

# KAZAKHSTAN

BUSINESS FEATURE

**GITEX AI**  
CENTRAL ASIA  
& CAUCASUS  
*Kazakhstan*

**4/5**  
MAY 2026  
**ALMATY**  
Atakent IEC

**Global FDI**  
REPORTS

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ON THE OCCASION OF  
**2026: Year of  
Digitalisation and  
Artificial Intelligence**



## Digital transformation fuels GDP leap

**K**azakhstan is building an economy that blends traditional strengths with a focus on technology, underpinned by its growing role as a Central Asian trade and logistics hub. Already the region's largest economy, the country recorded GDP growth of 6.5% in 2025, driven by expansion in industrial production, transportation and construction. In the international arena, 2025 marked ten years of WTO membership for Kazakhstan, a period which has seen foreign trade grow from \$76 billion to \$142 billion – demonstrating a broader shift towards a more outward-facing economy.

The UAE is a key partner in this evolution. Close bilateral ties have continued to deepen in recent years, marked by high-level engagements and strategic partnerships across key spheres. During a state visit to Kazakhstan in 2025, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, oversaw the signing of agreements worth more than \$5 billion in energy, infrastructure and technology. “We see immense potential to expand cooperation across multiple sectors,” said Tokayev. “We are committed to providing a favourable environment

for Emirati business partners.”

UAE investment in Kazakhstan exceeds \$1.3 billion over the past decade, with inflows doubling year-on-year in the first half of 2025. Major Emirati companies including Masdar, Presight AI, AIQ and AD Ports Group are already active in Kazakhstan's economy, with technology at the heart of an agenda that goes beyond simple economic exchanges. “Today we are discussing how our countries can jointly

**“WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR EMIRATI BUSINESS PARTNERS.”**

**KASSYM-JOMART TOKAYEV,**  
PRESIDENT OF KAZAKHSTAN

build the digital architecture of the future – from artificial intelligence to space, energy and scientific research,” said Zhaslan Madiyev, deputy prime minister and minister for artificial intelligence and digital development.

Central to this is Kazakhstan's ambition to become a fully digital nation within three years. President Tokayev has made AI-powered digital transfor-

mation a national priority, designating 2026 the Year of Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence. Kazakhstan's role as host of GITEX AI Central Asia & Caucasus signifies its growing global prominence in the sector, while its institutional infrastructure underlines intent. Established in 2025, the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development is leading policy delivery, while Astana Hub has become Central Asia's largest technology and innovation ecosystem, supporting startups and international companies while expanding its footprint overseas. The Astana International Financial Centre complements this, offering an English common law framework designed to facilitate cross-border investment.

This digital ambition is mirrored in physical infrastructure investment, part of Kazakhstan's push to become a major trade and logistics hub between Asia and Europe. Large-scale connectivity projects include the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, or Middle Corridor, as a key artery for east-west trade – a milestone undertaking that highlights how the convergence of national strategy, global engagement and international partnerships is defining Kazakhstan's next chapter.

### INSIGHTS



**ZHASLAN MADIYEV,**  
DEPUTY PRIME  
MINISTER AND  
MINISTER OF AI AND  
DIGITALISATION

**“THE UAE SERVES AS A STRONG BENCHMARK FOR KAZAKHSTAN.”**



**RENAT BEKTUROV,**  
GOVERNOR,  
THE ASTANA  
INTERNATIONAL  
FINANCIAL CENTRE  
(AIFC)

**“AIFC IS A LEADING FINANCIAL CENTRE IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA.”**



**MAGZHAN MADIYEV,**  
FOUNDING CEO,  
ASTANA HUB

**“CENTRAL ASIA IS AN UNTAPPED REGION WITH MAJOR TECH POTENTIAL.”**

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A PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

# Kazakhstan's digital future

President Tokayev's digital push drives Kazakhstan's transition to a knowledge-based economy.

**K**azakhstan's digital transformation agenda took on new impetus in 2026 with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev declaring it the Year of Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in his New Year address. "The introduction of advanced technologies will make it possible to strengthen the country's potential in all spheres," he said, adding in a later interview: "Kazakhstan must become a digital power."

Addressing the National Kurultai in January, Tokayev said the agenda must be measured through faster decision-making, higher labour productivity and better public services. The goal is not innovation for its own sake but to evolve Kazakhstan from an economy based on raw materials to a knowledge-based model in which technology raises efficiency, improves governance and creates new export streams.

The foundations are already in place. The Ministry of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development was established in September 2025, supporting the goal of becoming a fully digital

country within three years. Other initiatives include expanding the Astana Hub footprint and launching the national supercomputer clusters Alem.Cloud and AI-Farabium.

**"THE UAE IS OUR KEY PARTNER IN THE ARAB WORLD."**

**KASSYM-JOMART TOKAYEV,**  
PRESIDENT OF KAZAKHSTAN

International relations are key to driving the agenda, particularly collaboration with the UAE. Emirati investment in Kazakhstan more than doubled in the first half of 2025, and the countries are discussing the creation of a GovTech Innovation Hub as a joint platform to advance digital solutions in public administration. That builds on government partnerships with the UAE's Presight AI and AIQ across digital infrastructure, energy and smart city development. Said Tokayev: "The UAE is our key partner in the Arab world."



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## GOVERNMENT INSIGHTS



**NIKOLAI PODGUZOV,**  
CHAIRMAN, EURASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (EDB)

**Q: What are your key priorities?**

We developed an ambitious strategy for 2022-2026. The strategy targets nearly \$11 billion of investment, with a planned investment pipeline for 2026.

We also see strong mutual investment interest between Central Asia and the Gulf. EDB should serve as a bridge to enable cross-regional investment and support diversification beyond oil and gas. Ultimately, as a development bank, our mission is sustainable growth.

**Q: How do you sustain your investment pace?**

We maintain a high-quality portfolio with almost zero non-performing loans, and we can invest roughly the equivalent of one bank capital per year, about \$2.5 billion annually, including four consecutive years of investing more than \$1 billion per year in Kazakhstan. This pace is higher than typical multilateral development banks, which often invest about 0.4 to 0.5 times their capital annually.



**ARMAN SHAKKALIYEV,**  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INTEGRATION

Kazakhstan is placing export diversification and deeper Gulf ties at the centre of its strategy to grow its role as a regional trade hub. Appointed Minister of Trade and Integration in 2023, Arman Shakkaliyev is driving a shift beyond raw materials toward higher-value goods and investment-led growth.

"My main goal as minister is to promote exports, not only raw materials but also food, agro-products and industrial goods," he says. With more than 80% of China-Europe trade flows crossing Kazakhstan, the country is positioning itself as a land gateway connecting major markets across Europe, Asia and the Gulf.

Accelerating momentum in bilateral ties with the UAE has seen over 20 agreements signed, worth around \$5 billion, and a target of \$1 billion in trade. "Our industrial potential is enormous, supported by abundant raw materials across multiple sectors," Shakkaliyev says. "The recent free trade agreement has reduced average tariffs from 5% to 0.6%, creating a strong incentive to expand trade with the UAE."



**YERLAN AKKENZHENOV,**  
MINISTER OF ENERGY

**Q: What are your strategic goals?**

The main goal and priority is energy security. We have set a goal to add 26 GW of energy-producing capacity by 2035. We rely on traditional energy sources, but of this 26 GW, around 8.5 GW is from renewables. We have already signed contracts with major companies such as Masdar for 1 GW of wind power.

Masdar is a real success story of how two partners separated by a long distance can find each other and build a strong dialogue.

**Q: What competitive advantages does Kazakhstan offer?**

Gas chemistry and petrochemicals are our best example, as we invest in large-scale, high-value projects such as polypropylene and polyethylene that require significant capital and advanced technologies not widely available in the region. Our investment portfolio is built around becoming one of the key global producers of these finished products.