



Press Release

The First Kazakhstan Ski Expedition to the South Pole Has Started

The first Kazakhstan ski expedition to the world's South Pole started from the Union Glacier camp in Antarctica. The Kazakhstani athletes Yury Yushin and Ilyas Galimbekov, together with medical researcher Daulet Sharipov, will run a distance of 217 kilometres on skis to reach their goal. The group is led by the Kazakhstani mountaineer and traveller Magzhan Sagimbaev.

On Independence Day, upon completing the climb of Mount Vinson, the highest point in Antarctica, the Kazakh Geographical Society launched the second stage of its “Pole of Independence” scientific and research expedition — a trek on skis to the South Pole.

The polar explorers flew for approximately 6 hours to reach the starting point, crossing over the Polar Plateau, the highest elevated plain of Antarctica. Members of the expedition plan to reach the finish line within 10 days if the weather remains favourable. They are also bringing meals and equipment on sleds, all of which will be fastened by a special belt harness. The members of the ski expedition intend to get through up to 20 km of the route every day. The team is equipped with a special system of online trackers, which enables tracking of the skiers' movement in real time on the project's website www.kazgeo.kz.

"A notification was received, saying that the weather at the South Pole is fine and it is now possible to fly there. At 10:30 am we loaded the sleds with equipment and food onto the plane, and waited for takeoff. However, due to technical reasons, the takeoff was unfortunately delayed for another 30 minutes. Finally, after loading everything, the flight started. After 2 hours and 15 minutes, the plane landed for refuelling, and then the flight continued to the 88th parallel. Once we got out of the plane, the white snow and eternal sun surrounded us. For today, we started setting up camp once we had completed 7.6 km of the route. Sometimes

there was wind on the route, but in general the weather was favourable." This was reported by Magzhan Sagimbaev, the expedition team leader and head of the regional representative office of QazaqGeography in the city of Almaty.

This is the third polar expedition of KazGeo. The first expedition, which took place in 2011, was entered into the Guinness Book of World Records for the fastest completion of this route. And thanks to this successful Antarctic program, Kazakhstan initiated the ratification of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty.

It should be mentioned that the "Pole of Independence" expedition took place on some memorable dates. For example, Magzhan Sagimbaev's and Ilyas Galimbekov's climb of Mount Vinson occurred on the 50th anniversary of the very first ascension of this mountain. Also, the "Pole of Independence" expedition is expected to finish on January 13, 2016, exactly 196 years after the discovery of Antarctica by the Russian travellers Mikhail Lazarev and Faddey Bellinsgauzen.

The "Pole of Independence" expedition is being conducted under the sponsorship of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan and with the support of the Republican Public Association's Kazakhstan National Geographic Society (QazaqGeography). "Baiterik" National Management Holding is the general partner of the project, with support from other project partners, including Nazarbaev University, Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University, and D.S. Asfendiyarov Kazakhstan National Medical University. The Kazakh Geographic Society is organizing the scientific and research expedition.

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