



NEW SOCIAL PACKAGE FOR ORALMANDAR

There is a new social benefits package for ethnic repatriates "Oralmandar" (word 'oralman' is translation of word "repatriate" into Kazakh and -dar is the plural suffix) waiting for approval in the lower chamber of Parliament Majilis. The new package includes a number of benefits to encourage oralmandar to return their historical homeland. The aim of the new proposed social package is to stimulate the return of diaspora Kazakhs to Kazakhstan.

This social package is a response of government to a significant decrease in the number of arriving oralmandar in the last two years. Comparing the year 2013 and 2014 shows, that number of oralmandar who arrived in Kazakhstan reduced from 33.952 to 8.247 (meaning nearly 3 times reduction). Reasons for this reduction are new demands imposed on oralmandar after 2013, which created administrative barriers for oralmandar to arrive.

Previously oralmandar should have to wait for 4 years to receive citizenship. The government made changes in this procedure and reduced the process of getting the citizenship from 4 to 1 year. The provided changes in citizenship issue definitely will attract more repatriates to return to Kazakhstan, because the status of oralman is a temporary status until repatriate receives his or her citizenship. The term oralman is a legal term to identify

repatriates in official documents in order to provide them certain benefits and assistance. Oralmandar could enjoy all the social benefits provided by the law "On Migration". They are eligible to apply and receive pensions, social aid and housing program of government adding to that there is a quota for their children in Kazakhstani universities and schools.

It is quite ordinary thing that repatriates face a number of difficulties after their arrival to Kazakhstan. Housing and employment are two emerging problem, which requires immediate solution. That is why the new social package, which would be proposed under the new law draft "Amendments and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on migration and employment", will include compensation for the travel expenses and providing rental housing with the right of privatization after 5 years from the date of arrival.

Previously the government allowed them to settle in 7 regions including the north, east and west regions. Difference of this social package is that now oralmandar will be allowed to settle in any 14 regions of Kazakhstan including cities of Almaty and Astana. Draft includes a rule for housing: In the case of moving from the region before 5-year limit, oralmandar has to return the received social package to government immediately or has to refuse the citizenship of Kazakhstan.

The government will provide the social package only to those who agree to settle in particular regions. Attracting oralmandar to settle in designated locations, the Kazakh government wants to solve such internal problems as labor shortage and depopulation in certain regions. It means that if oralmandar decide to settle in areas with a labor surplus like Almaty city, they will not be able to receive this social package. Another aim of these social packages is to redirect the flow of incoming repatriates from southern regions towards northern regions, because of great concentration (59.5 %) of oralmandar in three southern regions of the country, namely, South Kazakhstan, Mangistau and Jambyl. Therefore, both parties could benefit from the new social packages - oralmandar could get a support to solve their economic problems and the government could get opportunity to fulfill its migration plans.

In conclusion, it should be noted, that the new social package is a part of a continuing assistance of government of Kazakhstan regarding settlement problem of oralmandar. Obviously, a significant number of oralmandar could benefit from these social packages if they are having problems with finding a job and trying to solve their housing problem for a long period.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- Russia, India and China held countries' foreign ministers' meeting, after which they signed a joint communique on increased diplomatic efforts between Iran and the Group P5+1.
- The Georgian Economy Ministry started negotiations with the European Free Trade Association to formalize the free trade agreement.
- The Federal Customs Service of Russia and the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan signed the mutual action plan for 2015-2016 on cooperation in the fight against smuggling.
- More than 400 leading politicians, heads of state and governments gathered in Germany to take part in the 51th Munich Security Conference.
- Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad and US Secretary of State held a round of talks on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program on the sidelines of a Munich Security Conference.
- Uzbekistan started to strengthen border security after receiving information that the Islamic State (IS) militant group was planning to conduct terrorist attacks in the country this spring.
- The US government announced about its desire to provide Kiev with Javelin anti-tank missiles, ammunition and small arms to support its fight against independence supporters in eastern Ukraine.
- The Japanese government announced its desire to increase humanitarian assistance to Middle Eastern countries in an effort to help them deal with the consequences of IS extremists' attacks.
- The leaders of France and Germany held talks with Russian president in Moscow over the resolution of the Ukrainian crisis and then moved to Kiev to meet with the head of Ukraine.
- North Korea said it would no longer engage in talks with Washington and would respond to any US attacks with its own "preeminent" warfare.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- The U.S. President announced a record 4 trillion-U.S.-dollar budget proposal for 2016. The 3.999 trillion budget represented an increase of 6.4% from the previous year.
- The volume of investments in Kazakhstan's agricultural sector exceeded 166 billion KZT as of 2014, which is 17% more than in 2013.
- Russia's Gazprom announced that it would cut the volume of Turkmen gas purchases from 10 to 4 billion cubic meters in 2015.
- The head of the Russian gas company Gazprom said that the land section of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline had been defined and mapped for further research.
- Gazprom stated that it would deliver to Turkey an additional 2 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year as soon as the Turkish Stream pipeline would be put into operation.
- The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China announced that it would purchase a controlling stake in Standard Bank's UK-based global markets business.
- Tokyo signed an agreement with Kiev on protection of investment that should trigger more Japanese investment to Ukraine's economy.
- According to the Agriculture Ministry of Kazakhstan, Moscow and Astana started to discuss the possibility of limiting food imports from Russia that

had soared due to the declining ruble rate.

- India's Defense Ministry announced the desire to purchase Multi-Role Transport Aircraft designed and being manufactured jointly by India and Russia.

Society and Culture

- Over 600 people were evacuated in Turkey's Edirne province due to floods.
- Amnesty International called on wealthy countries to accept larger numbers of refugees from Syria. According to the UN Refugee Agency, more than 3.7 million Syrian refugees were registered currently in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.
- The Iranian government and parliament have agreed to cut current public subsidies by about \$1.5 billion in the next Iranian calendar year (starting Mar. 21).
- The US Air Force announced that there were no restrictions on the military use of Russia's RD-180 rocket engines used to launch US national security payloads into space.
- Russian Emergencies Ministry announces that 13th Russian humanitarian convoy successfully delivered aid to the crisis-torn Donbas, and all vehicles have returned to Russia.
- Hong Kong's health minister stated that rampant seasonal flu in Hong Kong and the recent strain of bird flu detected in poultry could together give rise to a deadly new virus.
- Authorities in the eastern German city of Leipzig have canceled a weekly protest meeting of Legida, a more radical sister organization of the national anti-immigration protest group Pegida, citing "security reasons".