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## Faith always unites people of goodwill

Last Sunday, Orthodox and Catholic believers in Belarus celebrated Easter together. This is the greatest holiday for the Christian world which proclaims the triumph of light over darkness and brings great joy and hope for eternal life.

On Easter Sunday, Orthodox and Catholic believers return from church in the morning and break the long fast. The Easter food is the richest among Christians, with coloured eggs, Easter cakes, cottage cheese and meat. Easter cakes are made from pastry with additions of nuts, raisins and spices. An ancient tradition has long been kept: on this holiday believers present each other with coloured eggs which symbolise the source of eternal life. At Easter, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, lit

a candle in the Transfiguration Church in the Orsha District's Baran. The President was welcomed by the Archbishop of Vitebsk and Orsha, Dmitry, and abbot of the church, Father Vadim Kotov.

Alexander Lukashenko donated the icon of Jesus Christ the Almighty to the church. It is depicted in the style of the Vetka icon painting school and is made using the technique of wax tempera.

## Strategic partnership in focus

By Vladimir Khromov

**Recently, the President of Belarus had two important meetings: the first with China's State Councillor, Minister of Public Security, Guo Shengkun, and then with the Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate of China, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Cao Jianming**

The arrival of high-ranking Chinese guests to Minsk took place on the eve of the Belarusian President's visit to China, scheduled for May. The establishment of close co-operation in the law enforcement sphere and in ensuring security unanimously testifies to the strengthening of interaction between the two states.

Trust-worthy, comprehen-

sive and strategic partnership and mutually beneficial co-operation has been established between Minsk and Beijing. Belarus is a member of a very narrow circle of states who are conducting dialogue with China at such a high level. The People's Republic of China views our country as one of the most important strongholds of its large-scale initiative, the Silk Road Economic Belt. The Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, currently under construction near Minsk, will have a vital role to play. Co-operation is constantly being strengthened and it's logical that the two sides are keeping a close eye on ensuring security. On meeting Guo Shengkun, Alexander Lukashenko asserted, "Times have changed. It has become a very small world, and crime has gone international. Therefore, we have huge tasks that



Guo Shengkun

we need to address together. We're witnessing a big cross flow of people, with Belarusians going to China and Chinese people travelling to Belarus. We're building many joint companies in China, and there are a lot of Chinese people working here, in Belarus. With all the positive and negative tendencies in our countries there is also a cross flow of problems. That is why we need closer and more active co-operation between our law enforcement agencies."

Joint protection from



Cao Jianming

global challenges — extremism, terrorism, separatism, cyber crimes and illegal migration — is also an acute topic. According to Mr. Lukashenko, the People's Republic of China is fighting against this evil but it still needs to work out serious measures for active co-operation in these fields.

Mr. Shengkun noted that China welcomes such approaches and conveyed warmest wishes to Alexander Lukashenko from Chinese President Xi Jinping. The guest believes that the founda-

tion for good contacts between Belarus and China has been laid down by regular meetings at the supreme level and 'a strong friendship between Alexander Lukashenko and Xi Jinping who outlined the vectors of bilateral co-operation'.

The context of the first meeting continued during Mr. Lukashenko's meeting with Cao Jianming. The President determined the joint task, "We plan to activate our collaboration in struggling against crimes and in co-ordination of these activities. I believe that it will be also useful for China."

The strategy of development of inter-state co-operation also envisages close interaction of departments who solve similar tasks in the two states. Prosecutors of China and Belarus have found a common language and are already conducting joint work. This is caused by the fact that

today crimes are multi-dimensional and international. The President also spoke about the necessity to reinforce ties in this context, "Of course, against the background of everything positive we do have some negatives. If truth be told, there are violations, so whether we like it or not, we will have to fight against this. Organised crime and corruption have more intricate and adaptable forms nowadays. Our prosecutor generals, as well as prosecution bodies, co-ordinate the activity of law enforcement bodies across all areas, including these."

Mr. Jianming responded that prosecution bodies of the states have agreed to strengthen inter-departmental interaction. In this they see their contribution to the development of our strategic partnership and mutually beneficial interaction.

## Among the first to achieve good results

By Alexey Fedosov

**Belarus has made considerable progress in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The issue was discussed at the meeting of Alexander Lukashenko with Michel Sidibe, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS)**

The Head of State expressed his sincere gratitude for the enormous help and support provided to Belarus in healthcare, especially in the fight against such a terrible disease as HIV/AIDS, and for recognition of the country's HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. "Without your support in the fight against this disease we would have never achieved these results." The President presented the Francysk Skaryna Medal to Michel Sidibe in recognition of his contribution to the development of healthcare in Belarus.

In turn, Mr. Sidibe remarked that Belarus has made a great deal of progress in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS not only with the assistance of UNAIDS but also thanks to the proactive position of Alexander Lukashenko. The Executive



Michel Sidibe

Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS thanked the Head of State for his approach. It's a great honour for him to receive the Francysk Skaryna Medal from the President of Belarus, the leader of the country which was one of the first to achieve excellent results in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV. "Belarus demonstrates that a new generation can be born without HIV/AIDS problems," noted Mr. Sidibe.

The *Prevention of HIV Infection* sub-programme is being implemented in Belarus as part of the 2016-2020 *Health of the Nation and Demographic Security of Belarus* state programme. It involves state organisations and institutions, local authorities, public associations and the international organisations UNAIDS and UNICEF.

In recent years, provid-

ing treatment to all patients with HIV, preventive treatment of all infected women and children and provision of all newborns with substitutive feeding are among Belarus' considerable achievements in struggling against HIV/AIDS. By 2016, the country had managed to stabilise the epidemic situation and considerably reduced the spread of HIV: since 2000, more than 4,000 cases of HIV infection and 2,000 deaths from AIDS have been prevented. Moreover, the number of HIV cases among young people aged between 15 and 24 has been halved.

At the meeting in Minsk the two sides also discussed the achievements of Belarusian healthcare, as well as the prospects of relations between Belarus and African states. According to Mr. Sidibe, Belarusian know-how and technology in areas such as education and healthcare, once launched in the African states, will change their lives for the better. He described how Belarus has also achieved significant results in protecting the health of mothers and children. Belarusian policy is socially-oriented and aims to ensure equal access towards educational and healthcare services for all levels of the population.



## Oil and gas issues settled

By Dmitry Vernitsky

**Changes have been introduced to Belarusian-Russian agreements in the oil and gas sphere, with corresponding protocols signed in Moscow by Belarus' Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Semashko, and Russia's Energy Minister, Alexander Novak**

According to Mr. Semashko, both sides have settled all disputed issues from 2016-2017 and determined conditions for 2018 and 2019. "We have made a bridge towards our future — the common market of electrical energy and gas."

The Deputy Prime Minister reminded us that one of the major stimulators of Belarus' participation in the Eurasian Economic Union is the creation of equal conditions for economic activity. In the near future, the development of

basic conditions for common markets for gas and electrical energy are planned.

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, Arkady Dvorkovich, reported on four signed documents. These include protocols for amending the inter-governmental agreement on pricing natural gas deliveries to Belarus and future co-operation in natural gas affairs, as well as on the operation of the natural gas transportation company Beltransgas, and measures to smooth out trade and economic collaboration in the export of oil and oil products.

"Through mutual trust and understanding of common strategic interests, we've been able to find common approaches and have managed to fully resolve the existing problems after the St. Petersburg meeting of both presidents," summed up Mr. Dvorkovich, who then confirmed the agreement to develop a 'roadmap'

for the formation of common markets for gas and electrical energy.

According to the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, the new gas price for Belarus will amount to less than \$130 per thousand cubic metres. The final discount to the contract price will be announced by Gazprom. The currency in which payments will be made hasn't yet been discussed. Mr. Semashko believes that it's likely to be the Russian Rouble.

The increase of the supplies of Russian oil to Belarus will begin in April. The annual volume, stipulated in the documents, is determined as 24 million tonnes. Mr. Semashko explained that this agreement is until 2024. "Oil supplies will be completely assured," guaranteed Mr. Dvorkovich, adding that, out of 24 million tonnes, 18 will be processed in Belarus and the remainder can be exported."

# Principal conversation for the benefit of strong organisation

President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, takes part in Eurasian Economic Union's Supreme State Council session

By Vasily Kharitonov



At informal meeting of heads of CSTO members states in Bishkek

Alongside the President of Belarus, the negotiating table in the Ala Archa Residence saw the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Moldova. The agenda of the leaders of the EAEU member states had ten issues, with the heads of state discussing the implementation of major areas of the Union's international activity and the results of the external (control) in the EAEU in previous years.

Special attention was paid to economic collaboration with third states. The session tackled issues of a temporary agreement, leading to the formation of the free trade zone between the EAEU and Iran, as well as provision of observer status to the CIS states and Moldova. The EAEU states also discussed major areas of macroeconomic policy of their states for 2017-2018 and other vital topics.

At the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council session in an expanded format, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, called on the EAEU to step up their work to establish free trade zones with third states.

"Although we place major emphasis on improving relations within the Union, we also remember issues of expanding boundaries. In this regard, I can say frankly that signing preferential agreements on free trade is in the interests of Belarus. I'm confident that it also meets the interests of the other states. I call for an increase in efforts to diversify trade and investment relations with our partners, strengthening industrial and agricultural co-operation," noted Mr. Lukashenko.

The President also pointed out that the Eurasian Economic Union is gradually expanding its geography. "The work

to create a single economic space and the objectives laid down in the EAEU Treaty receive support from other countries of the region," he said. Moldova's move to get observer status with the EAEU and the eagerness of many countries to establish a free economic zone with the union attest to this.

"However, it's one thing to consolidate reasonable ideas in a document, and quite another to implement them. In this respect, the Union has a number of unresolved problems. In 2016, we did not manage to stop the decline in mutual trade and eliminate its causes. I'm not talking about other issues. This is the main problem in our economic union," underlined the President of Belarus.

In this respect, the Head of State supported Kyrgyzstan's call for focusing on settling the internal issues of the EAEU.

The President suggested a set of measures for a more rapid development of the Eurasian Economic Union. "I believe 2017 will be a crucial year in the development of our organisation," said Mr. Lukashenko. The President suggested implementing a set of priority measures, firstly addressing the necessity of a moratorium on the adoption of new laws that might discriminate the member states. Meanwhile, the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council and the Eurasian Economic Commission need to devote more attention to removing exemptions, barriers and restrictions on the EAEU domestic market. The Head of State suggested discussing the corresponding report on the matter at the next meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council.

"Continuing to improve the Eurasian Economic Union

Treaty means that it is not acceptable that we have results limited to technical updates by the end of the year. This matter should be considered in detail at the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council," stressed Mr. Lukashenko. Moreover, the President pointed to the Belarusian initiative which still has not been introduced. Our country proposed the development of a proper mechanism of operation for the EAEU in case one of its member states undertakes unilateral measures against third countries to protect its market.

Leaders of the Eurasian Economic Union states signed 11 documents in Bishkek. A decision was made on granting Moldova observer status. They also approved main guidelines for the macroeconomic policy of the Eurasian Economic Union member states for 2017-2018. The

EAEU leaders also approved the rotation of two members of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission and introduced several amendments to the regulations concerning its work. The heads of state also approved the results of the external audit (control) in the EAEU bodies in 2016 and adopted a resolution on the date and venue of the next session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council. It will take place in Moscow on October 11th, 2017.

The President of Moldova, Igor Dodon, said that his country's observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union is a very important and well-considered step for Moldova. He expressed confidence that the corresponding decision will be executed soon. Mr. Dodon noted that, according to sociological polls, most Moldovan citizens support integration with the EAEU.

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, also took part in the informal meeting of the heads of CSTO member states in Bishkek. The negotiations also tackled the situation in the sphere of security and acute threats and challenges, as well as ways of joint counteraction. The presidents also discussed candidates for the post of CSTO Secretary General. It was decided that from May 2nd, a representative of Armenia, Yuri Khachaturov, will occupy this position.

These events took place in the Ala Archa State Residence, which hosts all large summits and top level meetings.



Igor Dodon

By Vladimir Velikhov

Belarus and Moldova will be able to promote relations despite difficulties, noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, as he met the President of Moldova, Igor Dodon, in Bishkek

## Reserves will surely bring benefits

"Perhaps we should have met a long time ago to discuss steps to strengthen relations between Belarus and Moldova. Frankly we are keen to retain ties with your wonderful country," said Mr. Lukashenko. "I believe we have similar views and policy and despite our difficulties, we will be able to advance our relations. We follow the principle that if we can do something for our friends, we will. If there is a willingness to meet each other halfway (and the economy will help to drive this), we will be able to do a great deal for both Moldova and Belarus."

The Head of State noted that he has been to Moldova many times

and knows the country well. "You have had different governments, different presidents, and we did our best to maintain relations. Despite all the difficulties (we had transit, logistics and other issues), we were moving forward. I cannot say we have been active enough in the economic and trade sector in the recent years. However, we have managed to keep a positive momentum during these difficult years." The President added that Belarus has always supported Moldova when the country needed help.

It should be mentioned that in 2016, Belarusian-Moldovan trade totalled \$227.1m. Moldova is home to several joint assembly

plants, including those producing Belkommunmash trolley buses, horticultural tractors 'Belarus-921' of the Smorgon Aggregate Plant and small tractors of the Bobruisk's Plant of Tractor Parts and Units. Last year, the two states launched a joint project to produce Belarusian wireless trolley buses in Chisinau. Another joint project to bottle Zolotoi Aist cognac and Cricova wines at the Minsk Sparkling Wines plant was also launched last year.

"People in Moldova know about Belarus and appreciate many of your things. They often speak of how Belarus has managed to preserve many good things from Soviet times, including the agri-

cultural industry and infrastructure projects. This is a good example for us," said Mr. Dodon. He added that Belarus and Moldova maintain friendly relations and bilateral ties, the two states are vigorously developing their co-operation in various fields. "I'm pleased that we have finally become better acquainted with each other," noted the President of Moldova. "I think this personal meeting is a new stage in our bilateral relations."

The President of Moldova said that he hopes to meet with Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus in July to discuss the development of bilateral relations in detail, giving a new impetus to their development.

# The ability to reveal the most important will lead to success

There are good prospects for development of the wood processing industry in the country, notes Alexander Lukashenko as he chatted with workers at Rechitsadrev JSC

By Vladimir Khromov

The Head of State reminded the audience that some time ago, he'd made the decision to modernise the wood processing industry. The process of modernisation was not easy. There were certain problems, but this upgrade is nearing completion. According to the Head of State, those enterprises would have disappeared without modernisation. "They would have died in the market, and no one would have bought their products. It's great that we made the timely decision particularly considering the availability of raw materials in the country," said Mr. Lukashenko.

The production of white pulp is soon to be launched in Svetlogorsk and existing enterprises will increase their production capacity, enabling us to increase timber production in the country to 20 million cubic metres per year. Meanwhile, Belarus' resources make up 30-32 million cubic metres. "If we do not process wood on time it will deteriorate and will only be fit for firewood or woodchip. We need to process more than next year's target of 20 million cubic metres. We should try for 30-35 million cubic meters," the President believes.

During his working trip to the Gomel Region Mr. Lukashenko visited Rechitsa which is often called the 'capital of Belarusian oil workers'. However, the conversation primarily tackled another local major



Modern technological equipment in Rechitsadrev JSC's furniture workshop

GDP generating production — timber processing.

The attention to this industry is significant, since considerable funds were once invested in its modernisation. Mr. Lukashenko

described in detail the production and focussed on the most important aspect, "Though times are difficult, the light at the end of the tunnel can be clearly seen and Rechitsadrev is part of

the evidence of this."

The President started his working trip to the Gomel Region with an assessment of the spring sowing campaign. He made an important statement at the

Rechitsa District's Istok state-owned farm: this year, the region should demonstrate high farming standards and this refers not only to the faultless performance of technological discipline.

"Tell everyone that strict economies must be made," he demanded.

During his visit to the farm, Mr. Lukashenko reminded everyone about his requirement to bring the average salary in the country to Br1,000. He also spoke about this at Rechitsadrev JSC, where he was informed about the fulfilment of his instructions regarding reconstruction and modernisation of the enterprise. In total, the situation inspires optimism, as does its new produce — amino-formaldehyde resin used for the manufacture of wood particle boards. Methanol and carbamide, produced at Grodno Azot JSC — are initial materials for their production. Import and accordingly, the spending of foreign currency (in short supply), is excluded. Considering that, in recent years, the price for wood particle board has almost halved, the reduction of prime cost via import-substitution is an important moment.

## WORD-FOR-WORD

**During the meeting with workers at Rechitsadrev JSC, the President answered questions relating to people's concerns. He spoke about:**

### Business liberation

In the near future, we'll make revolutionary decisions on entrepreneurship, on private business. We'll liberate large businesses like Rechitsadrev, small ones, and self-employed businessmen. People will be able to come, leave a note they want to pursue this or that line of business, get registered with the tax office, and start working. Fire inspections, sanitary inspections and things like that will be reduced as much as possible. However, if a situation happens similar to that at the sugar refinery when people died [in late February an explosion happened at Skidel Sugar Refinery and five female employees were injured], they should bear full re-

sponsibility. We are going to fully liberate business initiatives. We've enabled the conditions for it.

### US missile attack on Syria

I supported Mr. Trump and sympathised with him probably as no one else in the world. However, a political situation has appeared in his country. This is the responsibility of US elite who didn't support Mr. Trump. The situation in Belarus was the same in 1994, when the elite didn't want to see me as the president, but I was elected by the nation. However, our establishment has finally yielded to the will of the people. Today he is confronted by everyone in the US and his initiatives are obstructed in every

way. He now has to prove that he is the president and he is able to do something, including pressing buttons. But this is not the correct way.

### Visa-free regime

This is the task of our Foreign Ministry to secure Belarusians with the opportunity to visit countries of interest. We're also negotiating with the Schengen Area countries. We've introduced a visa-free regime for citizens of 80 countries because we're an open country. We don't have anything to hide. Moreover, they bring foreign currency into our country. I'd like to see more people coming to us from abroad than our people going there.

# Promoting mutual understanding and interaction

By Vladimir Velikhov

**In recent years, relations between Pakistan and Belarus have been developing in unprecedented terms, as discussed during the meeting between Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and Chairman of the National Assembly's House of Representatives, Vladimir Andreichenko**

During the visit of the Belarusian Speaker to Pakistan, official negotiations took place with Nawaz Sharif and the President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussain.

Nawaz Sharif noted that to intensify co-operation, it's necessary to establish regular interaction between parliamentarians, since the parliaments serve as important links in the development of ties between our people, the promotion of mutual understanding, and the in-

tensification of mutually beneficial interaction.

Mr. Sharif pointed out that the Pakistani economy is growing, which opens up new investment opportunities in agriculture, agribusiness, the pharmaceutical industry, light industry, machine building and the oil and gas sector. He said he was satisfied with the results of the fourth meeting of the joint economic commission that took place in Karachi in March 2017.

The meeting also tackled the prospects for setting up joint agricultural enterprises, trading houses and joint ventures to process powdered milk and poultry. "We have developed good practices in the design and construction of equipment for livestock breeding facilities, storehouses for vegetables and fruit, and greenhouses," said Mr. Andreichenko. He assured us that Belarus can boost its exports of high-

quality meat and dairy products and baby food considerably. The parties also discussed the possibility of establishing facilities to assemble Belarusian tractors, harvesters and automotive vehicles in Pakistan.

Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain stressed that Belarus' participation in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will contribute to the economic development of the region.

## Co-operation as a bright example for other regions

By Alexander Pimenov

Delegation from Chinese Province of Hunan on working visit to Belarus



Du Jiahao

The heads of Belarus and China have agreed on the necessity to develop inter-regional contacts. The Mogilev Region has established partnership relations with the Hunan Province. This time, the guests had an intensive working programme, with visits to MAZ, BelAZ, BelGee, Mogilevliftmash, Babyshkina Krynka, residents of the Mogilev FEZ and a range of other enterprises. The meeting between the President of Belarus and China's Communist Party Secretary of the Hunan Province and head of the delegation, Du Jiahao, opened a range of substantive negotiations.

Alexander Lukashenko outlined several promising areas for collaboration. The guests are keen to establish supplies of food products, primarily dairy goods. The President focussed on the conditions for this, "Cargo containers travel to Europe via Belarus and return back half-empty. We're ready to load them with milk, yogurts and ice cream which are in increasing demand in your country."

Several projects involving Chinese businesses are also being implemented in our country, with one of the most significant being the organisation of the production of automobiles using special techniques by Zoomlion Bel-Rus Company. The factory will be constructed in the Great Stone Industrial Park and Mr. Lukashenko expressed his hope for its prospects. "The company will be able to establish high-technology production very quickly. These products will be in demand not only in Belarus, but also in Russia and the European Union," he said.

To maximise the potential for interaction, the President suggested Mr. Jiahao open a representation of the Hunan Province in Belarus, with every assistance from the Belarusians.

# Farewell to the Dollar

The Government and the National Bank have a plan which is expected to strengthen citizens' confidence in the Rouble after realisation. As a result, the move will slow down inflation and stabilise the situation in the currency market. The focus is on the economy's dedollarisation. Our *MT* reporter has studied the document and talked to experts to find out how the perception of dedollarisation can be improved.

By Polina Konoga

According to the prognoses, by late 2018, the country is to significantly cut the use of foreign currency in settlements and fee payments. Moreover, its value as an equivalent measure for tariff, rate and price formation is to be reduced. In February, the Deputy Chairman of the National Bank, Sergey Kalechits, presented a complex series of measures, explaining that the country already enjoys a favourable background for the launch of dedollarisation. In particular, inflation has slowed down, the profitability of Rouble deposits exceeds those made in foreign currency and the situation on the foreign currency market is stable.

However, we must not celebrate too early. It is no secret that Belarus has retained a high level of dollarisation of the economy in comparison to European and EAEU countries. As of January 1st, the share of foreign currency deposits in banks exceeded 76 percent and the currency component in the total credit portfolio was fixed at 75 percent. This greatly reduces the effectiveness of the interest rate channel through which we try to control inflation. The complex of measures of the Government and the National Bank aimed at reducing the dollarisation level is actually a

list of tasks. Some suggestions have already been realised and others are to be implemented by late 2017 and throughout 2018. Complete elimination of foreign currency settlements is planned for 2019.

Among the measures are proposals to determine the value of



land in Belarusian Roubles or setting rates of highway tolls in the national currency, in addition to payments for transportation of cargo. Eliminating pegging to the Dollar rate for value added figures per average worker is planned, as well as abandoning the Dollar peg for prices, tariffs for natural gas, electric and heat energy for legal entities.

According to experts, some measures can be easily implemented, such as paying road tolls in Roubles or eliminating binding to the foreign currency in some cases of compulsory insurance. However, some aspects might be problematic — such as gas and electricity prices. "After all, the state pays in foreign currency when buying energy," said the Chairman of the Belarusian Scientific and Industrial Association (BCIE), Alexander Shvets. He asks what sources would cover losses in case of a rate difference. Some risks are evident and the realisation of the plan would depend on the introduction of a fully-fledged system of assessment of risks in all areas, as well as the possibility of hedging currency risks. Unfortunately, Belarusian companies can not make full use of these tools so far: there are too many unresolved issues in the field of accounting and taxation on such transactions.

In addition, the practice of de facto operating foreign exchange rates has been formed in the country. "If everything is so easy, why not, for example, rid the Euro customs clearance of cars right now?" we asked Mr. Shvets, who illustrated his reply using the example of budget formation: here, some revenues are set in Roubles but are pegged to the foreign

currency through certain tariffs. At the same time, some expenditure articles are to some extent linked to the purchase of imports or repayment of certain commitments in the foreign currency. Although both these lines are expressed in Roubles, it's clear that they would be balanced at any rate with such an approach. Financial bodies would of course minimise the impact of exchange rate risks on budget implementation.

The Deputy Director of the Centre for Integration Studies of the Eurasian Development Bank — Mikhail Demidenko — has joined economists of the Bank Alexey Kuznetsov and Natalia Mironchik to prepare an article for the *Bankovskiy Vestnik* magazine: *Reasons and Solutions for Problems*. They distinguish several groups of measures aimed at dedollarisation of the economy. The priority measures are aimed at changing the macroeconomic environment. The second level envisages passive measures focused on the formation of the favourable financial market environment, while the third level includes active measures designed to influence the stimulus of distribution of operations of a particular market segment, as well as the rules of fixing prices on certain commodities. It is expected that the implementation of this complex of measures will lead to a stable macroeconomic situation.

Plan for economic dedollarisation envisages taking foreign currency away from paying for energy

PAVEL CHUIJKO

# Autonomous robot named Illariy

## First Belarusian android could replace a hundred various professions

By Taisia Azanovich

Artificial intelligence is gathering pace, with robot-advisers to appear in Belarusian banks by the end of this year. Engineers, programmers, mathematicians and psychologists have been working on the Belarusian autonomous robot, which could easily replace a hundred professions.

What will it look like, how much will it cost and should we be afraid that artificial intelligence will replace humans?

### Robots can do more than work; they can communicate

“Hello, let’s get acquainted,” says the robot named Illariy, offering me its hand. I cannot contain my nervous laughter: it’s my first time in this situation.

“Your eyes are so beautiful,” says the steel lady’s man, which makes me blush. His eyes display heartlets. For each woman who approached, the robot had a compliment.

“Our Illariy is a ‘jelly roll’,” comments Vitaly Bondarik, winking at the robot.

Vitaly, together with wife Olga, has founded the company specialising in creating autonomous robot-assistants: the first in the country.

The robot is an innovative development from the company from Perm, which is a resident of the Russian Park ‘Skolkovo’. Olga taps Illariy on the shoulder to add, “It can be a nurse, animator, tutor, promoter, adviser and presenter, replacing people in a hundred professions. It likes to communicate, and knows four languages.”

Unexpectedly Illariy engages in conversation, saying, “Nevertheless, I don’t always know how to answer certain requests. In this case, please forgive me.”

### Robot-advisers employed in banks

Belarusian brains are working on the creation of our own robot, setting ambitious aims. Our artificial intelligence should be notable for a bigger IQ than its Russian rival. Work is entering its third year, with the names of developers kept secret (employing user names only, to avoid Belarusian talent being enticed away to other countries).

Negotiations are now being carried out with a major state bank and, by the end of this year, the first robot-adviser is to be introduced. Ten robot-managers already work in banks across Russia, and 3,000 robot-lawyers are to be employed by the end of the year.

It may seem like some fantastic film but the Belarusian robot will be able to distinguish the location of a client, approach and communicate. In giving out tickets, the robot will be



VITALY PIVOVARCHIK

able to guide visitors to where they need to go, and tell them about bank services, while also acting as a payment terminal.

Vitaly is enthusiastic regarding the prospects, saying, “The robot will be able to remember clients by appearance and name. If, one month ago, a woman called Svetlana Nikiforovna used its help, when she returns, the robot will greet her by name and say how long it’s been since it last saw her, giving her a warm welcome.”

### Artificial intelligence with emotional soul

The Belarusian robot will also be able to distinguish emotions, having learnt to ‘read’ reactions and facial expressions. Yevgeny Grib, the first psychologist in the country who began to study artificial intelligence and its perception by people, points at Illariy, saying, “It’s difficult for a robot to distinguish our feelings so, when we take the robot to events, we capture their reactions on video. We then use this material to ‘teach’ the robot to identify human feelings. The robot is equipped with a set of cameras and gauges, capable of distinguishing various emotions, such as pleasure, fear or excitement. Thus, the robot will be able to adapt its responses to the situation. For example, if a person is fearful, the robot will try to act in a

soothing manner.”

Illariy can display about ten emotions with its eyes, and more are possible. The Belarusian robot will speak Belarusian, and be able to recite from Kupala’s poem *I’m a Belarusian Man*.

With a vocabulary of 70,000 words, the Belarusian robot will be erudite and able to converse on any topic — from the weather outside to philosophy. Meanwhile, as it communicates with people, it will



### Vitaly Bondarik says that our robot will even recognise human emotions

continue to ‘learn’, taking on new phrases.

“How does that work?” I ask. Vitaly, seeing my surprise, explains, “The robot saves all dialogue into a virtual cloud where we can analyse conversations and people’s questions, alongside the robot’s answers. We’ll look at which questions remained unanswered and alter the programming to cover such situations.”

Illariy seems not to like hearing this, saying, “Let’s pretend that you’ve not said that and I’ve not heard it.”

Illariy is programmed to joke around a little, finding humorous ways to deal with questions it needs to evade. At one event, when stuck for an answer, Illariy offered to dance. It differs from the Russian model in having movable arms able to lift up to 7kg.

### Are we anxious?

“We’ll improve the regulating system, to allow adaptation,” notes

Vitaly, schematically drawing the future robot. “If the Russian robot can

run for eight hours without needing to be recharged,

we’ll make sure that ours can run for twelve. It will also be more quick-witted. Sometimes, Illariy needs a couple of seconds to answer but ours will need just one second, which is more like a human reaction. The software for the Russian robot uses an open platform while ours will be closed,

making it more reliable in respect of cyber-safety and data storage.”

The robot will have a male and female version, and there will be a robot-assistant and robot-nurse. Programming is planned for one hundred professions, as assemblers, cashiers, technical advisers, waiters, bookkeepers, warehouse workers and for use as surgical tools.

“We’ve already had an inquiry from a university for a robot able to read lectures,” Vitaly tells us. “Though the profession of teacher isn’t yet considered suitable for robotised technologies, St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University has bought a similar robot, wishing to involve it in the Department of Mechatronics and Robotics. It will give lectures alongside the teacher, and will be able to carry out practical training. It seems frightening: the thought of robots taking away our employment and opportunities to earn money. Olga Bondarik shrugs her shoulders, “You should understand: it’s impossible to replace people. Our purpose is not to replace people with mechanisation and automation, but to find ways of helping people, co-operating with them more effectively.”

### Belarusian robot for \$20,000

The Belarusian robots will cost from \$10,000 to \$20,000, becoming cheaper as more are produced, and data is gathered to improve their function.

Not long ago, research showed that, of three hundred companies, from various service spheres, two thirds were keen to introduce robots into their business. Thirty companies would consider taking on robots in the near future. Can it be really true, that the sci-fi fantasies of the future are becoming reality?

# Almost half of Khomichi villagers are Yevtushenko

In May 2015, when Yevgeny Yevtushenko visited Belarus for the last time, crowds of fans gathered at the Belarusian State Philharmonic Society's Hall — packed like fish in a barrel

By Irina Ovsepyan

With my pianist friend, we somehow found a place to sit on the balcony. This visit by the master would be remembered by his admirers forever; particularly as it was last he was to undertake. Minskians had hoped to see the poet in the capital this summer: Mr. Yevtushenko was planning a major CIS tour, with Belarus as one of his destinations. Our country was home for the famous man whose fate decreed otherwise. Two years ago, before the triumphant performance, I had an opportunity to talk to Mr. Yevtushenko. Our four-hour interview was full of philosophical reasoning, memories and funny stories.

## How the poet searched for relatives in Belarus

Mr. Yevtushenko had Belarusian roots, explaining, "My mother's father — Yermolay Yevtushenko — was a man of the Chapaev dynasty. He was a three time George Cavalier of WWI who later joined the Bolsheviks. Yermolay was born in the village of Khomichi, in the Kalinkovichi District. He divorced my grandmother, although he visited our house all the time. He was very friendly with my second grandfather (born in Latvia) — who was a mathematician and completely differed from him. I would give a lot now to know what they talked about. They were both arrested in 1937; I witnessed that. My mathematician grandfather was freed from the camp but Yermolay was killed. I do not know where or how it happened; probably, as was usual, in a cellar, with a bullet in his head."

The poet's mother recalled the name of the village where their relatives, by pure chance, remained. Mr. Yevtushenko called Andrey Makaenok to learn that two sisters of his grandfather were still alive. "We went there by helicopter, landed in Kalinkovichi and then drove. We saw a man: limping on a wooden leg, with three George crosses on his chest and a partisan medal. The man was dressed in a German trophy uniform. Real bast shoes were on his legs which ached severely. When I asked him whether he knew the Yevtushenko family, the man replied, "What Yevtushenko are you talking about? Half of our villagers are Yevtushenko!" I then explained, "I'm talking of Yermolay's relatives." He then told me, "We escaped German captivity together." Can you imagine? I asked him to describe Yermolay and he replied, "He was a great womaniser. He has a nose like you have." The man recognised my grandfather in me."

## Scent of love

Mr. Yevtushenko was a passionate lover of painting and a collector. He personally had no painting skills but that fact did not stop him from making friends with the most famous artists of the time. "I really like painting though I'm completely incompetent in this respect. I was lucky: in my youth, I became acquainted with young artists. Among them were Ernst Neizvestny, Oleg Tselkov and the now forgotten, Yuri Vasiliev. The latter knew everything: he played the flute and could disassemble a plane. I even had a key from Ernst Neizvestny's workshop, the smell of



PAVEL CHUIKO

Yevgeny Yevtushenko during his meeting with young painters in Minsk

a workshop is the scent of love for me. I remember a time when Eric's raw plaster sculpture fell down on me and my girlfriend."

## 40 Picasso paintings

"I had an interesting story relating to Picasso," Yevgeny told me. "There were times when he viewed it as an honour to invite Mr. Yevtushenko to his house. He knew Mr. Mayakovsky and shared his memories of him. Speaking about me, he said, "You've made up for what I missed in Mr. Mayakovsky: he did not speak Spanish but you do." He showed me his last 40 paintings and offered that I choose any of them. I refused as I didn't like any, he was surprised, and I told him why (I did not know anything about his personal

life at that time but I guessed, though I was a boy), "It seems to me that you have been hurt by a woman and you've taken offense at all women of the world." The next day, I visited Nadia Khodasevich-Leger. She already knew; it was written in the newspaper that I had refused 40 paintings by Picasso! She gave me the work which Picasso once presented to Fernand Leger.

## Thousand faces

Picasso did not paint a portrait of Mr. Yevtushenko but a no less original artist — Alfaro Siqueiros — once persuaded the restless poet to pose. "Okay!" said Mr. Siqueiros. "You like red wine and Spanish smoked ham. You'll get it. You'll need to sit calm for an hour

while I paint your portrait."

The poet remembered what happened. "He turned his so-called portrait to me and I saw someone ugly looking at me from the canvas. I was horrified," he said. "Well, what more do you need? Just think of who is drawing a picture of you. I have attempted Trotsky! Actually, I failed but I'm still a great artist!" said Siqueiros. I then told him I thought the picture lacked heart." He replied, "Not a problem! We'll add it!" He drew the ace of hearts and wrote in Spanish on the left: "This is one of Mr. Yevtushenko's thousand faces. I'll paint another 999 later". I still think the portrait itself was awful but my wife loves it, saying, "You are the same that, you just can't see it."

## Knowledge of common history helps strengthen dialogue

By Alexey Fedosov

The Chinese Parliamentary delegation, headed by the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Zhang Dejian, has visited the Belarusian State Museum of Great Patriotic War History. Parliamentarians familiarised themselves with the exhibition, which has a section dedicated to the defeat of the Kwantung Army in August 1945 and the liberation of north-eastern districts of China.

The programme of the official visit of the Chinese delegation to Belarus envisaged joint talks with the Chairman of the Council of the Republic, Mikhail Myasnikovich, and the Chairman of the House of Representatives, Vladimir Andreichenko, as well as the signing of a joint statement on co-operation between the National Assembly of Belarus and the National People's Congress of China. Belarusian and Chinese parliamentarians discussed the expansion of all-round strategic interaction between the two states in political, inter-parliamentary, economic, investment, humanitarian and other spheres.

Chinese parliamentarians also visited the great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park — a key venue of the Silk Road Economic Belt. It should be noted that Belarus-China diplomatic relations were established on January 20th, 1992. Belarus and China regularly exchange high-level visits. An active inter-parliamentary dialogue is maintained to fuel the rapid development of Belarusian-Chinese political, trade-economic and humanitarian relations. The two countries successfully interact in international organisations, providing support to each other on matters of principle. Working groups on inter-parliamentary co-operation operate in the National Assembly of Belarus and the National People's Congress of China.

The high level of Belarusian-Chinese political relations represents a solid foundation for the advancement of bilateral trade ties. In 2016, Belarus' trade with mainland China was close to \$2.6bn. Belarus exported potash fertilisers to China, as well as petrochemical products, harvesters, spare parts for trucks, agricultural machines and other goods. Regional interaction and twinning relations between Belarusian regions and cities and Chinese provinces represents an important way of galvanising the entire range of Belarusian-Chinese relations, primarily bilateral trade-economic and investment co-operation.



In one of London's central streets

# UK wages growth losing out to inflation

Figures recently released show that British workers' pay growth is barely keeping up with inflation

Earnings rose by an annual 2.3 percent in the three month period to February. Meanwhile, consumer price inflation stood at 2.3 percent in the 12 months to March.

The stats illustrate how British households are grappling with rising prices in the shops.

After a long period of little inflation in the UK, consumer prices have risen sharply recently.

The situation has been exacerbated by the plunge in the value of the Pound against other currencies following the vote to leave the European Union, as well as by rising global oil prices.

At the same time the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the unemployment rate in the period between December and February held steady at an almost 12-year

low of 4.7 percent.

"The big picture remains a labour market with very strong employment plateauing at record highs ... combined with a pay disaster," Torsten Bell, Director of the Resolution Foundation think tank, said.

The number of people in work increased only modestly by 39,000 although the employment rate of

74.6 percent was a joint record high. Job vacancies in the three-month period to the end of March rose by 16,000 to a record high 767,000.

British workers are becoming more reticent about moving jobs as the process of leaving the European Union gets underway, exacerbating long-standing skill shortages, a survey of recruiters showed.

# Hungarians protest at government moves to restrict NGOs

**Tens of thousands of protesters have held a day of rallies in the Hungarian capital to oppose government policies seen as limiting academic freedom and intimidating civic groups**

Changes threatening the closure of a top university — the Central European University (CEU) funded by US financier George Soros — have sparked previous protests, now there is renewed anger over new restrictions on NGOs.

"Both topics are important (NGOs, CEU) and not only these two issues, but in general I would like to protest against the dictatorship building process of the govern-

ing parties, this is why I'm here," said one young protester.

"The current government should have noticed by now that it doesn't have a place in this modern world. This is a multi-faceted world. If they have already forgotten that they grew up this way but that they now don't want to accept it, then they should go away. We live here and we want to stay here, in Europe," was the opinion of another protester.

At one point protesters in Heroes Square in Budapest formed the shape of a heart. The organisers used the shape and wrote the word 'Civil' in the centre to symbolise the work of civic groups, of NGOs



Protests in Budapest

which are important for the people of Hungary.

After the rally officially ended some protesters faced off with police officers blocking access to the nearby headquarters of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz Party.

The protests ended up in front

of Parliament. Lawmakers are debating a government proposal to force new restrictions on non-governmental groups funded from abroad. It's to create more transparency says the government. But protesters say it's discriminatory and aims to silence government critics.

# United Airlines passenger launches legal action over forced removal

**Lawyers acting for the passenger who was dragged from a United Airlines plane in Chicago have filed an emergency request to require the carrier to preserve video recordings and other evidence**

The airline has apologised to Dr. David Dao whose forced removal from an over booked flight has caused widespread outrage. Footage from the incident shows Dao, bloodied and dishevelled, returning to the cabin and repeating, "Just kill me. Kill me," and "I have to go home." United CEO Oscar Munoz is under pressure to resign over the incident. Dao is still in hospital recovering from his injuries.

# 'Pandamania' grips Dutch animal lovers

**'Pandamania' has gripped the Netherlands after two arrived at Schiphol Airport on their way to a specially constructed enclosure at a Dutch zoo**

Children wearing panda hats welcomed them and waved bamboo branches — the panda's staple food. It's taken 16 years of hard lobbying to obtain the animals from their home in China.

To celebrate the arrival of Xing Ya and Wu Wen, a complex Panspaicthe Ouwehands Zoo in the central town of Rhenen commissioned 'Pandasia', a complex of buildings that will house the couple on its ground floor and a Chinese restaurant on the floor above.

# Saturn moon 'able to support life'

**Saturn's ice-crust moon Enceladus may now be the single best place to go to look for life beyond Earth**

The assessment comes on the heels of new observations at the 500km-wide world made by the Cassini probe. It has flown through and sampled the waters from a subsurface ocean that is being jetted into space. Cassini's chemistry analysis strongly suggests the Enceladean seafloor has hot fluid vents — places that on Earth are known to teem with life.

"We're pretty darn sure that the internal ocean of Enceladus is habitable and we need to go back and investigate it further," said Cassini scientist Dr Hunter Waite from the Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**

## Nikolay Isaenok: 'I paint my homeland with no embellishments'



The National Art Museum of Belarus features dozens of paintings by Nikolay Isaenok at his jubilee showcase. The exhibition is entitled *Touched by a Moment* and is dedicated to the artist's seventieth birthday.

By Veniamin Mikheev

Nikolay Isaenok is a recognised master of landscape painting who knows the colouristic 'drama' of painting; a lyricist favouring the magical poetry of the cosy and forgotten corners of Belarusian nature.

When creating his best paintings, the artist could feel the rhythms of the landscape and combine both the emotional and rational constituents of painting. As he says, he enjoys the miracles created by nature, captures its volatile states in numerous sketches and 'matches' them with would-be pictures.

"I paint my homeland with no embellishments, but always with emotion," confesses Nikolay Isaenok. "I think that without roots, without a sense of nationality an artist cannot realise himself as a creator. This feeling begins at birth, both physical and spiritual. If you drink strange water and eat exotic and strange food, you are going to become a stranger as well. Being a national means being filled with the land where you live every day, and every day you put your love for it on the canvas."

He now lives in a country cottage close to the forest, in silence and peace. This neighbourhood is very favourable for working. However, much depends on mood, that is why in summer he heads for his old country house, as only there, he says, can he find creative peace. There he has large spaces to work, and specialises in landscapes, he also recently painted a series of still-lives.

I visited him in his new spacious house. Nikolay does not show his pictures immediately. As the conversation unfolds, he takes out several works, and carefully places them in a way so that they can be seen best. Then you find yourself peering into the scenery, 'entering' the aura of the canvasses, being captured by the motifs, mood, and colour. And if the artist is delighted with the talk, he, like a magician, pulls out a new piece as if to illustrate his thoughts, and after a while hides the painting away.

The creative atmosphere is always difficult to describe. Yet, in Nikolay Isaenok's workshop there



Nikolay Isaenok and his palette



is something vivid and extremely important — freedom. Landscape. So many artists have professed their love for nature! Often landscapists try to avoid human presence so that it does not interfere with the spontaneity and purity of their relationships with nature. It is felt in the works by Nikolay Isaenok. He longs to communicate face to face with everything that spreads before his eyes, trying to explore what is open and what is concealed, the external and internal, and thus to understand his own self.

Nikolay Isaenok adheres to the tradition of realism, but he has developed his own individual style, which gives his works poetic and emotional colouring and celebrates the continuity of nature. My impressions of this artist's works are focused on his world view. Any landscapes always

have their secrets. To find out for yourself, visit the exhibition at the museum and view the pictures by Nikolay Isaenok.

### From a conversation:

**I heard that each of your paintings was created in a matter of hours — is it possible to fix such a wealth of textures so quickly, without a long 'agony' of creativity?**

*Even my colleagues sometimes do not believe me. But it's true — everything that you can see here at the show, was painted within just 2 or 3 hours. Firstly, I do not paint what I do not like. And then, when I come up to the canvass, I already have a mental image of the picture. Preparation can be very long, though. Sometimes I'm disappointed afterwards and want to destroy the finished work, if not for my wife, who often takes my pictures*

*with cell phones and thinking about fame or money? They wouldn't have time for anything! To listen to yourself, one needs time. Theoretically, I want to paint in the abstract. But when I pour honey into a copper utensil I want to convey its thick 'amberness', the warmth of the metal polished by someone's hands. I'll never be able to paint something abstract!*

**Is it true that you had your first personal exhibition at the age of fifty?**

*That's true. All that I painted at the time seemed to me poor. I painted and hid it. Colleagues literally forced me to make that exhibition! On the eve of the opening day, I was in panic: 'everyone will see how bad it is'. And then everyone started to congratulate me on my success. Now I have a display at a museum, very few people are so lucky in life.*

*Many years ago I had no plans to become an artist! As a child, I liked designing radio receivers and chasing pigeons. Once, somebody presented me with a set of paints. I remember I would often stare at the coloured tubes in the store. A boy from an orphanage, I didn't have money for that luxury. Artists seemed to me people from a different world. One day, I dropped at a design studio in Borisov. I came in and said: 'Give me some paints'. They just laughed. One of them came up to me and invited me to go with him. He took a cab and we went to his place where he had a lot of paints! Oil, watercolour... He gifted me a lot. That night in the orphanage I painted my first picture — well, not quite mine as I copied a Levitan from a book.*

*away from me, perhaps, this exhibition would never happen.*

**They say you have a huge collection of records.**

*I always listen to music when painting. When a student, I was always half-starved, because I would spend all the money on books and records. Unfortunately, I cannot listen to them any longer as there are no gramophone needles, so I have to collect discs. The sound on vinyl is certainly better. Times change, what can you do. I think sometimes: would Van Gogh or, say, Klimt create their artworks if they were running around*

# Long-awaited classical art is welcomed and admired

A nation is unthinkable without its national opera. We know the significance of *Life for the Tsar* for Russians, *Halka* for Poles, and *Porgy and Bess* for Americans. We should then understand why the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus has so fiercely fought for its national opera throughout history.

By Yulia Andreeva

Almost eighty years ago, the Opera House was neither National, nor Bolshoi, nor Academic. At that time, the first Belarusian operas were staged there: *Mikhas Padgorny* by Tikotsky and Bogatyrev's *In Polesie Forests*. It seemed then that, to achieve success, it was necessary to offer a revolutionary plot, transforming it into a libretto in Belarusian language and setting to music.

The creation of national opera was a difficult task, involving various experiments: *The Flower of Happiness* by Turenkov (richly mixed with Belarusian rites, songs and dances), *Alesya* by Tikotsky (the first Belarusian opera about the Great Patriotic War), *Clear Dawn* by Turenkov (about Western Belorussia's joining the BSSR) and *Venus Star* by Semenyako (a poetic play about Maxim Bogdanovich). All lacked something, though hopes were pinned on *Alesya*, which was staged five times before dropping from the repertoire.

Finally, in 1978, the State Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre premiered an opera by Dmitry Smolsky: a young actor at the time, and now a People's Artist. Vladimir Korotkevitch's *Grey Legend* was used for the libretto and, as the curtains opened, a new Belarus was unveiled: medieval, gloomy, dressed in sacrificial white robes, and using wonderful Belarusian poetic speech (I later learned that Korotkevitch wrote to Smolsky's music).

The music was charming, capturing the soul from the first note and failing to let go until the very end. Neither before nor since have our composers created such passionate,

melodic music, making a Belarusian *Aida!*

It's no wonder that this beautiful spectacle was staged for six years; probably, it could have continued longer. However, a new age was dawning, with artistes retiring, and conductor-director Vladimir Moshensky losing interest in the theatre. He decided to become a priest!

Three decades later, *Grey Legend* was revived and premiered anew on September 9th, 2012, with new staging and some updates by the composer, reducing the opera down to two acts from three, to keep the action and intrigue moving swiftly. Some music was lost but the opera was better attuned to modern realities. The setting also changed drastically. Principle Stage Director Mikhail Pandzhavidze created a staging more like a film than a traditional opera, as envisioned by Semen Stein.

Set-designer Alexander Kostyuchenko brought innovative ideas to the opera and the line-up of the choir — led by People's Artist Nina Lomanovich since 1993 — changed composition, to feature major artistes, and more movement. Years ago, performances could appear too 'static'; now, the modern choir is young, dynamic, impeccably trained and sonorous, allowing endless possibilities for staging. Meanwhile, actors from the Karate Academy help the company stage realistic fight scenes.

The artistes are the major focus, bringing more authenticity to their roles than was evident in the past. They travel the world, working in the best theatres, with famous conductors and directors, giving them invaluable experience, which benefits our



Scenes from *Grey Legend* performances

Opera Theatre. People's artistes Anastasia Moskvina and Sergey Frankovsky, and honoured artistes Oksana Volkova and Stanislav Trifonov are true superstars of whom any country would be proud. I was especially amazed by the love they demonstrate towards *Grey Legend*. "I feel

pleasure in singing in Belarusian. I enjoy our Belarusian history and this wonderful show. When singing, I experience a deep and strong pride in my country. This performance is our classic!" asserts Ms. Moskvina.

I would simply add that this is our long-awaited classic.

## According to the rules of the genre

By Vladimir Mikhailov

**Branislav Nušić's famous comedy *Doctor in Philosophy*, to be premiered at Yakub Kolas National Academic Drama Theatre**

*Doctor in Philosophy* is one of the best comedies of Branislav Nušić — a classical writer of Serbian dramatic art of the late 19th-early 20th century. The action takes place in Belgrade in the 1920s. The performance in the Yakub Kolas Theatre was directed by Mikhail Krasnobayev.

The work was carefully chosen. Mikhail Krasnobayev has long wanted to stage this comedy. The performance was previously staged in the 1970s at Vitebsk's theatre by Semen Kazimirovsky, starring People's Artist of BSSR, Georgy Dubovoy. Now, the major role of Zivota Cvijovic is played by the leading master of the stage, Yuri Tsvirko, and Honoured Artist of Belarus, Grigory Shatko, while Honoured Artist of Belarus, Tatiana Likhacheva, plays the wife of the major character.

We mustn't fail to mention the fact that approximately two months ago Vitebsk hosted a premiere of the *Les fourberies de Scapin* (*The Impostures of Scapin*) performance, based on Molière. The Yakub Kolas Theatre is renewing its repertoire with high quality comedies, which seem to be the preference of theatre audiences.

The storyline of the comedy, *Doctor in Philosophy*, is simple and accessible to modern audiences: a prosperous businessman is obsessed with the idea of teaching his son to become a doctor in philosophy and thus setting himself up in society. However, his offspring proves stubborn. The imaginative father finds a way out by sending a poor but talented young boy to the foreign university using the name of his son. The young man graduates brilliantly and brings back the long-awaited diploma. It transpires however that he has acquired not only a diploma, but also a young wife and child. The action develops according to all the rules of classical comedy.



## Minsk to host representative tournament

By Alexey Grishin

**In July, the Chizhovka-Arena will host the Minsk Cup international ice hockey tournament, featuring KHL teams and dedicated to the 950th anniversary of the Belarusian capital**

Among the participants of the tournament, organised and hosted by Yunost-Minsk, will be four teams representing the KHL: Yaroslavl Lokomotiv, Riga and Moscow Dinamo and Ugra from Khanty-Mansiysk.

Representatives of three countries will appear on the Chizhovka-Arena ice, including the most successful teams from Russia. These will be Moscow Dinamo (which has recently become a double holder of the Gagarin Cup) and a repeated winner and three-time champion of Russia — Locomotiv who always include many pupils from the club school and has outstanding results. Ugra will also come to Minsk; in 2016, it celebrated its first major anniversary (10 years) and, apart from participating in the tournament, it will also hold a preseason gathering at Minsk's Chizhovka-Arena. Interestingly, its coaching staff have recently been joined by Nikolay Borshchevsky, who was taught by Yunost; moreover, its head coach is now Igor Zakharkin who assisted the Russian team's Vyacheslav Bykov (the Bykov-Zakharkin duo brought their national team to the world's top position).

# Olga Govortsova has won tournament in USA

Belarusian tennis player celebrates victory in Indian Harbour Beach

By Igor Svitov

In the finals of the competitions, whose prize fund totalled \$80,000, Belarus' third seed defeated American Amanda Anisimova in three games — 6:3, 4:6, 6:3. Previously, Govortsova beat Jamie Loeb of the

USA, Aleksandra Wozniak of Canada, Madison Brengle of the USA and Ons Jabeur of Tunis.

Meanwhile, the chances of Brengle and Jabeur, seeded second and fifth respectively were expected to be much higher. However, Olga defeated them one after

another and then won the major prize.

Due to this success Olga has raised her position from 190th to 147th in the WTA ranking. Another Belarusian, Alexandra Sosnovich, who reached the semi-final of the prestigious tournament in Swiss

Biel, entered the top hundred tennis players of the world ranking, moving from 108th place to 96th position. Two more female players from Belarus also improved their positions in the WTA ranking: Arina Sobolenko is now ranked 125th while Vera Lapko is placed 241st.

## Half Marathon to see record number of participants

By Semen Bondarev

**Organisers of the Minsk Half Marathon-2017 expect 30 thousand participants — notes the Chairman of the Belarusian Athletics Federation, Vadim Devyatovsky, at the press conference dedicated to the opening of registration for the race**

"It's nice to see how much the Half Marathon in the Belarusian capital is in demand, this year, we expect 30 thousand people to attend and, as planned, the 5.5km race will feature 21 thousand runners. 5,000 are expected to run 21km and 4,000 will run 10km," Mr. Devyatovsky said, noting that the Minsk Half Marathon has received the Road Race Bronze rating from the International Athlet-



YURI MOZOLEVSKY

**During Half Marathon-2016**

ics Federation (IAAF). This will help to attract more people from all over the world, the official believes. The two-time winner of the Minsk Half Marathon — Olga Mazurenok became the first registered participant of the 2017 race. The First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Belarus, the First Vice-President of the

National Olympic Committee — Maxim Ryzhenkov — shared his opinion that the half marathon is not merely a competition, but an opportunity to show off the city. "Two years ago, we were not sure whether it would be possible to hold anything at such a high level. It's a great joy for me that we can continue this tradition," he said.

In turn, the Chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee — Andrey Shorets — stressed that the Half Marathon this year will be one of the main events for the celebration of the city's 950th anniversary.

According to the Minister of Sports and Tourism, Alexander Shamko, the five-day visa-free regime will contribute to the growth of the international component of the Minsk Half Marathon. "We have created all the necessary conditions for receiving guests," he said. Anyone can register at the official website: minkshalfmarathon.by. In 2017, the Minsk Half Marathon will be held for the third time. In 2015, it was attended by 16 thousand people from 36 countries and in 2016, the number increased to 20 thousand from 42 countries.

## Captains have decided on their line-up

By Kirill Karin

**The line-up of the Belarusian and Swiss teams approved to play in the semi-finals of the tennis World Federation Cup on April 22nd-23rd on Minsk Chizhovka-Arena's hard court**

Eduard Dubrov, Belarusian team captain, has chosen the same players that performed in the quarter finals: Alexandra Sasnovich, Arina Sobolenko, Olga Govortsova and Vera Lapko.

Belarus first played in the Federation Cup in 1994. This February, it achieved the highest result so far in its history — making its way to the semi-finals of the World Group. In the Federation

Cup ranking, the national team of Belarus takes 5th place. In 2016, Belarusian tennis players defeated the Canadian team — 3:2 in the first round of the II Federation Cup and then made a breakthrough in the playoffs of the World Group, defeating the 2015 Russian women finalists 3:2.

Thanks to the win, Belarus earned the right to host a home match in the 1st round of the World Group; when the team confidently defeated Holland — 4: 1.

The Swiss national team captain Heinz Günthardt has named the following line-up for the match: Timaea Bachinsky, Victoria Golubich, Belinda Bencic and Martina Hingis.



Snow falls in Vitebsk on April 16th

## EXHIBITIONS

### NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS

20 Lenin Street  
Until 23<sup>rd</sup> April. *Polish Landscape.*  
*Franciszek Ryszard Mazurek. Painting*  
Until 15<sup>th</sup> May. *Touched by a Moment*

### NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> June. *From Romanian Dinary to Belarusian Rouble*

### BELARUSIAN STATE MUSEUM OF GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY

8 Pobediteley Avenue  
Until 25<sup>th</sup> May. *How I See War and Peace*

### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> May. *Vladimir Akulov: Moments of Life*  
Until 16<sup>th</sup> May. *Belarusian-Italian Cultural Ties in History and Modernity*  
Until 30<sup>th</sup> June. *Exhibition of wax figures: Miraculous Travel*

### HOUSE OF PICTURES

89/3 Pobediteley Avenue  
Until 16<sup>th</sup> April. *Path to Shambala*

### TSEKH

16 Oktyabrskaya Street  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> April. *Kurasovshchina is My Love*

### PALACE OF ARTS

3 Kozlov Street  
*Return of Image: Devotion to Marc Chagall's 130<sup>th</sup> Birthday*

### YAKUB KOLAS STATE LITERARY MUSEUM

5 Akademicheskaya Street  
Until 30<sup>th</sup> September. *In Waves of Endless Movement: Along Kolas' Automobile Paths*

### MUSEUM OF BELARUS' MINIATURES

25 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Museum of Miniatures of Belarusian Sights permanent exhibition

### CAT MUSEUM

23 Internatsionalnaya Street  
Until 31<sup>st</sup> May. *Our Cosmos*

### MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN CINEMA HISTORY

4 Sverdlov Street  
Until 7<sup>th</sup> May. *Cinema posters by Andrzej Pagowski: Kiesłowski Anew*

### BELARUSIAN STATE CIRCUS

23 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
21-23, 26.04 Show of Giant Fountains. *Amazing City*

### LOSHITSA ESTATE

8 Chizhevsky Lane  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> May. *Embroidered Beauty*  
Until 9<sup>th</sup> May. *Loshitsa Park Legend*

## THEATRES

### BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square  
20.04. *Carmen* 21.04. *Easter Rings;*  
*Passions (Rogneda)* 22.04. *Night of Romance* 23.04. *Love and Death*  
26.04. *Viva la Mamma!*

### THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue  
20.04. *Wolves and Sheep*  
21.04. *Forgetting Herostratos* 22.04.  
*Who Laughs Last* 23.04. *Robbery at Midnight*  
26.04. *Unnamed Star* 27.04. *Even a Wise Man Stumbles*

### BELARUSIAN REPUBLICAN YOUNG SPECTATOR'S THEATRE

26 Engels Street  
20.04. *Savage Hunt of King Stakh*  
21.04. *Belarusian Vaudevilles* 22.04.  
*Cat's House* 23.04. *Merry Roger*  
27.04. *Syroezhka; Cherry Orchid*

### BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street  
20 and 21.04. *Shasha in Left Boot; Dog's Heart* 22 and 23.04. *Not All Hare Are Rabbit* 27.04. *Christmas Story*

### PALACE OF THE REPUBLIC

1 Oktyabrskaya Square  
21.04. *Button 13th Napoleon*

### YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street  
20.04. *Abduction of Europe, or Ursula Radziwill's Theatre*  
21.04. *Kolyady Night*  
22.04. *Marusya's Fairy-Tale concert-performance; School of Taxpayers*  
23.04. *Crystal Shoe; Art* 26.04. *Tyke*  
27.04. *Local Cabaret*

### MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street  
20.04. *Innkeeper* 21.04. *Bridegrooms*  
22.04. *Woe from Wit* 23.04. *He and She*  
26.04. *Testosterone* 27.04. *Lady for a Day*

### REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street  
20.04. *Medea Syndrome* 21.04. *Belarus. Didactic* 22.04. *I'm Not Ashamed; Adam's Jokes*  
23.04. *Eternal Song* 26.04. *Chernobyl Prayer*  
27.04. *Living to Premiere*

### BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street  
21.04. *The Bat* 22.04. *Adventures of Kai and Gerda (The Snow Queen)*  
23.04. *Buratinoby; Clandestine Marriage*  
27.04. *Cherry Orchid*