



Now aurochs graze on the floodplain meadows of the Zhitkovichi District



Military artists preserve the memory of the war in their works



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Smiles, beauty and charm of the awarded participants contribute to a special atmosphere of the event

Being proud of our best people

Solemn fanfares, formal dress and officer uniforms were richly represented at the Palace of Independence: following time-honoured tradition, on the eve of March 8th, it welcomed the awarding ceremony for the best of the best. Among them were beautiful and talented women who are the true 'face' of the nation and courageous defenders of the Fatherland who stand for its strength. Aleksandr Lukashenko addressed those present, "Perhaps the most rewarding mission for the President is to present awards to distinguished people, to be among those who make Belarus stronger and more beautiful by their daily work, and who make the lives of Belarusians safer and richer." → **3**



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Monopolism is unacceptable for the market

A meeting was held in Minsk on ensuring the efficient operation of the country's oil refining complex in 2020 and in the future. One of the main messages voiced by President Aleksandr Lukashenko is that hydrocarbon raw materials have become not only a commodity, but also a lever of pressure, a tool for solving problems for supplier countries without taking into account the interests of partners. The President updated instructions concerning the search for new oil suppliers and building logistics for the delivery of raw materials.



Naftan JSC

Number one task

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that hydrocarbons have been one of the key factors in the global economic and political relations for the past decade. "Certain states realised that with the help of an oil pipeline valve they can solve issues of interest in a much easier way. Don't think that I am hinting only at Russia here. This has become a new norm for many countries with such God-given natural resources. Unfortunately, in spite of any mutual obligations, such practices are also being used in relation to Belarus," the President said. "Terms of oil supplies as an ultimatum are tied to other issues, which the supplying country wants to resolve. It happens without reference to the existing legal framework and principles of building relations."

The Head of State said that the deliveries of raw materials to Belarus are now about 1m tonnes smaller than planned every month.

"This happens not only because someone is playing with a pipeline valve. It happens because we did not diversify oil supplies some time ago. Monopolism also leads to things like that," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

According to the Head of State, the domestic fuel market and the operation of chemical and other enterprises depend on hydrocarbon raw materials. As he noted, unmotivated activities concerning oil supplies have a negative impact on the gross domestic products and budget revenues, although the Government was instructed to step up efforts to diversify sources of economic growth several years ago.

"I hope that a concrete plan to reduce the influence of oil delivery terms on the formation of the GDP will be included in the next five-year development plan," the President said.

He emphasised that Belarus is not going to stop buying Russian oil. "We'll continue to do this, since this oil, its extraction and transportation have been developed also with the participation of Belarusians — by older generations which we are now following. Moreover, logistics is effective here as well. Of course, we won't be on our knees begging for this oil every December 31st. As soon as monopolism fades away, it will be easier to agree on prices," the Head of State said, also asking the participants of the meeting to inform him about the progress that has been already made in this field and about the future prospects.

In need of logistics

Import logistics was also in the spotlight at the meeting. "You should work on this issue as intensively as you are working on the first matter. It cannot be solved with the help of oil

transportation agreements only," the President believes. "Comprehensive and systematic infrastructure decisions are needed. It is necessary to consider the possibility of implementing joint projects with the foreign owners of raw materials."

"We should finally accept the fact that we can count only on ourselves as far as the energy industry is concerned. Even the closest partner will follow their own interests in critical moments," the President noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked that Belarus has two large and well-developed oil refineries: in Novopolotsk and Mozyr. These produce high-quality and competitive products which are in demand on foreign markets. Taking into account their location, the Head of State reiterated the task to diversify oil supplies and look for new promising routes. One of them goes through Ukraine via the Odessa-Brody pipeline, the second — through Baltic ports.

As far the Baltic direction is concerned, Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced that the issue can be solved through logistics improvement, first of all, via pipelines. "To build a pipeline is not a problem. There are couple of pipelines which we could use if we repair them and come to terms with the Baltic States on them," he said.

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ON THE TOPIC

New proposals on the table

Last Saturday, the President's schedule saw the Head of State meeting the Deputy Prime Minister, Yuri Nazarov, and the Chairman of the Belneftekhim Concern, Andrei Rybakov. The conversation focused on the supply to our country of hydrocarbon raw materials and, primarily, oil.

"I've received a number of proposals dealing with oil supplies and refining in Belarus," noted Aleksandr Lukashenko. "Now, thank God, there are many such offers. I'd like to discuss some questions with you and consult you on whether it is worth buying this oil, what is the best course of action, and which is more economically profitable."

"I think we'll find a solution," added Mr. Lukashenko. The Head of State drew attention to the fact that the question is urgent, so the meeting was held on a weekend, "We need to make a decision and take this oil from Monday-Tuesday, because the volumes are large: more than six million tonnes."

Yuri Nazarov appointed Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus by President

Before the meeting devoted to petrochemical issues, Aleksandr Lukashenko appointed a new Deputy Prime Minister: Yuri Nazarov. Until recently, he has headed the Bellesbumprom Concern for over six years and, from now on, he will oversee matters relating to the development of Belarus' petrochemical complex. Igor Lyashenko was dismissed from the post of Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus by a Presidential decree in connection with transition to another job.

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that the avenue overseen by Yuri Nazarov as Deputy Prime Minister is a key and most important one for the country. "That's why I'd like you to get involved and resolve this issue," he said.

Yuri Nazarov is known as a highly qualified specialist in forestry and industrial production. He has established himself as a firm and principled leader, well versed in management and economics.



Building a belt of good neighbourliness

Belarus will remain committed to integration processes while safeguarding its own interests, said Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko as he met the Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) — Stanislav Zas — at the Palace of Independence

"Since Belarus is presiding in all integration bodies this year, our country will do it with dignity. As before, we will remain committed to integration processes, including in the military sector, while safeguarding our own interests," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

According to the President, it is essential to look out for Belarus' interests in all integration associations. In his words, right now these interests are absolutely in sync with the interests of neighbouring

countries, especially CSTO members. "They are in sync with the interests of Russia, other CSTO members and they don't really contradict the interests of Ukraine — our main southern neighbour. At least, we have been doing and will be doing everything for peace and accord in Ukraine. This is our position stemming from the mentality of the Belarusian people," Mr. Lukashenko stressed.

Russia will host the CSTO summit in 2020. In this regard, the President asked for information about the agenda of the forum and about the efforts to promote Belarus' proposals regarding the development of the organisation. In particular, Belarus is advocating the strengthening of the authority of the CSTO, expanding its interaction with other associations.

The implementation of the resolution concerning the legal status of a CSTO partner and a CSTO observer, which was

initiated by Belarus, will be very useful here. This can also be achieved by implementing the decision taken at the initiative of Belarus on the legal registration of the organisation's partner status, as well as observer status with the CSTO.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also asked Stanislav Zas how the work in the organisation's secretariat is being organised. "If any personnel decisions are needed, please tell me, and I will initiate them at the next meeting. I will discuss this topic with Vladimir Putin, other presidents should have a clear picture. If the secretariat continues to work as before, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation will do the same. Neither the situation nor the time-frame allows for procrastination," the President noted.

Before speaking about the operation of the CSTO, Mr. Zas shared his impressions about his first business trip to his native



Stanislav Zas

Belarus. He said it's very unusual for him to come to Belarus as a guest.

In his talk to journalists after the meeting with the Head

of State, Mr. Zas said that the heads of the CSTO will soon determine the countries to receive the status of partner and observer of the organisation. "The decision has been made. It's been ratified by almost all CSTO states, except for Tajikistan. Now it is necessary to determine the countries and build concrete projects, to form a belt of good neighbourliness around our military-political bloc."

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Being proud of our best people

Aleksandr Lukashenko presents state awards and general's straps

Solemn fanfares, formal dress and officer uniforms were richly represented at the Palace of Independence: following time-honoured tradition, on the eve of March 8th, it welcomed the awarding ceremony for the best of the best. Among them were beautiful and talented women who are the true 'face' of the nation and courageous defenders of the Fatherland who stand for its strength. Aleksandr Lukashenko addressed those present, "Perhaps the most rewarding mission for the President is to present awards to distinguished people, to be among those who make Belarus stronger and more beautiful by their daily work, and who make the lives of Belarusians safer and richer."

The ceremony is traditionally held in the run-up to International Women's Day and, as Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, was distinguished by the cordial and festive atmosphere — created by women, their smiles, beauty and charm. The gloss and magnificence of the Palace of Independence are enhanced by the dress uniforms of the military.

Among the invitees were more than 30 people, including representatives of the army and other law enforcement agencies, honoured workers and mothers with many children. "Such a gender balance is not an attempt to follow western trends. The high status of uniformed people in our country and the respectful and caring attitude to women are absolutely fundamental values of Belarusian society," the President noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that peace is impossible without those who serve the people and know how to defend them. We remember those who brought us freedom 75 years ago. Belarusians are grateful to war veterans for their feats and venerate the heroic generation of our fathers and grandfathers. It's possible to say with confidence that children and grandchildren are worthy of their glorious grandparents.

The President mentioned Oleg Boinichev, from the Emergencies Ministry, as an example. Captain Oleg Boinichev and his co-workers risked their lives to prevent an explosion on the railway when several tankers carrying explosive gas ran off the rails. "Such courageous and bold people maintain the peace and calm of Belarusians today. Hats off to them!" said Mr. Lukashenko.

He also gave his special thanks to women with many children, as they chose a difficult but very important mission. "I would say this mission is extremely important for the country. You take care not only of your children. You

give life to new generations, you give hope for a better future and prosperity to the entire nation. After all, the future depends on you, dear women. I know that most of you do not only have a fulfilling family life but have also achieved great success professionally. This is twice as important," the President noted.

Awards and honorary titles were also bestowed on women who have achieved great success in culture, art, science and teaching. "We know and value your contribution to the upbringing of the younger

generation, the preservation of spiritual heritage and moral values," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also presented the Order of Mother to women who have raised five and more children. The awardees included a makeup artist at the National State Television and Radio Company — Olga Areshova-Kamenskaya, and a Sorochi kindergarden teacher from the Lyuban District — Natalia Mamaiko.

Honorary titles were presented to

ballet dancer Yekaterina Oleinik (Merited Artiste of the Republic of Belarus), the Dean of the Pedagogy and Child Psychology Faculty at the Kuleshov Mogilev State University — Irina Komarova (Merited Educational Worker of the Republic of Belarus), a Professor of the Belarusian and Foreign Languages Department at the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs — Svetlana Denisova (Merited Educational Worker of the Republic of Belarus), the Head of the Theory and History of State and Law Department of the same academy — Vadim Pavlov (Merited Worker of Law Enforcement).

The 'Merited Master of Sport of the Republic of Belarus' title went to an athlete-sport instructor of the national team, a member of the special forces unit of the Minsk City Police Department — Tatiana Matsko, and an athlete-sport instructor of the national team, and coach of the team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs — Svetlana Timoshenko.

The Head of State presented general's straps to the Deputy Commander of the Western Operational Command of the Armed Forces of Belarus — Igor Demidenko, the Head of the General Staff Faculty, the Deputy Head of the Military Academy of Belarus — Sergei Zaitsev, the Head of the Brest Regional Department of the State Security Committee — Sergei Gladyshev, the Head of the Military Counterintelligence Department of the State Security Committee — Konstantin Kuchinsky, and the Head of the Mogilev Regional Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs — Igor Shcherbachenya.

The attendees were taken on a visit to the Palace of Independence and were also invited for a reception on behalf of the Head of State.

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Oleg Boinichev, a senior engineer-inspector of the Emergency Response Services at the Emergencies Ministry, awarded the 'For Personal Courage' Order by the President

generation, the preservation of spiritual heritage and moral values," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President congratulated Belarusian female athletes on their sweeping victories at the world and European championships. These victories were acknowledged through the 'Merited Master of Sport' title. "Thank you for

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Honorary titles were presented to

Award for strong friendship

Belarus meets Chairwoman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of Russia, Valentina Matviyenko

The high-level guest spent an event-rich working day in Minsk which ended at the Palace of Independence on a high note. Valentina Matviyenko was awarded an Order of Francysk Skaryna — bestowed by the President — during their personal meeting. This was the recognition of her considerable personal contribution to the promotion of friendly relations and co-operation between Belarus and Russia.

"I always visit and leave Belarus with particularly warm feelings after your warmth and hospitality," Ms. Matviyenko said warmly.

"I am happy you've come. I think Natalia Kochanova [Chairwoman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus] has already told you that. We've been looking forward to your visit for a long time, getting ready to welcome you the best way we can," the President replied.

Ms. Matviyenko appreciated the itinerary prepared by the Belarusian side. "I've not visited you for long. I've missed you as well. Ms. Kochanova has prepared such a wonderful programme. We visited the All Saints Memorial-Church today. I've brought a capsule with soil collected from graves of Soviet soldiers near the Russian city of Rzhev. As you know, the bloodiest and longest battle took place near Rzhev. That was a touching ceremony. I am glad that part of this land, which is covered with the blood of Russians, Belarusians and other peoples, will be kept at your church. This is especially significant in the year of the 75th anniversary of the victory. I just want to convey my admiration for the church you built. This is a different philosophy: not simply a church. It is a wonderful, beautiful church. It's also combined with a hall of memory which is great for young people, children and

all of us — to go there and worship," she said.

During the official visit, Valentina Matviyenko also held talks with the chairpersons of the Council of the Republic and the House of Representatives of the National Assembly, Natalia Kochanova and Vladimir Andreichenko. One of the topics of discussion in the Upper House of Parliament was the preparation for the 7th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia which will be dedicated to the historical legacy of the Great Victory and bring together more than 500 people. "The business agenda will be an important part of the programme. Belarusian and Russian business circles will discuss prospects for co-operation and new joint projects. Co-operation agreements and commercial contracts will be signed," Ms. Kochanova announced. She also expressed confidence



During the meeting between Valentina Matviyenko and Natalia Kochanova

that the visit of our Russian colleagues will give a new impetus to the development of Belarusian-Russian relations and the activation of inter-parliamentary co-operation.

In turn, Ms. Matviyenko noted the responsibility of the present generation of politicians is to preserve all valuable aspects that bind our countries and peoples. "We also need to deepen and expand equal and mutually beneficial co-operation, taking into account each other's opinions and interests," she said.

Based on materials of belta.by



Energy for our future

The preliminary results of the International Atomic Energy Agency mission to comprehensively assess the development of the national nuclear energy infrastructure were discussed in Government. In a conversation with the IAEA Deputy Director General and Head of the Nuclear Energy Department, Mikhail Chudakov, Prime Minister Sergei Rumas emphasised that Belarus is determined to create a safe, reliable, cost-effective and environmentally friendly nuclear industry.



“We set our relationship with Belarus as an example. Despite the fact that our inspections are not mandatory (they are voluntary), Belarus complies with all IAEA requirements and invites all inspections related to nuclear energy, and at all stages of the construction of a nuclear power plant; it is an exemplary country. Not every country invites all IAEA inspections,” he added.

The IAEA representative noted that Belarus is not a newcomer to the nuclear industry and nuclear activities. “Belarus stood at the start of the IAEA and has been

The International Atomic Energy Agency has no technical claims against the Belarusian NPP.

According to Mikhail Chudakov, generation ‘3+’ reactors that will operate at the Belarusian NPP are safe.

In general, he noted that the IAEA is interested in continuing constructive collaboration at all stages of the nuclear power plant, as well as in other areas of application of nuclear technology in Belarus.

The day before, on the Belarus 1 TV Channel, Mr. Chudakov emphasised that our country is ready for the operation of a nuclear power station. “The country is ready to operate a nuclear power plant, and the nuclear power plant is ready. Belarus has done a lot to ensure safe construction, installation and commissioning. The country will decide on its own when the unit is turned on or when the loading of fresh fuel should begin,” he said.

The official also admitted that the first power unit of Belarusian NPP exceeded his expectations. “All post-Fukushima events have already been implemented and taken into account, and the units will work reliably for a long time. The projected period is sixty years, but I’m sure it will be extended to one hundred years,” noted the IAEA Deputy Director General.

The IAEA Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure review (INIR 3) mission worked in Belarus from February 24th to March 4th. The panel included one expert from Algeria, two from the UK, and seven IAEA staff. Experts analysed the infrastructure in all areas of its development. This mission was the second INIR mission in Belarus.

Based on materials of belta.by and sb.by

At the beginning of the meeting, the Head of the Belarusian Government noted the high level of constructive co-operation between Belarus and the agency, “The interaction of our country with the IAEA on the development of the national nuclear energy programme and nuclear energy infrastructure has been actively developing since 2007, from the very first steps by Belarus in the development of nuclear energy. Today it has acquired a truly large-scale and comprehensive character. We greatly appreciate the level of interaction achieved and look forward to all further support from the agency.”

According to the PM, Belarus is actively using the full range of tools and services provided by the IAEA and will continue this practice in future.

“I’d like to assure you that we intend not only to take into account the experience of the IAEA and its member countries, but also to fully rely on it in our activities.

Belarus is determined to establish a safe, efficient and environmentally friendly industry that will foster the country’s growth. An absolute priority in the construction of the Belarusian NPP is given to ensuring the safety of the future station.



Belarusian nuclear power plant

All stages associated with the commissioning of a nuclear power plant are carefully and consistently carried out. Moreover, Belarus is implementing this project quite openly, in co-operation not only with Russia, but also with many international partners.”

In his turn, Mikhail Chudakov thanked the Belarusian Government and ministries for their open interaction with the IAEA and the invitation of a number of agency missions. He noted that Belarus revealed the results of these missions to the public.

a member of the agency since 1957. Since 1965, the Sosny Research Institute has been operating here. Belarus boasts a large base, and therefore, of course, the infrastructure is not created from scratch.”

Mr. Chudakov said that he had visited the nuclear power plant and noted great progress, “The first power unit is actually ready to start and is in good condition. This is confirmed by our infrastructure audit, which issued seven general recommendations for the country and five positive experiences that other countries could use.”

New opportunities for co-operation

By Igor Svetlov

The Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted a major business event: Belarusian-British Season — 2020. Over two days, representatives of the UK business community demonstrated opportunities for co-operation between the two countries in the field of trade. Special attention was paid to discussing the prospects for implementing joint projects.

Before opening the event, the Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy, Lisa Thumwood, said that the UK is interested in co-operation with the business community of Belarus. “One of the reasons why we are holding this event is that we would like to encourage Belarusian enterprises to co-operate more actively with British companies,” the diplomat said. She believes the *Belarusian-British Season — 2020* will ena-

ble British companies to learn more about the opportunities offered by Belarusian partners. “We are particularly interested in the growing IT sector in Belarus. Liaisons in the supply of electric buses are another interesting area for us. We are not expecting any contracts today but 12 companies will participate in the negotiations on our part,” she announced.

In turn, the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vladimir Ulakhovich, shared the view that, with the UK’s exit from the European Union, new opportunities for co-operation with this country are opening up for Belarus. “It is well known that the UK is Belarus’ largest trading and economic partner. Last year, our trade turnover reached almost \$2.5bn, while Belarusian exports accounted for \$1.5bn. Among our traditional commodity range are products of

the metallurgy and petrochemicals areas and fertilisers, but there are also new niches that we will explore together with our British partners today,” Mr. Ulakhovich said, also focusing on one of the future directions for co-opera-



tion: an electric bus related deal between Belkommunmash and a British company. The long-term project involves the opening of a centre for the development of electrical technologies at the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park by British partners.

For his part, Mike King, a chief operating officer and the

Head of Investment for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region of the British Consulate General in Istanbul (Ministry of Foreign Trade), said that British business has a great interest in Belarusian IT companies, “This

area is particularly interesting for us, because the UK is one of the largest countries for business development in the ICT sector. We celebrate the success of your technology companies that have come to us and use our services and capabilities in terms of research and scaling. We help Belarusian companies open of-

ices in the UK, while they also keep their offices in Belarus, but can use the opportunities of British venture companies that offer opportunities for business expansion.”

The two-day programme of the event included presentations by experts from the British Embassy in Belarus, the Ministry of Foreign Trade of Great Britain, the Centre for Support of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses in the Coventry and Warwick regions, and heads of large companies on topical issues of conducting business in the British market. During the event, the participants discussed the possibility of opening representative offices in the UK in order to enter world markets, as well as legal aspects of doing business. The second day of the event was devoted to the discussion of promising areas for establishing and developing direct trade and economic ties between enterprises of the two countries, as well as trade barriers that companies face when entering the British and Belarusian markets.



Residential districts of smart ideas

The concept of ‘smart’ cities to be realised in 11 localities of the country



By Ilya Kryzhevich

Urbanisation is accelerating and this trend is, sadly, natural for modern times. It is happening so rapidly that the United Nations estimates that about 60 percent of the total population will live in cities by 2050. According to the latest census, Belarus is no exception, though we are moving forward: only 22.5 percent of our citizens live in rural areas. This situation increases the requirements for large localities to comply with safety, environmental, transport and health standards. To solve these issues, the creation of so-called ‘smart’ cities is planned, which — thanks to innovative solutions based on digital technologies — could significantly increase the comfort of residents. The ideal recipe for creating such a city was discussed in Minsk, as part of the forum of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU): *Smart Sustainable Cities: From Concept to Implementation*.

The most interesting news is that our country could become a platform for the implementation of the concept of ‘smart’ cities. Farid Nakhli, the Programme Officer at the ITU Regional Office for CIS,

spoke about this. The logic in this case is simple: according to him, large cities have sufficient financial and human resources to implement such modern projects.

“The role of the ministries of communications and ITU is to help where the market is not coping, in the implementation of digital infrastructure in order to ensure ‘smart’ cities are not only in the capitals, but also in small cities,” he says. “After all, Belarus focuses its development on regions where transport optimisation and ‘green’ technologies are being implemented. This is an example that no one should be left behind, everyone should get access to modern technologies.”

The programme co-ordinator hints: the specialised subdivision of the UN is able to allocate funding for such purposes. “The ITU programme for 2017-2021 focuses on ‘smart’ cities and we are ready to co-operate. Belarus could become an excellent platform for implementing such a project,” he believes.

It should be noted that the proposals voiced by ITU are aligned well with local initiatives to create the first ‘smart’ cities in our country. As recalled by the Minister of Com-

munications and Informatisation — Konstantin Shulgan, 11 localities have been identified for the implementation of accelerated socio-economic development, in which such conceptual projects will be tested. Last year, point-based implementation began with a project in Orsha: an adaptation of the standard concept of a ‘smart’ city has already been made. This year, ten other cities plan to follow a similar scheme. It is also planned to develop a separate adaptation for Minsk in 2020-2021, but

According to the Minister, in order for the digital economy to work at full strength, it is necessary to digitise many business processes of companies. However, when implementing projects, individual benefits should also be given to citizens.

“This includes an opportunity for citizens to receive a number of electronic services. Their inclusion in the concept of a digital state is the main issue that is being



Farid Nakhli

“ Farid Nakhli, the Programme Officer at the ITU Regional Office for CIS: **The ITU programme for 2017-2021 focuses on ‘smart’ cities and we are ready to co-operate. Belarus could become an excellent platform for implementing such a project.**

Konstantin Shulgan also comments on the individual solutions offered by a number of companies, which may well become elements of

the Ministry stressed that this campaign is on a completely different scale and requires a very serious approach.

In addition, the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation is currently working on filling out the *Digital Development of Belarus* state programme, running until 2025. It will include many industry events and platform solutions.

worked on right now. One of the solutions is the introduction of the Belarusian Integrated Service-Settlement System (BISRS), where each citizen is issued an ID card, thanks to which they can receive all necessary public services through their digital signature and solve issues by signing documents in electronic form,” the official explains.

‘smart’ cities, for example, the system of accounting for the consumption of housing and communal services. “What is offered by operators is taken into account, the Ministry has stored them in the project data bank which unites about 80 projects. We’ll allocate them at specific events in Orsha, they will be discussed, selected and applied,” the Minister adds.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Days of Culture of Belarus held in Oman

The official delegation was led by Culture Minister Yuri Bondar. The opening ceremony of the Days of Culture took place on the stage of the House of Musical Arts of the Royal Opera House in Muscat. Spectators could see performances from the gold collection of the Belarusian State Academic Honoured Choreographic Ensemble *Khoroshki*, based on rich folklore material and Belarusian history. The programme also included the *Patterns and Symbols: Legacy of the Belarusian Ornament* exhibition project, from the collection of the National History Museum, and a presentation of the tourism potential of Belarus, prepared by the Sports and Tourism Ministry.

IOC changes the Olympic Games’ opening ceremony

Following an executive committee meeting, the International Olympic Committee decided to amend the protocol for the national team parade during the Games opening ceremony. At least



one female and one male athlete in every team must carry the flag of their country. For the first time this practice will be applied during the Olympic Games in Tokyo. The Head of the IOC, Thomas Bach, noted the high state of readiness in Tokyo for the upcoming events. “All the competitive facilities have been built. In Japan, 4.5 million tickets have been sold, and more than 80 million requests have been received. We see the enthusiasm that the residents of Japan have for the Olympic Games,” he said.

First UK-assembled Belarusian electric bus to go into service in Nottingham

According to the representative of the Nottingham City Council, Richard Wellings, electric buses have been driving along Nottingham’s roads for ten years. “When representatives of Minsk, our twin city, approached us, we were enthusiastic about Belkommunmash’s proposal to let their electric buses be used on Nottingham’s roads. Moreover, this electric bus uses a technology Nottingham has not seen



before — liftable current collectors.” Mr. Wellings clarified that an electric bus with a charging device has already been delivered to the city but has yet to start trials. “If the project is as successful as we assume, we’ll start negotiations with major UK bus operators on selling them this electric bus.”

The Union State has acquired its own radio station

Belarusian-Russian wave — First Union Radio — will be broadcasting around the world around the clock, broadcasting the news and projects by the two countries. Working under the slogan ‘Two Countries — One Radio’, the station promises to cover the most important news from Russia and Belarus, as well as give announcements about the best of the Union State media and, of course, broadcast the author’s programmes. From a musical point of view, the new wave is based on modern hits and ‘golden’ musical hits that are close to the hearts of older listeners. The radio station is broadcasting on the Internet but, next year, First Union Radio may appear in the FM band of Belarus and Russia.



ECONOMY

The Minsk Times
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Aurochs return to Belarus



Ruffs performing mating rituals



Floodplain meadows near Turov already filled with water overflowing from the Pripyat's banks



Black-tailed godwit

Once Polesie was inhabited by whole herds of aurochs and the floodplain meadows of the River Pripyat were their natural habitat. But hunting and disease exterminated these ancestors of cattle. As a result, only legends, handwritten testimonies and archaeological finds have survived until our time. The last auroch became extinct in 1627. In the 20th century, the Heck brothers tried to revive this lost population of ancient bulls, while working to restore the sturdy cattle breed in Germany. So they bred auroch-like cattle, outwardly very similar to their ancestors. According to the experts, the Heck breed was created via the breeding back method. It is closest to the extinct aurochs. You can now also see these animals in the vicinity of Turov. They arrived there thanks to the *Wetlands* project by UNDP and the Global Environment Facility. The programme aims to preserve the biodiversity of floodplain meadows in the Zhitkovichi District and will undoubtedly attract tourists to Polesie.

By Olga Korneeva

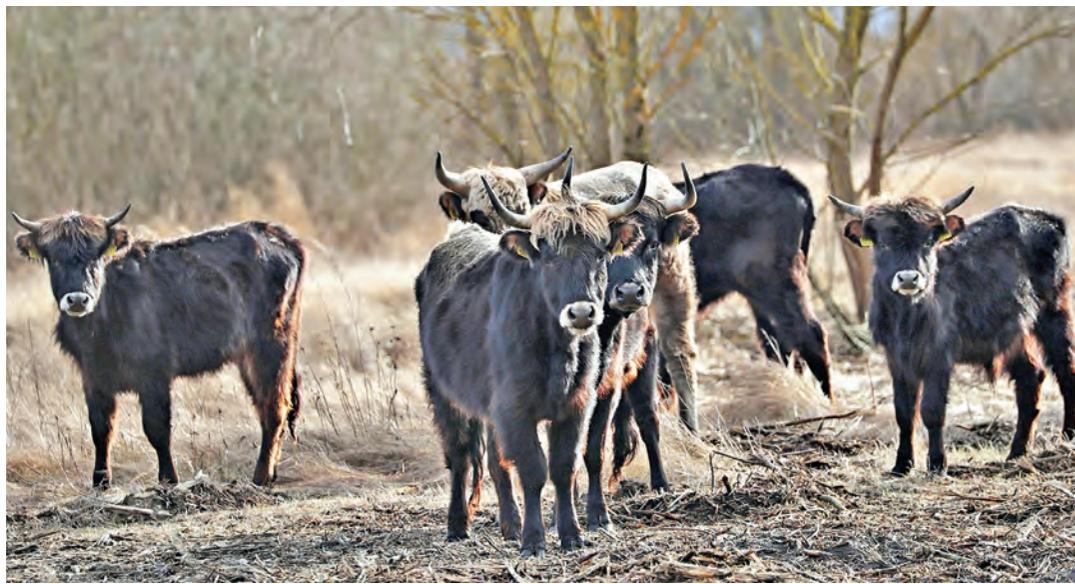
The initiative has been implemented since 2017. Settling auroch-like cattle in these places is one of the most important aspects of the UNDP project. Fifteen bulls of the Heck cattle breed were brought to the floodplain meadows of the Pogost natural area (Srednyaya Pripyat Reserve) from the Kemeri National Park in Latvia.

Animals brought to Belarus from Latvia are the descendants of a species bred by the Heck brothers.

A month ago, after veterinary checks and the necessary quarantine, the aurochs were released into the wild. They are free grazing, having at their disposal 200 hectares of floodplain meadows in the waters of the Pripyat and Stviga rivers.

Thanks to the return of the aurochs, it's planned to solve the urgent task (for most European countries) to restore floodplain meadows in the region. In recent decades, due to reduced agricultural use, these ecosystems have begun to overgrow with shrubs and are gradually losing their attractiveness for various species of fauna.

According to specialists, the traditional use of meadows will make it possible to restore and preserve key nesting sites of rare bird species — double snipers, Terek sandpipers, dotterels, black-tailed godwits and the largest European concentration of migratory species in the Turov meadow



— pintails, widgeons, black-tailed godwits and ruffs.

The technical issues have also been thoroughly thought out. Special equipment — worth \$600,000 under the UNDP-GEF *Wetlands* project — has been delivered to the Sporovsky, Zvanets and Naliboksky reserves as well as Turovshchina JSC. Its use will help stop the overgrowing of open swamps and floodplain meadows with trees and shrubs and restore habitats of threatened global species. In the Zhitkovichi District, this technique will clear 560 hectares of floodplain meadows.

According to Aleksandr Korbut, the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus, the topic of ecosystem conservation is relevant for the country. For various reasons, about 500 thousand hec-

tares of land has been withdrawn from agricultural circulation in the Republic. “The implementation of such projects with the support of international organisations help restore and preserve ecosystems,” he stressed.

“It’s symbolic that we are talking about the implementation of the initiative on re-wilding in the floodplain meadows of the Pogost area on World Wildlife Day [March 3rd]. This is an opportunity to draw attention to the diversity and beauty of the manifestations of wild fauna and flora, as well as to raise awareness about the benefits

that people get from environmental activities. UNDP in Belarus has committed to make wildlife conservation a key priority. Returning aurochs to the Turov District under the *Wetlands* project is one of the practical steps made today by Belarus at national and regional levels aiming to preserve ecosystems and wildlife,” said the UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus, Alexandra Solovieva.

The *Wetlands* project is funded by the Global Environment Facility and is implemented by the UNDP in

partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus. The implementation of the initiative on re-wilding was made possible thanks to efficient co-operation with Turovshchina JSC — one of the key partners of the project.

This experience was previously tested in European countries. Similar initiatives were realised in the Netherlands, Spain and Latvia. At the same time, rewarding programmes receive cross-border development. Thus, the Netherlands shares animals free of charge with other countries, which, after increasing their number, undertake to transfer aurochs to new countries. According to this chain, the Dutch bulls first came to Latvia and then to Belarus.



Climate records from winter season

The calendar winter in Belarus is over, but the climate winter has not come. Apart from the temperatures, this season has set a record for snowless weather. It is also surprising that the winter was abnormally warm throughout the Northern hemisphere. Meteorologists attribute these climate anomalies to the influence of Atlantic air masses, among other things. The National Centre for Hydro-meteorology, Radioactive Pollution Control and Environmental Monitoring at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection tells us of the recent winter surprises and what to expect from the beginning of spring.

By Natalia Yemelyanova

From the point of view of climatologists, winter starts when the average daily temperature falls below zero and is registered as such for more than five days. This did not happen in Belarus at the turn of 2019-2020. “The average air temperature in this winter season was plus 1.5 degrees, which is 5.5 degrees higher than the climate norm. In the entire history of weather observations, we have never had a winter with positive average temperatures. Before that, only a few winter months were abnormally warm: for example, even February of last

year was marked with a plus sign. This is the first time we’ve registered such temperatures throughout the whole winter season,” said the centre’s staff.

Weather observations on the territory of Belarus have been conducted for more than a hundred years. With this in mind, it’s safe to say that the past winter was the warmest in our country since 1881. Before that, the record was the winter season of 1989-1990, when the average temperature was minus 0.1 degrees.

All three of the past winter months were abnormally warm: on average, plus 1.9 degrees in December, plus 1.1 in January, and plus 1.6 in February. The temper-

ature deviation from the climate norm in each of them exceeded 5 degrees. January was the warmest in the history of weather observations. Temperature records were set for several days in each month, in various localities in Belarus.

At the same time, the past winter was not particularly snowy. “We are speaking not even of snow volume. We had precipitation, it fell at about a normal rate for the entire season, but a stable snow cover

was not formed. It formed for a day or two, a maximum of a week, then melted. Due to the warm temperatures, the rivers also didn’t freeze much,” note experts.

Will spring surprise us with new climate anomalies? It is difficult to judge yet. According to the assessment of the North-Eurasian Climate Centre, which specialises in long-term climate forecasts for the CIS countries, the air temperature in Belarus in March will be slightly higher than normal.



View of Pobediteley Avenue in Minsk

Brightest ideas

Finalists of the *100 Ideas for Belarus* contest amaze with their inventions

Among the ideas presented at the finals of the *100 Ideas for Belarus* national youth project are wind generators and robots, smart streets and greenhouses, information portals and training simulators, food for aquarium fish and even a means to remove chewing gum from surfaces... Each development is interesting and useful in its own way.

By Maria Zubkova

The conference hall of Minsk's Marriott Hotel has been transformed into a true centre of innovation for two days — bringing together more than 400 participants and experts. At the opening of the finals, young people were congratulated by the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Andrey Kuntsevich, who



said, “The ninth season of the *100 Ideas for Belarus* project has once again confirmed the high research potential of youth who are sought-after and progressive.”

According to Mr. Kuntsevich, the high intelligence of Belarusian youth, the thirst for new discoveries and the desire to be useful to their native country are now the basis for further growth in various industries: from biotechnology to robotics. *100 Ideas for Belarus* is a significant project for our country and a confirmation that we have talented and thinking young people today.

In ten categories, students, working youth and young scientists from all over the country presented 101 projects to the jury. Those were also demonstrated at the *Navigator of Ideas* exhibition which became one of the main events. The pupils of Vitebsk school No. 12 — Daniil Kuzminov and Anastasia Demeshchenko — created a prototype of an airboat: a special rescue vehicle. This all-terrain vehicle is able to reach an emergency in the shortest possible time by air, on ice or water. “Our school often holds classes with emergency workers, which remind us of the safety rules. Realising

the importance of the problem, we've designed a device that would be useful to rescuers,” the schoolchildren explain.

Young scientists of the National Academy of Sciences presented 25 innovative projects, including the development of antidepressants and tranquilisers with a key advantage over foreign analogues: efficiency and safety. Ksenia Borodina, an employee of the laboratory of applied biochemistry at the Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry of the National Academy of Sciences, comments, “Laboratory studies have shown that our substances do not have side effects, while they have high antidepressant properties. The drug in the form of a spray and nose drops starts ‘working’ five minutes after its use.”

Supporting young innovators is the main task of the project and the First Secretary of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union's Central Committee, a member of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly — Dmitry Voronyuk — emphasises, “It is important not only to find unique developments but also enable any young person to offer their ideas, be heard and



get support at the highest level. Every year, up to 20 projects are introduced into production in various fields — including medicine and industry. We hope that the brightest ideas will be developed this time as well.”



Joint drug control is more effective

By Arina Novikova

The State Forensics Committee of Belarus and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the US Department of Justice sign a memorandum of co-operation in the field of drug control

The document was signed by Michael Nowakowski, the Acting Regional Director for the Middle East Region, and the Chairman of the State Forensics Committee, Andrei Shved.

The structures will exchange information about the sources of origin of drugs, their analogues, precursors and methods of their identification, new designer drugs that are similar in structure to already controlled substances, methods and ways of research and the latest analytical equipment. They will also establish co-operation in the field of expert support for joint measures to reduce the illegal movement of drugs through international channels.

It is expected that the joint work will bear fruit in the near future and will enable experts of the two countries to exchange experiences in conducting forensic examinations of narcotic drugs, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the work.

The delegation familiarised themselves with the technical equipment of laboratories for the study of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, their precursors and analogues, petroleum products, materials, substances and products, as well as ballistic examination laboratories.

Interest was aroused by the procedure and efficiency of adding newly detected psychoactive substances to the list of controlled substances in Belarus. Since the beginning of the unified expert agency, 225 substances have been added to the national list of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors subject to state control on its initiative. The committee conducts about 10,000 drug examinations annually.



Following cultural routes of Europe

Belarus granted observer status in the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe



‘Viking Route’ passes through Belarusian Polotsk

By Svetlana Savelieva

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe is a programme launched to show the cultural diversity of Europe, on the one hand, and to make every nation feel that it is part of a great European heritage, on the other.

“On March 1st, 2020, Belarus received observer status in the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. Today the agreement has 33 member states and one observer state: Belarus,” the Council of Europe's regional spokeswoman, Tatiana Baeva, announced.

Observer status is granted for one year and does not imply financial contributions from the state. The Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes granted the status to Belarus in response to a request sent by Belarus' Foreign Minister, Vladimir Makei.

There are currently 38 cultural routes certified by the

network members in the country: ‘European Route of Jewish Heritage’ and ‘Via Regia’.

“Belarus offers great potential for the development of many other certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, as well as new routes directly related to the cultural heritage of the country in the European perspective,” Stefano Dominioni, the Executive Secretary of the EPA and Director of the European Institute of Cultural Routes, said.

Belarus truly enjoys considerable potential from the point of view of enriching regional intercultural co-operation. There are over 15,000 objects of historical, cultural and artistic significance in the country; 5,500 are included in the state list of historical and cultural values. The country also has a large number of memorials associated with the names of prominent figures in world history and culture — such as Adam Mickiewicz, Fiodor Dostoevsky, Simeon Polotsky, Mark Chagall, Nadia Leger and Kazimir Malevich.



Route map of ‘Via Regia’ and ‘Via Imperii’

Council of Europe, which cover various aspects of European history and heritage. Many pass through Belarus. Among them are the ‘Viking Route’, ‘European Route of Jewish Heritage’, ‘Baroque Route’, ‘European Route of Cistercian Abbeys’ and ‘Via Regia’. There are only two cultural routes of the Council of Europe with



United Nations Secretary General António Guterres

United Nations has launched biggest *Global Conversation*

In the year of the 75th anniversary, since the inception of the United Nations, the organisation has launched the *Global Conversation* project to popularise its activities and collect requests for help

The United Nations was founded in 1945 to support collective action to realise peace, development and human rights for all. The *UN75* initiative seeks to spark dialogue and action on how we can build a better world despite the many challenges we face.

“This year, we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Victory and the 75th anniversary of the UN, because the UN would not have existed without that Victory,” said UN Secretary General, António Guterres. “Of course, we are planning celebratory events, including in the General Assembly.”

“This year we are preparing something special,” added the Secretary General. “Now we see so much discontent, demonstrations and distrust between people and governments in the world. People believe that globalisation has left them behind, that their opinion is not taken into account and that the UN doesn’t listen to them.”

While *UN75* seeks to drive conversation in all segments of society — from classrooms to boardrooms, parliaments to village halls — it will place special emphasis on youth and those whose voices are too often marginalised or not heard in global affairs.

To hear the opinions of all people and to understand their interests and needs, the United Nations is launching the *Global Conversation* project. “We

must look to the future, understand what people want, how they see the work of international organisations, how the UN should work, how it can better help people,” emphasised António Guterres.

He said that he had already participated in several similar discussions on the project. “Basically, these are meetings with young people, and it’s amazing to hear about their hopes for the future, expectations from around the world. They call for fighting climate change and inequality, they want technology to be used more for the benefit of society,” said the UN Secretary General.

“We need a world in which international organisations work for the benefit of everyone,” António Guterres summed up.

Luxembourg makes public transport free

Luxembourg has become the first country in the world to provide public transport for free. The small EU hub aims to boost tram, train and bus usage and rid itself of traffic jams blamed on commuters using private cars.

Luxembourg Transport Minister Francois Bausch hailed a ‘great day’ for the Grand Duchy, as it became the first country on Earth to make public transport ticket free.

The small but wealthy nation has introduced free public transport in an effort to ‘motivate’ residents — and 214,000 daily foreign commuters — to change their behaviour in the hilly region wedged between Germany, Belgium and France.

Pre-existing sales of €2 tickets had amounted to €41 million (\$45 million) or just 8 percent of Luxembourg’s annual transport budget of €500 million.

Public transport will now be funded largely via taxes paid into the national budget, meaning travel savings for private households, especially ‘low earners’, said Mr. Bausch’s Ministry, adding, “The scheme applies to residents, cross-border commuters and tourists alike.”

“You will no longer need a ticket to board any national bus, train or the tram,” proclaimed Luxembourg’s public transport consortium, adding, “Commuters from neighbouring countries will benefit from reduced fares!” It warned Luxembourgers however, “Free public transport ends at the border, so you must get a cross-border pass or ticket if you plan to travel outside of the territory of the Grand Duchy.”

Tickets would also be needed for first-class travel on trains.

To end traffic jams, Luxembourg in 2017 opened the first section of its planned tram service from the capital’s southern outskirts to its airport to the north.

Secret doorway discovered under London’s House of Commons

A 17th century door discovered under London’s House of Commons

The UK Parliament recently announced the discovery of a previously hidden entrance that had been built for the coronation of King Charles II in 1661.



The discovery was made as part of a long-term restoration project by the Parliament’s Architecture and Heritage Team.

“We were trawling through 10,000 uncatalogued documents relating to the palace at the Historic England Archives in Swindon, when we found plans for the doorway in the cloister behind Westminster Hall,” said Liz Hallam Smith, a Professor and historical consultant for the project.

From there, the team was able to locate the hinges of two wooden doors measuring three and a half metres high each, with a small room between them.

Dendrochronology, a field of science that determines the ages of trees, was used to verify that the wood on the ceiling of the small passage was chopped down in 1659.

The passage was part of a longer pathway that would take people from the former location of the House of Lords into the hall where the king and queen sat.

The room’s existence wasn’t the only surprise. Inside, there was handwritten pencil ‘graffiti’ left there by bricklayers.



Western New York digging out from intense snow and ice

A powerful storm system that brought blizzard conditions to western New York created a winter wonderland on the shores of Lake Erie that resembled something out of the hit Disney movie *Frozen*

After temperatures dipped below freezing, days of persistent strong winds and heavy waves blew the water from Lake Erie ashore, encasing several homes in Hamburg, New York in ice.

Resident Ed Mis said that he’s never seen conditions this bad before, and the front of his home was covered completely in ice that is one to three feet thick. “I actually had to go out

a secondary door and then chisel my way back into the house by breaking the ice,” he noted.

So much ice had piled up on some home that residents reported their residences were dark inside from how thick the frozen precipitation was on their doors and windows.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Personal story behind each painting

By Irina Ovsepyan

“We don’t paint battle scenes,” say members of the Military Artists’ Studio at the Defence Ministry, adding: this should be done by those who fought and witnessed true battles. The theme of the Great Patriotic War, people’s misfortune and national heroism is revealed in a new way: in tune with the era and the memories of those who lost their fathers at the front. In the year of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory, the renewal of meaning becomes especially important.

There are about a dozen active artists in the studio at present and each has his own favourite themes.

Nikolay Opiok likes to delve into ancient times, inspired by the images of Vseslav the Magician and Yefvrosiniya Polotskaya. Vladimir Gordeenko’s soul was wounded by the Chernobyl disaster, while the name of a People’s Sculptor — Ivan Misko — has long been strongly associated with the space topic. However, the artists are united in their life-long comprehending and reinterpreting the history of the Great Patriotic War. For most of them, it is both a personal and family history.

“We are children of the war, so we are sincere in what we do,” says Nikolay Opiok, who heads the Military Artists’ Studio. “This picture I’m working on now features two soldiers near the well and embodies my childhood memory. It is called *The Hot Summer of 1941*. I remember running to the well to get water and rushing back home with a cry: ‘Mom, there are soldiers there!’ She then told me to run and get them some bread and lard. I was born near Dubrovno, the Red Army was already retreating, leaving our area, and for a few days we had a howitzer behind our house: it was aimed in the direction of Orsha... Those soldiers left us at lunchtime and, by evening, we could see the dust swirling from the neighbouring village. Everyone gathered at the outskirts of the village, wondering who was coming. The old men who had struggled in years of WWI said those should have been Germans. They were right: in the twilight, the occupiers came to the village on motorcycles. My mother and her five children were kicked out of the house. We lived in a dugout for a year, and then in a banya which was heated with charcoal. In the cold, when the fascists stopped near Moscow, all the women were forced to knit ear-warmers. The Germans came to the houses and took warm clothes out. In the village, they repaired weapons and tanks, also taking canisters full of food to the front line: those were large copper jugs equal to eight buckets each. They returned to the village with the wounded and dead. There were two cooks. One of them was kind. He gave us and children from the neighbouring families the remains of food, while the other dug a hole and poured everything into it. I would recognise the policemen who served in our village even now,” he recalls.

Artist Vladimir Gordeenko was the son of an officer who served in the garrison on the border with Poland. He also witnessed the grief of war. “I was born in 1936 and last time I saw my father was in the first hour of the war. We lived 500 metres from the border, the Germans bombed and captured the town, all the border guards were killed. My father was reported missing, but it was impossible to survive there. My mother and two children were kicked out of the house, and our wanderings in Western Belarus began. My mother was a needlewoman and her knitting enabled us to have some food. Then someone pointed at us, saying that we were the family of a Soviet officer. As a result, we got sent into the ghetto with the Jews and were then taken into slavery: many people were taken to work in families. We were also taken but those people treated us well. They virtually saved us,” he says.

Military artists preserve the memory of the war in their works



Vladimir Urodnich



Vladimir Urodnich’s picture



Nikolay Opiok

Vladimir Urodnich’s heart aches for the fate of his partisan father who died in 1943. “My father fought in a partisan detachment named after Chkalov, in Polesie. The central figure in the picture I’m working on now is its commander — Pavel Tomilov; he died in 1947, in the fight against the Bandera. The plot conceived by me features the year of 1944, the beginning of the ‘Bagration’ campaign, spring, soldiers with bird cherry leaves in a boat, geese flying over them... I will entitle it *The Time of the Geese Arrival* and the picture will be showcased at the Stolín District Museum, in my small homeland,” the artist notes.

The harsh style of Soviet fine art has set a high bar for painters who need to strive for this level. What distinguished Soviet art? It was the poetry of the soul, attention to a personality. The idea was: if not us, then who?

Unfortunately, young people are in no hurry to join the cohort of realists, and the difficult and painful military topic still needs to be matured. The youngest member of the studio — Aleksandr Osedovsky — is a lecturer at the Belarusian National Technical University’s Architecture Department. Though not participating in battles personally, the artist paints scenes from WWII and the war in Afghanistan. He evidently describes his own understanding of the war as primarily a human misfortune.

Georgy Loiko, who recently became an Honoured Artist, admits with a smile that he was once an abstract painter: spectacular paintings that perfectly fit into any modern interior were in demand, the author became fashionable and could have settled in, say, Germany, where he has a serious circle of fans, but he has chosen his homeland. Now he attends military exercises to collect material for new works.

The memory of the Great Patriotic War comes to life on canvas: veterans, broken scarlet memorial carnations, musicians leaving for the front line. The military theme is as huge and wide-ranging as the war itself.



DIRECT SPEECH

Vladimir Makarov, Head of Information of the Main Department of Ideological Work at the Defence Ministry:

The Military Artists’ Studio is only 16 years old but its participants have already created works that have entered the history of sovereign Belarus. It is very important and symbolic that a Hero of Belarus — artist Mikhail Savitsky — was there at the beginning of the movement. In his paintings, he captured one of the most difficult epochs in the history of mankind, was able to show the unsurpassed courage and heroism of the people who defeated fascism.

Exhibitions of the studio are held annually, and regularly, at the Mikhail Savitsky Gallery. This year, several exhibitions are planned for the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory, and we will certainly request that one of them be held at this site.

The studio undoubtedly has prospects. Today, all battles are fought in the sphere of meaning, and the Great Patriotic War is primarily a spiritual confrontation, an eternal struggle between good and evil.



Georgy Loiko

Among the studio members there are many famous, titled, award-winning authors but they all are simple and heartfelt. They work in a realistic manner, in line with the classical Belarusian school of painting. They go out to their audience, do not forget their small homeland, holding exhibitions in their native lands. True intelligence probably relies on putting their talent at the service of people, without renouncing their own roots and memory.

“We must keep the memory of our relatives, grandfathers and great-grandfathers alive!”

“We have no right to forget. If we stumble somewhere along the way, we will simply be blown away by the wind,” Vladimir Urodnich admits. In turn, Nikolay Opiok voices an idea that is more relevant than ever today, “This year, we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War. This date is dear to us, we are those who remember May 9th, 1945. I really want our idea to come true: this is a universal exhibition of fine art which will open on the same day in all regional and district centres where there are museums and artists, art schools. I wish adults and children alike to participate in this endeavor.”



Puslovsky Castle — a unique example of 19th century neo-Gothic architecture — was called a ‘knightly dream’ for its fabulous view and luxury

Returning is always a good sign

Notre-Dame in Gervyat, the fabulous lady merchant’s tower and a dizzying walk on a suspension bridge

By Violetta Dralyuk

The popular newspaper *Le Figaro* has included our country in the top-20 tourist destinations travellers should visit in 2020. We talk to the geophysicist from Rechitsa, who decided to travel all over Belarus — he has already visited 108 out of 118 districts — about what can be seen in our country.

Two years ago, Aleksei Drapeza decided to devote all his free time — vacations and weekends — to travelling in Belarus. Now his ‘piggy bank’ of impressions boasts more than 460 sights. It remains just a little more to the last sticker on his virtual card. Aleksei is firmly convinced that even having travelled all over Belarus, he will not be able to say that he has seen all its wonderful places.

Being born in Rechitsa, Aleksei admits that he has never considered himself an avid traveller. However, he suddenly realised that he more often chose foreign countries rather than the closest districts and regions, “I thought to myself, what do I know about Belarus? What are the most interesting places and sights? Much of it is remembered from school. But if you ask someone, you will hear in response: ‘Yes, there is such a place, but I haven’t been there’. I decided to fill this gap for myself.”

A car, a bicycle and a kayak... These are the means of transportation chosen by Aleksei for short and long routes through Belarus. Various Internet sources were his guide to the country. At first, he visited primarily regional centres, and along the way he tried to see as many sights in the provinces as possible. Over time he simply chose points on the map where he definitely wanted to go. He continues in more detail, “The first thing is architectural monuments: castles, estates, temples, churches, and palaces. In fact, there are a great many of them. And I was equally interested in those that welcome tourists, work as museums and complexes, and those that are still waiting for restoration.”

Aleksei does not hide the fact that he took a strong liking to many places. He has fallen in love with the Grodno Region, where every corner breathes history. The Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in the Grodno Region’s village of Gervyat was a revelation for him, “Seeing photos on the Internet is one thing but seeing first-hand is completely different. This is perhaps the most magnificent, graceful and fabulous Roman Catholic church in our country. This is a Belarusian Notre-Dame, you can’t say otherwise. Just think that such a neo-Gothic masterpiece was built in a village with a population of 500 people! The town of



House of lady merchant Katsnelson in Bobruisk



Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in Gervyat



The longest suspension bridge in Belarus: in Mosty



Aleksei Drapeza

THE MT REFERENCE

Our famous family of mountain climbers, Konstantin and Anastasia Lapko, climbed the top of the active North American volcano, Orizaba, with the national flag of Belarus and the flag of the *Belarus N* tourist project (*Belarus Unknown*) on January 12th. It’s the highest point in Mexico and the third highest on the mainland. The Lapkos are the first Belarusian family to ascend the four highest volcanoes of the continents: in Europe — Elbrus, in Asia — Damavand, in Africa — Kilimanjaro and in North America — Orizaba. To complete the *7 Volcanoes* world programme (this is their dream) they only have to climb three more, after which they will be the first Belarusians to complete this prestigious world climbing programme. At all the peaks, the couple raise our flags in order to arouse interest in Belarus.

When I was five years old, my grandfather and I went by train to the market in Bobruisk, and on the way we saw a completely fabulous tower: the former home of the lady merchant Katsnelson, which then housed a children’s library, and the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, built into the apartment building. To get to this church now, you need to go through the administrative building.”

Aleksei returned to many places, villages and cities several times. He says it was a great pleasure to watch how Krevo Castle in the Grodno Region is being reconstructed and the Puslovsky Palace in the Brest Region’s Kossovo. During his travels in Belarus

he learnt one rule for himself, “The more you deviate from the planned route, the more impressions you get. In this case every trip turns into a real adventure. It’s not that I set a goal to visit every district. My task was rather different: to see as much that is interesting and unusual as possible. There really is something to see in Belarus. It’s no coincidence that the French newspaper *Le Figaro* named our country the sleeping beauty of Europe, including it in the twenty tourist destinations that travellers should visit in 2020. And I’m ready to sign up with two hands.”

Aleksei Drapeza, who works at Belorusneft, not only teaches himself, but also shares his impressions and knowledge with others on

the Internet. His tirelessness in popularising his native places brought him victory in the *Learn Belarus* Republican contest. “My colleagues and friends ask me questions, as well as strangers. People usually ask whether it’s expensive to travel by car in Belarus and what is worth seeing first of all. Actually, it’s completely inexpensive. It’s much cheaper in our country, compared to the EU states, the cost of fuel for refuelling a car, alongside entrance fees to museums. What to see? The choice is huge. I was convinced from my own experience that absolutely every region of Belarus has something of its own, something unique,” he admits.

Mosty in the Grodno Region is, of course, the longest suspension bridge in Belarus at 193.3 metres, definitely worth a walk. The beauty around is indescribable!”

He enthusiastically tells us about the town of Glubokoe in the Vitebsk Region. Here, on the September 17th Square, opposite to each other, rise the Orthodox Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, mirroring the tolerance of the Belarusian people.

Aleksei calls Bobruisk a city of discovery, “It boasts many unusual monuments and a special atmosphere. For me, this city was a return to childhood.

They did it

Raubichi officially closed the biathlon season. The last stage of the IBU Cup ended here, when, according to many experts, it could not have taken place at all like the European Championship. A few weeks ago, a white flag was thrown out in Estonian Otepää, stating the impossibility of holding biathlon competitions when there is a stable plus on the thermometer and rain. In Belarus, they undertook to prove the opposite and did even more than could be expected.

By Dmitry Komashko

Following the results of the two biathlon top tournaments, the participants of the IBU Cup arrived in the Belarusian sports complex immediately after the European Championship ended. A further set of awards could have been given to the workers at Raubichi. They definitely deserved it, because their efforts were heroic. For the full operation of the snow cannons, nature allocated them a day and a half. Furthermore, there were continuous feats and searches for the best options among difficult alternatives: snow storage and

ingly, even the IBU Secretary General, Niklas Carlsson, didn't hide his admiration for the work of the organisers, "The organising committee was able to organise competitions in such a short time, against difficult conditions. Your efforts and the amount of work done are staggering. Here is a cool track and no less amazing atmosphere. Today Raubichi is definitely one of the best places for international competitions."

Yegor Khmelkov, Raubichi's Deputy Director, can say a lot about what efforts the employees of the sports complex went for the European Championship and the IBU Cup stage.



Belarusian biathlete Maksim Vorobei captures sprint silver at the IBU Cup stage

last-minute use; transportation from anywhere one could find snow; stacking, rolling and tidying up to meet the high IBU parameters. Of course, it was impossible to do this without some being dissatisfied: there are always those who are eager to write their own failures off to the work of service teams or the condition of the track.

It was not easy for the servicemen: it is difficult to prepare skis for natural and artificial snow with ice and water. But, nevertheless, the track survived, it wasn't slow, and allowed us to hold not only the European Championship, but also the next stage of the IBU Cup. Yes, the programme was somewhat 'squeezed', but the races were held in full, including the mass events. Everything looked very impressive both 'live' and on TV, especially against the green grass background. Not surpris-

They did not have to collect snow from the fields in bags, as was done before the 1990 World Cup, but at the same time, it's also difficult to say there were merely ordinary tasks.

"When the decision was made to postpone the European Championship, the picture outside the window still gave some hope that there would be at least a few 'winter' days. But closer to the start of the competitions, the weather presented us with one surprise after another."



Considerable effort made to maintain snow reserves and ensure the track met the level required for the competition

The snow was melting. To preserve its reserves and to make the track appropriate to the level of competitions, great efforts were made. In some cases, saltpetre had to be used. Usually, the track is sprinkled with it before the races on the warmest days to give rigidity to the coating, but this is good for only a few hours. The most interesting thing is that, as a result, during the IBU Cup races, the track was even better than during the European Championship. Due to lack of time, we did not have time to compact it properly, and at higher temperatures the top layer loosened a little. This created additional difficulties for athletes. The coating has now become denser and it was easier for them."

Mr. Khmelkov recollects that at one stage, even the representatives of the International Biathlon Union had doubts about the reality of holding races for the IBU Cup stage. The possibility of cancelling the launch was even discussed but, in the end, Raubichi managed to hold everything at the highest level. Moreover, life in the sports complex does not freeze with the departure of athletes. The track has already been changed, and now it hosts a children's tournament *Snow Sniper*. If the spring does not warm up very much, those Belarusian athletes who have managed to practice just a few times this winter in the usual conditions will be able to go out in the snow. The experience gained in Raubichi is to be used during preparation for future events. Already in 2021, the World Cup will be held here and, in 2025, with a high degree of probability — the World Cup. Undoubtedly, the weather now will definitely not be able to spoil the upcoming sports celebrations!



With the prefix 'super'

By Sergey Kanashits

The event, anticipated and spoken of for so long by fans, has happened: the football season officially kicked off with the match for the Super Cup in Belarus

The fight between the national champions — Dinamo Brest — and the owners of the Cup — Soligorsk's Shakhtyor — aroused great interest among spectators not only from these cities, but also countrywide: fans who missed the winter football hungrily watched and rode their emotions for the ninety minutes of the game. The match was a great success, with highs, goals, high speed, scandal, an unaccounted goal and a sending-off.

Two equal and equally cool teams (for now, as only the European cups will show their true strength) didn't concentrate on defence but tried to attack and enjoy the process. The mood on the move was set by Aleksandr Noiok, who created a small miracle. His kick from the penalty area was so steep and unrealistic that he made everyone go back to 23 years ago and recall 1997 and Brazilian Roberto Carlos's stunning goal against the French. After the shot by Noiok, the ball flew with such force and along such an intricate trajectory that if legendary Fabien Barthez had been in place of Aleksandr Gutor, he would not have a chance. However, unlike Barthez, who only watched the ball fired by Roberto Carlos, Gutor made a desperate attempt to save, which the famous 'Tiger' Aleksey Khomich would envy. It didn't help: the ball hit Gutor in the back and took a short roll along the goal line, where he was met by Kiki Gaby's leg, who opened the score. True

aerial stunts! The second goal was no less spectacular. Pavel Savitsky, when at his best, can play as well as Platini. He proved it once again, in conditions of very limited space and time, having dealt with the defenders and inflicted a precise strike, the ball went into the corner, like a ball into a pocket!

Shakhtyor desperately attempted to recoup the goal, showing the tense faces of Shakhtyor's bosses in the stands and the stony face of their head coach Yuri Vernidub. His team fought but lost. As always, Artem Milevsky gave the game a special flavour with his actions.



Yuri Kendysh and Artem Milevsky fight for the ball

Scoreboard

Super Cup of Belarus

Dinamo (Brest) — Shakhtyor — 2:0
(Gaby, 3, Savitsky, 30)

He devoted himself entirely to the game: shouting at his team, at those from another squad, and then, according to his habit, he tried to stand the entire refereeing team at attention. As a result, at the very beginning of the second half, Artem was forced to leave the field and forced his teammates to beat Shakhtyor with ten men. They managed to do this, winning the first trophy of the season.

Something tells us that it will not be the last.

ARENA

● Eight gold medals won by Belarusians at the Rhythmic Gymnastics Grand Prix in Czech Brno

After winning the all-around event, Alina Gornosko was the best in the hoop exercises, earning 23,700 points, according to the Belarusian Association of Gymnastics. Second and third places went to Ukrainians, Kristina Pogranichnaya (22,600) and Vlada Nikolchenko (21,900). In addition, the Belarusian athlete won bronze in the ribbon event (20,250), going ahead of Boryana Kaleyeva from Bulgaria (21,100) and Vlada Nikolchenko (22,000).



Belarusian juniors also claimed six gold awards. Our athletes earned all gold medals in the individual finals. The Czech tournament was the best for Dina Agisheva. After her triumph in the all-around, the Belarusian gymnast won the rope exercises (18,200), ball (20,400) and ribbon (20,250).

Furthermore, our Yelizaveta Zorkina was unequalled in the final of the clubs category (19,800), while, earlier, Dina Agisheva, Yelizaveta Zorkina and Polina Slanchevskaya won the team tournament.

● Belarus' national sports acrobatics team won three medals at the FIG Acrobatic Gymnastics World Cup in Portuguese Maia

The greatest success in this tournament was achieved by Belarusians in the men's pairs competition. Silver was clinched by Maksim Markevich and Oleg Mikhalevich, who received a final score of 28,180 points from the judges. Bronze medals were won by Artem Yashchenko and Aleksei Zayats (28,030). Gold went to British Samuel Large and Sammi Nassman (29,700).



Another medal success was achieved by Belarusians in the mixed pairs finals. Silver was claimed by Anna Kasyan and Konstantin Yevstafeyev (28,870). Alas, their compatriots — winners of the 2019 European Games — Olga Melnik and Artur Belyakov were placed fourth, boasting 28,610 points.

A performance at the Bulgarian stage of the World Cup, which will be held in Sofia in early April, lies ahead for the Belarusian sports acrobatics squad.



Photo of the week

Minsk hosts the feminine *Beauty Run 2020* on International Women's Day of March 8th

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 15th March. *Enchanted with Homeland*
Until 15th March. *Classics and Ethno-Modern of Victor Markovets*
Until 16th March. *Wind Shadow*: pictorial and graphical art of Yuri Khilko
Until 22nd March. Olga Sazykina's project: *About Glass*
Until 15th April. *We'll Be Understood in 100 Years: Lazar Khidekel*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 15th March. *From an Idea to Theatrical Stage*
Until 22nd March. *Mikhailovskoe. Pushkin's Office*
Until 31st March. *Young Talents of the Capital*

LEONID SHCHEMELEV CITY ART GALLERY

10 Revolyutsionnaya Street
Until 19th April. *Leonid Shchemelev is 97: Graphics from Family Collection*
Until 19th April. *About Women and Spring*

BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM

13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street
Until 14th March. *Valentin Taras and Rygor Baradulin: On Height of Memories*
Until 25th March. *Wisdom of Centuries*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

47 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 29th March. *Jazz! Cats! Spring!*

YANKA KUPALA LITERARY MUSEUM

4 Yanka Kupala Street
Until 28th March. *Valeriana Zholtok: Passion for Life*

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 12th March. *Robo Art*
Until 26th July. *Live Exotics*

GALLERY ARTEL

58/1-6 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 30th March. *Unknown Van Gogh*

LIBRA

37 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 7th April. *Sand and Blood: Francisco Goya and Pablo Picasso*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 22nd March. *Victor Mikita. Well-Portal*

GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY MUSEUM

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 27th March. *Heirs of Great Victory*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
13.03. *Swan Lake / City of Lovers*
15.03. *The Players*
17 and 18.03. *Romeo and Juliet*
19.03. *La Traviata*

MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
12.03. *Hot Mothers*
13.03. *How to Become Rich*
15.03. *Twelfth Night*
17.03. *Dangerous Ties*
18.03. *Pygmalion*

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
12.03. *ART*
14 and 15.03. *En Souvenir de Chagall*
17.03. *Pinsk Gentry / The First*
18.03. *Tolerance / Welcoming Sun*
19.03. *Comedy of Unhappy Villager, His Wife Malanka, Jew David and the Devil Who Lost Sense of Life / Elza's Land*

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Masharov Avenue
12.03. *Pygmalion*
13.03. *Who Laughs Last*
14.03. *Jubilee / Proposal*
15, 17 and 18.03. *Women Without Borders*
19.03. *Battlefield*

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
12.03. *Granddad*
13 and 15.03. *Adam's Jokes*
14.03. *Mad Woman*
17.03. *Silent Whisper of Leaving Steps*
18.03. *Doctor Raus' Career*
19.03. *New Drama Fire*

NEW DRAMA THEATRE

16 Liza Chaikina Street
13.03. *I'm an Object...*
15.03. *How Much is Love?*
17.03. *A Dog of Bely Island*
18.03. *Important to be Serious*

MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
12.03. *A Thousand and One Night*
13.03. *Tristan and Isolde*
14.03. *Shalom Aleikhem! Peace to You, People!*
15.03. *Gypsy Baron*
17.03. *My Wife is a Lier*
18.03. *Wedding in Malinovka*
19.03. *Cherry Orchard*

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
12.03. *Dear Pamela*
13.03. *Zhmurik / Family Weekend*
14.03. *Goat's Island*
17.03. *A House in the Middle of Spring*
18.03. *Tectonics of Feelings / Jubilee*
19.03. *Not Invented by Us*