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REVISTA DE PRENSA

16 de febrero de 2015

Kazajstán



Kazakhstan: Astana Presses for Positive Spin amid Economic Gloom

With Kazakhstan in the economic doldrums, the government is asking the “independent” media to don their rose-colored specs.

“At a time when measures to improve the economic situation are being carried out, the media is recommended to adhere to the following structure for publishing material,” says a statement sent to Kazakhstan’s private media outlets by the authoritarian government’s Committee for Communications, IT, and Information and re-published by the Adil Soz media freedom watchdog on February 12.

A list of detailed “recommendations” follows, containing information on what the non-state media should publish, right down to the content, the frequency, and the thrust of the reporting.

The recommendations include publishing “material on every briefing as they are held (1-2 reports in the ‘Main News’ section)”; expert comments on the “correct measures [being taken by the government] and Kazakhstan’s margin of safety that will allow it to withstand a crisis”; and “infographics about Kazakhstan’s margin of safety and achievements in the years of independence (no less than once a month).”

Private media are also recommended to base their reporting on “official statements by competent state bodies,” and they should publish material “on negative social phenomena in foreign countries owing to the global economic situation (daily).”



With Kazakhstan facing its worst economic outlook for six years owing to a slump in oil prices and a regional slowdown emanating from sanctions-hit Russia, President Nursultan Nazarbayev this week ordered spending cuts of some \$3.8 billion (or 10 percent of the previously planned budget expenditure for this year)—even while insisting Kazakhstan is not in an economic crisis.

To counter all this economic doom and gloom, the private media has also been “recommended” to report on events that will promote a feel-good mood: from this year’s celebrations of 550 years of Kazakh statehood and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, to plans for Astana to host the EXPO 2017 international exhibition in two year’s time.

According to research published in late 2013, the government already directs state media subsidies to produce positive spin, but issuing detailed “recommendations” to the private media – which, unlike state media, are supposed to be independent of government interference – marks a new departure in micromanaging the message.

Fuente: eurasianet

Almaty 2022: IOC Evaluation Commission Day 2 - The City Experience

Almaty, February 15, 2015

Day 2 of the IOC Evaluation Commission visit in Almaty:

HE Idrissov, Yerlan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan opened the session and reiterated full support of the Government. Theme briefings on Accommodation, followed by Transport, Media Operations and part 2 of the Sports & Venues theme were conducted. A venue tour of the City Zone held in the afternoon demonstrated the compactness of the Games Concept.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Yerlan Idrissov, opened Day 2 with welcome remarks as the International Olympic Committee's Evaluation Commission continued its assessment of Almaty's bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 2022. The Minister reaffirmed full government support of the bid stating, "I am here today to confirm the full support of the Government of Kazakhstan to the Almaty 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games bid. Our Bid Proposal is fully aligned with our country's long-term Strategic Plan -'Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy'. He closed his welcome address saying, "In Almaty they say to improve your vision you must look to the mountains. I hope that our mountains help with your vision and allow you to see the true capabilities of this great city and my hometown, Almaty. It is an honour to have the IOC Evaluation Commission here - we hope to see a lot more of you over the next seven years."

Timur Dossymbetov, long-standing Secretary General represented the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Kazakhstan discussed the Sport and Venues theme. Also presenting today were Rashida Shaikenova, the



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President of the Kazakhstan Tourism Association, Aset Asavbayev, the Chairman of the Transport Committee of the Ministry of Investments and Development, and the senior leadership of the bid committee.

Almaty 2022 discussed its plans on the Candidature File themes Accommodation, Transportation, Media Operations, in addition to the second of three Sport and Venue presentations.

After the morning briefing session, members of the IOC Evaluation Commission visited the venues within the City Zone, which included the Ice Palace, Central Stadium, Baluan Sholak Sports Palace, Medals Plaza site, and the Sunkar Precinct. Venues visited within the Sunkar Precinct include, the Sliding Centre, the world-class and stunning Ski Jumping Centre and Nordic Combined arenas.

"The City Zone is extremely compact and demonstrates our vision of keeping the athlete experience at the forefront of our planning," said Andrey Kryukov, Vice Chairman of the Bid. He added, «Yesterday we had the opportunity to showcase the Nordic and Alpine Venues. With the Tian Shan Mountains as a backdrop, our snow covered peaks displayed true winter wonderland appeal. Today the venues in the City Zone served as a platform to showcase our young and vibrant city and our ability to execute an efficient, compact venue plan. In less than four hours we managed to visit all five city venues including a 30- 40 min presentation at ever site".

Almaty is Kazakhstan's largest city and a major historical, educational, cultural and commercial centre in Central Asia. Accommodation is the lynchpin within the tourism industry in Kazakhstan. As a result, Almaty benefits from a broad range of modern, luxury and business hotels and numerous spa and wellness hotels. "Over the last decade the tourism industry in Kazakhstan has truly boomed,"said

Rashida Shaikenova, President of Kazakhstan ´s Tourism Association.

Shaikenova continued, "In 2011 we were the joint hosts with Astana of the Asian Winter Games -an event that saw two million spectators come together in the City. We hosted them, easily. Now we are looking forward to 2017 when we will host the Winter Universiade and an estimated 5,000 athletes from around the world. Hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2022 would be tremendous. We will be prepared! Almaty's population will be happy and pleased to welcome guests and friends from all over the world. "

Aset Asavbayev, Chairman of the Transportation Committee for the Ministry of Investment and Development and Elena Yerkovich, City of Almaty Transport Advisor briefed the Evaluation Commission on the Candidature File Transport theme. Centring on the athletes' experience, Asavbayev said, "Our main priority is to safely move athletes from village to venue and back again every day.No Almaty 2022 venue is more than a 33-kilometre drive away from the Olympic Village. This means an average village-to-venue travel time of approximately 15 minutes."

Asavbayev further discussed the City of Almaty's existing transportation infrastructure. He said, "The City's excellent, existing public transport network will be complemented by a highly efficient hub to venue shuttle bus system from spectators and workforce."



Almaty 2022 would offer the largest five-hour fly time population catchment for a Winter Games. Yerkovich discussed Almaty Airport's size and capabilities stating, "In 2014, it served 4.3 million passengers and has a daily capacity of approximately 40,000 passengers. ALA already has major winter sports experience. It was the gateway airport for the 2011 Asian Winter Games.

The 2017 Winter University Games will also provide us with another opportunity to ensure smooth airport operations."

Almaty 2022 understands and appreciates the importance - to the Olympic Movement - of excellent games-time media operations and the resulting worldwide media coverage. Ruslan Zhemkov, Media Advisor to the Almaty 2022 bid and Denis Vykhodtsev, Almaty 2022 Broadcast Expert reviewed compact and simple media operations and media facilities that tailor to every need. Denis Vykhodtsev said, "The media-facility-mix in Olympic City will provide a convenient, efficient and effective working environment for accredited media during the Games."

All but three venues can be reached in less than 30 minutes from the IBC/MPC transport mall by the media transport system. And the longest travel time is 39 minute. Vykhodtsev further stated, "Adding to the convenience and efficiency of this plan these Media facilities also sit adjacent to the IOC Hotels, the Almaty Olympic Arena, the Curling Arena and the Olympic Village. The compact nature of the overall Almaty 2022 venue concept not only benefits the media with short travel times within the two Zones - but also between the Zones.

"Day 2 was fantastic," said bid Vice Chairman, Andrey Kryukov. He added, "We had an excellent opportunity to continue our dialogue with the IOC and exchange information. I am very pleased with Almaty's second day of its first-ever IOC Evaluation Commission visit."

Fuente: sportsfeatures

Kazakh Central Bank Governor speaks tenge liquidity and de-dollarization

Governor of the National Bank of Kazakhstan Kairat Kelimbetov spoke about the tenge liquidity, de-dollarization of the Kazakh economy and the ruble, Tengrinews reports.

"How much tenge liquidity is needed in the short term - 3-6 months? Together with the banks we have calculated it to be between 500 billion (\$2.7 billion) and 1 trillion tenge (\$5.4 billion)," Kelimbetov said in a brief at the Central Communications Service headquarters in Astana on February 12.

According to the head of the National Bank, this amount will be covered through purchase of bonds of second-tier banks by the Single Pensions Fund and providing more than 250 billion (\$1.35 billion) tenge to banks through the Distressed Assets Fund.

"60 billion tenge (\$320 million) will be provided through monetary and interest rate swap through the Development Bank of Kazakhstan, about 80 billion tenge (\$430 million) through KazAgro. Also we intend to



make swaps with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Asian Development Bank to provide long-term and medium-term liquidity," he said.

According to him, every day the banks are provided with around \$2.5 billion in tenge at 15 percent. "We plan to lower the rate, we will expand collateral obligations and the volumes may also be increased," Kelimbetov said.

The Governor of the National Bank also spoke about the plans to de-dollarize the Kazakh economy.

"An important task vested on us by the President of Kazakhstan, is taking measures to de-dollarize our economy. We are currently finishing the work, and in the beginning of next week we are planning to adopt a joint action plan together with the government for de-dollarization of the economy. These are medium-term measures that imply a change in the legal and regulatory work and generally the change of attitude towards the tenge as a measure of value and payment arrangements," the Governor said.

He noted that there was no fit-all prescriptions for de-dollarization in the world. "There is a standard set. It, for example, includes bringing more order into the payment for expensive purchases, such as real estate and cars. And in accordance with the law, if it is a non-cash payment, it should be carried out only in the national currency - the tenge," he said.

Kelimbetov also noted that there was no need to return to the previous parity ratio of tenge and ruble amid the 80% devaluation of the Russian ruble.

"The big question that many enterprises in our country are raising today is the question of competitiveness and the issue of tenge liquidity. Many different proposals have been discussed over the last 6 months, including the one to go back to the previous tenge-ruble parity. In our view, such proposals have no ground," he said.

The head of Kazakhstan's central bank pointed out that last year's exchange rate adjustment (nearly 20% devaluation of the tenge in February 2014) created a certain margin of safety. "In 2014, foreign exchange reserves increased. In January last year they equaled to 24 billion (\$130 million), then on 1 January 2015 they reached nearly 29 billion (\$156 million), that is, we have broken that trend observed in 2011-2013, when gold reserves of the National Bank decreased from 37 billion to 23 billion. Also, last year, imports fell, and in general we successfully tacked the tension and devaluation expectations that had formed during the preceding years," he added.

Kelimbetov informed that budgetary programs and quasi-public sector plans would be supported by measures in the fiscal and industrial trade policy of Kazakhstan to the benefit of domestic businesses.

Fuente: tengrnews

Imports of Russian products to Kazakhstan to be discussed at special bilateral meeting

Imports of Russian products to Kazakhstan is to be discussed at a special bilateral meeting of representatives of the two nations, with the time of the meeting to be agreed on shortly, Russia's RIA Novosti reported February 15, citing Andrei Slepnev, Minister of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Committee.



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Last week Russia's Kommersant Newspaper reported, citing a source in the country's Agriculture Ministry, that Kazakhstan might ban or limit imports of a number of Russian products to Kazakhstan.

According to the source, some foodstuffs produced in Russia have become too cheap in the wake of the Russian rouble sharp devaluation and are posing a threat to Kazakhstan-made products.

Besides, the publication reported that Astana was allegedly insisting on introducing a ban on imports of cars and car batteries, petroleum products, some construction materials.

However, Kazakhstan's First Vice PM Bakytzhan Sagintayev and Russia's Agriculture Minister Nikolai Fyodorov refuted such speculations later.

Earlier Rakhim Oshakbayev, Vice Chairman of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs announced that the two sides were expected to discuss a possible ban on imports of cars and foul meat February 6.

However, according to Andrei Slepnev, Minister of Trade of the Eurasian Economic Committee, the issue hadn't been on the agenda at the sitting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council February 6.

"Both sides are looking for ways to tackle issues arising amidst the current economic situation", he said when asked if Kazakhstan had notified the Eurasian Economic Committee or the Russian side on its alleged intentions to restrict imports from Russia.

Fuente: tengrinews

Kazakhstan downs January oil production by 2.4%

Kazakhstan has produced 5.753 thousand ton of crude oil in January of this year, which is 2.4% less than in January 2014, reports the Statistics Committee of the Ministry of National Economy of the country.

During the same month of the year, the country's gas condensate production amounted to 1,114.2 thousand tons - a 4.1% more than in January 2014.

1,999,700,000 m3 of natural gas was produced in the country making it 10.3% more than in January 2014.

Fuente: akipress



KazAgro, World Bank discuss cooperation issues

Bishkek (AKIpress) - Astana hosted meeting of the KazAgro Holding and the World Bank representatives.

The discussion focused on trends of agriculture development in the world and issues of industry development in Kazakhstan. In addition, the parties discussed the prospects of cooperation in the diversification of agricultural sector of the republic and its adaptation to climate change. WB delegation was led by Mark Cackler, Manager of the Agricultural and Rural Development Department of the World Bank.

Acting Chairman of the Executive Board of KazAgro Dauren Mahazhanov told the guests about the existing funding mechanisms of domestic agriculture, the main directions of Agribusiness 2020 program, subsidy system, as well as key priorities for further development of the group of companies of National holding.

The parties spoke about the coincidence of positions on many issues of both global and Kazakhstan agriculture development. Touching upon the prospects of cooperation, Kazakhstan Holding has expressed interest in the direction of long-term funding, as well as assistance in the development of technical support in the agricultural sector of the republic of network of loan partnerships. This is one of the activities of the holding to ensure maximum availability of financing for Kazakhstan agricultural producers.

Business contacts between representatives of KazAgro and the World Bank will be continued to establish mutually beneficial partnership relations.

Fuente: akipress

EuroGUS brings wind turbines to the East

The German logistics provider EuroGUS is expanding its range of services to include transportation for complete wind turbines to the CIS countries. The company is responding to the rising demand from the wind power industry.

EuroGUS (link is external) has been providing freight transport and vehicle transfers to Russia and the CIS since 2010. The company is now also offering heavy and oversized transports. EuroGUS began offering its new service in June 2014. One of the company's first contracts was for transporting two wind turbines to Kazakhstan (link is external). In December 2014, an additional system was transported to Belarus. The market for used wind turbines that are repowered in Germany is growing, particularly in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belarus.

Transporting the special cargo safely requires considerable logistical finesse as well as detailed planning. Roads, curves, bridges and potential bottlenecks all need to be checked. Special guidelines apply to oversized transports. Each special transport requires numerous permits and approvals from government authorities and also has to be accompanied by BF2 / BF3 escort and police vehicles. "We know from experience what is important for oversized transports. We also have good contacts to the authorities and do not have to overcome language barriers," says Denis Rayzman, managing director and owner of EuroGUS.

Fuente: sunwindenergy



Kazakhstan: Local Ethnic Conflict Exposes National Fault Lines

“Kazakhstan is a land of unity and accord,” reads the billboard looming over the highway to the southern village of Bostandyk, which was hit by ethnic clashes between the Kazakh and Tajik communities last week.

Four days after the unrest the area was still under lockdown by security forces, with the Internet shut off. Though the conflict was localized and tensions quickly faded, the episode shows just how suddenly ethnic violence can grow out of control. With neighboring Russia having recently rewritten the rules for intervening to protect its ethnic kin abroad, Astana is especially sensitive about ethnic frictions. Russians, after all, make up a sizable minority in Kazakhstan.

Events on the ground in South Kazakhstan Region on February 5 are little disputed. “There were two close friends, a Tajik and a Kazakh,” Tajik community elder Umuridin Nazhmiddinov explained. “They had a fight and the Tajik pulled a knife on the other, as a result of which the other died.”

Nazhmiddinov was speaking to EurasiaNet.org in a teahouse near the victim’s family home in Yntymak, where relatives were mourning while hordes of riot police and plainclothes security agents patrolled the streets.

It was from here that enraged residents, intent on revenge, set off for the adjoining village of Bostandyk – which is predominantly ethnic Tajik – after the funeral on February 5, rampaging through the streets, setting vehicles and houses alight, and hurling stones through windows.

No casualties were reported, but a dozen damaged houses and several burned-out trucks and cars on the potholed streets testify to the disorder, unusual in a country that prides itself on social stability.

The killing of Bakytzhan Artykov was sparked by a dispute over a greenhouse rental, which local authorities insist was a “domestic” incident. The situation has stabilized now that the suspect, Navmidin Narmetov, has been arrested and his family has left the village, authorities say.

But voicing a view prevailing in both communities, Bostandyk resident Suhrob (a pseudonym—like most interviewees, he declined to use his real name) says the row “was just the spark.”

Nervous of publicly discussing the taboo topic of ethnic frictions, Suhrob spoke to EurasiaNet.org in a cloak-and-dagger interview conducted in a car, because “we’re under the watchful gaze of the security forces.”

“Let the guilty man be punished, but it’s as if the fault is all of ours. I’m a Tajik so I’m guilty before all Kazakhs,” said Suhrob, whose house and car were damaged in the violence.

Like multi-ethnic Kazakhstan itself, the south, near the border with Uzbekistan, is a melting pot, with the majority Kazakhs living alongside minorities including Uzbeks, Uighurs, Tajiks, Tartars, Russians, and Koreans.



Bostandyk's Tajik community was resettled from Soviet Uzbekistan during administrative gerrymandering in 1954, explained an octogenarian retired teacher attired in a traditional blue velvet robe and skullcap. "Since then we've lived in friendship," he said. "But now we're being called outsiders."

The groups mostly rub along with few visible frictions. Ironically, just last month state TV touted Bostandyk as a model of ethnic harmony. Yet inhabitants agree that when disputes erupt (particularly over agricultural resources in this densely populated region), latent tensions surface, splitting communities along ethnic lines.

"Any domestic, criminal, or economic conflict can quickly grow into an ethnic one," Almaty-based analyst Aidos Sarym told EurasiaNet.org. "And if [the authorities] aren't capable of reacting quickly and effectively, a conflict can quickly escalate into something more terrifying and horrifying."

Kazakhstan has avoided major ethnic clashes of the type that rocked Kyrgyzstan in 2010, although occasional incidents (like a Kazakh-Chechen conflict outside Almaty in 2007, also sparked by a petty incident) reveal simmering tensions.

For President Nursultan Nazarbayev, harmony between Kazakhstan's 140 ethnic groups is "our life-giving oxygen," a cornerstone of his nation-building strategy. This policy is popular with minorities, although Kazakh nationalists complain it is pursued at the expense of the majority—a gripe that carries some traction with ethnic Kazakhs on the ground.

The conflict in Ukraine – especially Moscow's assertion of its self-appointed right to intervene in foreign countries to protect Russian speakers – has sharpened Astana's attention toward interethnic relations.

Kazakhstan is a Kremlin ally, but Moscow's aggressive rhetoric rattles nerves in a country with an ethnic Russian minority of 21 percent nationwide. Ethnic Russians form a majority in some northern towns along Kazakhstan's long border with Russia, where Astana has a close eye on the delicate ethnic balance. (By comparison, Tajiks form 0.2 percent of the national population; 1.2 percent in South Kazakhstan Region.)

Social disorder is rare in Kazakhstan, where significant unrest last erupted during an oil strike in 2011, ending in a fatal crackdown.

In Bostandyk, the authorities are favoring carrot over stick. No arrests have been reported following the unrest, leaving Tajiks who face huge repair bills questioning the Kazakh rioters' apparent impunity.

Officials are conducting outreach efforts to prevent interethnic divisions that would be "hard to heal," said Nazhmiddinov, the elder, and "to stop people from accepting false rumors as true and turning against each other."

To prevent anyone spreading rumors (a criminal offense, punishable by 10 years in jail), the authorities blocked cellphone networks and Internet access as far away as Shymkent – Kazakhstan's third-largest city, 120 kilometers away – angering and inconveniencing locals and spawning wild rumors. Meanwhile, national media have virtually ignored the conflict.



The “information vacuum” has backfired, said Sarym, the analyst, “undermining trust in the authorities, sewing enmity and distrust between ethnic groups.”

In Bostandyk and Yntymak, locals from both communities agree the storm has passed, but have a wary eye on the future.

“We’ve always lived in peace with the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Russians,” said Azamat, a Kazakh born and bred in Bostandyk who had no sympathy for the rioters. “But now, who knows what’s around the corner?”

Fuente: eurasianet

Steel production in Kazakhstan down 18.6% in January

ALMATY. Feb 13 (Interfax-Kazakhstan) – In January 2015, Kazakhstan produced 258,220 tonnes of crude steel or a decrease of 18.6% compared with January 2014, the Statistics Committee of the National Economy Ministry said.

In January 2015, the output of flat steel products dropped 2.6% to 197,849 tonnes, production of ferroalloys totaled 148,622 tonnes, 2.1% up from last January.

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Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan

Electricity generation in Kazakhstan down 1% in January

ALMATY. Feb 13 (Interfax-Kazakhstan) – In January 2015, Kazakhstan produced 8.897 billion kWh of electricity or a decrease of 1% compared with last January, the Statistics Committee of the National Economy Ministry said.

February 13, 2015, 08:40PM | back

Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan

Court extends ex-Karaganda region governor Abdishev’s arrest

KARAGANDA. Feb 13 (Interfax-Kazakhstan) – Kazybekbi district Court No.1 in the city of Karaganda has extended the arrest of Bauyrzhan Abdishev, former governor of Karaganda region, for another two months.

The court spokeswoman said that the investigation with regard to Abdishev was finalized and he will study the material of his criminal case from February 23 until April 23.

Afterwards the case files will be sent to a procecutor’s office to indict Abdishev, who still refuses to plead guilty.



The ex-governor was detained in September last year at his home and arrested; two criminal cases were opened against him over office abuse, his arrest was repeatedly extended.

February 13, 2015, 08:33PM | back

Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan

Decision on SCO enlargement may be made at Ufa summit - Russian envoy

MOSCOW. Feb 13 (Interfax) - Hopefully, a decision to enlarge the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will be adopted at its next summit in the Russian city of Ufa, the Russian president's Special Representative to the SCO Bakhtiyer Khakimov has said.

"Vigorous work is under way on this matter [SCO enlargement]. We hope that specific decisions will be adopted at the summit in Ufa," he told a press conference in Moscow on Friday.

At their meeting in Ufa, the leaders of SCO member states are expected to confirm the organization's development strategy for the period up to 2025. The document allows the SCO to admit new members.

The SCO is currently considering several membership applications, including Syria's request seeking observer status, Khakimov said.

"Today we have applications from Pakistan, Iran and India seeking full-fledged membership in the SCO. A number of countries have requested observer status. They include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Recently, we have received a similar request from the Syrian side," he said.

A specialized group established within the SCO is "actively working to formulate a strategy of the organization's development for the period up to 2020," Khakimov said, adding that this document "envisages enlargement."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on January 21 that "we will consider the applications of India and Pakistan [for full-fledged membership in the SCO] first. There is rather broad consensus on this matter at the organization."

"Iran has applied for admission to the SCO. I think this is quite realistic, moreover if progress is made in the resolution of the Iranian nuclear program issue, as SCO membership criteria include the absence of any UN sanctions on a candidate state," Lavrov said.

Iran's accession to the SCO has now been put on hold as Tehran faces UN sanctions.

The SCO includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan hold observer status, while Belarus, Sri Lanka and Turkey are the organization's dialogue partners.

Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan



Kazakhstan's construction output down 2.5% in January

ALMATY. Feb 13 (Interfax-Kazakhstan) – In January 2015, the construction output in Kazakhstan came to 61 billion tenge in value (185.05 tenge/\$1) or a decrease of 2.5% compared with January 2014, the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Economy said.

In January 2015, the volume of construction and erection works dropped by 7.8% compared with January 2014 to amount to 54.5 billion tenge. The volume of overhauls rose 170%, annual repairs – up 30%.

In the reporting month, 2,669 building weres commissioned in Kazakhstan, including 2,526 residential and 143 non-residential buildings.

In January 2015, 30.9 billion tenge was allocated for housing, 1.9% down from last January, while funds spent on the housing sector accounted for 12.4% of total equity investment.

In the reporting period, the main finance source for housing projects were money from individual co-investors totaling 80.6%, the total area of commissioned residential space amounted to 680,700 square m, 1.5% down from last January, including 324,900 square meters, built by individuals.

In January 2015, the average actual construction cost per square m of housing space in apartment blocks totaled 103,500 tenge, while the cost of housing space built by individuals was 59,800 tenge.

The population of Kazakhstan tops 17.3 million people.

February 13, 2015, 08:04PM | back

Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan

Gasoline output in Kazakhstan up 3.5% in January

ASTANA. Feb 13 (Interfax-Kazakhstan) – In January 2015, Kazakhstan produced 213,100 tonnes of gasoline, including aviation fuel or an increase of 3.5% compared with January last year, the Statistics Committee of the National Economy Ministry said.

In the reporting month, diesel production edged down 0.4% to 364,400 tonnes, production of heating oil went down by 7.9% to 280,600 tonnes.

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Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan



Russia's Ufa to host BRICS and SCO summits in July

MOSCOW. Feb 13 (Interfax) - Ufa, the capital city of Russia's Republic of Bashkortostan, is expected to host a summit of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) on July 8-10, and a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on July 10, the Russian president's Special Representative to the SCO Bakhtiyer Khakimov has said.

"The dates have already been announced: the BRICS summit will be held in Ufa on July 8-10, and the SCO summit in Ufa on July 10. A joint session of these two organizations may take place on July 9," he told a press conference in Moscow on Friday.

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Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan

Ospanov, antimonopoly agency ex-chief, fined 1.1 billion tenge and released from custody

ASTANA. Feb 13 (Interfax-Kazakhstan) – A court for criminal cases in Astana delivered on Friday a guilty verdict for former chairman of the State Agency for Regulation of Natural Monopolies Murat Ospanov.

Ospanov was fined 1.10106 billion tenge (185.05 tenge/\$1) with confiscation of his personal property, banned for life from holding public office, and released from custody with an undertaking not to leave his permanent place of residence, Court Chairman Erbol Rakhimbekov said reading out the verdict.

Ospanov was found guilty of attempted murder and bribe taking pursuant to Kazakhstan's criminal code.

It was reported earlier that an amount of \$37,000, found at his place of residence, his stake in the real estate with a land plot in Astana, his stake in a land plot pool in the city of Semei, his another stake in an underground parking pool, as well as personal belongings (a watch, mobile handsets etc) were confiscated by the authorities.

During the trial a public prosecutor had asked the court to sentence him to 11 years in prison.

Ospanov was detained on July 1, 2014 on suspicion of receiving a bribe. On July 3, the court sanctioned his arrest. The financial police charged him with taking the \$300,000 bribe in exchange for protection and patronage to a monopoly company.

Fuente: Interfax-Kazakhstan



Kirguistán



Kyrgyzstan on the brink of energy crisis

BISHKEK (TCA) — The situation in the energy system of Kyrgyzstan is difficult due to the failure of a transformer unit at the Toktogul hydropower plant (HPP), which led to a 300 MW decrease in the power plant's total capacity of 1,200 MW.

According to the Ministry of Energy and Industry of Kyrgyzstan, the power capacity will continue to decline because of declining water levels in the Toktogul reservoir. By the end of February or in early March the HPP capacity may fall below 700 MW, which is almost twofold decrease.

Last year was very difficult for Kyrgyzstan's energy sector. During the growing season, the volume of water inflow into the reservoir was about 7.2 billion compared to 8.8 billion cubic meters in 2013.

Growth in electricity consumption, water shortage and failure to comply with the limits of electricity consumption have led to an increase in electricity generation at the Toktogul HPP and increased water consumption. On January 1, 2015 there was 9.2 billion cubic meters of water in the Toktogul reservoir, and on February 10 — 7.7 billion cubic meters, a 32% decrease compared to this day in 2014.

Kyrgyzstan buys electricity in Kazakhstan to make up for the shortage, Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Valery Dill said. This measure is necessary to save the water in the Toktogul reservoir.

At the same time, the Bishkek thermal electric power plant (TEP) is operating at full capacity of 360 megawatts.



The current situation has forced the Government to think about increasing the country's power generating capacity. The total available capacity (about 14 billion kilowatt-hours per year) does not satisfy the economy. In recent years, domestic electricity consumption grew by 10% per year. Earlier, Kyrgyzstan exported electricity but now the country has to import it.

Savings

Due to the warm winter, Kyrgyzstan has managed to save electricity this year. In January Bishkek consumed 335.9 million kWh of electricity with the planned 373.2 million kWh. Last month consumers in the Chui oblast saved 14.5% of the electricity and in the Talas oblast - 18.4%.

According to the Energy Ministry, the number of outages has decreased by 6.6% in 2014 compared to 2013. In Bishkek, the number of accidents in electricity networks has decreased by 16%.

No changes

To develop the economy, it is necessary to build new generating facilities and reform the energy sector, said Dill.

The population sees no real progress in the construction of large hydro and thermal power plants as well as in modernization of the Bishkek TEP, Energy Minister Kubanichbek Turdubayev said.

A lot of criticism comes to the ministry about Kambar-Ata-1 and Kambar-Ata-2 HPP projects, as well as about the Upper Naryn HPP cascade, because people see no results.

Upper Naryn HPPs

According to the Upper Naryn HPPs JSC, 2.8 billion rubles will be spent for the construction of the Upper Naryn HPPs cascade in 2015. Construction of two plants for concrete production will start in March. A power line and a 35 kilometer road will also be constructed.

At the public hearing in Naryn, Russia's RusHydro representatives said that construction of the Upper Naryn cascade will not harm the environment. The plan provides for a minimum area of flooding. Permanent sanitary control of water flows through the dam will be conducted during construction works, and after the completion the land will be reclaimed.



The Upper Naryn HPPs JSC is a direct operator of the construction of the Upper Naryn HPPs cascade. Shareholding in the company is divided between the RusHydro JSC (Russia) and the Power Plants JSC (Kyrgyzstan).

Small hydropower plants

The Government, in the long-term perspective, is going to increase power generation mainly due to construction of large HPPs and reconstruction of the TEPs in Bishkek and Osh. In the short and medium perspective, construction of small hydropower plants could help cope with the energy crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

Investors are ready to invest in small HPPs if the Government supports them through improved legislation and a favorable investment climate. The Korean Economic Development Fund is ready to invest more than \$100 million in this sector.

Problems hindering the development of small hydropower energy in Kyrgyzstan include the lack of investment guarantees and strategic and long-term vision by the local authorities, and the lack of awareness of the population about the benefits of small HPPs.

Tariffs

Increase in electricity tariffs is inevitable, experts say. Obsolete equipment requires updating. Prices for it are rising, and funding from the state budget is not enough.

Kyrgyzstan has the lowest electricity tariffs in the world. If they rise, people will start saving electricity.

Fuente: Timesca

Kyrgyzstan to implement large-scale projects this year

BISHKEK (TCA) — In the first nine months of 2014, direct foreign investments in Kyrgyzstan saw a decrease to \$443.3 million while capital outflow grew 2.1 percent, Kyrgyzstan Economy Minister Temir Sariyev said at a Government meeting last Friday while presenting a report on the country's economic results for 2014.

In his words, Kyrgyzstan's entry to the Eurasian Economic Union was taking place under difficult geo-political conditions, a crisis in the currency market caused by strengthening US dollar, and an oil price drop.



“Due to the above factors the world economy has seen a trend of slowdown of economic growth, and the macro-economic situation in Kyrgyzstan remains unstable,” the governmental press service quoted Sariyev as saying. “The economy of Kyrgyzstan is the most open economy in the region and is highly dependent on gold production, money remittances from labor migrants, transit trade, and external aid.”

According to preliminary estimates of the National Statistics Committee, in 2014 Kyrgyzstan’s economic growth was 3.6 percent, due to a growth in the construction and services sectors.

“This year the economic situation will depend on neighboring countries, the exchange rate of the Kyrgyz som, and other economic factors,” said Sariyev. “Many countries are revising their macro-economic programs. 2015 is the year of Kyrgyzstan’s entry to the Eurasian Economic Union, which entails a number of risks. We are currently considering two options of programs and developing an anti-crisis plan.”

This year was announced the Year of Strengthening the Economy in Kyrgyzstan, so, in the minister’s words, the year will see implementation of large-scale projects, construction of roads, and holding bids for development of natural resources deposits.

“We have received \$100 million from the Kyrgyz-Russian Fund, and the fund will start working and lending late in March or in early April,” the minister said.

Fuente:Timesca

Bishkek mayor's office, Chinese company consider investment opportunities to implement municipal projects

Bishkek (AKIpress) - bishkek_petunia First vice mayor of Bishkek Zamirbek Malabekov met last week with a delegation of the China's GreenView International (Holding) Limited to consider investment opportunities to implement municipal projects in the city.

The city budget, the vice mayor noticed, fails to allocate the required money for development of the capital. In this regard, attraction of investments is the main direction for Bishkek's development.

The Chinese delegation, in turn, told about the company and expressed interest in cooperation on mutually beneficial terms. “Our goal today is to explore the potential of the city for investment,” they said.

The sides agreed to once again organize a working meeting for a detailed study of specific proposals within social housing for citizens.

GreenView International (Holding) Limited represents the largest public construction corporations of China, including China Shandong Economic & Technical Cooperation Group.

Fuente: AkiPress News



Kyrgyzstan: Russia Has Made “No Real Progress” on Hydropower Promises

A top official in Kyrgyzstan has grumbled that Russia is far behind schedule implementing billions of dollars of critical hydropower projects in the energy-starved country.

The giant Kambar-Ata 1 hydropower dam and the Upper-Naryn Cascade of four smaller hydropower dams were supposed to be well on their way to completion by now. Moscow and Bishkek signed deals for their construction in August 2012. As part of the package of related agreements, Moscow secured a 15-year extension on its military facilities in the Central Asian country after the current lease expires in 2017.

But according to Kyrgyz Energy Minister Kubanychbek Turdubayev, nothing much is happening. Speaking at a ministry meeting on February 12, in comments carried by Vechernii Bishkek, Turdubayev said:

We have been barraged with criticism over [energy] projects. People can see no real progress in such projects as [the construction of] two Kambar-Ata hydroelectric power plants and the Upper-Naryn Cascade of hydroelectric power plants. It should be admitted that there are serious omissions. Kyrgyzstan's rights have been violated and there is no progress. [...]

At about this time last year, Russia's state-owned Inter RAO, responsible for the construction of the 275-meter, 1900MW Kambar-Ata 1 facility – estimated to cost \$3 billion – blamed Kyrgyz officials for holding up the project by not signing important technical documents and allocating the land on which the facility will be built. The Kyrgyz side denied the accusations.

According to Moscow's government-run Sputnik.kg, the land issue is slowing completion of the Upper-Naryn Cascade, a series of smaller hydro facilities dotted along the Naryn River that were originally projected to cost \$727 million. The agency reported on February 14 that Kyrgyzstan had allocated only a sixth of the land needed for the project. Meanwhile, another Russian contractor working for RusHydro, which is involved in the dam projects, hinted to Sputnik that the local community in Naryn Province had issued demands that were difficult to fulfill.

With Kyrgyzstan providing no cash or capital for either project, it would not be a surprise if they are low on the Kremlin's to-do list right now. Since the agreements were signed, Russia has entered a full-blown economic crisis triggered by Western sanctions over its war in Ukraine and the collapse in oil prices.

Moreover, RusHydro's Chairman Evgenny Dod told Russian journalists in December that it is likely the cost for the Upper-Naryn Cascade has jumped. RusHydro had initially thought sourcing equipment from China a cheap option, but the Chinese renminbi gained almost 50 percent against the ruble in 2014, compromising the company's buying power.

Fuente: Eurasianet.org



Kyrgyz parliament raises base rate of excise duty on vodka, liqueurs and spirits, brandy, beer, petrol

Kyrgyz parliament raised the base rate of excise duty on vodka, liqueurs and spirits, brandy, beer, petrol, having approved the amendments to the Tax Code. According to the initiators, thus the conditions for the development of the national economy are created and forming of the single market within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, where harmonization of rates of certain taxes is considered as one of the main objectives of formation of interstate integration association.

Fuente: 24kg

US wants to expand its engagement in Central Asia – State Department

BISHKEK (TCA) – Because of the location of Central Asian countries at a crossroads between Asia and Europe and because Central Asia borders on many large countries with whom the United States has important and complicated relationships, the US has an interest in this region, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia Daniel Rosenblum said at a telephonic press briefing with journalists from Bishkek, Tashkent, and Astana held in Brussels earlier this week. Rosenblum oversees US policy and diplomatic relations with five Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

“We don’t want to see the Central Asian countries become safe havens for terrorist groups. So we want to expand our security cooperation to meet threats that we share, transnational threats, terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and we also talked about the emergence of ISIL, the organization of ISIL,” the Deputy Assistant Secretary said.

He also said that the US wants to expand its economic engagement, to have more bilateral trade, more investment opportunities, and help build more connectivity within the region, and more connections between Central Asian countries.

He also emphasized that the US wants to “expand and also address our concerns regarding what we call usually the human dimension, supporting efforts to institute reforms, supporting human rights, that that was part of our relationship with each of these countries.”

The Deputy Assistant Secretary was asked a question whether none of the US presidents have visited Central Asia because the interest of the United States has dwindled in that regard, and whether in future the Central Asian countries can expect the visit of the President of the United States.

“We hope for more visits at higher levels to Central Asia including Kazakhstan in the future,” Mr. Rosenblum said. “I can say that the fact that there hasn’t been a presidential visit does not signify weak interest or a lessening of interest in the region. Our presidents always have, as you know, many demands on their time and it can be difficult to arrange such things. But we hope that there will be more such engagement either in the region or in Washington or New York in future months, including this year.”

Fuente: Timesca



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USAID launches 2015 – 2019 strategy for Central Asia

DUSHANBE, February 15, 2015, Asia-Plus -- On Thursday February 12, U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan Susan M. Elliott joined USAID's Regional Mission Director for Central Asia Jonathan Addleton to launch the United States Agency for International Development Strategy for Central Asia for 2015 to 2019.

Usmonali Usmonzoda, Minister of Energy and Water Resources and Jalil Pirizoda, Head of Department of Agriculture and Land Use also participated in the event, demonstrating the Tajik government's commitment to working together to achieve the goals outlined in this new five-year commitment to Tajikistan.

The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe says that with the launch of this new strategy, USAID will focus on expanding diverse and competitive trade and markets; enhancing regional cooperation on shared energy and water resources; and supporting more effective and inclusive governance institutions. USAID will help the economies of Central Asia become stronger and more resilient, with significantly increased cross-border trade, including with Afghanistan and the broader South Asia region, and increased income-generating opportunities for the poor. Secondly, USAID aims to make the shared issues of water and energy compelling reasons for cooperation, instead of sources of conflict, and achieve more effective and equitable management of these two critical trans-boundary resources. And finally, USAID will support civil society to advocate for citizens' needs, and improve



national and local government abilities to deliver high quality public services that will mitigate health threats and improve literacy.

Ambassador Elliott highlighted the 20 years of successful partnership between the U.S. and Tajikistan and emphasized that Tajikistan has a tremendous role to play in ensuring the regional prosperity and stability of Central Asia. USAID's Regional Mission Director Jonathan Addleton noted that this new strategy ushers in a new period of engagement for the United States in Central Asia.

Since 1992, USAID has partnered with the governments and people of Tajikistan and all of Central Asia to foster prosperous, healthy, and forward looking communities. During this time, USAID invested close to \$2.2 billion in the region. USAID's Central Asia Mission maintains offices in Dushanbe, Almaty, Ashgabat, Astana, and Tashkent, and maintains close ties with USAID's Kyrgyzstan Mission in Bishkek. But, as Mr. Addleton emphasized in his remarks, while USAID has multiple locations, it has one purpose: to enhance regional cooperation and broad-based prosperity in Central Asia.

Fuente: Asia Plus

EU awards Louis Berger public finance management contract in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE (TCA) — The Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan has selected Louis Berger, a global professional services corporation, for a 5.1 million euro (\$5.8 million) technical assistance contract for public finance management, the company said.

Strengthening public finance management is part of far-reaching political and economic reforms the Tajik government has implemented to support the country's National Development Strategy and Living Standards Improvement Strategy. Both aim to promote overall economic competitiveness and growth, which are in part predicated on Tajikistan's ability to make public services more effective, reliable, transparent, accountable, ethical and professional.

"Development practitioners have long known that a strong public finance system is a key contributor to strong development outcomes, such as improved living standards," said Daphnee Benayoun, director of institutional development at Louis Berger. "Based on our 16 years of experience in Tajikistan, this public finance management project is one of the most significant development interventions the country has undertaken."



As part of the contract, Louis Berger will help the Tajik Ministry of Finance and the Economic and Financial Institute improve how the country performs macroeconomic modelling, formulates revenue and tax policy and rolls out a medium-term expenditure framework for other governmental institutions. In addition, Louis Berger will help enhance the Ministry of Finance's ability to respond to changes in the economic environment, forecast macroeconomic indicators and make informed decisions on fiscal decentralization.

Louis Berger will also partner with the Tajik Financial and Economic Institute to deliver high quality public financial management education services. Throughout the project implementation, the company will provide training, coaching and knowledge transfer.

Louis Berger has been working in Tajikistan for more than 15 years. The company has supported both the government and the private sector in poverty reduction and in the development of strategic sectors, such as transport, energy, water supply and agriculture.

Fuente:Timesca

Three new sports complexes to be built in Khujand this year

KHUIJAND, February 16, 2016, Asia-Plus -- Three new sports complexes are expected to be built in Khujand, the capital of the northern province of Sughd this year.

“A mini football ground as well as gyms at High School # 1 named after Mahmoudkhouja Behbudi and Lyceum # 1 named after Muhammadjon Osimi will be constructed this year,” Mahmoudjon Dadoboyev, a spokesman for the Khujand mayor’s office, told Asia-Plus in an interview.

The mini football ground will be built at Children’s Sports School # 1 and the construction budget for this project is reportedly 300,000 somoni.

Projects for construction of the gyms cost 800,000 somoni each, Dadoboyev said.

According to him, Khujand Mayor Rajabboy Ahmadzoda asked builders to complete the sports complexes ahead of beginning of the new school year.

Fuente: Asia Plus



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Prospects of Tajikistan-China economic cooperation discussed in Dushanbe

DUSHANBE, February 12, 2015, Asia-Plus -- State and prospects of further expansion of bilateral economic cooperation between Tajikistan and China were discussed at a meeting of Tajik Minister of Economic Development and Trade Nematullo Hikmatullozoda with Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan Fan Xianrong that took place here on February 11.

According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) press center, Hikmatullozoda and Fan, in particular, exchanged views on plans and measures aiming to expand mutually beneficial economic cooperation and trade between the two countries.

Ambassador Fan reportedly expressed confidence that trade and economic cooperation between China and Tajikistan would expand in the future as well.

Tajik minister, for his part, appreciated China's support for development of Tajikistan's economy.

China is one of major trading partners of Tajikistan. According to data of the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan, a two-trade between Tajikistan and China increased from 32 million U.S. dollars in 2003 to nearly one billion U.S. dollars in 2013.

China is one of the main investors in Tajikistan. China is expected to invest 6 billion U.S. dollars in Tajikistan's economy in the coming three years.

Fuente: Aki Press