority at the time, the rest of the world was happy with unipolar multilateralism, focusing on trade, finance and development. Geopolitics during the Cold War was constrained because the Soviet bloc was militarily strong but economically weak. Paradoxically, the success of the global multilateral system over time gave rise to new forces that now threaten the viability of the above-mentioned theories. China, Russia, India and other players have begun to challenge that world order. With the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict, the divide has become sharper than ever. The real issue is whether we continue with unipolar led multilateralism or switch to multipolar multilateralism, for which the rules are yet to be revised. We saw this after the global financial crisis of 2008, when the G7 recognized that they must accommodate new powers and formed G20 to include China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Argentina, Mexico, South Korea, Australia and the European Union. Incidentally, now all the above-mentioned

three pillars are in crisis. The WTO's role in solving trade disputes has diminished when the US disagrees with decisions against its interests; tariffs are back and sanctions threaten to choke global supply and payment chains. Besides, the combined resources of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and multilateral development banks are not enough for what is needed to tackle climate change, the global debt crisis and other global public issues. Instead of diplomacy and negotiation, the weaponization of finance, sanctioning of individuals, corporations and the countries, and military conflicts has triggered a seismic shift in the world order. And above all, some countries have something different in their game plans. For example, Britain has the Commonwealth Development Corporation, under the new name British International Investment, which is known as a national champion to compete in overseas infrastructure markets, under its arms. There is European Union's the Global Gateway (a more snappily titled and more muscular version of the EU's former EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy) and there is US President Joe Biden's Build Back Better plan. Japan has not remained behind with a similar transcontinental network with India and others, to be known as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor. The battle for economic and geostrategic spheres of influence then became apparent with the launch in 2018 of the US-led Indo-Pacific Business Forum. This was followed by the announcement of a "trilateral partnership" among the US, Japan and Australia aimed at marshalling public and private investment into Asian infrastructure and other major projects. The partnership later metamorphosed into something called the Blue Dot Network. Unfortunately, in open and naked world reality, there is admittedly no existing international organization with the authority to force cooperation on these competing and overlapping infrastructures. Therefore, New Delhi has been vociferous in giving voice to the aspirations of the Global South, at a time when few global powers have neither the time nor resources to cater to the most vulnerable, occupied as they are with their own domestic woes. For its G20 Presidency, India is poised to focus attention on the following areas: women's empowerment, digital public infrastructure, health, agriculture, education, culture, tourism, climate financing, circular economy, global food security, energy security, green hydrogen, disaster risk reduction and resilience, fight against economic crime and multilateral reforms.



## YOU SAID IT...

Kyrgyzstan's economy exhibits stability and has proven resilient to global challenges. Sustainability is ensured through accelerated measures aimed at supporting citizens and businesses. It is possible to increase the real money income of the public and ensure economic progress due to social benefits for the common man and increase in the wages of the working class. — *Alisher Joraev, BISHKEK*

**An attempt to give nationality to shared culture is not a fashion of the 21st century. Such an attempt was frequently made in the preceding century, when some countries strived to show off their cultural dominance by adding their names to different cultural assets. But today, doing so can trigger political spats. Culture has no nationality.**

— *SANJOY KUMAR RAKSHIT, Patna*

Both Russia and China are global players in international politics and economic affairs. If the Americans have an aspiration to contain either of them, the United States needs to forge a global consensus to mobilize an effort to contain these countries on a worldwide scale. As for now, it is simply a "mission impossible" to consolidate most countries to take any negative measures towards Moscow or Beijing. Only certain western states have joined the collective actions to hinder the freedom of actions acted by Moscow or Beijing. — *Ravi Kumar Gupta, NEW DELHI*

**There are certain stereotypes and prejudices being spread in society related to the image of science. But it is astonishing that young people see their future in science. They realize that without science, it is impossible to take a step forward in any society. For them, everyone can do science, but one has to take some steps towards their dreams.**

— *SHABNAM SRIVASTAVA, Mumbai*

happy to be partners in making companies in Russia. These sanctions have created vast new sectors of industries in Russia, which would never have been seen before. Russia will indeed grow, and will undoubtedly attract immigrants looking for opportunities. India has some of the biggest pharmaceutical industries in the world, and will just replace the western suppliers permanently. — *Vijay Yadav, CHANDIGARH*

In its history, the United States has repeatedly resorted to pressure on competitors with the help of economic sanctions. However very often they have suffered failure. And one of the obvious examples of that is Russia. In the shortest possible time, Putin was able to adjust to the treatment of sanctions and acquire new partners for import and export. The whole world today is attracted by Russian oil and gas. — *Dr. Robin Pramanick, BENGALURU*

Whether there will be an inflation spiral depends on inflationary expectations. When inflation continues to rise and breaches a certain level, part of the current inflation is converted into inflationary expectations. Under such circumstances, consumers tend to consume in advance, producers choose to control goods to raise prices, workers will demand higher wages and companies finally pass higher costs on to consumers. Inflation will thus be further pushed up and even lead to a vicious cycle of sorts. — *Prof. Javed Hussen, CHENNAI*

China's surprise reopening and its spillover effects to the rest of Asia, mostly in the form of tourism, are likely to strengthen the region's economies even as global headwinds mount. But it also has weaknesses. Slower demand from developed economies will translate into weaker exports, posing a major threat to the region's manufacturing hubs, as political instability within some countries also worries people. — *Raja Chakraborty, KOLKATA*

There is no free lunch for Americans to take from the dining tables of other countries any more. After all, the general rule of give and take is always valid in international politics. It all depends on how much Washington can commit to the alliance relationships. Even many of the US' traditional allies like the Philippines would have strong reluctances to take coordinated actions against Russia and China. No nation would like to take sides unconditionally nowadays. — *Ivy Sarkar, GURUGRAM*

Türkiye has been consistently adhering to the pro-western position on the Ukrainian crisis which did not hinder its interaction with Moscow given their ties on both economic and political issues. Ankara is trying to increase its potential as an international player of a higher caliber than its resources permit and even manages to overcome the structural limitations of a membership in various international organizations. — *Dr. Arijit Chowdhury, KOLKATA*

If the Chinese economy picks up in a reopened China, it will not be easy to buy the planned volumes of energy on the world market. China is responsible for almost one-fifth of global oil consumption and surpassed Japan in 2021 as the world's largest importer of LNG. The country also fills more than half of the world's demand for copper, nickel, and zinc. If the Chinese economy recovers rapidly, it could put commodity prices under intense upward pressure and keep inflation high in Europe and elsewhere in the West. — *Nur Hameed, KOLKATA*

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**“Quoted”**

The only priority is - no one in the Kyrgyz Republic is allowed to violate strict observance and enforcement of the current legislation.

**Sadyr Japarov, President of Kyrgyzstan**

Kyrgyzstan always remains committed to the principles of the rule of law; human rights and freedoms are among the highest values in the country. At the same time, freedom leads to responsibility, and responsibility leads to freedom, therefore, the more freedom, the more responsibility. The only priority is - no one in the Kyrgyz Republic is allowed to violate strict observance and enforcement of the current legislation.



**HEALTHCARE**  
**First Ayurveda based wellbeing hotel built in Azerbaijan**

SHABRAN WELLBEING RESORT hotel, located in Pirabadil village of Azerbaijan's Shabran region, is 147 kilometers away from the capital Baku.



The complex located in Pirabadil village of Shabran district is 147 kilometers away from the capital Baku.

Covering an area of 12.6 ha, the hotel consists of 119 rooms of different categories, 10 Composers', 10 Writers' and 10 Artists' cottages. This is the first resort center in Azerbaijan that applies Ayurvedic (ancient Indian medicine) treatment methods. Here, professional

*Panchakarma* (detoxification) specialists offer special original therapy opportunities based on Indian traditions. Covering a large area, the Ayurveda Spa has a beauty salon, 6 treatment rooms, a Finnish sauna, a steam room, a relaxation area and an indoor pool. Here, every condition has been created for practicing fitness and yoga. Healing *Panchakarma* procedures, *Pranayama* sessions, yoga and lifestyle training will be carried out at the spa.

**The hotel with luxury infrastructure serves as the first Ayurveda center in Azerbaijan.**

At the Shabran Wellbeing Resort hotel, Rübai, Ahang, Ojak restaurants, Misra Lobby Lounge, Bade Lounge Bar, and Aura Cafe will operate. The hotel also has a billiards room, a cinema room, a PlayStation room, a children's playroom and

a mini-football field. For business meetings, conferences and special events, the hotel offers Bayati and Shiraz conference halls that can perfectly accommodate up to 180 people. To explore Shabran Wellbeing Resort hotel, you can visit [www.shabranwellbeing.az](http://www.shabranwellbeing.az)

**TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE**



1. When was Miss International beauty contest established?
2. When was International Day for the Eradication of Poverty established?
3. Who was the father of Ksenia Sobchak, a Russian celebrity?
4. Which city is famous mostly for large number of twins?
5. What is the real name of Katy Perry?

**Answers of the February 2023 quiz**

1. Robert Thurman, an Indologist and the first American to be tonsured a Buddhist monk personally by the Dalai Lama. Since Buddhist monasticism is not lifelong, Thurman resigned, became a professor at Columbia University. The actual name of Uma Thurman was Uma Karuna (*bestower of bliss*).
2. Sailor Moon, the famous Japanese anime character created in the 1990s, is a sweet loving schoolgirl and also champion of justice who leads a group of comrades – the Sailor Soldiers – to save the universe from evil forces.
3. The Golden Triangle is situated at area where the borders of three countries converge: Thailand, Laos and Burma. There used to be opium poppy plantations in this region, which is why it is informally called the Opium Triangle.
4. Acupuncture was introduced in West Bengal in 1959 by BK Basu, one of five Indian doctors who served in China during WWII; thus, West Bengal became the first Indian state to recognize the treatment. In 2019, the Indian government recognized acupuncture as an “independent system of healthcare.”
5. From 1429 until 1879, Siam was the name of Thailand under the Ryukyu Kingdom which rose to prominence as a hub for maritime trade between China, Japan and Southeast Asia.



**Romani community in Türkiye**

President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan often hails his ties to the Romani community, with which he spent his childhood in the Kasımpaşa neighborhood of Istanbul where a large part of the Romani community lived. He was also the first to apologize to the community in 2010 for the Turkish state's past policies depriving the community of their rights.

**COOPERATION**  
**Dushanbe to host Heads of State of Central Asia**

THE 5TH CONSULTATIVE MEETING of the Heads of State of Central Asia will be held in Dushanbe on September 14-16 2023. The same time, the founding meeting of the Council of Heads of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea will be held in the capital of Tajikistan. Recall that the IV meeting of the heads of Central Asian states was

held in June 2022 in Cholpon-Ata in Kyrgyzstan. At the meeting, the participants discussed issues of regional cooperation, as well as trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian partnership between the countries. The first consultative meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia was

held in Astana, Kazakhstan in March 2018, the second - in November 2019 in the capital of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. But a single symbol was approved at the 3rd meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, which took place in August 2021 in Turkmenistan in the Awaza National Tourist Zone.



The 4th consultative meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia was held in Cholpon-Ata, Issyk-Kul region, Kyrgyzstan on July 21, 2022.

**STABILITY**

**EBRD updates forecast growth for Central Asia**

THE EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT (EBRD) has updated its forecast for the growth of the in 2023-2024. The Economist has reviewed the EBRD's data and findings. Thus, the EBRD expects output in Central Asia to grow by 4.9% in 2023. This slight upward revision from September reflects higher high oil and gas prices for commodity exporters, higher labor, capital and remittance inflows, and growth in intermediary trade. Output growth is expected to pick up to 5.4% in 2024, driven by planned infrastructure investment, high commodity prices and the relocation of highly skilled professionals and entire businesses from Russia to Central Asia.



The EBRD forecasts that Kyrgyzstan's GDP will grow by 7% in 2023, and accelerate to 7.2% in 2024. The economies of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan will show less growth in the next two years. The economies of Mongolia and Tajikistan, on the contrary, will bypass the Kyrgyzstan in terms of growth rate.

**The economies of Central Asia are showing strong resilience to the geopolitical adversities caused by Ukraine conflict, EBRD reported.**

**ENFORCEMENT**

**Taliban closes shops for not attending Friday prayers**

THE RADICAL MOVEMENT “Taliban,” controlling power in Afghanistan since August 2021, has begun to close shops of Afghans who do not attend Friday prayers in mosques, writes *IA Ferghana*. The publication refers to the network portal Etilatroz, which informs that in the administrative center of the southern province of Gilmend, the city of Lashkargah, about 70 stores have already been closed for the specified reason. In November 2022, the Taliban demanded from the merchants to appear for the Friday prayers on a mandatory basis. The radical movement warned shop owners that their businesses could resume their activities only after paying a fine of 10,000 Afghanis (\$111). This is quite a large amount by local standards.



Taliban previously stated vice and virtue orders were advisory only, but it has published those who fail to comply.

Let us add that after seizing power in Afghanistan, Taliban is consistently imposing the norms of Islamic law, *Shariat* - as they understand them. In particular, for this reason, girls over the age of 12 are not sent to school, from December 2022 girls are prohibited from studying at universities, and women from working.

**ADVANCEMENT**

**China surpasses US in key innovation metric**

A STUDY FINDS CHINA has surpassed the US in one key measure of innovation and is making major strides in another. The study conducted in January 2023 by the *Information Technology and Innovation Foundation*, a Washington-based think tank focused on US science and technol-



A robot makes coffee at a hi-tech fair in Shenzhen, China. The report by the *Information Technology and Innovation Foundation* looked at 22 innovation-related indicators.

ogy policy, found that China’s innovation in 2020 was 139 percent of its US equivalent, up from 78 percent in 2010.” China is evolving from an imitator to an innovator, following a path blazed by its Asian Tiger neighbors – but at a much larger scale, with far greater geopolitical results,” said Robert Atkinson, the foundation’s President, who co-authored the report along with research assistant Ian Clay.

The study also found that China has already displayed great potential for global leadership in several key areas, including supercomputers, space exploration, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and high-speed rail.” Its innovation capabilities now threaten the global market share of firms from the United States and allied nations in most high-value-added, advanced industries that are important to US prosperity and security,” Atkinson added. The foundation has examined 22 innovation-related indicators between 2010 and 2020, including venture capital, patents and the amount of value added in advanced industries. It concluded that China was making significant gains by almost every indicator. China’s strongest inroads came in the number and quality of science and engineering articles, the number of patents worldwide related to a particular innovation – known as an international patent family – and the fees it received for its patents and other advances.

By 2020, China tallied more international patent families than the US and published more scientific articles in all fields surveyed, other than in geology, atmospheric and oceanic sciences. China accounted for 39.6 percent of the 1.7 million patents granted globally in 2021, the World Economic Forum reported in December, followed by North America with 19.9 percent and Europe with 11.8 percent. SCMP

**ACCESSIBILITY**

**Who can visit Russia without visa!**

In 2023, citizens of some 65 countries can visit Russia without a visa. This includes most of the post-Soviet states like Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, as well as Ukraine. Additionally, citizens of some countries in South and Central America – including Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Panama, Peru, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Uruguay, Ecuador – do not need a visa to travel to Russia. Citizens of Israel, South Africa, Cuba,



Montenegro, Thailand, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Andorra, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

North Macedonia, Mongolia, Botswana enjoy visa-free regime with Russia, too. RUSSIA BEYOND

**REPORT**

**The ratio of US visa refusal in CIS**

In 2022, the US Embassy in Tashkent refused to issue B category visas (tourist and business visas) to 47.04% of Uzbek nationals, the United States Department of State said in a report. Among the Central Asia countries, Uzbekistan ranked second in terms of visa refusal rate after Tajikistan, 57.03%, while the refusal rate in Turkmenistan topped - 35.69%, in Kyrgyzstan - 37.85%, in Kazakhstan - 44.02%. In other CIS countries, the rates are: Azerbaijan - 23.54%, Belarus - 26.05%, Russia - 26.18%, Armenia - 37.87%, Ukraine - 41.27% (was 15.15% in the past year). The main reason of refusal is over-stay and staying as illegal immigrant.

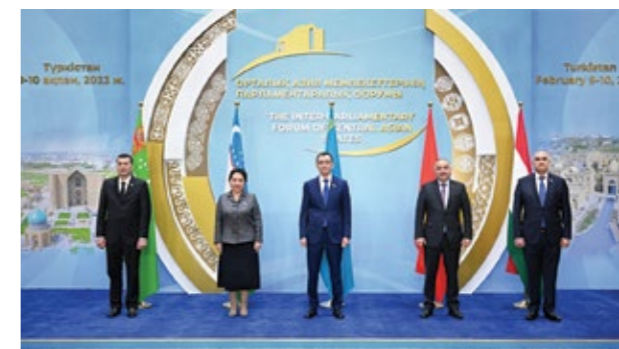
**EDUCATION**

**Kyrgyzstan to introduce different teaching methods**



The Minister of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan Kanybek Imanaliev wishes to introduce British and Soviet teaching methods into the education system of Kyrgyzstan. He announced this at a recent meeting of the parliamentary committee on social policy. According to the minister, the education system will consist of three components. “We will adopt the good sides of Soviet pedagogy. Two models have been competing in the world in the last 200-300 years – the Prussian and British teaching models. Finnish, Swedish, Estonian schools apply British model. Kazakhstan has completely switched to this system. The third component is national,” said Kanybek Imanaliev.

**MILESTONE**



L-R: Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan, Speakers of Oliy Majlis of Republic of Uzbekistan, Chairperson of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, Speaker of the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan and Speaker of the Majlisi Oli of Tajikistan.

**COMMITMENT**

**Parliamentary cooperation gains momentum in Central Asia**

THE FIRST INTER-PARLIAMENTARY FORUM of Central Asian states, which resulted in the adoption of the Turkestan Declaration, signed by all five countries of the region, was held in city of Turkestan, Kazakhstan on February 9-10 2023. Thus, the declaration became the foundation for the integration of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

**The Turkestan Declaration reflects the prospects for further development of inter-parliamentary relations aimed at expanding economic cooperation and forming a single cultural and historical space of Central Asia.**

through the legislature. Only in the last few years, the intensification of regional cooperation between the Central Asian Five has contributed to the formation of a center of power with significant economic and human potential and now the countries of the region to jointly respond to the foreign policy challenges with world powers such as Russia, China, the USA, India, Japan and the EU.

The consultative meeting of the heads of the Central Asian states held in Turkmenbashi in 2021 confirmed the policy commitment to the formation of a unified approach to the pressing problems of the region and its relations with its neighbors. At the same time, the format of cooperation itself wants to combine the integration features of other structures: that is why the merging of the interests of countries is all-encompassing. This also applies to the humanitarian direction (Creating a space for higher education in Central Asia), and security (Programs on borders and combating extremism of the EU), and economic (the desire to increase mutual trade), as well as political (a unified approach to regional and global problems). The adopted Turkestan Declaration and other joint documents indicate that the time of protectionism and border problems in Central Asia is coming to an end. Now the countries are determined to a comprehensive join the forces to create a fair and mutually beneficial cooperation.

**RELATIONS**

**President asks Ambassador to enhance ties with India**

In a bid to strengthen the already developing ties between Kyrgyzstan and India, the President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadar Japarov, received Askar Beshimov, the newly appointed Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to India. Having set a number of specific tasks, the Head of State noted that a good political dialogue has been built between Kyrgyzstan and India and there is a deep mutual understanding that allows to develop fruitful cooperation in all areas of interaction.



Sadar Japarov stressed that India is a country with a developed economy and a large market for the sale of various products, therefore it is important to further develop bilateral trade and economic ties. Further, given the favorable conditions for investment in Kyrgyzstan, the President directed for sustained and proactive work to attract potential investors from India to Kyrgyzstan. Askar Beshimov thanked the Head of State for his trust, and also informed about his plans to develop bilateral cooperation with the Indian side.

**CONNECTIVITY**

**Important Announcement!**

Turkmenistan Airlines will resume regular flights on the Ashgabat-Delhi-Ashgabat route from March 26, 2023. It is planned that flight to the capital of India will be carried out once a week - on Sundays. In March 2020, due to the pandemic, regular flights between the two countries were suspended. Before the world health crisis, Turkmenistan Airlines operated regular flights to Delhi and Amritsar.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### Tajikistan to build its part of railway line to Afghanistan

IN TAJIKISTAN, THE CONSTRUCTIVE initiatives are being taken for the construction of the Jaloliddini Balkhi-Jayhun-Nizhny Panjirailway line, which in future should become part of the interregional railway network. The length of the proposed railway line on the territory of Tajikistan will be 50 kilometers; it is expected that the laying of the section will create conditions for connecting the railways of Central Asia and East Asia. At present, South Korean specialists are engaged in the preliminary work necessary to prepare a feasibility study for the Tajik section of the route.



Recall that this railway line in the south of Tajikistan, which should be connected to the railway lines of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, is planned to be built since 2013. The corresponding memorandum was then signed by the heads of these three countries. The first stage of this railway line, Atamyrat-Ymamnazar (Turkmenistan) - Akina (Afghanistan) was launched at the end of 2016. However, the construction of its Tajik part did not start for various reasons, including a disagreement between Tajikistan and Afghanistan over the route of the proposed line. Later, all disagreements were settled, but no work on the project could be carried out.

## RECOGNITION

### Azerbaijani ASAN wins Global Government Excellence Award

THE ASAN (AZERBAIJAN SERVICE AND ASSESSMENT NETWORK) service has been named the Best Government Service in the World and won the Global Government Ex-



The award was presented to the Chairman of the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of Azerbaijan, Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, February 15, 2023

cellence Award at the 10th World Government Summit in Dubai February 15 2023. The award was presented by the Crown

Prince of the Emirate of Dubai Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum to the Chairman of the State Agency for Public Services and Social Innovations under the President of Azerbaijan Ulvi Mehdiyev. This award was established at the initiative of the government of the UAE as part of the World Government Summit to evaluate the world's leading government initiatives and reward successful practices in promoting innovation in public service delivery. Azerbaijan was conferred with this award, the first one in the world in this field, established in a simi-

**“ASAN Service” was honored with the “Best Government Service in the World” award among contenders representing 80 countries.**

lar format, out of 80 candidate countries. ASAN Service under the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations was established by the decree of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on July 13, 2012.

Previously, the service was conferred with such international awards as United Nations Public Service Award and International Safety Award (in 2015).

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### April 30 date set for constitution referendum

AFTER GETTING THE APPROVAL of the Legislative Chamber and Senate of Uzbekistan, it has been decided to hold the referendum on the new constitution of the country on April 30, 2023.

The new edition of the constitution will come into force from the day the results of the referendum are announced by the Central Election Commission.

The text of the main law of Uzbekistan will change by 65%; the country is proclaimed a social state, the number of senators will be reduced and other changes

are planned. At the same time, there is amendment to extend the term of the country's President in office from 5 to 7 years. The need to reform the constitution was announced in November



2021 by the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his inaugural speech, specifying that such a proposal comes from the people of the country. In congratulating

the people of Uzbekistan on the occasion of the 29th anniversary of the constitution in December of the same year, Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed to adopt amendments to the Constitution, that is, by December 8, 2022, but the adoption of the document was delayed. In early March 2023, President Mirziyoyev met with deputies and senators, as well as the leadership of the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan and discussed the results of considerations on the proposals of the people on amendments to the constitution. It was stated that the document would be considered by the Constitutional Court of Uzbekistan.

## IMPORT EXPORT

### Foreign trade turnover of Tajikistan in 2022

In 2022, the foreign trade turnover of Tajikistan amounted to about \$7.6 billion, which 25.1% more than in 2021. The import of goods amounted to about \$5.2 billion, which 22.9% more than in 2021. The share of exports is more than \$2.3 billion, which is 30.4% more than in 2021. In 2022, Tajikistan carried out export-import operations with 109 countries of the world.

In export the main export goods were: minerals and concentrates - 31.4% (\$730.8 million); aluminum - 6% (\$139.9 million); electrical energy - 4.6% (\$106.8 million); fruits - 2.2% (\$51.5 million); cement - 1.9% (\$44.4 million). The main buyers were Kazakhstan - 20.8%, China - 15.8%, Türkiye - 7.7%,

Uzbekistan - 7.7%, as well as Iran - 4.9%, Afghanistan - 4.5%, Belgium - 4.4% and Russia - 3.8%. In the structure of imports the bulk of the goods were: petroleum

products - 13.2% (\$681.6 million); wheat - 5.3% (\$329.1 million); light vehicles - 4.5% (\$234 million); wood materials - 2.2% (\$114.8 million); mineral fertilizers - 1.6% (\$80.4 million). The main suppliers were Russia - 30.6%, Kazakhstan - 18.5%, China - 16.2%, Uzbekistan - 7.6%, Türkiye - 3.3%.



A vehicle from Tajikistan passes the Karasu port to China's Xinjiang.

## EXPANSION

### Kazakhstan plans to build five hubs on borders

THE AUTHORITIES IN KAZAKHSTAN intend to build five border centers for trade with neighboring countries by 2026, according to a report released by the Ministry of Trade and Integration. “An industrial trade and logistics complex will be created in Zhambyl region on the border



Cross-border hubs are expected to cover the export potential of enterprises in Kazakhstan's vast regions.

with Kyrgyzstan; in Turkestan region, on the border with Uzbekistan, an international center of industrial cooperation – Central Asia. It is planned to build

a cross-border trade center Eurasia in the West Kazakhstan region on the border with Russia. The Caspian container hub will appear in Mangistau region, and Khorgos Hub border complex will be built on the border with China,” the report said.

The activities of trade and logistics hubs will be aimed at ensuring industrial cooperation in the field of warehousing, storage, processing, production of new goods and their further sale with integration into international commodity distribution systems. “They will also provide services of

short-term storage, logistics, rent of trading places, pre-sale preparation, consolidation and redistribution of goods by wholesale lots, loading and unloading, development of transcontinental cargo transportation. It is assumed that the cross-border hubs will cover the export potential of enterprises in the regions of Kazakhstan,” the ministry explained.

According to Kazakhstani officials, the development of infrastructure complexes in the border areas will create conditions for the implementation of industrial cooperation, which will

reduce the number of participants in the supply chain, reduce the cost of the product for the end consumer and increase the speed of delivery.

## REPORT

### Kazakhstan's GDP grows 5.6% in January 2023

KAZAKHSTAN'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT grew by 5.6 percent in January 2023, according to the country's Ministry of National Economy. Kazakhstan experienced growth in major economic sectors, such as the real sector (2.3 percent) and the service sector (7.6 percent). Trade grew (19.4 percent) as did information and communication (18.1 percent), whereas growth in construction reached 12.5 percent as over one million square meters of housing were commissioned.

The volume of investments in fixed assets for the reporting period grew by 18.3 percent. Investment inflow increased by 9.2 percent in the industrial sector, 33.7 percent in agriculture and real estate each, and 31.8 percent in transport and storage.



Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Alikhan Smailov.

Following the preliminary results of 2022, the country's foreign trade turnover increased by 32.1 percent to \$134.4 billion. The exports grew by 39.9 percent to reach \$84.4 billion, with imports reaching \$50 billion. The positive trade balance reached \$34.4 billion, while the manufacturing industry maintained favorable growth rates (1.6 percent). The positive trend is also seen in the production of food, oil, chemical products, beverages, pharmaceuticals, and light manufacturing.

## CONNECTIVITY

### New route from India to Kazakhstan launched

A NEW SERVICE HAS been launched to develop the eastern branch of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC); KTZ Express, a multimodal subsidiary of the Kazakhstan Railways, will transport sesame seeds from India to Kazakhstan via Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The estimated travel time for this cargo is about 20 days. First, the goods will travel by sea from the port of Mundra to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. From there on, the containers will be transported by rail and sent to Almaty via Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The service is a part of the development plan of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway corridor and a part of the INSTC eastern branch connecting Mumbai with Moscow.

Many players participating in INSTC insist on the development of the eastern branch of the corridor. For example, in December 2022, Russian Railways established a 20 percent discount for operators who decided to transport goods on the eastern side of INSTC. The discount is granted only to containers transported through Russian-Kazakh border crossings, as well as through the Bolashak-Serkhetyak border crossing between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

The eastern branch of INSTC refers to the network connecting Russia with the countries of the Caspian Basin, the Persian Gulf, Central, South and South-east Asia.

## PLATFORM

### Kazakhstan launches Astana International Forum

KAZAKHSTAN IS GOING TO LAUNCH a new international conference, the Astana International Forum, to join efforts on tackling key global challenges, to be held on June 8-9, 2023 in Astana. It will serve as a platform for eminent delegates from governments, international organizations, business, and academia, to engage in a dia-



President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

logue to seek ways to address climate, food scarcity and energy security challenges. Commenting on the launch of the Astana International Forum, President Tokayev

noted, "Today, across the globe we face historic challenges, the likes of which we have not encountered for decades or longer. These challenges are putting unprecedented pressure on the international community, creating new dividing lines and challenging the principles of globalization and multilateralism. The Astana International Forum was created to respond to these challenges, prioritizing cooperation as a core tenet of a functioning international system. Kazakhstan has a long history of advancing constructive international relations, serving as a bridge between East and West – and while this policy has been firmly tested in 2022, it has proven resilient. Through the Astana International Forum, we hope to build new bridges and strengthen ties, as we come together to overcome the collective challenges we face, charting a new way forward – diplomatically, economically and politically."

The Astana International Forum grew out of the success of the Astana Economic Forum. It was conceptualized to address four key global issues: foreign policy, security and sustainability, energy and climate, and economy and finance. These pillars are at the heart of the Forum's mission of "Tackling Challenges through Dialogue: Towards Cooperation, Prosperity and Progress."

## PROGRESS

### Ten years of WTO membership of Tajikistan

On March 2, 2013, Tajikistan became the 159th member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) - the second (after Kyrgyzstan) in the region of Central Asia. The country in the process of multilateral negotiations accepted and introduced changes in more than 100 regulatory-legal documents for the adaptation of its economy to the new conditions of competition in the world arena. At present, the government of Tajikistan notes many positive moments from joining this organization in all possible sectors and industries of the economy. The main advantages relate to the strengthening and expansion of export

potential, diversification of foreign trade, and simplification of export-import procedures. According to official statistics, during these 10 years the number of trade partner-countries of Tajikistan increased from 102 to 110. The volume of exports increased from \$1.4



Tajikistan's capital city Dushanbe.

billion in 2012 to \$2.1 billion in 2022, and the volume of foreign trade turnover, in general, from \$5.1 billion to \$7.3 billion. The country's trade balance (the difference between exports and imports) has not changed much during this

period: the share of exports in the structure of foreign trade in 2012 was 27.4%, and in 2022 - 28.8%. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economic Development claims that after the accession of Tajikistan to the WTO, the country's export volume increased by 2 times; the list of exported goods by 1.8 times, the production of industrial products by 2.1 times, and agricultural production by 1.3 times. In addition, a "single window" was introduced for the simplification of export, import and transit procedures; the "Trade Portal of Tajikistan" was created; and a number of important reforms in the field of trade were implemented.

It is also noted that, participating in global trade initiatives, Tajikistan has achieved 7% medium-term economic growth and 10% medium-term business growth.

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An exclusive interview granted to BUSINESS CENTRAL ASIA by His Excellency Ambassador of Kazakhstan to India Nurlan Zhalgasbayev.

VALUES IN GOVERNANCE

## Beginning of a new era of New and Fair Kazakhstan

**In your opinion, how will political reforms influence the process of building New and Fair Kazakhstan?**

Since last year, the world has been going through many trials. The conflict in Ukraine, in particular, has affected the entire planet, including indirectly, through economic depression and alarming geopolitical tensions. Kazakhstan has not escaped this, because the consequences of the war have affected our economy, and the risks of a global recession and rising inflation undermine business confidence in the Central Asian region. Against this difficult background, Kazakhstan could have looked inward, particularly due to the tragic events that took place in our country in January 2022, when we faced a coup attempt through armed violence. Many



President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev registering to vote during the referendum in June last year.

were unsure whether Kazakhstan would recover. Despite our assurances and firm commitments to reform, democratisation, and further protection of human rights, some doubted whether this would be achieved. In addition to demonstrating our resilience and stability, we have transformed our country through significant political and socio-economic initiatives. We have implemented constitutional reforms following a **nationwide referendum in June 2022**, which have instilled new democratic values in our governance, including limited

presidential powers, a more influential parliament, an independent Constitutional Court, establishment of new political parties, direct elections of mayors, and other important measures. In November 2022, our country held a **presidential election under the new Constitution**, which means all future heads of our state, including current President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, will serve a single seven-year term without the right to re-election. The election, which was held fairly and transparently, was an important milestone in the democratic development of our country. We also learned valuable lessons from the **tragic events in January**. Many of the participants of those riots received an amnesty. Steps were also taken to prevent human rights mistreatments. All of our efforts over the past twelve

months have contributed to the creation of a **Just and Fair Kazakhstan** – a prosperous society, and a more vibrant, dynamic and competitive political system. While transforming our domestic political system, we did not forget about our **international obligations**. In October 2022, our capital hosted the sixth summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, an organisation that we launched 30 years ago to en-

hance cooperation towards peace, security and stability in Asia. During the same month, Astana held the meeting of Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council, Charles Michel. Symbolically, it took place on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Central Asian countries and the European Union. The domestic and foreign policy course taken by Kazakhstan has opened the door to enhanced cooperation with India. Over the years, we have established a constructive political dialogue



His Excellency Ambassador of Kazakhstan to India Nurlan Zhalgasbayev.

and are constantly expanding our multifaceted economic and humanitarian ties transformed to Strategic Partnership in 2009. We have five Joint Working Groups in such the areas as trade and economic cooperation; on textile industry, IT, military-technical cooperation, and science and technology committee. Our countries are working on instituting a transport and logistics, space, medico-pharmaceutical joint working groups. I consider it important to pay special attention to priority projects, which include energy, space, military-technical cooperation, FinTech, IT, tourism, healthcare and pharmacology. Kazakhstan is the main trading partner of India in Central Asia. As part of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the countries, on June 2, 2022, the official opening ceremony of the bust to the great Kazakh poet and thinker Abai Kunanbayuly took place in New Delhi, timed to coincide with the Anniversary of diplomatic relations between our countries.

In response to the opening of the monument to Abai Kunanbayuly in New Delhi, a monument to Mahatma Gandhi was erected in Astana on October 13. I think it has a symbolic meaning for the relationship and cooperation of the two countries. We have well-established cultural and economic relations, and I believe this event will contribute to their further development.

As the world looks to navigate the challenges associated with current geopolitical and economic hardships, closer cooperation between Kazakhstan and India is essential. At the same time, Kazakhstan remains committed to

developing its relations with all the countries and partners. As President Tokayev said during his inauguration following the recent presidential election, “Kazakhstan will continue to pursue a balanced, constructive foreign policy aimed at protecting national interests. Mutually beneficial cooperation and strategic partnership with neighbouring countries – Russia, China and brotherly countries of Central Asia, with partners in integration alliances – will be a priority. We will make every effort to develop multifaceted cooperation with the United States, the European Union, the states of Asia, the Middle East and Transcaucasia, as well as with all interested countries.”

We are convinced that our multi-vector foreign policy will contribute to the resolution of many global crises and facilitate increased international collaboration. 2023 will be another significant year for Kazakhstan Parliamentary elections will be held on March 19.

**How do you see this parliamentary election as compared to the previous elections?**

The constitutional amendments that were implemented following the nationwide referendum in June 2022 have ushered in new democratic principles in our country, including a more influential parliament, limited presidential powers, simplified procedures for registering new political parties, direct elections of *akims* (mayors), among many other important measures.



A building of the Mazhilis, the lower house of Kazakhstan's parliament in capital city Astana.

Several political initiatives have launched from January this year. Perhaps most significant is the establishment of the Constitutional Court, to which every citizen can apply, including the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Prosecutor General. The Court will ensure that

our country's laws are in line with our Constitution and will protect the fundamental rights of our citizens. Elvira Azimova, the first Chairperson of the Constitutional Court, previously worked as Commissioner for Human Rights in Kazakhstan. This is a clear indication of the Court's priorities and direction. Now, Kazakhstan is moving fast towards *Mazhilis* (the lower house of parliament) and *maslikhats* (local representative bodies) elections on March 19. These elections will be unique in many respects. Firstly, two recently established political parties will participate in the vote. For instance, towards the end of last year, the Green Party was established in Kazakhstan, which will raise awareness of ecological issues – an area that is of vital importance due to the ongoing climate change challenges, and of great concern to our citizens due to enduring consequences of large-scale Soviet-era man-made environmental calamities. Overall, seven parties are now registered in the country offering a plethora of political choice for the electorate. Their participation in competitive elections will further contribute to strengthening a multi-party system by increasing plurality and influence of opposition politics, an objective which our country has been working towards for the past several years. Significantly, the threshold for parties to enter the *Mazhilis* has been reduced from seven to five percent, making it easier for

opposition parties to enter parliament and play an important role in increasing government accountability. Secondly, a mixed proportional-majoritarian model will be used for the first time for the election to the *Mazhilis* since 2004, where 70 percent of deputies will be elected proportionally from party lists, and 30 percent by majoritarian rule from single-member districts. This means that 29

out of 98 members of parliament will be elected in single-mandate constituencies, while 69 will be elected from party lists under the proportional representation model from a single nationwide constituency. The elections to the *maslikhats* of districts and cities of national importance will also be held

under a mixed electoral system, with a 50/50 ratio, while lower level *maslikhats* will be elected completely under a majoritarian rule.

In addition, an “against all” option will be included on the ballots, which will give the electorate the opportunity to express their disapproval of all candidates should they wish to do so. Finally, a 30 percent quota for women, youth, and persons with special needs has been established at the legislative level in the distribution of the mandates of the members of parliament from the party lists. This ensures wider representation in parliament of all groups in Kazakhstan.

Our country has always shown its commitment to holding free, open, and fair elections. The role of election monitors is undoubtedly crucial in this regard. As with previous elections, including the presidential election in November 2022, we have invited 10 international organizations and scores of observers from foreign nations to observe the election. We expect the largest election observation missions from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The upcoming elections will mark another important milestone in the development of Kazakhstan's democracy. Many were unsure whether our country would recover after the unrest in January 2022. Yet we have managed to overcome this hurdle. In addition to demonstrating our resilience and stability, we have transformed our country through significant political and socio-economic initiatives.

The elections will not change our country overnight, but they will further contribute to the creation of a Just Kazakhstan – a prosperous society, and a more vibrant, dynamic and competitive political system. Such a country will be an even stronger and more committed partner for cooperation for the international community, including for India. As the world continues to navigate current geopolitical and economic challenges, a stable and thriving Kazakhstan is to the benefit of not just our own citizens, but to the whole region and beyond. Our political reforms, supported by competitive elections, is the foundation on which we will ensure our stability and continue to build our future.

## A MONOPOLY STATE

## Party approves China's State Council members

THE 14TH NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS has approved China's new State Council. There are only two newcomers among the 26 heads of ministries and agencies: Defense Minister Li Shangfu and National Development and Reform Commission Chairman Zheng Shanjie.

Officials loyal to Xi Jinping currently hold key positions in the State Council. New Prime Minister Li Qiang is one of them. However, his appointment is based not only on his personal loyalty but also on the expertise that he gained while leading the economically developed regions at the mouth of the Yangtze River, including Shanghai. As for Li Shangfu, his appointment is first and foremost a reward for his successful work to upgrade the Chinese army. In terms

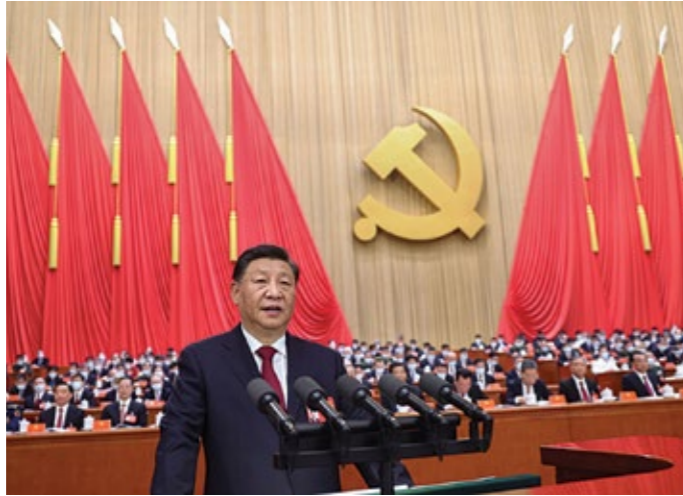
of expertise, he is not a military leader but an engineer. The United States imposed sanctions on him for Russian weapons purchases. Still, we can't say that his appointment marks or paves the way for a new phase of a standoff between China and the US. Over the past decade, China has seen a significant consolidation of power in the hands of Xi Jinping, and the Communist Party's supremacy over the state and society has also become more apparent. The next decade will be a difficult one for China, given that the old economic development model is exhausted, with cheap labor and free resources no longer available, while the external environment - relations with the US and its allies - is getting more and more toxic.

### Is today's China yesterday's Soviet Union?

by Di Guo and Chenggang Xu

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held in October 2022, confirmed President Xi Jinping and China's top political

leadership for the next five years. But what that means for the Chinese economy going forward will depend on three factors: the state of the country's institutions, past and current eco-



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of the 20th National Congress of China's ruling Communist Party in Beijing, China, October 16, 2022.

nom conditions, and the leadership's political intentions. China's most fundamental institutions are totalitarian, reflecting and reproducing the party's monopoly control over every facet of society, including the economy. The party-state institutions of totalitarian control were transplanted, in full, from the Soviet Union in 1949. When Soviet-style totalitarianism collapsed three decades ago under the dead weight of its economic failures, China appeared to be an exception. The question now is whether China's own totalitarian experiment can last. To answer that, one must understand the structure of "totalitarianism with Chinese characteristics." A key pillar is regionally decentralized totalitarianism, which combines highly centralized totalitarian control over politics, ideology and personnel with decentralization in administrative and economic affairs. This is the arrangement that facilitated the post-Mao reforms. Centralized totalitarian control of the economy was relaxed, evolved into regionally decentralized authoritarianism. But since Xi came to power in 2012, China has shifted back toward totalitarianism, with

the party leadership reasserting control, particularly over the burgeoning private sector. That reversal is a central reason for China's sharp economic slowdown in 2022.

#### OPENING UP

Much of China's rapid economic growth in the early post-Mao reform era was recovery following the devastation inflicted from the late 1950s until the late 1970s by the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. But the remaining share represented something beyond mere recovery, and is something of a puzzle.

China's reforms succeeded where all of the reform efforts by its communist counterparts in the Soviet Union and Central and East Europe had failed, because China had managed to solve a fundamental incentive problem that characterizes party-state bureaucracies. This earlier success offers clues about whether its economy remains sustainable today. Following Mao's death, the party leadership came to

believe that economic growth was the key to its survival, and it settled on the institutional foundation for new reform policies. Under the new model, regional economic performance would determine the promotion of local party-state bureaucrats, which led to competition between subnational bureaucrats. To gain an advantage, some covered up or even supported illegitimate private enterprises, and thus inadvertently unleashed rapid growth in China's private sector, a development that was incompatible with totalitarianism and certainly never tolerated in the Soviet Union.

With private enterprise becoming increasingly embedded in the Chinese economy, the party took the additional step of amending the constitution to recognize private-property rights, making China the first communist state to do so. At this point, there was a relative relaxation of control. Thus, the private sector, a rudimentary civil society, and nonstate-owned mass media outlets were allowed to grow, and did so rapidly, provided that they did not challenge the party's political monopoly. Then came China's 2001 accession to

the World Trade Organization, which brought an enormous inflow of foreign investment and a dramatic increase in exports. That development and the rapid expansion of the private sector became the decisive drivers of China's rapid growth this century.

#### BEIJING, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

But the sustainability of China's economic dynamism is persistently threatened by the exclusive state ownership of land, a state monopoly in the banking sector, the absence of judicial independence, discrimination against the private sector and a dearth of domestic demand. While the party's desire to rebuild its legitimacy drove the relaxation of totalitarian control in the early reform years, the 2008 global financial crisis gave the party an excuse to renew its push for total control. The regime relied on a massive accumulation of debt to boost infrastructure development across the board, which generated a high economic growth rate, at least for a while. But most of these investments were inefficient, and China entered a vicious cycle of overleveraging and overcapacity. Worse, the massive debt-backed public spending sidelined the nonstate sector. As the public sector advanced, the private sector retreated.

Another problem is China's lack of an independent judicial system to uphold the private property rights the constitution recognizes. Instead, the judiciary tends to protect state-owned enterprises and party-controlled assets; sometimes, it even serves as a channel through which the party-state expropriates private owners. This lack of judicial independence is bad for business for another reason, because it means that contracts are not enforceable in any predictable way. Meanwhile, the exclusive state ownership of land and the state monopoly of banking have led to severe problems in the real-estate sector, which contributes directly and indirectly to about one-third of GDP. China's real-estate marketization, which began in 1998, was designed to convert state-owned land into local party-state fiscal revenue. The key reform was to make each local government the sole landowner within its jurisdiction. But to maximize their financial gains from land, governments at all levels try their best to raise prices by reducing supply. Consequently, Chinese real estate, measured by the ratio of local

real-estate prices to average per capita household income, is among the world's most expensive. In the Xi era, China's real estate value exceeds that of the United States and the European Union combined. But this intentionally created bubble is now on the verge of bursting. In addition to creating trouble in the real-estate sector, exclusive state ownership of land and the state's banking monopoly have destabilized the Chinese financial and fiscal systems. Using land as collateral, governments across China have borrowed massively from state-owned banks, pushing the country's total debt-to-GDP ratio to 300% in the first quarter of 2019 and making its leverage rate among the highest in the world.

Worse yet, most debts in China are mortgage loans that use land and financial securities as collateral. Now that the Chinese economy has been slowing, the devalued mortgages behind these pro-cyclical debts are starting to weigh on the entire economic system, possibly triggering financial and fiscal crises. Low domestic demand is compounding all these problems. In the past, China could substitute the revenue from exports for low domestic demand. But now that China's ties with the world's high-consumption advanced economies are deteriorating, exports can no longer be relied upon to drive growth. China's own ratio of private consumption to GDP remains one of the lowest in the world - just 38.5% in 2021, compared to nearly 70% in the US and 56% in Japan. The fundamental reason for chronically low domestic demand is that household income growth has been lower than GDP growth for decades, because the state has taken too much through state agencies and monopolies. But another reason is severe income inequality. A massive number of people, especially the officially defined rural population, live in absolute poverty regardless of their livelihoods, owing to various institutional constraints. In a 2020 speech, then-Premier Li Keqiang reported that about 600 million Chinese had a monthly income of around 1,000 Chinese yuan (\$140); in fact, 500 million earn less or even much less.

#### THERE AND BACK

The greatest new challenge to the Chinese economy is the change in the party's objectives for it. Economic development for the sake of the party's survival has been supplanted by the goals of peaceful political evolution

and the prevention of "color revolutions." Since 2012, the party leadership has been systematically tugging China's political economy back toward totalitarianism.

Even though China's social pluralism (private businesses, civil-society organizations, independent media) remains limited, party leaders still worry that this narrow space provides a basis for rebellion. Prominent private-sector entrepreneurs have been purged, and leading nonstate companies in the digital economy have been ruthlessly suppressed - developments that have both undermined the private sector and reduced China's access to the world's advanced economies.

Following the party's recent Congress, it now seems clear that totalitarian control over every corner of society will be strengthened. The number of moderate technocrats and their weight in party-state agencies will be reduced. Economic policy will be politically determined. State-owned enterprises and party-state bureaucracies will steadily crowd out private enterprises and markets. The devastating "zero-Covid" policy has already showcased how far the party's power can and will extend. By the 1980s, the Soviet Union's per capita GDP (measured by purchasing power) was about one-third that of the United States, whereas China's per capita GDP today is only slightly above one-quarter that of the United States. Even worse, as a consequence of the party's decades-long "one-child policy," China's population growth rate has started to decline and the demographic structure implies that both labor supply and domestic demand will run into deeper trouble. All of this means that China still has a long way to go just to catch up with the relative development level of the Soviet Union. Whether it will do so is an open question now that it is moving back to the failed Soviet system of central control. In the 1950s, one of the Communist Party of China's most famous slogans was, "The Soviet Union's today is our tomorrow." That tomorrow may well have arrived, with the party on its way to transforming today's China into yesterday's Soviet Union. The party's leaders apparently do not realize that the same problems that sank the Soviet economy are now threatening to sink China's. With each passing day, that outcome appears more certain. Courtesy: PROJECT SYNDICATE

CONSEQUENTIAL

# Progress of the CICA Environmental Dimension

by Dr. Ugur Turan

UNDOUBTEDLY, ASIA IS ON its way to becoming the fastest-developing continent in the world. Projected new trade routes, efforts to develop a sustainable system, and the significance of green transformation in the face of rising energy, food, and security demands. All of these are issues that deeply concern member states of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), from North Asia to the Indian Ocean and from East Asia to the Aegean Sea. However, how realistic are the ambitious carbon-neutral plans countries aim for in line with their green transformation goals? At this point, with its five dimensions, CICA offers confidence building measures, dialogue, connectivity, synergy, and best practices for its member states to achieve their goals. At the sixth CICA summit, among the common issues highlighted by the distinguished Heads of State or government and high-level representatives were combating climate change and the significance of CICA's environmental dimension for future cooperation. Why is the environmental dimension so significant for the future of the CICA region?

**The CICA Member States, which are seriously exposed to environmental problems, are taking different measures to ensure their sustainable development and environmental protection.**



The CICA environmental dimension has three priority areas: sustainable development, environment protection, and natural disaster management. Each priority area has its coordinator and co-coordinator. For instance, Thailand is the coordinator for sustainable development, Mongolia is the coordinator for environment protection, where Bangladesh and China are co-coordinators, Iran is the coordinator for natural disaster management, and Bangladesh is co-coordinator.

▲ *Kazakhstan's emerging solar industry is already helping its transition to a green economy with country's goal set to reach carbon neutrality by 2060.*



CICA Secretary General Ambassador Kairat Sarybay.

According to the updated CICA Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), the member states have specified the priorities for cooperation in environmental areas for the implementation of the CICA CBMs, such as sharing information on best practices concerning national policies on environmental protection and sustainable development, exchanging information on natural and industrial disasters in the countries, which, in their view, may affect their neighbors. In addition, seminars, workshops, conferences, and trainings are held within the priority areas of the CICA environmental dimension. In general, the topics coordinating and co-coordinating countries cover are green transformation, sustainable development, low-carbon developments, waste management, carbon markets, natural disasters, and circular economy. Recent history has shown that Asia is exposed to various climatic events and natural disasters. CICA member states were affected by sweltering weather conditions, drought, floods in 2022, as well as earthquakes in early 2023. For example, Pakistan has had a

challenging year because of floods. According to the World Bank, at least 7 million people were displaced and over 1,700 people died as a result of this disaster. The cost of floods in Pakistan is around \$30 billion. Moreover, the World Health Organization reports that over 7.1 million Bangladeshis were displaced by climate

change in 2022. China, India, Thailand, and the Middle East also had difficulties due to climate change in 2022. Recently, the world has experienced a devastating sequence of earthquakes in Türkiye. After the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic damage of the climate crisis and natural disasters has been taken into account, and the question of how fragile countries are for the future has come to the fore. CICA covers a broad geography, therefore observing various environmental characteristics. Member states are taking multiple actions to ensure sustainable development and environmental protection. The major environmental problems in Asia include desertification, climate change, lack of water resources, deforestation, earthquakes, and forest fires. Indeed, there are environmentally vulnerable CICA countries. Among the most vulnerable member states, according to the University of Notre Dame's Vulnerability index score of the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, are Afghanistan in the 168th and Bangladesh in the 154th place. Pakistan ranks 147th, while Cambodia is in the 133rd place,



*While the cause of the February 6 earthquake in Türkiye and Syria is currently unknown, there is growing scientific evidence that climate change is increasing the such calamities.*

and India ranks 132nd. The index evaluates a nation's vulnerability, sensitivity, and capacity for climate change adaptation. There are 177 nations on the scale, and those with high rankings, close to zero, have great climate

change resilience. Highest-ranking CICA member states include Israel in the 14th place, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Türkiye sharing the 28th place followed by Kazakhstan in the 33rd place, the UAE in the 40th, and Qatar in the 44th. The negative economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought countries closer to producing new solutions. Although developed and developing countries have different agendas, governments are shifting their economic targets to efficient systems aligned with sustainable development goals. Green transformation is one of the most prominent examples of this. Countries that aim to decarbonize their economies are investing more in green technology, fields such as carbon capture, mitigation and adaptation, circular economy, and water management. Along with diversifying energy sources, it is one of the essential steps in energy security. United Nations' climate change conferences are significant to raise awareness and act together against extreme environmental events the world has been facing in recent years. For example, Egypt, a CICA member state, host-

that China and the USA, the countries with the highest carbon emissions, decided to engage in climate diplomacy at COP27. Furthermore, COP28 will take place in the United Arab Emirates, another CICA member state. From this point of view, it is a fact that the environmental theme becomes increasingly relevant in Asia. The initiative of Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to hold a high-level conference in 2024 in Astana to identify environmental challenges among the CICA members was one of the major outcomes of the sixth CICA summit. Thanks to this meeting, the CICA region and the entire world will benefit from the potential establishment of the CICA Council for Environmental Cooperation. Indeed, it will be in the interest of the CICA member states to hold the 2024 High-level Environmental Conference, where best practices can be shared among the CICA countries and a sustainable mutual dialogue is likely to be ensured. As a result, the CICA environmental dimension is expected to progress rapidly among other CBMs. The 2024 high-level environmental

conference is at the forefront of priority initiatives for the CICA Kazakh chairmanship. Kazakhstan's goal of being carbon neutral by 2060 sets an example for other countries in the region. According to the CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay, the CICA member states are extensively introducing green technologies, pursuing the ambitious goal of achieving carbon neutrality. In addition, within the scope of the preparations for the conference on environment, the member states agree to arrange a series of expert meetings of the countries to develop goals and objectives for the conference. There is no doubt that CICA is an evolving international organization, and its environmental dimension is developing its capabilities. With the dialogue and support of member states, the interest in environmental topics is increasing gradually in line with the region's sustainable development goals. *(The author is an expert on the environmental dimension and have experience of working in China and Türkiye as a researcher on international organizations' projects)*

## ROADMAP

## Türkiye is all set to become a gas trading center

TÜRKIYE IS ALMOST ENTIRELY dependent on imports to cover its energy needs, which leaves it vulnerable to rising costs that skyrocketed following Russia's military operation in Ukraine. Domestic demand has increased since the pandemic. Türkiye imports gas mainly from Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia as well as liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar, the USA, Nigeria, and Algeria. In November 2022, Iran increased its natural gas supply to Türkiye by 7.68 percent compared to the same period in 2021, bringing the overall amount to 857.13 million cubic meters and becoming the first biggest gas supplier. Azerbaijan has become the second biggest natural gas supplier of Türkiye and increased gas export to Türkiye by 23.45 percent amounting to 749.9 million cubic meters in November 2022. Russia is in third place with 746.16 million cubic meters. The country's gas supply to Türkiye decreased by 53.87% compared to November 2021.

**“Given Türkiye's unique location straddling Europe and Asia, the country is well positioned to bridge the gap between supplier and customer, providing much to both.”**



Meanwhile, Türkiye is set to start pumping the natural gas it discovered in the Black Sea into the national grid by the end of March 2023. It has gradually discovered about 710 bcm of natural gas since August 2020, which is estimated to have a market value of \$1 trillion. The current reserve is sufficient to meet Türkiye's demand for 30 years; however, as the nation's hydrocarbon explorations increase, this number may rise. About 10 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas per day is expected to be transferred in the initial phase, while the infrastructure has been set up to enable this figure to peak at 40 mcm through 2026. Türkiye's annual gas consumption rose from 48 bcm in 2020 to a record 60 bcm in 2021. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said it was expected to stand at around 53.5 bcm in 2022. Earlier estimates had put the figure at up to 63 bcm, but the power generated from renewable resources this year drove the gas consumption downward. According to sources, Türkiye's third floating liquefied natural gas storage and regasification unit (FSRU) is projected to arrive in Türkiye in February 2023 and that the

LEFT: Oil tanker ships are anchored in the Black Sea near the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul, Türkiye.

RIGHT: Türkiye will finalize its roadmap in a bid to realize its long-standing aim to operate as a gas hub, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Türkiye, Fatih Dönmez, said.



In October 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed setting up a gas hub in Türkiye following explosions that damaged Russia's Nord Stream gas pipelines under the Baltic Sea. Putin suggested developing transshipment and exchange terminals for Russian gas, potentially making Türkiye a significant center for sales of Russian gas to third countries. Erdoğan backed the idea and the two countries instructed authorities to work on a roadmap, which is expected to be announced soon. Türkiye has the infrastructure and experience in gas trade and authorities are taking steps for it to be a hub where regional benchmark prices are set. Turkish target is to bring together supplier and consumer countries and become a gas-trading center where the benchmark price of gas is set.

ship has taken its first cargo and started sailing. The ship will serve at the Saros FSRU terminal, which will also give the country the flexibility to carry out LNG transport, especially during the summer season when the demand to pump gas into the system is low. With the Saros FSRU, Türkiye will add a new entry point to the Thrace region, where consumption is high. More importantly, the country will become a more active player in the regional gas trade, especially in the Balkans, in line with their gas hub target. In this context, the first step has been taken with Bulgaria, as the agreement includes an annual gas supply of approximately 1.5 bcm to Bulgaria until 2035, which will be 30 percent of the country's annual gas consumption. Moreover, the agreement will give Bulgaria access to Türkiye's gas network and LNG terminals to help bring in supplies. Therefore, in addition to Bulgaria, Türkiye is carrying out similar processes with North Macedonia, Romania, and Moldova.

## TRANSFORMATION

## Public-private partnerships have potential in Central Asia

by Cassandra Colbert

INFRASTRUCTURE IS CRITICAL for accelerating economic growth, creating new jobs, and providing access to critical services to millions of people across Central Asia. But finding the money to support these essential projects can be difficult, especially given today's challenging global headwinds and the strain the pandemic put on public resources. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) can help address this funding gap by enabling governments to leverage private sector expertise, raise private capital, and optimize scarce public funds. More and more governments around the world are now using PPPs - along with traditional public procurement - to help deliver the infrastructure and services their citizens need and adapt to climate change. Central Asian countries are no exception, with many governments in the region now integrating PPPs into their development strategies.

**The increasing number of competitively tendered PPPs are turning Central Asia into an important destination for international investors.**



Take Uzbekistan, where the government's energy sector reforms paved the way for several groundbreaking renewable energy PPPs that are boosting the country's electricity generation capacity and reducing its dependence on natural gas. For example, the Nur Navoi Solar project developed under the World Bank Group's Scaling Solar Program, the country's first competitively tendered PPP, has the capacity to power 31,000 households and offset nearly 150,000 tons of carbon emissions. Kazakhstan has also been implementing PPPs to meet its needs for better roads, railways, airports, and power and gas distribution networks. According to the Kazakhstan Center for PPPs, more than 1,000 PPP agreements and concessions with a total value of 2.2 trillion *tenge* have been concluded in the country, mostly in education, healthcare, energy, transport, and municipal utilities. Big Almaty Ring Road was the largest infrastructure project

With 300,000 solar panels, the Nur Navoi solar park is powering 31,000 homes with clean energy and at the same time the project is a torch for Uzbekistan's economic liberalization and public-private partnerships.



One of Kazakhstan's major public-private partnership project, it is designed as a 66 km long ring road through the Karasay and Talgar regions of the province of Almaty.

in Kazakhstan outside the oil and gas sector, and the first infrastructure PPP of its magnitude in Central Asia, when it reached financial close in 2020. The project will reduce traffic congestion and pollution in the Almaty city area and increase road safety, benefiting residents, commuters, and the economy. In Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Health signed the country's first PPP in 2017, a groundbreaking agreement to finance, build, equip, and operate four dialysis centers covering three-quarters of the country's population. The project was the first PPP in the region's healthcare sector. This paved the way for a pipeline of PPP projects with more than \$1 billion in potential private investments, according to the Kyrgyz PPP Center. This includes a competitive tender for a qualified airport operator to manage the Manas International Airport in Bishkek, which IFC is assisting the government with. With a strong commitment from the government. Tajikistan, meanwhile, was the first Central Asian country to use PPPs to finance infrastructure development, including the Pamir Private Power project. Several more PPPs are currently being developed, including a 200 MW solar PV plant in the Sughd region to help diversify its energy mix and reduce its reliance on imported fuel. But while these achievements are to be lauded and PPPs can provide clear advantages for governments, much more could be done to unlock the private sector's capital and expertise to meet the region's vast infrastructure needs. The increasing number of competitively tendered PPPs are turning Central Asia into an important destination for international investors. (The author is International Finance Corporation's senior manager for Central Asia)

**ROUTES**

## Baku port, a transport link between East and West

THE BAKU INTERNATIONAL SEA TRADE PORT (Baku Port) is one of the main gateways for the transportation of goods from East to West and vice versa, and the expansion of its infrastructure will create alternative routes for the efficient and fast transportation of cargo.

The current geopolitical and geo-economic realities have prompted global manufacturers of goods and cargo carriers to look for alternative ways to transport their goods. The cargo that previously passed through the territory of Russia, Ukraine and some other countries have been redirected to corridors passing through Azerbaijan, among other things. It is expected that in the coming years, shippers will only increase the flow of goods on these corridors.

It should be noted that in 2022, over 6.3 million tons of cargo were transhipped through the Baku port, which is 14 percent more than in 2021. During the reporting period, 52,276 TEU containers were handled, which is 16 percent more than in 2021. Transshipment of wheeled vehicles (TIR) grew by 31 percent to over 51,514 trucks, while passenger vehicle transshipment tripled.



In addition, in 2022, for the first time in the last three years, an increase in the transshipment of railcars was noted. It amounted to 27 percent - up to 38,692 wagons. It is worth emphasizing that about 90 percent of the cargo transhipped by the Baku port is transit as the port is an active participant in the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, and is also logistically connected to the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway.

For the sustainable provision of timely cargo transshipment, the Baku port plans to expand its current capacities, as well as infrastructure capabilities. Today, work is already underway on the construction of a terminal for transshipment of mineral fertilizers. The transshipment capacity of the new terminal will amount to 2.5 million tons per year. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan

**The master plan for the second phase of the Port of Baku is being prepared by the Dutch Royal Haskoning DHV company. It is expected to be ready by mid-2023.**

▲ *The flow of goods through Baku Port, particularly energy, from Central Asia to Europe has become a vital issue since the Ukraine situation commenced, with Europe looking for alternative routes.*

are important exporters of mineral fertilizers, having a large production potential (about 10 million tons per year), in connection with which Azerbaijan has already reached preliminary agreements to attract these cargoes to its territory for further transportation to the EU countries. Besides, to expand the port's capacity for transshipment of bulk cargo, a grain terminal is expected to be built in the short term.



*The Port of Baku is located in Alat at the intersection of two major transportation corridors, East-West and North-South.*

In the medium and long term, as part of the second phase of the construction of the Baku port, the preparation of the master plan is planned to be completed by mid-2023; the construction of a large container terminal is expected, which will increase the throughput from 100,000 to 500,000 TEU containers. It is also not excluded that a terminal for loading and unloading and further transportation of block trains will be built as part of the second phase. In addition, a multimodal logistics terminal will be built, which will be able to perform operations for the replacement of transport, packaging and unpacking of goods; moreover, a number of other logistics operations will lead to the creation of added value. Azerbaijan continues to invest in transport infrastructure, in particular roads and railways, and restores the historical connectivity of the region. The transport network being created by Azerbaijan is closely connected and complementary to other routes and corridors that have a significant impact on the development of international trade and the creation of a new supply chain. In this context, the role of the Zangazur corridor should also be noted, with the launch of which the time for transshipment of goods from China to Europe will be reduced to two weeks, new markets for Azerbaijan will open, including transit towards Africa, and a reduction in the cost of transporting goods is expected.

**POPULARITY**

## World loves and likes carpets of Turkmenistan

ONE MUST AGREE THAT it is always nice to see when a product closely associated with the culture of your country finds fans among the residents of neighboring countries and abroad. This is what happens to the Turkmen carpet - the pride and a symbol of the thousand-year

**Traditionally, the carpets reflect aspects of Turkmen culture and spiritual traditions through patterns, color harmony and the density of the spaces between warps.**

history of the people of Turkmenistan. The art of handmade carpet weaving is preserved to this day. Craftswomen from Turkmenistan continue to weave carpets that are distinguished by their unique beauty and durability. In December

2019, the UNESCO included traditional carpet weaving in Turkmenistan in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind. Let's start with the most recent fact - in January 2023, former Irish UFC champion, mixed martial arts fighter Conor McGregor shared a picture on his social network page where internet users immediately recognized the Turkmen carpet.



In the clip of the song *L'amore Eternity* (Eternal Love) of the Italian duo, rapper Fedez and singer Noemi, a Turkmen carpet can be seen.

In 2014, ex-chief creative director of the Burberry fashion house Christopher Bailey presented the men's autumn-winter collection. Accessories received special attention at the show, namely bags made of various carpets, including Turkmen ones. A 2005 photo circulated on the internet, where Angelina Jolie plays with her first adopted son Maddox, also shows a Turkmen carpet. But not everyone knows that the filming for the June issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine



▲ *American actress Angelina Jolie playing with her son Maddox on a Turkmen carpet.*

◀ *Legendary musician Jimi Hendrix's apartment in London, now a museum decorated with antiques, Persian rugs and traditional Turkmen carpets.*

▼ *A shot from the promo video White Christmas (2018) by British rock musician Eric Clapton.*

took place not at the Hollywood actress' house, but at the Ritz Hotel. By the way, the photo shoot was conducted by American portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz, known for her work with many world celebrities.



*Rare pictures of band The Beatles from 'The Mad Day Out' photoshoot in in Lodnon during the summer of 1968 in the midst of recording The Beatles' "The White Album."*

The American guitar virtuoso Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970) had a weakness for oriental carpets. In his London apartment, where the musician lived in the late 60s, there are a lot of textiles and carpets, among them the national Turkmen carpet. Today, the apartment located at 23 Brook Street has been turned into a museum in memory of the iconic guitarist.

SPIRITUALITY

# Time to revisit the legacy of Shah-e-Hamadan (R.A.)

by Dr. Abid Gulzar

WIDELY KNOWN AS Hazrate Amir Jon in Central Asia and Shah-e-Hamadan in Indian sub-continent, Mir Syed Ali Hamadani was an illustrious Sufi, a mystic, a revolutionary, a visionary and above all an eminent humanist; who till his last breath remained a flag bearer of the unconditional love, benevolence, tolerance, accommodation and freedom of speech. The available data on his early life establishes the fact that he was born in Hamadan, Iran in a distinguished family of highest nobility to Sayed Shahab-ud-din and Say'yida Fatima on October 22, 1314; both having lineage with Prophet Mohammad's (s.a.w.w) family. As revealed by Noor-ud-din Jaffar Badakhshi in *Khulasatul Manaqib*, the Amir was by birth a genius and a prolific learner, so much so that he memorized Qur'an and guzzled all the necessary religious sciences at the very tender age of twelve under the guidance of his maternal uncle, Syed Ala-ud-din who was also a distinguished scholar and Sufi.



Mir Syed Ali Hamadani portrait on the ten Somoni bank note.

associated with Kubrawiyah Mystic School (*Silsilah*) but was always open to ideas and experiences from different shades of opinion. His comprehension of these humanistic traits fostered strong during his extensive

journeys and voyages that many sources like *Lata'iful Ashrafi*, *Aneesul Salikeen* and *Saheefatul Awliyah* provide ample evidence how Amir by way of achieving the spiritual elevation and authority, could cross over different parts of globe in shortest span of time (*Tai-ul-Arz*). In these journeys, he not only had illuminated interactions with thousands of learned Sufis and saints but always prioritized to have first-hand experience and understanding of the agonies and anguishes of the suffering humanity. He used to sit with the common masses; listen to their distresses; solace them and address their needs. Therefore, contrary to the conventional Sufi way of life, preferring seclusion

and solitude, away from the hustle and bustle of the masses, the Amir instead preferred to live with the people. His aura of influence is witnessed all across Iran, Central Asia and in the entire sub-continent; particularly in Kashmir. The authentic historical records reveal that amidst Timur's wave of destruction and plunder all across Central Asia and Iran, Amir Jon, visited Kashmir three times. First, during the reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-din in 774/1372 to have a feel of the overall

socio-economic and cultural milieu of the region. Before his arrival, this intellectually fertile land where Naga, Buddhist and Shavite scholars had made tremendous contributions to their respective philosophies and way of life through the centuries; was engulfed into the murky waters of mental and material corruption of both the ruling elite and the people who would exercise authority in the matters of faith. This suffocating environment had pushed the already caste ridden stratified society into sheer poverty, dejection and distress almost for two centuries before the arrival of Amir. The second arrival of Amir in 781/1379 was therefore a serious and well organized socio-economic and religious voyage towards the people of Kashmir to end their tumultuous state of affairs. The records suggest that the Amir arrived with 700 scholars, mystics and artisans of varied skills and crafts. With the patronage of then Muslim ruler, Sultan Qutub-ud-din, Shah Hamadan was successful to propagate the tenants of Islamic faith all across the valley for the new faith witnessed a mass acceptance in view of its teachings of equality, patience and tolerance. Alongside that, the craftsmen taught the new skills and arts to common masses that within a span of few years, it resulted into real economic transformation of the region. During



Entrance to the Mir Syed Ali Hamadani complex.

his two and a half years of stay, the Amir, continued the spiritual guidance of his disciples but never forgot advising rulers for piety, patience and justice with respect to his subjects. The treatise, *Zakheeratul Malook*, he penned down for the king is a guide book as how to follow the commandments of God vis-a-vis serving his people.



President Emomali Rahmon visit and offers prayers at the Mir Syed Ali Hamadani mausoleum during his working visit to Kulob region of Tajikistan.

Wherein, he emphasizes that the ruler should regard himself not the master but as one of the governed and issue such orders that he would expect from a benevolent ruler if he was a subject himself. He should promote justice and treat weak and marginalized with sympathy. There are many such fascinating pearls of wisdom in the treatise. If seen in context of time and space, it could be asserted that the treatise is a well-intentioned document depicting the same spirit embedded in the letter of Hazrat Ali (a.s) written to Malik Ashtar, the then governor of Egypt; enlightening the principals of good governance. Hazrate Amir Jon visited Kashmir third time in 785/1384 but left shortly due to ill health; stayed at Pakhli for ten days at the request of the ruler, Sultan Muhammad. But left for heavenly abode on 25 *Jamadol Awwal* (January 14) 786 / 1385 at

the age of 73 at Konar in the vicinity of Pakhli. His body was carried to *Khatlan Shareef* in Tajikistan and was buried there on July 14 1385. Amir's matchless scholarly contribution is with us in the form of treatises deliberated on varied issues related to spirituality, gnostic journey (*Sair-o-Salook*) and the stages of

mystic experiences. But the fundamental emphasis laid in all his works like *Minhajul Aarifeen*, *Risala-e-Dah Qaidah*, *Risala-e-Talqeeniah*, *Risala-e-Zikriyah*, *Risala-e-Akhlaqiyah*, *Risala-e-Zikriyah*, *Risala-e-HalliMushkil*, *Risala-e-Mochlakah*, *Risala-e-Mir'attut'Taibeen*, *Risala-e-Nafsiyah*, *Risala-e-Hal'lul Fasool*, *Mawad'datul Qurba*, *Maktoobaat-e-Ameer* and scores of his other treasures is the duty of man to be honest and just to himself and with his fellow beings. He ought to be always in the state of absolute surrender before his creator. This only, is the path to achieve lasting salvation (*Sa'aadat-e-Ab'badi*) and become the perfect man (*Insaan-e-Kamil*). Today, in this world of shifting values; intolerance and impatience, hate and hegemony, injustice and inequality, terrorism and tragedy, it is high time to revisit the legacy of Hazrate Amir Jan, Mir Syed Ali Hamadani, who, as lime lighted above, calls the man to become human by discovering his own self. Live with tolerance and love alongside different shades of opinion. True, the great men are humanity's legacy but the leaders, academics and mystic lovers of India, Tajikistan and Iran are much more indebted to shoulder the mission of enlightening the world by the humanistic teachings of Amir Jon for they own him equally than others. (The author is Associate Professor, Center of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir)



His spiritual and mystical journey continued under the patronage of established mystics and Sufis like Sheikh Mehmood Muzdkani, Sheikh Taqi-ud-din Ali Doosti Simnani, Sheikh Najm-ud-din Mohammad, Qutb-ud-din Yehya Neeshapuri and others. The Amir under their selfless guidance got spiritually metamorphosed to the extent that very few among the Sufis could be distinguished as having been attained the highest realms of mystical experience during their spiritual journey. This is why the Amir has comprehended the real message of Sufism that suggests the equality of mankind, oneness of purpose, no distinction on the pretext of caste, creed or color and the religion, region or the race. Though he was

▲  
The mausoleum is the burial place of Mir Syed Ali Hamadani, famous Tajik Sufi scholar. The mausoleum has been renovated by the government of Tajikistan and as a result looks like a brand new building.

**STREAM**

**Watch Russian movies and TV shows for free!**

Below is the most recent list of sources for contemporary and classic Russian and Soviet movies with English subtitles and others, as well.

**Russian Film Hub:** This website has many Soviet-era and modern Russian movies in good quality and with English subtitles. The website positions itself as “definitive encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet cinema.” It also has a useful option to sort content by decades. “Amazing Russian” YouTube channel. The “Russian movies with English subtitles” playlist on this channel offers about 20 Soviet and Russian movies with English subtitles. **Epic Media:** Epic Media is one of the production companies in Russia that produce and distribute TV shows. The company’s YouTube channel has a decent library of contemporary Russian shows with English subtitles. **Star Media:** Star Media is yet another Russian production company that shares its content on YouTube. **Mosfilm:** One of the largest and oldest studios in Russia has a lot of content available on its website, including classic Soviet and contemporary Russian movies. The company’s YouTube chan-



Movie “Andrei Rublev,” 1966.

nel is also worth a glance. All the soviet movies on **RVISION**. This YouTube channel has multiple movies of the early Soviet era, mostly from the 1920s and 1930s. **Cartoons:** Some Russian cartoons have gained considerable popularity outside of the country. There are multiple YouTube channels that show Russian cartoons, some have English subtitles, such as, *Gem Mountain, Russian cartoons* and *The Three Heroes*. **RUSSIA BEYOND**

**ENCHANTING**

**Magic, mystical Chor-Chinor garden near Samarkand**

THERE ARE MAGIC, even mystical, places around the world surrounded by ancient legends and stories. Moreover, they are surrounded by facts, and the modern science is still trying to find explanation to it.



The ancient garden Chor-Chinor “four plane tree” in Urgut.

One of these places is a sycamore garden Chor-Chinor, located in a small ancient city of Urgut, only 50 km to the south-east of Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The place outstands with unusual sycamores, the age of the oldest one is more than 1160 years, and the youngest one is 600 years old. It is to mention a giant tree, a real titan, 16 meters in girth. The most interesting is inside the tree hollow; the carved door reveals a hidden room with minimalistic collection of furniture. Nevertheless, the sycamore is alive and continues to grow. Once there was a Sufi school inside the tree, and served as a haunting place for few generations of the dervish. Entering the garden, you will find yourself in a magic world with unique aura, as if in

another dimension. The first you will feel is tranquility that gifts the atmosphere of this holy place. Many people from across Central Asia pay a visit to this place seeking penance and healing. People come here with their problems searching for peace and wisdom. Moreover, visitors belong to different religions and social status. There is a brook starting from an unusual spring with a small pond. It is unusual because the spring comes from the middle of the stone similar to millstone. Here is the mystic that has been mentioned earlier. A group of geologists decided to study the underground waters of this place. For these purposes, it was agreed to extract a clod, and it turned out in the morning that the spring has ended, and the pond dried out over the night. This phenomenon is beyond scientific explanation.

There are different legends related to the Chor-Chinor garden; one of them says that the founder of the garden is a mighty *batir* (hero) who had stolen magic stone from evil spirits and built

it on this very spot. As soon as he placed the cobble stone, the spring waters came out. The hero decided to plant four cuttings of sycamore that were brought to him by four beautiful birds. These sycamore trees outlived the centuries, and turned into a wonderful grove.

In the beginning of the 20th century a mosque was erected on the territory of the park. Initially, the building was conceived and served as *madrassah*, educational institution. Today visitors enjoy exquisite walls of the building adorned with a grand dome. The mosque attracts attention with the fact that it stands not on the ground, but on a little slope, still having ideal proportions and without any inaccuracies.

**DILIGENCE**

**The space game**

The Russian film “Challenge,” filmed in space with Yulia Peresild in the title role, will be released on April 12, 2023, writes *Gazeta.ru*. Peresild and director Klim Shipenko went to the ISS on October 5, 2021 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. On the Soyuz MS-19 spacecraft, under the guidance of cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov, they took part in the filming of the first ever feature film in space. The film “Challenge” will become part of a scientific and educational project, within the framework of which it is planned to shoot a series of documentaries about enterprises in the rocket and space industry.



The 37-year-old Russian actress Julia Peresild arrived on the International Space Station ISS on October 5, 2021 to shoot a feature film there with the director Klim Shipenko.

**COMMODITY**

**Saffron export of Iran**

According to the latest statistics released by the Iran Customs Administration February 11 2023, a total of 178 tons of saffron worth \$172.75 million were exported from Iran to 59 countries in the first 10 months of the current Iranian year (March 21, 2022 - January 20 2023). The UAE with 54 tons worth \$61.73 million of imports was the biggest destination for Iranian saffron during the period, *Financial Tribune* reported. It was followed by Spain with 35 tons worth \$38 million and China with 28 tons worth \$32 million. Iran produces over 90% of all saffron produced in the world, 80% of



which are exported. However, the share of Iran in the global trade of saffron is disproportionately low, as many

customers of the Iranian spice buy it in bulk and re-export after packaging it to third countries.

**RESULTS**

**Foreign investment in Uzbekistan during 2017-2022**

THE INSTITUTE OF FORECASTING AND MACROECONOMIC RESEARCH analyzed the results of measures taken in 2017-2022 in order to attract foreign investment to Uzbekistan and released their conclusion on February 6 2023. Followings are the results of their findings:



Staff members work at a chemical complex built by Chinese companies in Navoi region, Uzbekistan

In the past few years, Uzbekistan has pursued a policy of openness, removing various barriers to business and investment. Today, the country closely cooperates with such major international financial institutions and organizations as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic

Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. As a result of an active foreign policy, the geography of countries inverting into the economy of Uzbekistan is expanding. By 2022, the number of stable investing countries-investors has grown to 50, the leading positions among which are occupied by Russia, China, Türkiye, Germany and South Korea.

By the end of 2022, the volume of inflow of foreign investments and loans into the country increased to \$9.8 billion compared to \$3.3 billion in 2017. As a result, the share of foreign investments and loans in the total volume of investments in the economy increased from 23.8% to 40.5%.The number of enterprises and organizations with foreign investment is also increasing every year: if in 2017 there were 5.5 thousand enterprises with foreign capital, by 2022 their number reached 15.8 thousand, of which 6.4 thousand are joint enterprises, and 9.3 thousand - completely foreign. Of the total number of

enterprises with foreign investment, 30.5% operate in trade, 27.5% in industry, 8.0% in construction, 4.8% in agriculture, 4.1% in housing and public catering, 2.9% - in the field of transportation and storage, 4.8% - in the field of information and communications, 17.4% - in other industries.

**REPORT**

**Trans-Caspian route sees double growth**

THE VOLUME OF FREIGHT traffic in Kazakhstan along the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) increased by 2.5 times and reached 1.5 million tons in 2022, according to the Kazakhstan’s national railways company. The TITR international association met on February 8 in Almaty to address the cargo flows, the development of container traffic, and the results of the association’s work in 2022. The export of Kazakhstan’s goods increased by 6.5 times compared to 2021 and reached 891,000 tons. Some 33,600 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEUs) containers were transported in 2022; 33 percent more than in 2021.

**APPOINTMENT**

**New Secretary General of FICCI**



The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the country’s apex business chamber, announced the appointment of **Shailesh Pathak** as Secretary General March 1 2023.In a career spanning 37 years, he has spent time in government as an IAS officer as well as helmed large companies in the private sector. A law bachelor and a diploma holder in ornithology, Pathak has an MBA degree from Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. He has over 40 publications on infrastructure, cities, finance and public policy.

**TRADITION**

**Uzbekistan, the most welcoming in Central Asia**

THE CANADIAN COMPANY Arton Capital has announced the Welcoming Countries Rank-2023 ranking of the most welcoming countries in the world. The distribution of countries in the ranking is based on how many citizens can enter the country without a visa (by obtaining a visa on arrival or issuing an e-visa).



At the heart of Uzbek culture is its wonderful hospitality, in which, the guests are respected and adored as devine.

Taking the 25th place in the rating, Uzbekistan has become the most welcoming country among the Central Asian countries. Citizens of 139 countries can visit the country without a visa. In the rating, Tajikistan is in the 49th place (the country is open for visa-free visits to citizens of 87 countries), Kyrgyzstan – the 53rd (80 countries), Kazakhstan – the 54th (77 countries). Russia stands at the 62nd place (63 countries). The rating was immediately occupied by 22 countries, most of which are located on the African continent (Nigeria, Ethiopia, Gabon, Rwanda, Djibouti, etc.). Maldives, Cambodia and Comoros islands have also taken the first place. Citizens of 198 countries can visit each of these countries without a visa.

**НАЗНАЧЕНИЯ**

**Национальный парк «Долина цветов»**

ИНДИЙСКИЙ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ПАРК, основанный в 1982 году. Он расположен в Чамоли в штате Уттаракханд и известен своими лугами с эндемичными альпийскими цветами и разнообразием флоры. В этом богатом разнообразии также обитают редкие и находящиеся под угрозой исчезновения животные, в том числе азиатский черный медведь, снежный барс, кабарга, бурый медведь, рыжая лисица и голубая овца. Среди птиц,

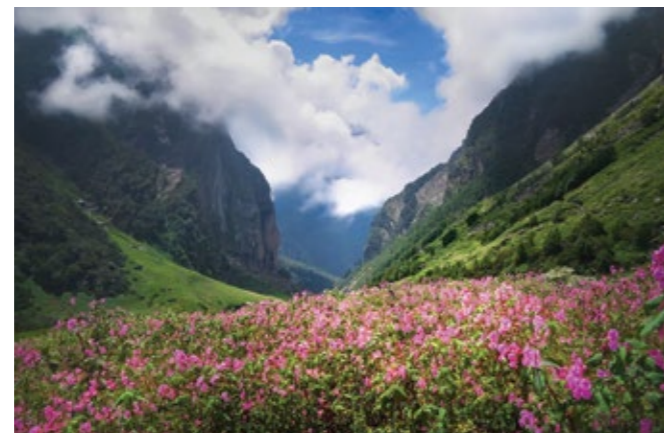
обитающих в парке, — гималайский фазан-монал и другие высокогорные птицы. На высоте от 3352 до 3658 метров над уровнем моря нежный ландшафт национального парка «Долина цветов» дополняет суровую горную дику природу национального парка Нанда Деви на востоке. Вместе они охватывают уникальную переходную зону между горными цепями Занскара и Великих Гималаев. Парк простирается на площади 87,50 квадратных километров, имеет длину около 8 км и ширину 2 км. Парк полностью лежит в умеренной альпийской зоне. Оба парка входят в состав биосферного

заповедника Нанда Деви (223 674 га), который дополнительно окружен буферной зоной. Национальный парк Нанда Деви входит во Всемирную сеть биосферных заповедников ЮНЕСКО. Парк открыт только летом с июня по октябрь, так как в остальное время года он покрыт сильным снегом. Чтобы добраться до Долины цветов, нужно пройти около 17 километров. Из Дели можно сесть на поезд до Харидвара, а затем доехать на автобусе до Говиндхата через Ришикеш. Также можно доехать из Дели до Говиндхата, расстояние около 500 километров.

**DESTINATION**

**Valley of Flowers in Uttarakhand**

VALLEY OF FLOWERS NATIONAL PARK is an Indian national park which was established in 1982. It is located in Chamoli in the state of Uttarakhand and is known for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers



Today, the Valley of Flowers is famous for the charming meadows of alpine flowers, the richness of flora and fauna, and the view of snow-clad peaks.

and the variety of flora. This richly diverse area is also home to rare and endangered animals, including the Asiatic black bear, snow leopard, musk deer, brown bear, red fox and blue sheep. Birds found in the park include Himalayan monal pheasant

and other high-altitude birds.

At 3352 to 3658 meters above sea level, the gentle landscape of the Valley of Flowers National Park complements the rugged mountain wilderness of Nanda Devi National Park to the east. Together, they encompass a unique transition zone between the mountain ranges of the Zaskar and Great Himalaya. The park stretches over an expanse of 87.50 square kilometers and it is about 8 km long and 2 km wide. The park lies completely in the temperate alpine zone. Both parks are encompassed in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve (223,674 ha) which is further surrounded by a buffer zone. Nanda Devi National Park Reserve is in the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The park is open only during summer from June to October as it is covered by heavy snow for the rest of the year. Getting to the Valley of

Flowers requires a trek of about 17 kilometers. From Delhi, one can take the train to Haridwar and then travel by bus to Govindghat via Rishikesh. It is also possible to drive from Delhi to Govindghat, a distance of about 500 kilometers.

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**ACCESSIBILITY**

**Kyrgyzstan launches new booking systems for tourists**

FIVE ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEMS are being launched in Kyrgyzstan, according to the country's Tourism Development Fund. Accordingly, this will help attract more tourists and establish new business contacts. Five new online booking systems: Bronevik, Travel-Line, Shelter, Ostrovok.ru, and KontrOtel will allow local entrepreneurs to enter the multi-million-dollar CIS market and open up new opportunities for the country's tourism sector. The online booking system is built into the hotel website instead of the on-demand booking form. The



New booking system is aimed towards making the process much easier.

client just needs to choose the category of the room, the date of arrival and

departure. These systems reflect the availability of actual hotel rooms.

**SOCIETY**

**Women are in shortage in China!**

A VIDEO OF A BLIND DATING event in China where more than 20 men scrambled with each other to meet a woman has highlighted the country's gender imbalance and the difficulty men face seeking a re-



Many who saw the video were horrified by the desperation at the event.

lationship. "I am speechless at this ratio of 20 men for a woman," one person said. Another person commented: "This is karma for the previous one-child family planning policy and the public's preference for

boys over girls." A frequently-used term in China, "Leftover women" refers to a feudal mentality that a woman's life is over if not married by a certain age, as young as 25 in rural areas and 30 in cities. China has 722 million men and 690 million women, a surplus of roughly 32 million men to women, much of it concentrated among those born during the one-child policy era from 1980-2015. The problem is more pronounced in rural areas where the preference for boys over girls is more deeply ingrained and many

**The video of the blind date event has gone viral and was viewed 48 million times on Weibo alone and attracted tens of thousands of comments.**

women leave to work in the cities. As a result, bride prices have soared over the past decade across China. It is paid by men's families to brides' parents as compensation for raising daughters who are often seen as non-productive and far less desirable than sons and to convince the women's parents to support the marriage.

**LANDSCAPES**

**Scarlet cypress trees at Sukko Lake**

AUTUMN IS BEAUTIFUL in any city and in any region, but what could be more beautiful than bright scarlet trees above the mirror surface of the lake? If you are looking for just such landscapes for your photos, visit Lake Sukko near Anapa. The height of cypresses reaches 30 meters. These trees are famous for their essential oils, which help with respiratory diseases. In the 1930s, the people decided to plant cypresses in an artificially created reservoir in the Kuban. The tree needs a special climate, and, as a rule, it does not take root anywhere except in North America. But they settled down in the Kuban! The tree is very resistant to water and decay processes.



People come to the lake for walks on beach and to take boat rides on the lake. Though, sailing between the trees is prohibited.

Every year the lake becomes shallower, and you can walk to the cherished cypresses right on the water. They acquire their famous bright red color around mid-October, just in time for the end of the velvet season. Therefore, if your vacation at sea takes place in the fall, we recommend that you do not focus solely on a beach holiday (especially since it is already cool there) and be sure to visit this place.



# Trends

**REPRESENTATION**  
**Tatar for me is the language of love: Guzel Khasanova**

Guzel Khasanova is a popular Tatar pop singer of Russia. Before participating in a music show and achieving a wave of popularity, she lived in Ulyanovsk and was brought up in a Tatar family. The folk traditions were used to be honored in her house, which left an imprint on her whole life and work. In 2014, she participated in the first all-Russian festival "Tatar Kyzy" in Moscow and became "Miss Musicality." In the beginning of her career, men, having learned about her nationality, resented the choice of her profession, criticized her appearance and started the conversation by studying her culinary abilities. But she loves Tatar language, "Tatar is the language of love."



In my childhood, we spoke and sang in the Tatar language, Tatar music constantly sounded in our house." She further explains, "My mother taught me prayers before going to bed and often cooked national dishes. I am sure that there are people who are much more successful in honoring folk traditions. We just loved our culture, our roots, and still love with sincere great love." About herself, she says, "I vividly show my feelings on stage, while in life I leave a lot exclusively to myself and live alone with myself."



**CHAMPION**  
**Kyrgyz wrestler takes first place in world ranking**

Kyrgyzstan's Akzhol Makhmudov took the first place in the world ranking among Greco-Roman wrestlers in the weight category up to 77 kilograms, reports the United World Wrestling. Akzhol won the World and Asian Championships, as well as the Islamic Games. According to the results of 2022, he took the second place in the world ranking. He was also recognized as the best Greco-Roman wrestler in Asia last year.

**PAGEANTRY**  
**Russian woman crowned Mrs. Universe 2022**

Elena Maximova, 34, from the Russian republic of Udmurtia has won the title of Mrs. Universe 2022. The contest was held in the Bulgarian capital of Sophia from January 30 to February 5, the final of which was held on February 4 2023. Elena Maksimova runs a network of language centers in Izhevsk. She has two children, loves to travel and has already been to 34 countries. This is the first time in the history of the contest, which has been held since 2007, when a representative of Russia wins. In total 120 women from China, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, India, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany, Spain, the USA and other countries took part in the beauty pageant.



**RISING STAR**  
**A singing star at just 19!**

A year ago, few people in Kazakhstan had heard of singer Ayau, but one hit, "sybyrlaiyn," got people talking about her. To date, more than 20 thousand short clips (reels) have been recorded using the audio track of the song on Instagram alone. Ayaulym Kusaiyn, known as Ayau, is a 19-year-old performer and artist. She made her debut in September 2022 with the single "sensiz." But her song "sybyrlaiyn," took first place in the Top 100: Kazakhstan Apple Music and fourth place in the top tracks on Spotify.



The life of a fourth-year student at the Tchaikovsky College in Almaty has changed after the rise in popularity. Interestingly, once Ayau wanted to give up the idea of singing. When she was 17-18 years old, she tried her luck by giving many auditions; her hope of being realized in creativity was melting away. And then she started writing her songs herself. She says, when she writes the lyrics of a song, it doesn't come from an inspiration. The melody first comes to mind, and then, harmonizing with it, she creates the text. In future, she wants to glorify Kazakh music to the whole world and win a Grammy.

**UNIQUE TALENT**  
**Chinese cakes with extra-ordinary and artistic looks**

At traditional Chinese markets, *tangren* (sugar people) are a popular draw, as they make cakes for children and adults alike. Name practically any animal or famous fictional character and, with great ease, the folk artisans will mold maltose syrup into a figure that can be easily



elaborate edible figurines of the country's historical like empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and poet Tang Wan of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) or mythical characters like a flying apsara (a fairy, or *feitian* in Chinese) with a mythological beast that is half fish and half bird.



held and eaten off a stick. With deft handiwork, vendors seem to bring the molten bronze liquid to life, as they shape it into a mouth-watering piece of art. In the past five years, however, *pâtissier* Zhou Yi has been taking the concept to the next level, combining fondant cake-making skills with Chinese dough-sculpting techniques to create



**CELEBRATING**  
**Rauf Hajiyev A legend of music**

The prominent composer and People's Artist of the USSR Rauf Hajiyev (1922-1995), Rauf Hajiyev, is the author of nearly 100 songs like *My Azerbaijan*, *Spring is coming*, *Baku*, *Leyla*, around 20 symphonic and classical compositions, six ballets, and nine operettas as well as soundtracks for twenty movies. His lyrical songs in a patriotic



spirit, combining national motives and modern style, entered the repertoire of famous performers and played an important role in the development of the song genre. Caucasus Niece (1969), the world-famous Rauf Hajiyev's operetta, is characterized by its superb music, interesting storyline, and subtle humor. The operetta has become a treasure in the golden fund of the Soviet classics. For over 50 years, theater-goers from Russia, Belarus, Latvia, and other countries have been able to enjoy this work of art.

**PERFORMING ARTS**  
**Fidan Hajiyeva of Azerbaijan, known as Carmen**

Since 1996 Fidan Hajiyeva, popularly known as Carmen, has been a leading vocalist at the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater, performing national and classical leading opera roles. She became Baku's youngest performer of the title role of Carmen in Georges Bizet's Carmen opera. Italians delighted by Fidan's voice invited her to study in the master-class of the Italian mezzo-soprano Bernadette Manca di Nissa at the Academy of Chigiana, where she won first prize in the final international competition.



Fidan released her first album *Jealously and Love* in 2003, singing national and international songs in seven languages. In 2006 she was awarded the title of "Honored Artist of Azerbaijan" and in 2015 she was awarded the title of "People's Artist of Azerbaijan." Fidan Hajiyeva was born in Baku, Azerbaijan in 1976. In 1984 she entered the fortepiano class of the Bulbul Secondary Music School. After graduating school in 1994 she entered the faculty vocal of the Baku Music Academy, becoming a student of Professor Huseyn Aliyev. In 1998 she received master classes for vocal art from the world-famous People's Artist of Russian Federation Irina Arkhipova.



## UZBEKISTAN FACILITATES CONDITIONS FOR INVESTORS

A favorable environment for investors has been created in Uzbekistan, there is an effective system for protecting the rights of investors, said the Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan, Jamshid Khodzhaev, *centralasianlight.org* reported. Since 2017, the volume of foreign direct investment in Uzbekistan has increased by 2.5 times and amounted to \$8.6 billion. Import duties on almost 8,000 types of goods have decreased; 70 types of business licenses and 34 different types of permits have been cancelled. The procedure for registering new business entities has been simplified. Land plots are provided through online auctions. In general, work will be actively continued to improve the legal framework to create a favorable investment environment, Khodzhaev said.

## TURKMENISTAN INCREASES EXPORT OF ELECTRICITY

Turkmenistan increased electricity production by 11 percent year-on-year in 2022, according to the Electricity Market Report 2023 of the International Energy Agency (IEA); in comparison with 2021, Turkmenistan increased electricity exports to foreign countries by 30 percent over the past year. It was noted that such a significant increase in exports was due to an increase in



production at a large complex of gas-fired power plants in the Mary region in the southeast of the country. Turkmenistan began exporting electricity to Kyrgyzstan in August 2021, while increasing these supplies to 1.7 TWh in the first half of 2022. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have agreed to increase electricity supplies to 4 TWh per year in October 2022, which could increase the security of electricity supply in Uzbekistan, the report said.

## IRAN'S TRADE WITH TURKMENISTAN

The value of Iran's trade with Turkmenistan (excluding crude oil exports) in the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-January 20) increased by 32.64 percent compared to the same period of last year, the *Financial Tribune* reported on February 21 2023 with reference to the Iran Customs Administration.



During the period, Turkmenistan and Iran traded 1.1 million tons of products worth \$389.65 million. Iran's total trade turnover period with Caspian Sea littoral states in the first ten months reached 5.54 million tons worth \$3.03 billion, a 9.19 percent rise in value compared to the similar period of last year. Russia was Iran's main trading partner among the Caspian states during the period with 3.11 million tons of products worth \$1.79 billion (down 1.27%). Iran's exports to the Caspian littoral states exceeded \$1.67 billion during the period, registering a 3.41 percent rise.

## KAZAKHSTAN SETS TARGET FOR ATTRACTING FDIS

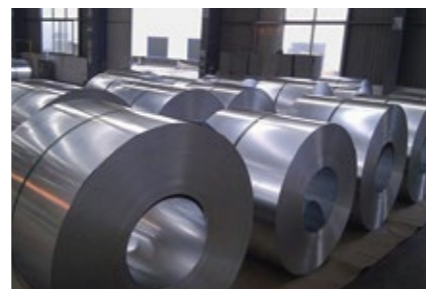
The government of Kazakhstan intends to attract at least \$24.4 billion of foreign investment to the national



economy in 2023 and has set the plans. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kazakh Invest national company, and regional administrations have been tasked to carry out proactive work in this direction and strengthen cooperation with Kazakhstan's foreign missions. In 2022, some 46 enterprises with foreign capital were launched in mechanical engineering, renewable energy, mining, metallurgy, agro-industrial complex, and other sectors in Kazakhstan. The Netherlands, the United States, Switzerland, Belgium, Russia, South Korea, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Türkiye were the top investor countries in 2022.

## IRAN BECOMES 9TH STEEL-PRODUCING STATE

According to the World Steel Association, in January 2023, Iran stands as the ninth-biggest producer of steel in the world, producing 2 million and 700 thousand tons of steel in the first month of 2023. The figure shows a 27.7 percent hike in the corresponding period of the preceding year. Steelmaking countries produced 1.878 million tons in 2022, marking a 4.2 percent drop compared to the preceding year. China produced 79 million and 500 thousand tons, becoming top steel-making country in the world. India produced 10 million and 900 thousand tons, ranking second. With production of 7 million and 200 thousand tons of raw steel, Japan stands in third place.



The Iranian steel industry has been constantly developing over the past years against all the pressures and obstacles created by outside forces like the US sanctions and the coronavirus outbreak that has severely affected the performance of the world's top producers.

## KAZAKHSTAN'S FOREIGN TRADE TURNOVER

Kazakhstan's foreign trade turnover hit a record high of \$134.4 billion in 2022, a rise of 82 percent over 2021 and four times that of 2020. Export volumes reached \$84.4 billion in the reporting period, growing by 40 percent in 2021 and 78 percent in 2020. The surge in oil and metals exports was the growth's primary driver. Thus, rev-



venues from oil sales increased by 51 percent to \$46.9 billion, copper by 15 percent to \$3.7 billion, ferroalloys by 51 percent to \$3.4 billion, uranium by 95 percent to \$3.4 billion, and copper ores by 51 percent to \$2.4 billion. Exports of wheat grew by 37 percent, oil products by 73 percent, zinc by 43 percent, and sulfur by 91 percent. In 2022, the country's import volumes reached \$50 billion for the first time, surpassing a 2013 record of \$48.8 billion. Compared to 2021, the figure increased by 21 percent.

## UZBEKISTAN'S GDP TO GROW BY 6.5% IN 2023

The economy of Uzbekistan will grow by 6.5% in 2023. This is stated in the report of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). According to the bank, the growth of the Uzbek economy in 2022 amounted to 5.7%, which is 0.2% higher than forecast in September and almost doubled compared to April 2022. EBRD experts predict that Uzbekistan's GDP will grow by 7% in 2024.



## IRAN, CHINA TO LAUNCH GREEN CUSTOMS CORRIDOR

According to a senior Iranian official, Iran and China plan to launch a Green Customs Corridor aimed at facilitating growing trade between the two strategic partners. Foroud Asgari, the deputy head of the Iranian Customs Administration, told media that China is a major trade partner of Iran in terms of imports and exports. He said Iran will work to create as many customs corridors as possible with China under bilateral agreements so that business people from both countries will be able to handle imports and exports without delay. It is noteworthy here that Iran has already launched a Green Customs Corridor with Russia, which offers special incentives to business sectors of the two countries.

## UZBEKISTAN TO EXPORT URANIUM TO INDIA

An agreement has been reached with the Department of Atomic Energy of India, as per which Uzbekistan's state-owned company NavoiUran will start export of uranium to India from March 2023, the company reports. Reportedly, Indian officials visited the company facilities and got acquainted with the processes and preparation of production and for export. In particular, the natural uranium to be exported to India was inspected and a positive assessment was given to its production process. NavoiUran is currently exporting



uranium to Japan, Canada, USA, and South Korea. The company has entered into export agreements with the world's major companies.

## KAZAKHSTAN INCREASES EEU TRADE TURNOVER

The trade turnover of Kazakhstan with the EEU countries amounted to \$28.31 billion in 2022, according to preliminary information from the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan. This amount is 6.5% more compared to the same period in 2021, *Centralasianlight* reports. For the year, exports of goods amounted to \$9.7 billion (24.3% more), and imports - \$18.6 billion (0.9% less). In the total volume of foreign trade turnover of Kazakhstan with the EEU countries, Russia occupies the first



place, with which the trade turnover is 92.3%, followed by Kyrgyzstan - 4%, Belarus - 3.6% and Armenia - 0.1%. At the same time, the largest increase in exports with the EEU countries is noted for chemical elements, which doubled compared to the same period last year.

### FORM IV

Statement about ownership and other particulars about newspaper **BUSINESS CENTRAL ASIA** to be published in the first issue every year after the last day of February

1. Place of publication: New Delhi
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- Nationality: Indian
- Address: C-778, Vikaspuri, New Delhi 110018
6. Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital: Inderveer Singh, C-778, Vikaspuri, New Delhi 110018

I, Inderveer Singh, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: March 10, 2023 Inderveer Singh  
Publisher

**OUTLOOK**

**Turkish men love romantic rumors**

Men in Türkiye quickly open up, but at some point, they begin to violate your boundaries and build their own rather rigidly.



You have to be prepared that in terms of importance you will be in third place with the Turk at best. First and foremost are his family and friends. But at the same time, surprisingly, if an outside woman openly shows sympathy for a Turkish man, in his thoughts she has immediately fallen into the category of easily accessible. Even if there was no sex, he will tell his friends that it is easy to have physical intimacy with such and such. Turkish society adores such rumors, they will spread quickly. Turkish males love to announce their relations to everyone they know.



**ACCLAIM**

**She wants to live the best version of life**

To appear on the pages of *Vogue* is the dream of every model. Vanessa Kan of Kazakhstan was lucky enough to pose for the legendary publication almost at the very beginning of her career.

The 22-year-old has been working as a model for almost three years and has done modelling for premium Rolex watches. Vanessa shares her emotions, "To be honest, I always have a lot of desires and goals, but my cherished dream is to live the best version of life!"

**CULTURAL EXCHANGE**

**Grooms from India in Russia!**

The best grooms are from India. This is not the tagline of some Indian matrimonial agency, but the much-publicized view of Russian writer Maria Arbatova. She says, "Indian men are a better match for Russian girls because they're closer to Russians emotionally. Besides, the success of Indian soap operas in our country suggests a similarity in the idea of a family of Russian provincial girls and Indian suitors."



**OUTCOME**

**Bucking conventions and values!**

Success in China has traditionally been tied to marriage and parenthood amid societal pressures to have children. But younger Chinese are increasingly forging their own path as they seek to break away from what some see as constraints on their lives.



China's population is declining as an increasing number of young couples are shunning parenthood. Government policy and demographic trends are out of step with each other, a gap that cannot be fixed by simply increasing the country's birthrate.

"It's hard to sustain a satisfactory quality of life once you have children because your life becomes consumed by them. If we choose to have children, it comes at the expense of losing our individuality. In our opinion, children are not essential if we do get married," according to a young girl.

**In traditional Chinese culture, children are typically viewed as something of an insurance policy for being looked after in retirement.**

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Shower Columns



Multi-functional Showers



Rain Showers



Each Watertec Shower Solution is crafted to offer an exquisite showering experience. The range comprises Multi-functional Showers, Rain Showers, Overhead Showers, Hand Showers and Shower Columns. This diverse offering not only leaves you spoilt for choice but also pampers you with a personalised, intimate showering experience using the intuitive control panel. At the turn of the knob, you can switch from intense to waterfall mode or hot to cold water.

Happy bathing, happy showering!