



Ambassadors on the eve of the ceremony of presenting credentials

# Building relationships requires responsibility

On accepting credentials from foreign ambassadors, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, notes the necessity of building and strengthening bridges between countries in both the West and East

By Vladimir Khromov

“Today it’s necessary to build and strengthen bridges — political, economic and humanitarian — between countries and integration associations both in the West and the East. It’s vital to find more things in common which will unite countries and nations,” said Mr. Lukashenko.

The Belarusian capital has long had the status of an efficient negotiation venue, not only regarding Ukrainian problems. This year, Minsk has hosted two important international forums: the meeting of foreign ministers of the Central European Initiative, where Belarus is current chair and a session of the

Parliamentary Assembly for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

At this session, and following on from the UN General Assembly’s meeting, Belarus proposed an initiative to be launched under the OSCE aegis. This would be a wide discussion on a new Helsinki process, aimed at tackling the knot of contradictions between states within the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasia. “We’ve keen to launch a ‘Helsinki-2’ process. I believe that you, dear ambassadors, will be able to make your own contribution to the creation of a group of like-minded states aiming to promote and implement this important initiative,” asserted Mr. Lukashenko, addressing the ambassadors.

The President underlined the fact that Belarus is a peaceful, stable and safe country. The absence of inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflicts is a major advantage of our country in the global economic and political arena. “In dialogue with its partners, Belarus has always adhered to the principles of openness, honesty, equality and justice. Now, when the situation in the world is far from being calm, these approaches are especially vital. The consequent and pragmatic policy of our country enabled us to normalise and reinforce relations with western countries. We’ve managed to overcome disagreements and we are now building a new platform of co-operation based on mutual respect and a balance of interests.”

It was also said during the meeting, that we shouldn’t underestimate the uniting powers of culture and sport. In 2019, Belarus will welcome the 2nd European Games, while in 2021 it will be hosting the IIHF World Championships with Latvia. “I sincerely hope that representatives of your countries will be among the participants and guests of these large-scale competitions,” said the Head of State.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, Belarus is ready to develop collaboration with states on all continents. Addressing the ambassadors, he described key areas for co-operation with each of the attending states.

## Conversation about peace

Belarus welcomes a representative forum of European spiritual-religious leaders, with Minsk hosting a plenary session of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences

By Vladimir Mikhailov

The participants of the assembly — heads and representatives of bishops' conferences from 45 countries — discussed topics dedicated to youth and Europe as a common entity.

Catholicism in Belarus is the second largest religion, with an ancient history and centuries-old spiritual and cultural traditions. Over the last twenty years, the Roman-Catholic Church in Belarus has been given, or returned at least 300 buildings, and the process continues.

The arrival of such high-ranking Catholic representatives in Minsk recognises the Belarusian policy of peace and accord, noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, as he met with participants of the plenary session the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). He continued, "Today, Belarus is not just the geographical centre of Eu-



Participants of the session of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences

rope. This is God's gift. For many centuries Belarus has been the country where different religions coexist in harmony. Their interaction has had a strong impact on the formation of the Belarusian nation, its cultural and spiritual development."

Mr. Lukashenko remarked that the hosting of the CCEE plenary session in Belarus now is symbolic. This year we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the first old-Belarusian printed book. It was Francysk Skaryna's Psalter. The work of the printing pioneer made the Gospel more accessible to Eastern Slavonic nations. "Moreover, this meeting takes place in the year when we mark the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Holy See. I believe that our co-operation with the Catholic Church will develop further in the name of peace."

Mr. Lukashenko believes that re-

### WORD-FOR-WORD

Alexander Lukashenko, President of Belarus:

The meeting between the Pope and Patriarch Kirill, which took place in Cuba was also discussed. I think we should consider their meeting here, in Minsk. This is the place where the problems of the West and the East, the North and the South can be discussed.

ligious beliefs can and should play an important role in settling conflicts in the world. "Today we see that many countries face a spiritual crisis. This threat is more dangerous than all economic challenges. In fact, economic issues have their roots in it. They emerge because of the lack of spirituality. Crisis is in people's minds. This is the prime cause of all economic issues," asserted the President.

He commented that the indignant population of European countries is growing older, and the birth rate is falling. These negative demographic processes emerge against the

backdrop of the moral degradation of society, weakening of traditional family values, and a massive inflow of migrants. "As a result, that may lead to tragic consequences, the degeneration of ancient and important European civilisations," said Mr. Lukashenko. "People should not lose the God-given moral compass that allows us to distinguish good from evil."

The role of Belarus in building a peaceful European future is considerable, noted the President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, Archbishop of Genoa,

Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, as he met the President. Mr. Bagnasco thanked Belarus for the opportunity to meet in Minsk, on behalf of the participants of the plenary assembly of the CCEE. "We're playing a great part in forming the future of our nations by holding this event. We should answer the questions that every young person bears in his or her heart," said Mr. Bagnasco, adding that the church shows a keen interest in Europe's further development and peaceful future. Mr. Bagnasco drew attention to the importance of the history of Minsk which turned 950 this year, and the 500th anniversary of the Francysk Skaryna's Psalter. The CCEE President thanked Alexander Lukashenko for the co-operation between the state and church in Belarus. Angelo Bagnasco believes that such close collaboration in Belarus and other European countries will contribute to peaceful development in general.

Belarus is becoming an attractive centre for both sides of the continent, said the Chairman of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops in Belarus, Metropolitan of Minsk and Mogilev, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz. Many meetings take place in the Palace of Independence, but it has never hosted such many representatives of the Catholic church. "This is one more piece of evidence to prove that Belarus, which is geographically located in the centre of Europe, is becoming a centre of attraction for both sides of the continent for politicians, economists, figures of culture and science or athletes, as well as for religious leaders," said the Metropolitan. According to him, the meeting between the President and representatives of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences shows the respect of the state towards the Catholic church and is a sign of the development of relations between them.



Ramzan Kadyrov

By Alexey Fedosov

The development of industrial co-operation should be a key avenue of interaction between Belarus and the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, Alexander Lukashenko noted, as he met with the Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov

Industrial co-operation should become a key avenue of interaction, believes the President. This is the most pro-

## Guest has arrived from the Caucasus

gressive mutually beneficial form of collaboration which will help meet the demand of the regional market and create new high-tech jobs.

"It is great that you are focused on advanced technologies because they are the future. If you were focused on the things of today, you would be lagging behind in a year or two. Instead, you take on very serious projects, and we are ready to join them, to find our niche there," asserted the President.

The Head of State pointed out the possibility of expanding interaction in view of the car production launch in the Chechen Republic. "Some of our enterprises, for example, Avtokomponenty, have the experience of working with

Russia. We can co-operate with you. Of course, you can buy these vehicle components in any other country. However, we guarantee good quality and prices, we're very responsible partners," he said. Moreover, Mr. Lukashenko emphasised the importance of a responsible partner. Belarus lost hundreds of millions of Dollars because of interaction with irresponsible companies. "We do not have any problems with you because your state structure relies on strong authority, there is influence in all sectors. It is the same in Belarus," added the President.

He also suggested developing liaisons in machine building. Belarus has been a leading country in this field since the times of the Soviet

Union. Petrochemistry is also a promising industry. "We can offer our services in oil extraction and processing if you are interested. Our company Belorusneft is working in many parts of the world." Special attention was drawn to the production of passenger and municipal equipment. "Look at it, if you like it, you can use it in Chechnya. We can set up a joint venture and produce this equipment together," said Mr. Lukashenko.

Belarusian specialists can also take part in the development of agriculture and rural areas in general in the Chechen Republic. "The Caucasus has always been famous for its rural development. I believe that rural areas will always be a priority in the Caucasus," added

the President. They discussed the development of tourism, "We're open to you: you can look and learn. You can share your best practices with us, we will share ours. But this visit should mark the beginning of good co-operation with your region," he concluded. Mr. Kadyrov agrees that the development of inter-regional collaboration strengthens Belarusian-Russian relationships. "We've been studying the economy of your country for several years. I believe that today's meeting will help develop our relations in the economic, industrial, and agricultural dimensions." According to Mr. Kadyrov, over the last few years, they have managed to completely restore the Chechen Republic based on an

economy built on the potential of whole region of the Northern Caucasus, with many millions of population. "As you have said, if a pilot project is launched in Chechnya for the whole Northern Caucasus, it would be beneficial for your enterprises and for us," said Mr. Kadyrov.

The Head of the Chechen Republic told journalists about the results of his negotiations with the President of Belarus. "I greatly enjoyed the meeting. I have long wished to meet and to discuss issues. I believe today we have found answers to all our questions," he described the talks as fruitful, with the two sides agreeing to develop trade-economic interaction across particular avenues.

# Partners may leave but will still remain with us

During the meeting with Alan Duncan, the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, noted that he regrets that the UK is leaving the European Union from the point of view of the development of Belarusian-European relations in general

By Vasily Kharitonov

“My initial thoughts on the meeting are that, first, it’s great that a top-ranking official, a member of the government of a highly-developed and advanced country has finally decided to visit Belarus. It is a good sign,” noted the Head of State. “Secondly, it is a pity that the UK is leaving the European Union. We would have had a reliable partner and friend in the EU, who would be able to give an opinion on Belarus.”

Alan Duncan thanked the Belarusian Head of State for his comments regarding the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union. “I have to constantly talk about the problems the UK is facing and explain everything to the countries that are seeking EU membership, while Britain is leaving the union,” he said.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, Belarus and the United Kingdom could cooperate in the electric transport sector. During the meeting, the President emphasised that the United Kingdom has made a very interesting decision to ban the sale and use of diesel and petrol cars from a certain year onwards. “I applaud this decision and we’ve decided to follow your example. We’re looking for the most progressive partners in this area. Let’s try to work together in Belarus,” suggested the President.

Mr. Lukashenko also suggested that the United Kingdom could more actively invest in Belarus. “Let’s



Alexander Lukashenko suggests the United Kingdom to more actively invest in Belarus

determine 3-4 substantial pilot economic projects (because the economy is the foundation of any relations) and implement them,” said the Head of State. “Let’s make it simple: the United Kingdom has enough spare money to be invested in business. We’ll create the most favourable and preferential conditions for business, and will set up 2-3 joint ventures in Belarus which will work for the benefit of the two countries.”

The President also sees potential in the joint manufacture in Belarus of goods that will be in demand on the British market. Let’s create such manufacturing in Belarus,” he said.

## WORD-FOR-WORD

### Alan Duncan:

I had a very pleasant conversation with the President of Belarus and I have clearly outlined that the UK views Belarus as a very important partner. We have talked about the UK leaving the EU. However, we aren’t leaving Europe. It’s a big honour for me to meet the President and the Foreign Minister during this visit. I hope that it will lay the foundation for the next 25 years of good relations between the UK and Belarus.

Mr. Lukashenko also noted that he expects that the visit of the UK Minister will help form an objective opinion about Belarus. “I hope that you will see Belarus and form a certain objective opinion about our country. I want you to see all the things that have been

‘overlooked’ by western politicians and public officials for so long,” asserted the Belarusian leader.

In turn, Alan Duncan remarked that it was a pleasure for him to be the first British minister to visit Belarus. “Unfortunately, it took a long time, this year we cel-

brate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations,” he said. The Minister also conveyed greetings from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May.

The arrival of Alan Duncan is the first visit to Belarus of a representative of the British Government at such a high level. In October 2016, a member of the British royal family, Prince Michael of Kent, visited and he was also welcomed by the Head of State.

As far as the economy is concerned, the trade turnover between Belarus and the UK was around \$1.5bn in January-July 2017, or almost 200 percent against a similar period in the previous year.

Belarusian exports reached around \$1.4bn. Belarus primarily exports oil products, bitumen mixtures on natural mineral tars, metallurgy goods and furniture to the UK and imports internal combustion engines, alcoholic drinks, medication, passenger cars and electric transformers. In 2016, exports of Belarusian services totalled \$199.7m. Over the same period, \$1.46bn of investments, including almost \$1.39bn of direct injections, were attracted into the Belarusian economy.

Today, 264 enterprises with British investments are functioning in Belarus, including 158 joint ventures and 105 foreign companies.

# What deputies have in their portfolio

By Yevgeny Kononovich

## Deputies of the National Assembly’s House of Representatives at the autumn parliamentary session, launched on October 2nd, plan to ratify the Customs Code of the Eurasian Economic Union

The major internal document will be a draft Republican budget for the next year. Its ‘zero reading’ will

take place in October. This information was expressed by Vladimir Andreichenko, the Chairman of the House of Representatives, at the session. He also praised some of his colleagues for their suggested proposals for the package of budgetary documents. This tackles the distribution of funds for the highways budget. Parliamentarians believe that this should be spent on the repair of local roads, as well as streets which are a continu-

ation of these roads.

“The permanent commissions currently have 58 draft laws. Practically half of these are already prepared and will be included in the agenda of the session,” said Mr. Andreichenko. He also called on deputies to speed up work on draft laws of the economic bloc. Issues of counteracting monopolistic activity, public private partnership, state purchases, investments and privatisation acquire

special topicality considering the planned liberalisation of the business climate in the country. International topics won’t be ignored. In October, our delegation will go to Andorra to take part in the PA OSCE autumn session. Mr. Andreichenko demanded greater activity and efficiency in inter-parliamentary dialogue from the deputies.

“Our voice in the PA OSCE can and should be heard more often. We

need to more actively promote our resolutions. By the summer session in Berlin, we should be very well prepared. There’s enough time to think through the topic and content of our resolutions,” noted Mr. Andreichenko. Another proposal by the Speaker is to organise the first international exhibition in Minsk, *Belarus — ASEAN EXPO* and a business forum, involving the states of South East Asia.”

# Green corridor for business

Preparation of legal acts aimed to develop entrepreneurship and stimulate business activity has entered its final stage. A corresponding working group has developed ten draft documents and these all have been already submitted to the President. The first three are draft decrees 'On the Regulation of the Activity of Individuals', 'On Tax Consultation' and 'On the Development of Trade, Public Catering and Public Services'. The documents were discussed during the President's working meetings with the Minister for Taxes and Duties, Sergey Nalivaiko, and the Minister for Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, Vladimir Koltovich.

By Dmitry Kryat

What is the essence of the innovations? Primarily they considerably simplify the process of starting up a business. For example, the Decree 'On Regulation of Activity of Individuals' expands the list of types of economic activity which people can undertake without registering as individual entrepreneurs. It would be enough just to pay a single tax. Using this scheme, one will be able to independently sell culinary items, repair furniture, watches, footwear, sew clothes, build stoves, service computers, provide hairdressing services and design interiors, etc. The list of similar businesses is large and many of them can be run from one's own home. No excessive red tape — only the skill and desire are needed.

In recent times, the creation of an institute of tax consultants has been actively discussed in the country. It has proved popular in many European countries. It refers to professional mediation between business and tax bodies. A consultant ensures faultless keeping of accounts, calculation and payment of taxes while also being liable for the



Entrepreneurs are keen on innovations in the sphere of business regulation

quality of their work and risks management (because of this activity) are always insured. It's up to entrepreneurs either to use the services of a tax consultant or not. However, it's evident that such mediation protects business from unintentional errors and violations, as well as possible manifestations of corruption.

The goal of the draft decree 'On the Development of Trade, Public Catering and Public Services' proceeds from its name. The document focuses attention on rural areas and small towns with a population of up to 10,000 people. In recent years, these have seen the reduction of shops, public catering facilities

and consumer service establishments, as it's difficult to run such businesses with such a small number of clients. Therefore, regional councils are to be given wide powers to present tax preferences in these spheres. In separate regions, they will be able to establish a special taxation regime with legal entities paying

only 6 percent tax on income and individual entrepreneurs paying a single base amount. A range of privileges also refers to land use, with state property suggested to be sold to businesses without an auction. The President stipulated the major principle of the innovation, "It goes without saying that trade, public catering and consumer

services are very important and, primarily, in small towns and villages. Measures that we will take should primarily target this sector. It's necessary to remove all unnecessary measures, hindering the development of business and preventing them from working efficiently. We need to do everything simply but everything should be clear for people and safe from the sanitary point of view and organisational measures. This is the concept."

A similar approach should be used to improve conditions in any sphere. The proposal of experts in taxation also aims to simplify the existing rules. The only thing pointed out by the President to the Minister for Taxes and Duties is that the creation of an institute of tax consultants shouldn't lead to the mass movement of professionals from tax authorities into the new sphere of activity. All three draft decrees have been primarily approved. From the strategic point of view, the orientation of these documents is apparent on the promotion of self-employment and the improvement of living conditions in small and medium-sized settlements. Several more documents are to be submitted very soon.

## Bringing positive consequences

By Alexey Fedosov

**If the aim is to generalise all business needs regarding the improvement of economic conditions, then only two words are needed: more freedom**

The key is to ensure minimal state interference for entrepreneurship through the reduction of excessive regulations, which are now widely applied. There are simple basic requirements: to work honestly and pay taxes, to ensure the rights and lawful interests of labour collectives. As regards the remaining aspects, it is best that directors are not unduly constrained by bureaucratic details. A draft decree 'On Entrepreneurship Development' is aimed at building this model. The document has been presented to the President by the First Deputy Prime Minister — Vasily Matyushevsky. During their working meeting, a report was also made on improving licensing procedures.

The most important innovation,

perhaps, lies in the fact that the notification procedure is simplified for the most common activities. The list includes utility and travel services, trade, catering, passenger transportation, agricultural production, and building materials amongst others. These are the spheres which — according to the Economy Ministry — employ up to 95 percent of small and medium-sized enterprises. The procedure of launching a business will be simple and clear. It will only be necessary to apply to an executive committee through the one-stop-shop principle, to send it by mail or through the electronic services portal; a business can start running the next day. The only requirement is to act in line with the law, nobody can prevent someone from attempting to run their own business.

In addition, stability in the field of taxation is another important factor in the formation of a comfortable business environment. Until 2020, a moratorium on the introduction of

new taxes and the increase in current rates has been announced. Moreover, the procedure for obtaining various permits and documents will be simplified. While gaining much freedom however, a company head must realise that they bear full responsibility for the functioning of the company. They are responsible if — due to their fault — the company's work damages state or public interests, the environment, life, health, rights and lawful interests of citizens. If no criminal case is registered, administrative responsibility will be applied for such violations.

Regarding improving licensing procedures, new approaches are envisaged by a corresponding draft decree. Special permits will only be needed for activities which might generate potential threat of damage. Therefore, 3 activities and 20 works and services are excluded from the general list. No licensing will be needed for passenger transportation (excluding international), printing,



Ivan Shafarenko — a craftsman from Gomel Region

psychological, legal (except realtor) support and some other activities.

From July 1st, 2018, these licenses will only be issued in electronic form and free access to the register of such documents will be provided via the Internet. The body which issued the license is only permitted to stop a company's activity until violations are eliminated from its record; however, it is not able to terminate it or cancel its activity. This issue is now overseen exceptionally by the courts.

After the report, Mr. Matyushevsky told reporters that all the proposed innovations had been sup-

ported by the President. Speaking of another important condition of the process of improving the business environment, the official noted, "Developers of all packages of documents mostly advocate the immutability of their basic ideas. The process of improvement is logical; we need to constantly improve things. Meanwhile, the basic principles must remain unchanged. Any business planning cycle involves 10-15 years. Accordingly, all conditions — ranging from macroeconomics to regulation — should be predictable for the entrepreneur."

## New-style shopping centres

Minsk is already ahead of Paris, Kiev and Moscow in the number of sales premises. What's next?

By Polina Konoga

Who amongst us could imagine some 15-20 years ago, that trade centres with cinemas, skating rinks and food courts would replace traditional clothes markets and favourite flea markets? However, the retail trade makes its own rules and today well-loved trading formats have moved into the past while customers choose modern premises suitable for both shopping and leisure.

### Competition is toughening

The expression 'sprout like mushrooms after the summer rain' wonderfully describes the retail trade centres that have been appearing countrywide in the last 15 years. Theoretically, the crisis years of 2015 and 2016 should have slowed the commercial property market but the collapse didn't happen. Trade premises in the new style continue to open, while experts agree that competition is toughening. It's believed that today, retail centres built using the shared-equity construction scheme are vulnerable and unprotected, as well as those centres whose tenant mix includes individual entrepreneurs. Famous Zerkalo (Mirror), Impuls (Impulse) and Siluet (Silhouette) trade centres belong to this older style.

A pioneer of the first generation of new style Shop & Fun (comprising trade and entertainment) was the Expobel trade centre which has no difficulties with attendance or tenants. According to Artem Davidovich, a manager of retail property projects with Tvoya Stolitsa Agency, such trade centres, as a rule, have a single management (since they have one owner), well-thought-out navigation and zoning, spacious trade



One of the new trade centres in Minsk

pavilions and 'packing' with chain retailers. Spacious centres with big public zones and a wide range of entertainments belong to the second generation of the Shop & Fun centre: Dana Mall, Galleria Minsk, GreenCity. Moreover, competition in the market isn't vertical but between centres of the same group.

"In 2015-2016, incomes of the population were falling while the number of trade centres, on the contrary, was growing. This resulted in strengthening competition between trade areas. Centres in the old style, for example, are gradually becoming empty," explained the specialist, analysing the trends of the market. "At the same time, rental rates have fallen almost everywhere: this drop slowed at the

beginning of last year. There was a small growth but it wasn't significant. Today there are too many trade centres and they can't persuade tenants to occupy the space.

**The period of quick growth of trade centres in Minsk has already passed and would-be new malls won't be as plentiful as in previous years**

There are no expectations for the end of the year: either from the owners nor from the tenants. Everyone was previously anticipating the arrival of a group of large brands of fashionable clothes to the market but now everyone is waiting for their rivals."



### Interest towards the regions

According to data of Colliers International Belarus, in the first six months, there were cases of rotation of tenants and closing of shops. Some trade centres were losing significant tenants and seriously suffering from the growth in the vacancy rate. Among the oldest operating sites, the vacancy rates have been maintained in such trade centres as MOMO, Arena-City, Titan and OUTLETO. Many areas were also empty in most first-generation retail centres.

Real property market experts are optimistic: there is room for further development, as the share of quality trade centres isn't high. This means that interested investors have the opportunity to implement large and interesting projects.

If incomes grow in the near future, a new format of trade areas — hyper malls — will appear; these will be located not within the city boundaries but outside the Minsk ring road. New trade centres will also appear in Minsk, but not within the next few years and not so many as in recent years. As far as the regions are concerned, not all regional centres are suitable for development. Today's investors have become more selective regarding the location and characteristics of the site.

At the same time, the attention of developers is drawn to cities with a population of 50,000 residents and more. This is the most fertile ground for the construction of new modern trade sites. The time of clothes markets has already passed and today customers await shopping comfort, quality and affordable prices. Mr. Davidovich gives the example: in early September, Europark trade centre opened in Slutsk, with a total area of 5,000sq.m. By the moment it opened, rental contracts were signed for 100 percent of the area. Colliers International Belarus adds that large and interesting sites were opening countrywide in the first six months of this year. For instance, Materik trade centre was opened in Grodno, Planeta Green appeared in Mogilev and TriO — in Vitebsk.

### FIGURES

Over the last two years, the combined area of trade centres in the country has increased by 55 percent. In total, the growth of the supply of rented areas in the first six months of 2017 stood at 64,400 square metres — or 5.3 percent.

## From food products to high-tech manufacturing

By Oleg Bogomazov

**Belarus is ready to supply a wide range of food products to Chinese Shandong Province, notes Belarus' Prime Minister, Andrei Kobyakov, as he met**

### the Governor of the Shandong Province, Gong Zheng

"We have seen a growing demand for high-quality food products in China. The same is true of the Shandong Province. Belarus is known for its natural and eco-friendly products.

We're ready to launch supplies of a wide range of food products, including milk, baby food, beef, poultry, beverages and confectionery. We suggest using railway transportation along the Silk Road route in container trains which are currently not

full to capacity, on the way from the European Union to China," Andrei Kobyakov said. In general, Belarus is interested in expanding co-operation with the Shandong Province on a wide range of issues, including transit on the Belt and Road route, collab-

oration in tourism and education and setting up joint high-tech enterprises in the Great Stone Industrial Park.

After the negotiations, a treaty was signed on joint activity between the Minsk Automobile Works (MAZ) and China's Weichai.

# Rain from Stary Dedin village

The village of Stary Dedin in Klimovichi District is a famous ancient settlement — built before the year 1030. This is an approximate figure, as historians can't say exactly when people settled here; it may be even earlier. The period is calculated from the age of a unique treasure discovered in the village. It is considered to be the oldest not only in Belarus, but in Eastern Europe. A boulder with commemorative inscriptions — situated at the entrance to the village — reminds visitors of this wonderful find.

By Irina Svirko

## Pot with coins

In 1926, local villager Trofim Gudkov discovered a clay pot when ploughing; over 200 ancient coins were contained within it.



Stary Dedin carefully preserves customs, with 'River Ploughing' being one of them

Specialists later speculated they were hidden between 980-985, dating the find.

The village is renowned not only for these coins. Stary Dedin is also famous for its respect for folk customs and traditions. Even now, ancient songs — resembling prayers and incantations — can be heard on the picturesque bank of the Oster River; for centuries, they have been performed here. It's also possible to see a pagan rite — the 'Call for Rain'; it has been performed in the village since ancient times. Last year, it was included on the State List of Intangible Historical and Cultural Heritage of Belarus.

The director of the centralised

club system of the Klimovichi District, Sergey Bulenkov, explains, "Speaking the language of ethnographers, Stary Dedin's villager, Galina Brikova who headed the village club in the past, is now known as the keeper of local traditions. She knows many authentic songs and dances and, since childhood, has heard about 'River Ploughing' and saw how the custom was conducted by older women. With Galina's help, the rite was restored and is now performed by members of the national folklore-ethnographic band — *Ostranka*. We would love this tradition to be upheld and develop further; to ensure this, the children's folk band — *Ostranochka* — has been

established in Stary Dedin. The rite has no specific date. It is performed when needed: when there is no rain for a long time and when crops are beginning to die in fields and gardens. It is believed if it is performed correctly, it will start raining several hours later that day or the next.

## River ploughing

In the past, only widows could participate in the rite; without a breadwinner, their families experienced great difficulty. At present, it is performed by women and young girls. They go to the Oster River to pray, come into the shallow part of the river and — to the accompaniment of ritu-

al singing — plough the surface three times. Two of them pull the plough — followed by a woman who 'ploughs' and another who helps them along.

However, in ancient times, the rite was performed slightly differently. Rain callers agreed on their intentions secretly — to ensure nobody knew of their action. They also went to the river naked. Modern women are dressed in white embroidered shirts. Moreover, many people gather by the river to observe the action. Some come from other Belarusian regions and Russia. The ceremony has been filmed several times for TV and sure enough, rain began shortly after.

## It is necessary to pass on the legacy to our descendants

The Forest Workers' Day — a professional holiday — was celebrated in Belarus by more than 35,000 workers of the industry

By Lyudmila Shestokovich

Of these, around 8,000 work in the forestries of the Minsk Region. Protection, maintenance and reproduction are only part of the work conducted daily by them, often in difficult conditions. At first sight, it may seem that the forest is a natural element — not within human control — which grows as it wants. However, it is managed with painstaking care by many specialists — growers, chain-saw operators and tractor drivers...

Director General of Minsk State Production Forestry Asso-

ciation, Sergey Matyushevsky, explains, "We have more than 87 percent of the Minsk Region's forests — covering about 1.5m hectares. There are 20 forestry-based institutions and 167 forests in the area subject to our jurisdiction.

Analysing the results of work over the last eight months, we see that by the end of the year, we'll reach the forecasted figures and fulfil the planned parameters. There is considerable variability in terms of the growth of revenues, exports and procurement of timber. Borisov forestry is a leader in terms of revenues. The forestries of

Kopyl, Berezino, Cherven, Starye Dorogi and Logoisk are also high performers. In general, the association has been occupying first place in the competition for more than a year.

There are always difficulties to face in forest management, particularly in dealing with the effects of the previous years' windfalls. Moreover, at present, our forestries are involved in developing plantations damaged by pests, still a huge issue especially in southern regions. New areas constantly appear which must be registered and the work need to be organised dealing



Belarusian forest in autumn

with cutting, utilisation of felled debris, logging and transportation of timber. Of course, it should be quickly processed so that it doesn't lose its quality and becomes part of the economic turnover. At the same time, we prepare soil in these areas for planting this autumn and next spring. New forests are created on sites where cutting was done. We hope that they will be more qualitative and efficient and will remain for our descendants.

Last year and this spring, we conducted forest restoration in an area covering more than 8,500 hectares. Much work still needs to be done this autumn. By November, we plan to finish the reconstruction of the third storey in our association, enabling our employees to work in comfortable conditions and to conduct working sessions with heads of other forestries. This is a good gift for us for Forest Workers' Day."

# Conversations on beauty

The day of beauty to celebrate beauticians, make-up designers and models, was recently celebrated in Belarus. *MT* correspondents asked workers in the beauty-industry and Minsk citizens to answer the question: what would they sacrifice for the sake of beauty and what does ‘beauty’ in the age of Instagram mean?

**Ruslan Khmelenko, stylist-designer:**

*For me beauty is not something especially important. There are more important things: I am not ready to sacrifice anything for the sake of it. For the beauty of other people however, that's another matter, after all I am a designer.*

*I hardly follow Instagram, I do not like social networks. If I was not a designer I would not have an account at all. On the Internet, beauty turns into ways to advertise member's own pages, to collect more 'likes'. It is somehow fake. Though I work in the fashion industry, I appreciate internal beauty, rather than appearance.*

**German Titov, singer:**

*For the sake of beauty, I would refuse foods which prevent a healthy way of life. I do not eat sweet products and I limit salty dishes. My passion is halvah, but for the sake of my shape I refuse it. I go to the gym twice a week.*

*I treat beauty on Instagram as a commercial project: after all, people do earn money from their accounts. These are simply beautiful pictures, and it is not necessary to get upset if you do not match these imposed ideals.*

**Darya, cosplayer:**

*Some consider that cutting one's hair is a sacrifice. While I think that it is the smallest and most painless thing that we can do for the sake of appearance. If I do not like something about the way I look — I change it at once, and I do not worry how peo-*



**Manmade beauty is great power**

*ple around me will react to that. I would hardly consider even a full facelift or other cosmetic surgery on parts of the body as a sacrifice.*

*As for beauty during the age of social networks ... If previously people looked up to beauty icons, like Monroe or Hepburn, then today many things that used to seem strange, uncommon or even scary, may be considered beautiful. Instagram partly promoted that: we can see popular people with something unusual in their appearance, even with defects — people have ceased to hide and be afraid. I see enthusiastic comments under photos of*

*such people, and it is a very good thing! Now there are no barriers, nobody needs to adapt to common ideals. Today the concept of beauty has become much wider.*

**Veronika, BSU student:**

*I do not follow fashion, and sometimes I look at modern tendencies with a smile. I think that the main sacrifice is time and energy. Bright hair, dreadlocks, tattoo or piercing — is time, money and sometimes pain. The result is often worth it though: I consider it beautiful! I can say that sacrifice is trying the new, after all you never know what will be the result of another experiment.*

*Beauty on social networks is, firstly, imitation. There are few accounts creating something new. Some imitate glamorous stars, others European or Asian models. On the other hand, 'body positive' and its primary idea is to help people with physical disabilities and make them feel beautiful. However, it seems to me that now Instagram has only one purpose — to draw attention to oneself.*

**Pavel, model at the K&Q agency:**

*I am not ready to make serious sacrifices. But at the same time, I understood that with my appearance it would be difficult to find a job. Fi-*

*nancially I am independent and I can spend on myself as much as I need to.*

*Instagram-models and catwalk models are not the same. Runway models try to transfer atmosphere and feelings, participating in shows, while the primary work of models from social networks is advertising.*

**Polina Borodacheva, holder of the title Miss Belarus 2016:**

*I am not ready to make a sacrifice of something essential for the sake of beauty, unless it's time. I work hard, not just on my appearance, but also for internal beauty, this is much more difficult.*

*Many people want to present themselves as more beautiful than they are, and search for help on the Internet. However, in pursuit of 'likes' you can forget that in life, people are not perfect. I prefer people with their imperfections, while on Instagram everyone is equally beautiful. Personally, I use the social network very rarely: I prefer to live in the moment. I do not take work from Instagram either. I should probably share news and events more often, but I am not able to put photos on in time, and often I give up that job.*

**Dmitry Vrublevsky, Acting Deputy Director — Art Manager of the National School of Beauty:**

*Making sacrifices for the sake of beauty ... It depends on whose beauty and for what. For the sake of internal, inner peace, I am ready to agree in respect of self-education, self-discipline, perfection as a person. While for the sake of external beauty, I wouldn't make a huge sacrifice. As a self-sufficient person I am satisfied with my own appearance and I'm happy to work with a hairdresser and stylist.*

*Beauty during the Instagram age is mass beauty, to some extent artificial, created by means of graphic editors, a heap of mobile applications and other stuff. Instagram imposes on us canons and nuances of beauty, but this is fleeting beauty as it changes with new applications or new images from those who have many thousands of subscribers.*

## Electric buses for European Games



**By Alexander Pimenov**

**Belkommunmash plans to supply at least 60 electric buses to Minsk for 2nd European Games in 2019, notes Belkommunmash's Department for Marketing and Sales in Belarus and Russia**

“There're plans that purchases of electric buses to replenish Minsk's public transport fleet in anticipation of the 2019 European Games are supposed to begin next

year. The enterprise intends to sell 60 electric buses in 2018. A certain number of electric buses may be also shipped in H1 2019,” note representatives of Belkommunmash.

At present, Belkommunmash offers an articulated electric bus E433, which can carry 153 passengers. Twenty innovative vehicles are already being used for two routes in Minsk. The company has also designed a short electric bus E420, which can carry 90 people. Electric buses like that will become

available in Minsk by the 2019 European Games.

The advantages of electric buses include a low environmental footprint, manoeuvrability, and increased comfort. Just like a trolleybus an electric bus is powered by electricity. Instead of overhead power lines its electricity is stored in ultra-condensers. An electric bus takes five minutes to charge to full at a terminus in order to travel for 13km. It uses 14 percent less electricity in comparison with a trol-



**Electric buses from Belkommunmash**

leybus. The bus offers space for wheelchair users with a fixation system and a driver notification system. The bus floor gets lowered

on approaching a bus stop. Moreover, there are power sockets and USB sockets for charging gadgets inside the passenger compartment.



## Multiple casualties in shooting at Las Vegas open-air music festival

At least 50 people have been killed and another 406 taken to hospital after a mass shooting at a Las Vegas concert

A gunman, named as 64-year-old local resident Stephen Paddock, opened fire from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel towards an open-air music festival attended by 22,000. He was found dead after officers stormed the room where a number of guns were found. The

attack is the worst mass shooting in recent US history.

US President Donald Trump tweeted his 'warmest condolences and sympathies' to the victims and their families, and called the shooting 'terrible'.

Sheriff Joe Lombardo described

the shooting as a 'lone wolf' attack. He said there was no information about Paddock's motives. "We have no idea what his belief system was," he said.

He added that police were now confident they had located a woman, earlier named as Marilou Dan-

ley, who was thought to have been travelling with the gunman before the attack.

Sheriff Lombardo said he was unable to give accurate details of dead and wounded, but confirmed two off-duty police officers were among those killed.



## Catalans back a 'yes' vote for independence

There have been celebrations in Barcelona after the Catalan government declared 90 percent voted in favour of splitting with Spain in the region's contentious referendum

Unconfirmed figures say 2.26 million people defied a police crackdown and cast their ballots, amounting to a 42 percent turnout.

The head of Catalonia's regional government Carles Puigdemont (Pooch da Mon) said a right to inde-

pendence had been earned.

"On this day of hope and suffering, Catalonia's citizens have earned the right to have an independent state in the form of a republic. Hence, my government, in the next few days will send the results of the vote to the Catalan Parliament, where the sovereignty of our people lies, so that it can act in accordance with the law of the referendum." The outcome is of little surprise given that many unionists had boycotted the poll.

## Marseille knife attack: two women killed, assailant shot dead

Two women were stabbed to death by a knifeman last Sunday at the main train station of the southern French city of Marseille

Patrolling soldiers shot the assailant dead, according to police. French media reported that one of the women had her throat slit, while the other was stabbed in the chest. The victims were between 17 and 20 years old, police union Unsa-Police said in a statement.

The man shouted 'Allahu Akbar' ('God is greatest' in Arabic), according to police sources, who described the attack as a 'likely terrorist act'. The assailant was carrying a butcher's knife, was around 30 years old and of North African appearance, police sources said. One source said no ID documents were found on him, but that police identified him using his fingerprints. He was known to authorities for common law crimes,



the source added.

There was also information that the man was known to police under seven different identities for close to a dozen petty crimes. However, he was not known to anti-terrorism services and was not on France's terror watchlist.

## Superfast broadband speeds for a brave new Gigaworld

Being connected is changing the way we live, work and play

What started with simple e-mails has evolved way beyond expectations. We are entering what many have termed Gigaworld. A world where millions will have access to broadband speeds of 1 gigabit per second or more.

A new generation of high-speed stable networks is already opening up a world of possibilities. A new report estimates that the Gigaworld innovation cycle will unlock a market value of 250 to 660bn Euros by 2025 in Europe. Three sectors should thrive in the next decade: mixed reality, virtual telepresence and automated living.

## Britain frustrated by slow pace of Brexit talks

Prime Minister Theresa May's top ministers are all frustrated by the slow pace of Brexit negotiations, but her team owes her its loyalty as she negotiates Britain's departure from the European Union, Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond said

At the Conservative Party's conference in Manchester, northern England, Hammond played down the importance of four new red lines set down by Foreign Minister Boris Johnson in a British newspaper that underlined the rifts in cabinet. "We're all frustrated by the slow progress that we've made over the last few months with the European Union negotiations, that's why the Prime Minister went to Florence 10 days ago and made a key speech which was designed specifically to unstick the logjam in the negotiations and move them forward," he said. "Boris' position on these issues are well known."

## Monarch Airlines has ceased operations with immediate effect

It's the largest UK airline to enter administration according to the Civil Aviation Authority

The British Government has asked CAA to charter thirty aircraft to transport stranded customers.

Customers due to fly in the UK have been told not to travel to the airport while customers outside the UK that are due to fly in the next fortnight will be brought back at no additional cost.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

## Undoubtedly, spectators in China will be greatly impressed

In late October, as part of the celebrations of the 25th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China, the National Art Museum of China in Beijing will host a solemn opening of the *Masterpieces of the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus* exhibition

By Veniamin Mikheev

A joint exhibition project by the National Art Museum of Belarus and the National Art Museum of China aims to familiarise residents and guests of Beijing with canvases by prominent masters and to show the development of Belarusian art in the context of traditions and modernity. In total, the exhibition will display around sixty 19th-20th century pictorial works from the collection of the National Art Museum of Belarus.

The uniqueness of the exhibition is that it will showcase works by painters of various generations, diverse artistic traditions and stylistic interests. The event will display works from the collections of Belarusian museums by such prominent masters of Russian art as Ilya Repin, Isaac Levitan, Ivan Shishkin, Ivan Kramskoy, Valentin Serov, Boris Kustodiev; works by the classical artists of the Belarusian 19th-20th century art — Ivan Khurtsky, Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya, Stanislav Zhukovsky, Mikhail Savitsky, Gavriil Vashchenko, May Dantsig, Victor Gromyko, Pavel Maslenikov, Alexander

Kishchenko, Vladimir Stelmashonok; and artwork by the contemporary Belarusian painters — Vladimir Tovstik, Vasily Sumarev, Valery Shkarubo, Sergey Katkov, Anton Barkhatkov and Vasily Kostyuchenko.

“In 2017 we are celebrating the 25th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Re-

public of Belarus and the People's Republic of China. The cultural programme of celebrations of this event includes performances by famous theatrical groups, organisation of concerts, exhibitions and plein airs which give a new stimulus to the bilateral cooperation in the sphere of culture and arts,” notes Vladimir Prokoptsov, Director General of the National Art Museum of Belarus. In May, Beijing hosted negotiations with the Director of the National Art Museum of China, Wu Weishan, regarding the organisation of exchange exhibitions between the two museums. At the same time, the second session of the Cultural Cooperation Commission of the Belarusian-Chinese Intergovernmental Committee took place. As far as the forthcom-

ing exhibition is concerned, the exhibition will open with a range of Russian painters from the 19th and early 20th century: Ivan Kramskoy, Ilya Repin, Ivan Shishkin, Isaac Levitan, Konstantin Makovsky, Mikhail Nesterov, Boris Kustodiev and Valentin Serov. The works by these famous authors are taken from our museum collections. Each of

the painters made their invaluable contribution to Russian and European art.” From the late 18th century, Belarus was part of the Russian Empire. For the 19th century Belarusian painters, the centres of Russian art became a place where one could receive a stimulus to creative development. For example, the wonderful Belarusian master of still-life paintings, Ivan Khurtsky, whose works will go on show at the exhibition in Beijing, studied in St. Petersburg. Two outstanding Belarusian landscape painters of the 19th-20th century studied in Moscow — Stanislav Zhukovsky and Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya. It should be also mentioned that alongside landscapes, Zhukovsky worked often in the sphere of interior painting, and pictures



Works by sculptor Sergey Selikhanov to go on show in Beijing

on this topic will be certainly displayed at the event. “The exposition will be continued with works from the collection of the Belarusian art of the second half of the 20th century — comprising the largest part of the museum collection and boasting more than 15,000 exhibits,” notes Mr. Prokoptsov. “This part of the exhibition is focused on

embodied in the works by Vitaly Tsvirko, Pavel Maslenikov, Anton Barkhatkov, Sergey Katkov, Piotr Daneliya, Anatoly Baranovsky, presented at the exhibition. Undoubtedly, the works by Vladimir Stelmashonok are a bright point in 1960s painting. He was one of the first to creatively re-interpret the traditions of Belarusian folk culture.

“Socio-political change in the late 20th century, and Belarus' gaining its independence in 1991 marked a completely new stage of development in the artistic culture of our country,” says Mr. Prokoptsov. “The processes of transformation determined the change of a single artistic concept of socialist realism into the diversity of artistic trends, areas, genres, forms and individual styles. Fundamental spiritual-moral tasks of modernity are reflected in the pictorial art of that period; the issue of national cultural self-identification and the necessity to understand oneself within the borders of one's own culture are top priority.” The creativity of many



In the hall of the National Art Museum of Belarus



Vladimir Prokoptsov donates his work to the National Art Museum of China

presenting the creativity of a talented group of artists of the new generation who stood at the roots of the national artistic school of painting: Ivan Akhremchik, Pavel Maslenikov, Gavriil Vashchenko, May Dantsig, Vladimir Stelmashonok, Victor Gromyko and Leonid Shchemelev.”

Reflection on people's peaceful lives became an important topic in Belarusian painting of the 1950s-1960s. Episodes of post-war activity are embodied in Adolf Gugel's *Dreamer* while an image of the post-war revival of Minsk is captured in May Dantsig's *New Districts Are Emerging*. These pictures will be also seen by the visitors of the Beijing exhibition.

In the 1960s, the pictorial gift of famous Belarusian landscape painters was fully revealed. Love towards one's native land, lyricism and the harmony of paints in reflecting simple everyday motifs, as well as unusual coloristic ability and deep psychologism are

Belarusian painters is seen in their keen interest in the traditions of Belarusian antiquity and accent on roots and sources of the Belarusian nation. Painters are inspired by the traditions of ethno-culture, folk customs and mytho-poetic heritage, while an enhanced interest towards folklore material, interpretation of folk holidays, legends, folk tales and parables, is seen in works by Nikolay Seleshchuk and Vasily Kostyuchenko.

A new view of reality, connected with photo-realism, the aspiration to reflect our times in a documentary way is found in the works by Valery Shkarubo and Boris Kazakov. Unique cultural and time ‘renaissance’ can be seen in the pieces by Vladimir Tovstik who combines both the past and modernity in his pictures.

“Today the creativity of Belarusian painters — both representatives of the older generation and young artists — is closely connected with the life of their country and it can't be imagined without universal philosophical and aesthetic views,” believes Mr. Prokoptsov. “Evolution from purely narrative thematic structures towards symbolical-metaphorical language is becoming logical, with the works more often showing the reality of culture and its symbolic space rather than a visible and physical reality.”

It's to be expected that the works of Belarusian painters in the Beijing exhibition, will demonstrate unique colour, spiritual integrity and the emotional nature of Belarusian pictorial art, as well as a succession of our great traditions and the national identity of domestic culture.

## Don Quixote of modern theatre

Our conversation began with the creative credo of the hero of the day: Don Quixote, who fights against the windmills of human vices and shortcomings. Don Quixotes have never beaten windmills and the theatre is unable to eradicate the evils of society and man. However, Don Quixotes and Lancelots must continue to fight against evil — while understanding that they'll never win. If, for even a short time, they cease to do this, evil and injustice would overwhelm the world.

By Nelli Krivosheeva

People's Artist of Belarus — Director Boris Lutsenko — is 80 and he answers our questions:

**Mr. Lutsenko, you have often been called a Don Quixote, a patriarch of our theatre, a master and a living classic. How do you feel about these names?**

*I do not think the same way about myself. I do my favourite job. I'm happy and grateful to fate for this opportunity.*

**Mark Zakharov once said that if you are a director, you must direct a Shakespeare play.**

*I began my career path with Shakespeare. Our teacher at the Theatre Institute [now known as the Belarusian Academy of Arts] — Vladimir Malankin — invited me and Valery Raevsky (we were then novice filmmakers) to join him in lecturing future actors. My first diploma show was 'Laughter and Passion for Shakespeare'.*

**You then staged *Macbeth* at the Russian Theatre, *Hamlet* at the Theatre Institute, the Theatre-Studio of Cinema Actors, the Maxim Gorky Theatre and Yaroslavl's Volkov Theatre...**

*I think for those who live and work in Belarus — if you are a director, it is necessary to stage a work by Yanka Ku-*



People's Artist of Belarus Boris Lutsenko

*pala, Andrey Makaenok, Ales Adamovich, Alexey Dudarev for your own biography.*

**You've been addressing these authors regularly...**

*I fall in love with the material and always want to find new facets of the same play. Time is changing and viewers are as well. As Nemirovich-Danchenko believed: the purpose of the theatre is to disturb the slumbering conscience.*

**Few people know that your path to the professional art began with cinema — with a cameo in *Soldiers*. Interestingly, Innokenty**

**Smoktunovsky appeared on the screen for the first time. It must be nice to recall your cinema experience...**

*This is unforgettable. I was then a student of the Rostov-on-Don railway technical school; a people's theatre was situated not far from it, at the House of Culture. It was led by Roman Gukovsky. I was immediately given a major role in 'Adult Children'. It happened that the show was viewed by an assistant of the director of 'In Trenches of Stalingrad' (which was shown as 'Soldiers' on the*

*wide screen). A week later, I received a startling letter: along with my friend, we were approved for the minor roles of young officers and were invited to shooting at Kavkazskaya station. You can imagine what I felt then — especially since the script was written by Victor Nekrasov.*

*Without hesitation, we bought tickets and went to the site. We were given a scenario. We read it and were very worried. Along with Mr. Nekrasov we went to the director and shooting took place the following day. We*

*then got acquainted with Vsevolod Safonov (he starred in the same episode as we did). Sadly, we didn't meet Innokenty Smoktunovsky then. A premiere later took place in Leningrad, with captions listing my name. I saw myself on the screen and was very proud.*

**You constantly excite audiences with bright, clever, subtle, philosophical, surprisingly modern productions. Your plays are not comedy; they are reflections, warnings and parables. Not long ago, you**

**amazed everyone as an actor in your own *He and She* performance. Being an acknowledged director, how did you dare try yourself as an artist?**

*I began working as an actor at the Syzran Theatre and I recollect Rostislav Yankovsky's last role in my 'Double Eternity' with pain. Moreover, he was planned to play in 'He and She', with Bella Masumyan. Having lost my close friend and a great actor, I dared to play this role myself. The main idea I got from it is that it's truly hard for actors. Inspiration is important. Otherwise, it's hard to play a part that audiences will believe in.*

**Mr. Yankovsky once said: to be happy, it's important for an artistic person to choose the right profession and have a reliable backup — their home. It seems you are not mistaken with the profession. How about the rest?**

*I was lucky to meet Lyuda; we live together for 53 years. I feel safe with her. Lyuda graduated from the conservatory and lectured in conducting at the Glinka Musical College for many years. She is very talented and well-educated and she bakes wonderful pies.*

**There are things still ahead of you! I congratulate you on the anniversary and hope to meet you at the next premiere.**

## Entrusted to represent the country

By Natalia Stepuro

**What led to the success of Helena Meraai who will represent our country at Junior Eurovision in Georgia?**

Helena Meraai will be representing Belarus at the Junior Eurovision in Georgia. This was decided by the professional jury and spectators, who unanimously gave 12 points to the young dark-eyed beauty. When, after all the emotion, she had calmed down we spoke to the artiste about her performance and the people who have brought her to success.

**Helena, tell us, how did you meet Dakota who has written the song *I Am the One* for you?**

*Last year at the 'Battle of Talents' where Dakota was one of the contest's teachers. Interestingly her hus-*

*band Vlad Sokolovsky also selected me. Then it was my turn to choose a teacher and I went for Dakota. It was very enjoyable to work with her and I have reached the final. I really wanted to take part in 'Junior Eurovision' and we asked whether she could write a song for me. She agreed and Vlad worked on the sound and arrangement. However, my teacher Olga Drozdova has slightly polished the composition. When Dakota listened to me performing the song she said: 'It's a bomb!'. I was very happy that after my victory in the national selection round, she was one of the first to congratulate me on her Instagram page.*

**Was your teacher pleased with the performance?**

*My teacher wouldn't have been my teacher if she had been pleased*

*with everything! She always demands a perfect performance so she immediately showed me my mistakes. I understand that I still have much to work on. I need to learn how to manage my excitement, as this prevented me from completely revealing my soul during the performance, though I was trying hard. There will be a big stage in Tbilisi, as well as many spectators.*

*I have been co-working with Olga Drozdova for the third year. She isn't merely my teacher, she is my friend. Every lesson brings much joy. I remember how I first began to study everything from scratch with her. Together we took part in the 'Golos. Children' TV project where I was a part of Dima Bilan's team and 'New Wave' where we came first.*

**Tells us something about**

**yourself...**

*I have been singing from the age of eight though I first appeared on the stage when I was just three. My nursery teacher in the kindergarten took me to take part in the 'Teacher of the Year' contest where I sang a song from Mary Pop-pins and my teacher won.*

*I study at gymnasium #3 where I'm in the ninth grade. This year I finish the choir department of the musical school and I also play the piano. I feel that this year will be very difficult. In autumn, I will be preparing for 'Junior Eurovision' and then I will have to take exams. I enjoy studying and last year my average grade was 9.5. I like the history of Belarus and the Belarusian lan-*



Helena Meraai

*guage. Are you surprised? Why? I'm a Belarusian. My father was born in Syria but I have been living in Minsk all my life and I'm very happy that I was entrusted to represent the country at such a high level.*

# Doing their best but Gunners perform better

## BATE football club defeated by London's Arsenal in home match of Europa League

By Alexey Grishin

One of the giants of English football came to the match with BATE without many of its leading players. Arsenal's French coach allowed the experienced Czech goalkeeper Petr Čech, attackers Chilean Alexis Sanchez and Frenchman Alexandre Lacazette, Spanish defender Nacho Monreal, German midfielder Mesut Özil and other players to rest. However, even those from the reserves list immediately showed that they were top players. In the 9th minute, experienced midfielder Theo Walcott opened the score and, shortly after, doubled the score when he capitalised on a serious mistake by BATE goalkeeper Denis Shcherbitsky. Three minutes later, Rob Holding scored to make it 3:0. The Borisov team, however, did not give up and some time later, Mirko Ivanić scored a spectacular goal. Before the break, both teams had opportunities but the ball failed to reach the net.

Immediately after the second half started, Stanislav Dragun and Jack Wilshere clashed in the penalty

area with Dragun receiving a yellow card. The penalty was converted by Olivier Giroud (the hundredth goal for Arsenal for the French striker).

Alexander Yermakovich's trainees had no plans to give up and had several quick attacks; one of them was finished by the team's top striker — Mikhail Gordeichuk. The hosts continued to attack but Arsenal's defence held up. Despite the loss, Belarus' champions performed well: in the second half, they played good football and the fans showed their appreciation.

As BATE's head coach Alexander Yermakovich stated at a press conference after the European League's match against Arsenal, the Borisov team saved face. "It was important to score after such an unsuccessful start. A header by Mirko Ivanić inspired hope, but the penalty in the beginning of the second half spoiled everything. After the break, we moved forward with a great force and I think fans liked the second half even more," he added.

Speaking about the first half, the BATE coach emphasised mistakes.

"Before the break, our players were not attacking well. BATE midfielders were badly placed often losing the ball," he said.

Arsenal needed great effort to keep the advantage in their match against the Borisov footballers — as the London club's head coach, Arsène Wenger, noted later. "The hosts played a rather interesting game. We needed much effort to keep the advantage. In the match against BATE, we had a pretty experimental line-up. Our young players joined but I liked how my trainees performed for about 60 minutes of the match," he said.

Mr. Wenger also congratulated Olivier Giroud who scored his 100th goal for the London club. "We can congratulate him on his achievements as not all good players manage to achieve such a landmark," Mr. Wenger added.

After the press conference, one of the head coaches spoke of the beauty of the Belarusian capital. "Minsk is a wonderful city!" he said.

Some parts of the match were truly memorable. This year, Mirko



Arsenal players did better

Ivanić is so relaxed that can even score with his head! His goal was fabulous and just in time to ensure both the fans and the team were not emotionally exhausted. Eventually, BATE has come out of its stupor to demonstrate its European Cup football — which we saw in Belgrade a couple of weeks ago and were anticipating on the recent September night. Of course, we can criticise the

referee for the unnecessary penalty kick in Shcherbitsky's goal in the debut of the second half. However, even against a score of 1:4, BATE continued to play attacking football. The desire to continue naturally led to Gordeichuk's goal — 2:4. Before all hopes were lost, the hosts had enough goal chances but none were realised, squashing hope for a stunning comeback.

# Game is a dream which comes true

By Igor Svitov

**Max Mirnyi is among the top five most successful doubles tennis players in history**

The famous Belarusian tennis player has reached the level of 750 doubles match wins at ATP tournaments in the Open Era.

In the history of world tennis, Max Mirnyi has become the fifth athlete to reach the mark of 750 doubles match wins in ATP tournaments. Max joined the outstanding company of Canadian Daniel Nestor (1,053 victories), American Mike Bryan (1,052) and Bob Bryan (1,038), as well as Australian Todd Woodbridge (782). Among these



players the Belarusian is ranked fourth.

"I'm very pleased that I have reached this stage of my career. In the beginning I couldn't ever imagine this would happen. At that time, playing at ATP level was a dream which is still coming true. I would like to thank my family, coaches and all my partners who have helped me achieve this!" tennis. by cites the words of Max Mirnyi, who is conducting his 22nd season in professional tennis.

In 2004, Max won three ATP tournaments of the Masters series, partnered by Mahesh Bhupathi and one tournament with the outstanding Swiss player Roger Federer.

Three years later, Mirnyi, partnered with Jonas Björkman who is now training Croatian tennis player Marin Čilić, earned seven titles, including three in the Masters series and victory at the ATP final tournament and Roland Garros.

Last year, Max Mirnyi and the Philippine star Conrad Huey, achieved victory at the doubles tournament in Acapulco and qualified for the ATP final tournament in London where Max was performing for the 10th time.

In total, over his career, Max Mirnyi earned 49 titles in doubles, including 16 titles at Masters tournaments and 6 titles in Grand Slams with 18 various partners.

# Crazy about Leo

By Denis Krymov

**Victoria Azarenko's son has launched his own Instagram account. Of course, this has been done with help of his mother as the little boy is not yet a year old. He promises to post photos and texts about his life regularly.**

Time will show how everything progresses, but the fact that 10-month-old Leo has his own Internet account has been appreciated by most sports fans. It will not be long before the court hearing aimed at settling issues in the relationship between Victoria Azarenko and her ex-boyfriend Billy McKeague, takes place. The two parties involved in the conflict are trying to take the most advantageous positions on the eve of the hearing. A child clearly acts as a way of influencing public opinion in this respect.

A day before little Leo appeared on Instagram, Billy McKeague had posted photos with his son. They feature nothing extraordinary: a walk in the stroller, games and riding on his father's shoulders and a



toy car. However, the boy's face was revealed to the world for the first time. Until then, Victoria rarely showed any photos and only from the back. Leo's personal page — which was created a day after — was an attempt by the Belarusian tennis player to counteract the father's posts.

At present, Victoria remains in California and shares the time spent with the baby with his father; each party is doing everything possible to use this time fruitfully. The ball is in McKeague's court now and, before the trial (scheduled for October 12th), fans are likely to learn many more details of family life.

# 12 AGENDA

The Minsk Times Thursday, October 5, 2017

## Cycling of the week



Sporting ride for female cyclists — Lady on a Bike — held in Grodno

### EXHIBITIONS

#### NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS

20 Lenin Street  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> October. *From Book Treasure*  
Until 3<sup>rd</sup> December. *Napoleon Orda. Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Country*  
Until 10<sup>th</sup> December. *Treasures of Ancient Egypt*

#### NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marx Street  
Until 10<sup>th</sup> January. *Fashionable Century*

#### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 9<sup>th</sup> October. *Anatoly Dribas: My Minsk* Until 20<sup>th</sup> November. *Skaryna's Letters and Words* Until 31<sup>st</sup> December. *Francysk Skaryna and His Epoch*

#### STATE MUSEUM OF HISTORY OF BELARUSIAN LITERATURE

13 Maxim Bogdanovich Street  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> December. *Kandrat Krapiva: from Childhood to Maturity*

#### MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square  
Until 31<sup>st</sup> December. *Meeting the Master*

#### HOUSE-MUSEUM OF FIRST RSDRP CONGRESS

31a Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> October. *Revolution Names*

#### UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE ART GALLERY

1 Oktyabrskaya Square  
Until 14<sup>th</sup> October. *Days of European Heritage: Legacy and Nature*

#### VLADISLAV GOLUBOK PARLOUR

14 Starovilenskaya Street  
Until 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Exhibition of embroidered pictures: *I'll Open You a Wonderful World*

#### MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL CULTURE HISTORY

5 Muzykalny Lane  
Until 10<sup>th</sup> October. *Masson Signs*

#### LOSHITSA ESTATE

8-2 Chizhevsky Lane  
Until 14<sup>th</sup> October. *Jointly with Minsk*

#### CAT MUSEUM

23 Internatsionalnaya Street  
Until 30<sup>th</sup> November. *Miraculous Autumn*

#### SVOBODY SQUARE

Until 15<sup>th</sup> October. *Free Museum: People and Items*

#### CHELYUSKINTSEV PARK OF CULTURE AND REST

84/1 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018. *Legacy of Belarus: Dedicated to Minsk's 950<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

### THEATRES

#### BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street  
05.10. Tours of the M. Lermontov Stavropol Academic Drama Theatre:  
Luxurious Wedding 06.10. Tours of the M. Lermontov Stavropol Academic Drama Theatre: Dangerous Liaisons 07.10. My Sister — Mermaid 07.10. Tours of the M. Lermontov Stavropol Academic Drama Theatre: Calling for a Groom, Ladies? 08.10. A Steadfast Tin Soldier 08.10. Tours of the M. Lermontov Stavropol Academic Drama Theatre: Women 10.10. Dubrovsky 11.10. Wedding Market 12.10. Gypsy Baron

#### NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Street  
07 and 08.10. Corsair 10.10. La Traviata 11.10. Esmeralda; Mozart Forever 12.10. A Masked Ball

#### YOUNG SPECTATORS' THEATRE

26 Engels Street  
05.10. Philosophy Doctor  
06.10. Cat's House; How Wolf Acts as Mother 07.10. Road to Bethlehem; How Wolf Acts as Mother 08.10. Cat's House 11.10. Taras on Parnassus

#### THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTOR

13 Pobediteley Avenue  
05.10. #13 06 and 07.10. Sheep and

Wolves 08.10. Anna Snegina 10.10. An Unnamed Star 11.10. A. Chekhov's Night of Miniature 12.10. Forgetting Herostratos

#### REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street  
05.10. If There Is No Tomorrow 06.10. Adel 07.10. Uninvited Guest 11 and 12.10. Concrete

#### YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street  
05.10. The Fool 06.10. Masculine, Single 07.10. Sanya, Vanya and Rimas 08.10. Summer Night's Dream 10.10. Sasha, Take Waste Away; Detailed Talk 12.10. Love Lesson

#### BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street  
05.10. Boat of Despair 07.10. Wash-em-Clean 08.10. Cat in Boots 11.10. Belvedere 12.10. Mann ist Mann

#### YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street  
05.10. School of Taxpayers 06.10. Local Cabaret 07.10. Two Souls 08.10. Pinsk Gentry 10.10. The Tyke 11.10. Art 12.10. Abduction of Europe, or Ursula Radziwill's Theatre

**The Minsk Times**

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