

# UZBEKISTAN – DECEMBER 1-31, 2019

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## TOP NEWS OF THE PERIOD

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Uzbekistan wins The Economist's country of the year award

Uzbekistan has won the "country of the year" award from The Economist. The edition annually awards the states achieving the biggest progress in democracy.

The selection criteria include not the financial situation, influence, cuisine of the country, but the improvements the country demonstrated.

The Economist said after dismissal of the State Security Service Chief in 2018, reforms were started that accelerated during the last year.

The Uzbek government largely ended forced labor. The notoriously famous Jaslyk prison was shut down. Foreign journalists are allowed to enter the country. Officials are prohibited to pressure business. More border crossing points were opened helping families to reunite. Foreign technocrats are invited to help overhauling national economy, the edition said.

Uzbekistan still has a long way to go, but no other country travelled as far in 2019, The Economist said.

AKIpress (press release) - akipress.com

## POLITICS AND LAW

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Uzbekistan is planning to cancel the registration of foreign citizens arriving in Uzbekistan for up to 30 days

From July, 1 2020, the procedure of registration of foreign citizens and stateless persons who are in the country for a period of not more than 30 days is proposed to be abolished. This reformation is provided for in the draft Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On additional measures to improve the effectiveness of ongoing reforms in the tourism sector" developed by the State Committee for Tourism Development.

Starting July 1 of next year, it is planned to introduce a unified system of accounting for tourist tax and simplify its payment, including through national mobile payment applications and international payment systems. Control over the stay of foreigners in the country and the timeliness of their departure will be carried out by checking the payment of tourist tax.

All checkpoints should have to be equipped with points for currency exchange and payment of tourist tax.

Moreover, from January 1, the draft Decree proposes to equate the services of guides (guides-translators), guides and instructor-guides with the types of activities (services, works) that are granted with temporary labor certificates for self-employed citizens.

The project proposes to revise the tariff conditions for local and foreign airlines with the provision of equal (non-discriminatory) tariff conditions with respect to the use of aviation infrastructure and the prevention of additional payments.

In addition, until July 1, 2020, it is proposed to open duty free shops (Duty Free) on the basis of public-private partnership at all international airports in the country.

### Uzbekistan to introduce car ownership fee

In Uzbekistan, an annual fee for car ownership and a special fuel charge for the development of regional roads are being introduced, lex.uz said.

“The Council of people’s deputies of regions and Tashkent has been given the right to introduce a special fee of no more than 25 soums per unit of fuel for the development of regional roads. The fee is charged when gasoline, diesel fuel, liquefied and compressed gas are sold to gas stations,” the statement reads.

The right to introduce an annual car ownership fee, which will depend on engine power, is also granted. It will be directed to the budget of the district or city with the intended use for repair and maintenance work on the regional roads of this district or city.

However, all fees can be introduced only on the basis of wide public discussion, taking into account the income level of the population of a particular administrative-territorial unit and in consultation with the Ministry of Finance.

“In addition, according to the decree, the Council of Ministers of Karakalpakstan and khokimiyats of regions and the capital were given the right to establish fees for using parking spaces along roads and streets in order to streamline traffic and rational use of road transport infrastructure, as well as increase the liability of road users,” the statement said.

They will also determine the size of the base rates for the technical inspection of vehicles and additional coefficients for the base rate, differentiated based on engine power.

Kun - kun.uz

### UNAIDS office opens in Uzbekistan

The country office of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has opened in Uzbekistan. The Ministry of Health reports about this.

“With the opening of the UNAIDS country office in Uzbekistan, efforts will be redoubled in reducing new HIV infections, providing access to testing and treatment, as well as reducing HIV stigma and discrimination,” the Ministry of Health said.

Today, over 42,000 people with HIV infection live in Uzbekistan, of which nearly 28,000 are undergoing appropriate treatment.

According to the Ministry of Health, the country has adopted the relevant legal documents, which allow achieving a “new qualitative level in the field of HIV diagnosis, early detection of the infection, timely implementation of preventive measures and the provision of medical-social assistance to people living with HIV”.

kun.uz

### Uzbekistan to permit sports betting in 2021

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has signed a decree that sets out a range of goals to develop football, which includes allowing bookmaker activity from 2021.

In an attempt to attract additional funds to further develop sports, especially football, a presidential decree was published Friday which, among other measures, permits sports betting activity in Uzbekistan.

The decree signed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev sets out a range of goals to develop football, including making it attractive both for fans and investors, opening sports schools for children, and introducing Video Assistant Referee in national league games.

Previously, some Uzbek officials had spoken in favor of legalizing sports betting to make football attractive and to raise funds to popularize it, Xinhuanet reports.

The document also approved a framework for the development of Uzbek football until 2030.

Yogonet International (press release) (blog) - [yogonet.com](http://yogonet.com)

### Uzbekistan introduces visa-free regime for UN passports holders

Under the Decree of Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev dated December 24, from January 1, 2020, a visa-free regime is introduced for foreign citizens who hold UN passports (Laissez-Passer biometric passports in red) and enter the country for up to 30 days, Trend reports citing Uzbekistan's Ministry of Justice.

For holders of UN blue biometric passports, the deadline for applying for a visa by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is reduced to two business days (based on a letter from the inviting party in Uzbekistan).

Holders of UN passports of both colors must have valid national passports with them when visiting Uzbekistan.

From January 1, 2020, citizens of 86 states will have the right to enter Uzbekistan without special documents.

Citizens from countries included in the list can stay in Uzbekistan without a visa: without a time limit (Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus and others); up to 60 days (Kyrgyzstan); up to 30 days (Austria,

Spain, Norway, Italy, Great Britain, Tajikistan and others); no more than 7 days (China, including Hong Kong).

From the new year, a visa-free regime is introduced for a number of Latin American countries. The list includes Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama Trinidad and Tobago, El Salvador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Bahamas, Dominica, Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Jamaica.

Earlier, Uzbekistan also canceled visas for most countries in Europe and America. Another entry without a visa is available to citizens of Australia, Japan, South Korea, Israel and all CIS countries except Turkmenistan.

AzerNews – [azernews.az](http://azernews.az)

### Uzbek Senate approves law to protect investors' rights in special economic zones

Uzbek Senate has approved a new law that guarantees legal protection of investors' rights in the Special Economic Zones (SEZ), Trend reports citing Xinhua.

The law strengthens the protection of the rights of investors, including from unreasonable interference by the state and other bodies or officials in their activities, the press service of the Senate said Saturday.

According to the document, the SEZ is created under the decision of the country's president for a period of 30 years, and it can be of five types -- free economic zone, special scientific and technological zone, tourist and recreational zone, free trade zone, and special industrial zone.

The law will come into force after it is signed by the Uzbek president.

Uzbekistan provides a range of privileges to investors in the SEZ, including tax and customs exemptions. Some 20 free economic zones have been established across the country so far.

Uzbekistan has been carrying out economic reforms in the last two years to attract foreign investment. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has tasked the government with increasing foreign direct investment up to 4.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2019.

Trend News Agency – trend.az

#### Brussels to host negotiations on the draft enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement between Uzbekistan and the EU

On 10 December 2019, Uzbekistan delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Dilshod Akhatov and representatives of various ministries and agencies of Uzbekistan arrived in Brussels.

The purpose of the visit is to conduct the 4th round of negotiations on the draft Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Uzbekistan and the European Union, which will be held on 11-13 December 2019. Since the first round, the parties have agreed on many important points of the document.

Uzbekistan – European working groups on political, sectoral and trade issues held consultations, including via video conference, which resulted in mutual understanding on various aspects of the draft agreement.

UzDaily – Uzdaily.com

#### Period of temporary stay without a registration in Tashkent extended

The resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On measures to further simplify the procedure for permanent and temporary registration in the Republic of Uzbekistan” has been adopted.

According to the legal information channel “Huquqiy axborot”, the resolution provides for the simplification of the procedure for permanent and temporary registration of citizens, registration at the place of residence, including:

- Registration of temporary stay and at a place of residence of citizens is carried out by any district (city) department of internal affairs, which is located near the place of residence and is most convenient for a citizen;
- homeowners are not required to participate in registration at the place of residence of citizens personally, documents are certified by their digital signature;

- the period during which it is necessary to register permanently at a new place of residence is extended to 10 days from the moment of arrival at a new place of residence.

The resolution also approved the Regulation on the procedure for permanent registration of citizens in the city of Tashkent and Tashkent region.

According to the rules, citizens can also apply to the Center for State Services (CSS) or through the Single Portal of Interactive Public Services (SPIPS) in order to obtain a permanent residence permit or registration under a residence permit.

For the provision of public services, a state fee is charged in the amount of 2% of the base calculating amount (BCA – 223,000 soums).

According to the decree, public services in the field of registration of citizens will be introduced experimentally in the Bektemir and Chilanzar districts of Tashkent, and from January 1, 2021 – throughout the republic, such services will be provided only through the CSS.

In addition, the Regulation on the procedure for permanent and temporary registration of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the city of Tashkent and Tashkent region has been approved. The categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons, eligible for registration in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region, have been defined.

It should be noted that the government decree does not provide for permission to purchase apartments on the secondary market in the capital and Tashkent region for citizens, who do not have a corresponding permanent residence permit.

Kun - kun.uz

## ECONOMY AND FINANCE

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### Ernst & Young awarded investment advisor license

Ernst & Young has been awarded a license of investment advisor in Uzbekistan and can operate as a licensed actor in securities markets.

The license was handed over by the director of the Capital Market Development Agency, Otabek Nazirov during a meeting with capital market participants, which discussed the strategy for developing the capital market for the next five years.

A license of an investment advisor will allow the company to provide consulting services on issuance, placement and circulation of securities, analysis and forecasting of the state of the securities market and its participants, as well as training and advanced training of specialists in the securities market.

Now over 40 licensed investment advisors are operating in Uzbekistan.

Tashkent Times – tashkenttimes.uz

## Uzbekistan to expand land allocation for fruit and vegetable clusters in 2020

Uzbekistan will introduce a new mechanism for development of the cluster system and cooperation in the production, processing and export of fruits and vegetables and grape products, follows from the presidential decree.

The head of state instructed to conduct a complete inventory of existing orchards and vineyards in all 55 districts, specialized in horticulture.

Thus, in 2020, it is planned to create cherry orchards on 7,000 hectares, walnut and peach orchards - on 8,000 hectares, apricot and pomegranate orchards - on 8,500 hectares, plum orchards - on 2,500 hectares.

Next year, it is also expected to create intensive orchards and vineyards, to build greenhouses with their transfer to the population on leasing and credit terms through commercial banks and leasing companies. On their basis, agricultural associations and horticultural clusters can be formed.

Today, the agricultural land allotted to crop clusters makes up 67% in the cotton and textile industry, livestock farming - 8%, and horticulture - 7.5%.

The Cabinet of Ministers has been instructed to take government decisions in two weeks: on measures to address targeted support for the activities of fruit and vegetable clusters created in 2020; on approval of the Regulation on the procedure for creating intensive orchards and vineyards, building greenhouses and transferring them to the population on credit and leasing terms; on approval of the Regulation on the procedure for declaring unsuitable economically inefficient, low-yielding orchards and vineyards.

Kun - kun.uz

## BUSINESS

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[A] Company gets US\$ 430,000 from state for building a hotel

The first compensation certificate in Uzbekistan was awarded by the authorities for building a hotel. The company which built the 3-star Grand Hotel Sogdiana hotel was awarded the 4,080,000,000 soums worth certificate. The hotel has 102 rooms.

Note: As per the government's Measures to create favorable conditions for further development of hospitality industry resolution, the state budget shall provide subsidies to investors for building a 3-star hotel with at least 50 rooms and a 4-star hotel with at least 100 rooms.

While, the new hotel should be commissioned before January 1, 2022.

The subsidy to investors is provided once, its size, with annual indexation in the process of approving the parameters of the state budget for the next year, is at:

- 40 million soums per room for 3-star hotels;
- 65 million soums per room for 4-star hotels.

Tashkent Times – tashkenttimes.uz

A waste sorting pilot project launched in Tashkent

The first pilot project for waste sorting has started in Yakkasaray district of Tashkent. The project was implemented by SUE "Makhsustrans", the UNDP Project and the Tashkent khokimat.

During the implementation of the project, 630 plastic containers of 120 l each were prepared for transfer to the mahalla, into which the residents of this mahalla will sort household waste at home.

Bright colors were not chosen by chance: green for organic waste from the kitchen and household garden, yellow for plastic, paper, metal and other dry waste. Red for the rest of unsorted waste not suitable for the above containers.

With the help of UN project volunteers and employees of the Makhsustrans Yakkasaray branch, all containers will be handed over for operation to the public.

The waste will be removed by a separate special machine for each type of waste, that is, for each container separately. So, for example, on Monday the contents of the yellow container will be taken out on Wednesday green, and on Friday red.

On 3 December, mahalla residents were provided with detailed information about this experiment and its expected results.

Next, information on the results of the experiment will be provided.

UzDaily – Uzdaily.com

#### UzAuto Motors unveils new Chevrolet models

UzAuto Motors unveiled four new Chevrolet models in Tashkent - Tahoe, Traverse, Trailblazer and Equinox Wednesday. Sales of Trailblazer will start on December 26, Traverse and Tahoe will go to stores from the beginning of 2020, and Equinox - from March-April, the company's press service said.

The Tashkent Times – tashkenttimes.uz

#### Uzbekistan to build IT-parks in all regions

Shavkat Mirziyoyev said that in 2020, special IT-parks will be built in Karakalpakstan and in all regions of Uzbekistan, Kun.uz correspondent reports.

"In 2020, IT parks, aimed at developing youth startup projects, will be built throughout the republic. Technological park buildings should consist of at least 20 floors. Each khokim will be responsible for the construction of an IT-park in his region," the head of state said on December 27.

In his speech, the head of state expressed great confidence in the activities of new technology parks.

"If we can introduce new youth startup projects into society, then there will be development. When we carry out these projects, there will be much less mistakes," Shavkat Mirziyoyev added.

It should be recalled that on July 24 this year, the first technological park of software products and information technologies was opened in Tashkent.

Kun - kun.uz

## Several Uzbekistan airports could be handed over for management to Sumitomo Corporation

On December 3, a government delegation led by the Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade Sardor Umurzakov hosted a Japanese delegation including the Senior Vice President and Executive Director at Mitsubishi Corporation, Kenji Ota, the Senior Vice President at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Kenji Terasawa and Senior Managing Executive Officer at Sumitomo Corporation, Tsutomu Akimoto.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries is currently involved in the construction of a ammonia and urea production unit. The parties reviewed the work progress within the project and agreed to develop the algorithm for future cooperation, the ministry said in a statement.

During the talks with senior management of Sumitomo Corporation, the parties discussed the possibility of partnering in the modernization and management of provincial airports, creation of industrial and transport and logistics infrastructure, and the implementation of a number of projects for renewable energy and thermal power plants.

In addition, the prospects of technical cooperation in the development of Pre-FEED proposals were considered.

Following the talks, the parties agreed to step up joint efforts to accelerate preparing technical and financial details of the agreements and to concretize deals for signing at the upcoming visit of the President Mirziyoyev to Japan.

The Tashkent Times – tashkenttimes.uz

## Uzbekistan to create a modern "craft market" in 2020

On 6 December 2019, the Agency for Information and Mass Communications under the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Hunarmand Association, together with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan, held a press conference on the essence and significance of the Decree Of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On additional measures for the further development of handicraft and support for artisans” from 28 November 2019.

The press conference was attended by the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan A. Ikramov, the chairman of the Hunarmand Association, as well as representatives of the State Committee for Tourism Development, Halyk Bank, the National Association of Electronic Mass Media of Uzbekistan, the National Television and Radio Company of Uzbekistan, craftsmen and the media information.

The conference was opened by the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan Adkham Ikramov.

In his speech, Adham Ikramov noted that the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures for the further development of handicrafts, comprehensive support of artisans” dated November 17, 2017 No. 5242 showed its results and contributed to the development of handicrafts, therefore, as of 1 December 2019 in the year the number of registered masters in the Hunarmand Association increased 2.5 times and today their number is 32,000, 53,500 students have been trained and 46,400 new jobs have been created. Banks funded 12,402 projects for a total of 405.1 billion soums. In 2018-2019, \$ 18 million worth of handicrafts were exported throughout the country.

At a press conference, the chairman of the Hunarmand Association Ulugbek Abdullaev informed the media about the measures, essence and significance of the Presidential Decree “On Additional Measures for the Further Development of Craftsmanship and Support for Craftsmen”.

According to the decree:

A national catalog of masters of applied art will be created, and from January 1, 2020, the National catalog will be launched as an open and public website.

The Council of the Ministry of Culture and the Academy of Arts of the Republic of Uzbekistan is headed by the chairman of the Hunarmand association for the selection of candidates for the national catalog of craftsmen.

The State Committee for Tourism Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan together with the Hunarmand Association will create a register of artisans in the tourism sector.

Centers for the development of handicrafts, schools for usta-shogird will be created, it is planned to provide loans for the construction of museums and workshops or the purchase of buildings and structures, working capital replenishment for 18 months at a rate not exceeding 250 times the basic calculation.

Starting from the academic year 2020/2021, specialized courses in crafts and folk arts will be organized for children’s music and art schools, Barkamol Avlod children’s centers and vocational training centers under the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Within two months, a special “artisans’ store” will be created on the territory of large shopping centers and farmer markets.

By the end of 2020, in all regions of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regions and the city of Tashkent, a modern “craft market” will be created with the involvement of entrepreneurs.

Specialized craft complexes will be created on the example of the Suzuk-Ota complex with the aim of social support for artisans.

The Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Culture, the Agency for the Management of State Assets and the Hunarmand Association organize exhibition halls and galleries of folk arts and crafts in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and regional centers, as well as in Tashkent.

Corresponding indicators will be developed to assess the development of handicraft in the republic in conjunction with the State Committee for Statistics, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Hunarmand Association.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the khakims of the regions and the city of Tashkent will develop strategies for the development of handicraft in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regions and the city of Tashkent for the period 2020-2021 in accordance with the measures set forth in this resolution, and the specialization of regions and cities, develops and submits a strategy to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and will approve it in the prescribed manner.

The National TV and Radio Company of Uzbekistan, together with the Hunarmand Association, will organize regular television programs on the Madaniyat wa Marifat channel, which will widely disseminate the history and development of modern applied art in the media.

UzDaily – Uzdaily.com

## A complex for production of polyvinyl chloride, caustic soda and methanol is launched

On December 28, Navoiazot Joint-Stock Company hosted the launch of a complex for production of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), caustic soda and methanol.

The event was attended by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The Head of the state congratulated everyone on the upcoming New Year and expressed gratitude to builders and chemists, foreign partners who contributed to the implementation of this project.

“Such significant, modern, innovative projects will serve to renew the economy of Navoi region and its “locomotive” – industry, create additional jobs, accelerate the growth of population’s incomes and the budget”, said Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The new enterprise will produce 100 thousand tons of PVC, 75 thousand tons of caustic soda, 300 thousand tons of methanol per year. These products are in demand in the automotive industry, textile, metallurgical, chemical, oil and gas industries, the electrical and building materials industries. To date, these products have been imported for foreign currency. It was especially difficult for small business.

The complex of PVC, caustic soda and methanol will provide domestic enterprises with necessary raw materials. In addition, is planned to export products worth 40 million annually. 900 new jobs have been created here.

The Head of the state noted that the implementation of three large investment projects at the same time in Navoiazot JSC was not easy.

“No matter what difficulties arise, if we set high goals, show initiative and work selflessly, we will certainly achieve what was planned”, the President said.

The project was implemented in conjunction with a consortium of Chinese companies, China CAMC Engineering Co., LTD and HQC Shanghai Company.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted that Navoi region has even greater potential, has all the necessary conditions and specialists.

“The hardworking, brave and generous people of the region, who built cities such as Navoi and Zarafshan in the desert, who built the industrial region, will continue to make a huge contribution to development of Uzbekistan”, the Head of the state expressed confidence.

The President has launched the company by pressing a symbolic button.

The ceremony was attended by labor veterans and youth, engineers from China.

Uzbekistan National News Agency – uza.uz

## Huawei launches “smart” education system in Uzbekistan

Huawei presented to Uzbekistan’s President Shavkat Mirziyoyev a system of “smart” education based on an innovative study room, opened with the assistance of Uzbektelecom, Trend reports with reference to the Uzbek media.

The room was presented during an opening of a new building of a specialized school for in-depth study of ICT named after Muhammad al-Khwarizmi.

During the visit of the head of state, representatives of Huawei held a demonstration of the organization of the educational process through the use of innovative technologies. Based on the CloudLink intelligent video conferencing system, a connection was made to the training center of the company's headquarters in China.

This solution allows a teacher in real time, being anywhere in the world, conduct a lecture lessons for several educational institutions. Thanks to the "friendly system" management interface, both a teacher and a student can easily use it.

Thanks to Huawei software, which was developed specifically for Smart Education projects and integrated with media tablets, a teacher in real time can: monitor student activities; broadcast media resources (presentations, educational films) both to students' media tablets and to an intellectual board; conduct exam tests with the ability to notify the result immediately after the exam has expired.

In 2020, Huawei, together with the Ministry of Education, plans to use these intelligent systems in two more schools in Tashkent.

Trend News Agency – trend.az

## TOURISM AND CULTURE

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### Khiva declared cultural capital of Turkic world in 2020

The historical city of Khiva in Uzbekistan is named the cultural capital of the Turkic world in 2020. This decision was adopted unanimously at the 37th meeting of the TURKSOY Permanent Council in Osh Saturday.

The Deputy Minister of Culture of Uzbekistan Kamola Akilova noted that the ancient city of Khiva is one of the gems of modern Uzbekistan, having fully preserved its historical appearance. Once it was the capital of the Khorezm Khanate. Most of the city now resembles an open-air museum. And at the center of this museum is the Ichan-Kala fortress, an ancient complex included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Tashkent Times – tashkenttimes.uz

### Tashkent to Moscow bus service launched

Uz-Autotrans Service, a state owned company, on Monday launched a regular bus service to Moscow. "We launched the first service today. We hope that on the New Year's Eve, we will get a good load," an Uzavtotrans Service official said.

According to him, after the end of the New Year holidays, many labor migrants from Uzbekistan will return to work to Russian cities, which will allow to keep the commercial load.

According to the company, the service from the main Tashkent bus station to the Novoyasenevskaya bus terminal in Moscow will be operated on Chinese Yutong buses on Mondays and Thursdays, and on Fridays and Sundays. The travel will last three days. The ticket price is 700 thousand soums, or US\$ 75 dollars.

Regular bus service between Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation was first launched in September last year, with the first destination being in Russia being Nizhny Novgorod

In 2018, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev instructed the government to launch regular bus services to cities in other countries of Central Asia and Russia.

Tashkent Times – tashkenttimes.uz

### Uzbekistan – best travel destination for 2020, CNN says

Uzbekistan, for a long time unknown to most Westerners, is already forming a tourist scene for 2020, Trend reports citing CNN Travel.

Earlier, Lonely Planet, the largest publisher of travel guides, named Uzbekistan, along with the rest of Central Asia, the No. 1 travel destination for the new 2020 year due to new visa-free travel opportunities. The Economist newspaper chose Uzbekistan as the country of the year, pointing out significant government reforms.

All this, plus its untouched history and wonderful food, make Uzbekistan an increasingly popular destination, the article says.

“Next year will be the most suitable time to visit Uzbekistan, primarily because of new visa reforms,” the article emphasizes.

Now the country has a visa-free regime for a period of 30 days for citizens of 65 countries, as well as a simplified procedure for obtaining visas for citizens of 77 countries.

“Perhaps the most attractive quality of Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region is an untouched and sacred history that has been preserved for thousands of years,” the authors say, adding that this is a region “with a refreshing lack of hype and crowds.”

The authors characterize the Uzbek cuisine as fragrant and hearty, with many rice dishes. The most popular dish in the country is pilaf, they say.

Trend News Agency – trend.az

### Tourism Committee develops a number of proposals to reduce the cost of airline tickets

The State Committee for Tourism Development has developed a number of amendments that are expected to lead to reducing the cost of airline tickets.

Recently, the State Committee for Tourism Development has presented the draft presidential decree on further development of tourism in the country.

According to Spot, a number of measures have been proposed that should reduce the cost of air transportation within the framework of the project.

In particular, while importing aviation fuel and lubricants, as well as raw materials, domestic and foreign companies are expected to be exempted from customs duties for a number of years.

Foreign airlines will not be penalized for overdue receivables for air navigation services provided during transit.

Uzbekistan Airways is exempt from customs duties on importing the following:

- aircrafts (TIF code 8802, 8803 and 8805), the period of manufacture of which does not exceed 10 years at the time of importing;

- equipment and drinks of world brands, used exclusively for providing passenger services.

It is planned that the Air Code will be amended to determine the mechanism for optimization of the cost of air transportation using non-refundable and without baggage rates.

Kun - kun.uz

### Hollywood-like neighborhood to be built in Uzbekistan's Samarkand

Uzbekistan will allegedly have its own Hollywood-like neighborhood, Trend reports citing Uzbek media.

A cinema town called Cinema City Sollywood will be built in Uzbekistan's Samarkand on an area of 160 hectares.

At the initial stage, \$15 million will be invested in the project.

In addition to the pavilions for filming movies, modern cafes and restaurants, 3 and 4-star hotels, a culture and leisure park, a water park, and movie and concert halls will be built.

First films at the studio will reportedly be shot in 2022.

The history of cinema of Uzbekistan began in 1908, when the cameraman and photographer Khudaibergen Devanov shot footage of the sights of ancient Khorezm.

The first film studio in Uzbekistan was Bukhkino Partnership, created in 1925, while the first film was The Minaret of Death. Since 1958, the Uzbekfilm studio has been operating in Uzbekistan.

Dozens of creative associations and private film companies work in Uzbekistan today, which annually release about a hundred feature films, documentaries and animated films.

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