

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko delivers State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly which highlights major priorities in the current social and economic development of the country



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Alexander Lukashenko and Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting in Ankara

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Planned projects aren't simple

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko delivers State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly

Vasily Tikhomirov

The joint session of the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic at the Oval Hall brought together top-ranking officials, members of the Government, heads of state management bodies and agencies, major enterprises, universities and banks, representatives of the diplomatic corps and journalists from both central and regional mass media. Among those in attendance were also former MPs, representatives of the Belarusian Public Association of Veterans, the Belaya Rus Republican Public Association, the Belarusian Union of Women, university students and cadets of military universities.

The State of the Nation Address highlighted major priorities in the current social and economic development of the country. The President spoke of the successes, problems and tasks which the country needs to work on in the near future.

The main themes of the Address are outlined below.

On the Belarusian state

“The Republic of Belarus emerged on the map of the world almost two decades ago. On gaining independence, it had to build and develop in a situation of complex geopolitical, economic, social and regional transformations. Belarus was under the scrutiny of the global community, keeping an eye on us and constantly evaluating us. Sometimes they made judgements and put us under conditions of economic and political blockade. However, through the difficulties of sanctions and the challenges of global crises, we have reached our goals. We have created our own country at the centre of Europe. Belarus is a peace-loving, stable and beautiful country. This is a country for life,” said the Head of State.

The President remarked that a new diplomatic course of external interaction has been built within a short period of time. Belarus initiated and took an active part in Eurasian integration projects. “Belarus remained neutral in relation to familiar global and regional conflicts. We summoned the global community to establish a new multilateral dialogue in order to enhance measures of trust, security and co-operation,” he reminded the audience. “We took a firm position in the modern geopolitical system. While developing relations with our strategic allies and foreign

partners in various parts of the globe, we did not step aside from the principles of making independent decisions about our own national interests and the interests of other nations, firstly, our neighbours.”

“In matters of sovereignty and security in foreign and domestic policy there has never been and will never be any room for compromise. The experience of division of the Belarusian people and re-

dent. These decisions must be socially responsible.”

The growth in incomes of the population remains among the priorities of the state. Last year, wages were increased for some categories of workers of science, education, healthcare and construction. However, people are still concerned about the prospects for their further growth. Special attention is paid to low-paid categories of workers.



drawing of borders repeatedly makes us appreciate today's unity and territorial integrity,” emphasised the President.

On prices and income

The Head of State drew the attention of the Government, the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade and trade unions to the fact that there should not be people complaining about excessive growth in prices for essential goods and services. The change in prices is sensitive for low-income citizens and pensioners. “Prices must be acceptable,” he stressed.

“To curb the growth of prices I demand the Government create an environment for healthy and fair competition. Some monopoly sectors demonstrate attempts to dictate their prices and tariffs to suppress price collusion, level conditions and cancel individual privileges,” Mr. Lukashenko ordered. “The Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, the State Control Committee, trade unions and other authorised state bodies should be strict in ensuring that the law is not violated. They must take the necessary measures without additional instructions from the Presi-

“The Government is obliged to ensure the ratio of the average wage in the budget sector and the average in the country is no less than 80 per cent,” said Mr. Lukashenko.

On the economic situation and business development

The Head of State noted that, in recent years, the country has upgraded over 500 major industrial enterprises. New production facilities have been set up in wood and metal working industries, construction and textile industries, pharmaceutical industry and food industry, which — according to the President — operate quite effectively today.

“Industry promotion is the right development path for Belarus. The objective is to create comfortable living conditions in every corner of the country. It is important to remove everything that restrains economic growth today. This is the overriding task for the Government and the National Bank,” said Mr. Lukashenko.

“The Belarusian economy will rely on the development of large enterprises and production venues in the future. This is our overriding priori-

ty,” the President said, adding that a strong economy is the foundation of a successful state, and Belarus has done a lot over its years of independence. For example, the gross domestic product per capita and in terms of production parity has gone up almost five times and production output increased almost 2.5 times.

Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that Belarus is still not satisfied with what has already

employment and job opportunities for citizens. “Reduction in the level of employment or in the number of working places is inadmissible under any pretext. All those who create jobs will get full support at any level,” the President said, adding that creating high-performance jobs remains a priority goal, and the whole chain of management is responsible for achieving it.

The work carried out over the past two years has created unique opportunities for the economic development of all spheres of society — including self-employment and high technologies.

On regional development

“It should be noted that among the addresses received during the recent meeting with the expert community and journalists, there were many proposals for the development of the regions. Their residents really cheer for their land, offering interesting solutions for the development of cities and villages. There are initiatives that, without exaggeration, relate to the future of the entire country, its further socio-economic and political development: from the role of the trade union movement to the improvement of legislation and proposals to change our Constitution. I am glad that people think on a large scale. Of course, this shows the political maturity of our society,” Mr. Lukashenko said.

According to him, such initiatives are valuable feedback from residents for all authorities. “In fact, this is a road map for our future actions,” he added.

Mr. Lukashenko drew attention to the balanced development of territories. “Belarus is a compact country. There should not be any dividing lines, especially in social, economic and living conditions.”

Levels of regional policy have been determined in Belarus, relating to the capital city, regional centres, districts, agro-towns and villages. There are strategies at every level. Separate programmes should be developed for 11 major towns to ensure robust development. “The Government, chairmen of regional executive committees will have two years to implement these programmes,” Mr. Lukashenko said. “Importantly, there should be tangible results for our people.”

Mr. Lukashenko also spoke about the development of infrastructure. “Comfortable living conditions are the foundation of social standards

but success lies in the decisions

and the main criterion of successful regional projects. Corresponding construction and modernisation programmes should be developed there, if necessary," he added.

On foreign trade

"We do not have large reserves of raw materials, so we have to rely on the export of high-yield goods and services. However, it's not enough just to produce a good product and find a market. World trade, unfortunately, is hostage to political manoeuvres," stated Mr. Lukashenko.

The President called 2018 the year of trade wars. "They are continuing this year. This is not only a sanctions confrontation. A wide range of unacceptable measures such as pressure, discrimination, intimidation and bans are used. Some countries have imposed unilateral restrictions on trade even for their most important, closest foreign economic partners — including Belarus."

He stated that the most important task for the country is the development of exports. "At the same time, the high share of foreign trade turnover not only bears fruit, but also creates a risk of dependence on the external market environment."

Therefore, it is important to find our own niche in the world market, to produce goods and provide services that have a steady demand, high competitiveness and stable profitability. "The Government should offer effective, in-demand tools to support exports," the President added.

On the international situation

"Strained relations between the USA, China, partially India and Russia create an uncomfortable reality for the entire world," Mr. Lukashenko said. The mechanisms of global checks and balances are falling apart, while the decision of the United States to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty could have unpredictable consequences. "We cannot but be concerned by the military build-up of NATO and the USA in the neighbouring states. Against this backdrop, Belarus needs to build up its Armed Forces and take action to maintain security," the Head of State said. While working to improve its defence capacity, Belarus is building co-operation within the framework of the CSTO to the greatest extent possible, taking part in manoeuvres and improving the efficiency of the regional group of forces. Together with its main ally, the country is gearing up for the Belarus-Russia Union Shield 2019 exercise.

On the EAEU

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that Belarus does not need integration for the sake of it. "We expect to achieve certain goals that will bring about tangible results for the economies and peoples of our countries. The EAEU should become a full-fledged economic union with equal conditions for its participants. This will be a priority goal for Belarus during its presidency in the organisation in 2020," Mr. Lukashenko said. "Today, Belarus is ready to play a bigger role as a trade channel for the multi-million-Dollar market of the Eur-

Europe — our common home. We encourage all our partners to get involved today."

The Belarusian Head of State believes it may even be said that a war is going on in Europe. "There is reluctance to meet at the level of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or at the level of heads of state, because it seems to be disadvantageous for some," Mr. Lukashenko said.

The Belarusian leader pointed out that Minsk has earned a reputation as a neutral ground for negotiations on the most difficult items on

entire chain of power, but also for each voter," he noted.

Mr. Lukashenko said that the date has not yet been determined but noted that if acceptable in law, the elections could be timed for the Day of the October Revolution.

"There must be no games, I emphasise once again. Come out and fight. The country needs an effective, active, powerful Parliament in which young people should be represented, veterans should be given the opportunity to contest, and I will ask the authorities to support them. We should not be afraid to put for-

tion to respond to changing realities and the new social and economic challenges facing the country. "We should prepare amendments to the basic law with the country's long-term development goals in mind," he said.

Judges of the Constitutional Court are scrutinising the proposals to amend the Constitution. "They are highly professional specialists who bear great responsibility for the accuracy and relevance of the amendments. The public and scholars are involved in this challenging work. We have recently reached a new



asian Economic Union and the CIS countries with the European Union," he added.

Speaking about Belarus' foreign policy priorities in the East, the Head of State noted the country seeks to take an active part in the integration associations in the post-Soviet space. Belarus stays committed to the course chosen 20 years ago to develop the Union State with Russia. Mr. Lukashenko named co-operation in the CIS among the priorities. He said that for many of the CIS member countries this is virtually the only platform for trade and political dialogue.

On peace in Europe

Mr. Lukashenko believes that only a broad strategic dialogue can overcome existing contradictions in the world, including in the common Euro-Atlantic space. "It doesn't matter what the dialogue may be called — Helsinki-2 or something else. Results are what matters. It doesn't matter where it will happen. It doesn't matter who will initiate it. We don't want people to die due to our political ineptitude," stressed the President. "It is of vital importance to preserve peace and prosperity in

the international agenda. "We take pride in this fact. We will continue doing our best to restore peace and accord in Ukraine."

"We remember the lessons of the past. We are analysing the current international situation. It is objectively getting more and more complicated. Therefore, we will do our utmost to avoid the standoff between the East and West and warn the world about a new civilisational split. It is the key purpose of our foreign policy, our peaceful initiatives aimed at bringing together different integration formats and at bolstering trust and security," Mr. Lukashenko concluded.

On elections

Mr. Lukashenko stated that Belarus will hold elections to the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic this year. "The Presidential elections will be held in strict accordance with the law within the terms established by the Constitution. The election campaign should, as always, be calm and organised. Elections to the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic will be held this year. They will be a test not only for candidates and the

ward our candidacies, to fight — from parties and organisations. This is the election campaign, this is the election," Mr. Lukashenko said. "We should act reasonably, in debates in stadiums and other things [a reference to the events of the election campaign in Ukraine — editor's remark]. Go to the people. They are the main front of the political struggle."

Mr. Lukashenko stressed the role of the future Parliament, "We need a very talented Parliament as it will be the centre of the drafting of basic law together with the President. We — future parliamentarians and I — will put the final points in the updated Constitution of our country."

On changes to the Constitution

The expected updating of the country's basic law should serve the interests of Belarus and its citizens at the present time. "I am convinced that thanks to the balanced and scrupulous work of experts we will have the Constitution meeting the interests of our country and our citizens," noted the Head of State. According to Mr. Lukashenko, consistent work has been in progress to improve legisla-

stage. I instructed the Head of the President Administration to engage scholars — highly-qualified people, members of the public. The next step will involve individual members of the parties to make sure it is an accurate document for discussion at Presidential level," Mr. Lukashenko said.

He added that the media and the Internet show great interest in possible changes. "It is not worth talking about the options right now. They are just options. We have not yet developed a concept to amend the Constitution. It will be made public as soon as I receive the final proposals from different segments of our society," the Belarusian leader said.

"We will investigate the new Constitution jointly with you — to learn what it should be for our people. We need to learn from the mistakes of others and see what our neighbours have failed to do. When the time comes, we will sit down with you, take our pens and start writing our Constitution. It will be updated in many ways. This law is unlikely to create a new political structure, but it will be a continuation of what we have done."



Aiming at major projects

President of Belarus pays official visit to Turkey

By Vasily Tikhomirov

After the welcoming ceremony, with guard of honour, at Ankara international airport, the Head of State went on to Anitkabir, the Mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, where he laid a wreath at the tomb of the national leader, founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal.

The official meeting between the presidents of Belarus and Turkey took place at Recep Tayyip Erdogan's residence: The White Palace. On approaching the site, Mr. Lukashenko's motorcade was met by a cavalry group of 40 riders, who accompanied the esteemed guest to the main palace gate. During the ceremony, the orchestra performed the anthems of both Belarus and Turkey, against which a 21-volley salute was given, according to local tradition. Here, in the White Palace, the heads of state held their talks.

After the negotiations, Mr. Lukashenko stressed that Turkey is one of the key partners of Belarus in the region. Co-operation with the country is of great importance. The President of Belarus drew attention to the fact that the first official visit of his Turkish counterpart to Belarus in November 2016 opened a new page in the history of Belarusian-Turkish relations, "Significant focus was given to political, economic, cultural and humanitarian co-operation. It was an important step that gave serious impetus to our relations."

Mr. Lukashenko said that,

during the current negotiations, the two parties 'openly and constructively discussed a range of important topics on the bilateral agenda'. There has been positive and fruitful dialogue between the two countries. "In the political sphere, we have absolutely no disagreements - including on major international issues. Our views are the same," emphasised the President of Belarus, adding that the basis of Belarusian-Turkish co-operation is the economy. During the talks, the two parties identified priority areas in the fields of trade and investment and discussed the prospects for the implementation of joint projects in engineering, agriculture, construction, finance, chemicals and light industry.

"It is good that we are gradually moving from simple trade to a more advanced form of economic collaboration: industrial co-operation. The assembly of MTZ tractors in Turkey testifies to our serious intentions in this direction. We will work together on similar projects on other types of Belarusian equipment," said Mr. Lukashenko.

In April, the first Belarusian tractor was assembled in the Kirikkale industrial zone, 80km from Ankara. Before the talks, it was shown to Mr. Lukashenko. The assembly production of BELARUS tractors is scheduled to start in Turkey in July and Azerbaijan has provided support for this.

"We've managed to complete this ahead of schedule -- with our Turkish friends and

representatives of Azerbaijan. I believe there are few such examples in the world, starting production in one of the countries using Belarusian technologies and then coming together with Turkey, which is friendly to both Belarus and Azerbaijan," said Mr. Lukashenko.

Particular attention was



paid to the promotion of trade and economic co-operation. These include the optimisation of logistics routes in organising cargo delivery, the continuation of work on the creation of a bank in Belarus, using Turkish capital, and the localisation of joint ventures in the two states. "We are ready for you to buy a Belarusian bank or invest in the capital of one," Mr. Lukashenko said, inviting his Turkish partners to invest.

Belarus is also interested in further expanding contacts in the fields of technology, innovation and education and intends to increase collaboration in the field of joint research, academic programmes, exchange of students and teachers of higher educational institutions.

The presidents of Belarus and Turkey agreed that mutual

trade turnover of our countries should be increased to \$1.5bn. Recep Tayyip Erdogan reminded us that, in 2016, Minsk and Ankara set a goal to achieve a volume of bilateral trade of \$1bn and it's almost there: reaching \$984m last year. "We decided to focus even more on this and increase trade turnover to \$1.5bn. Turkey and Belarus have such potential," said the President of Turkey.

Mr. Lukashenko agreed that the current level of trade does not correspond to the potential of Belarusian-Turkish relations. He noted, "When we made the decision on a \$1bn trade turnover, we named the figure with caution. I didn't think we'd reach the milestone so quickly. Today we are talking about \$1.5bn. I've promised the President of Turkey that we wouldn't have any closed topics in our relations -- be it food supplies or military-industrial co-operation. We are determined to take serious and radical steps in this regard."

Two years after the Turkish President's visit to Belarus, mutual trade turnover has increased by 20 percent. "This is a good amount, but the figures do not correspond to the potential of the two states. We can, should and will do much more than we have done even in these last two years," said Mr. Lukashenko.

Following the talks, the presidents of Belarus and Turkey signed a package of documents. An intergovernmental agreement on co-operation in the field of education, a

memorandum of co-operation between the ministries of justice, a memorandum of understanding between the State Military-Industrial Committee of Belarus and the Presidium of the Defence Industry of the Turkish President's Administration were signed. In addition, Belarus' National Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Industry and Development of Turkey signed a memorandum on scientific and technical co-operation in Antarctica. A 'roadmap' for the development of co-operation between the NAS of Belarus, the Scientific Research Council of Turkey for 2019-2021 and the protocol of the tenth meeting of the Belarusian-Turkish joint intergovernmental economic commission were signed.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, these documents create additional conditions for the expansion of mutually beneficial Belarusian-Turkish relations in the political, trade, economic, scientific, technical and humanitarian areas.

"Turkey is a priority for us. We highly appreciate our friendship and are aiming at further productive all-round co-operation. Dear Recep, there are many topics, that don't need to be mentioned, that have tested our friendship and reliability, primarily of Belarusians. I don't think you can blame us today. We have always been focused on good relations, respected our agreements, and always did what we promised -- no matter what the cost. This will continue," assured the President of Belarus.

Business at the forefront

The Belarusian-Turkish Business Forum -- held in Ankara -- was a practical illustration of the guidelines outlined by the presidents of Belarus and Turkey: \$325m of contracts were signed



By Olga Korneeva

As the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry -- Vladimir Ulakhovich -- noted, the petrochemical sector prevails, "We have 66 Belarusian companies among the exporters. The majority relate to petrochemistry, metallurgy and mechanical engineering. They make up the bulk of the export portfolio. There are also new areas at the Forum such as pharmaceuticals, banking, logistics and the furniture industry."

Naftan signed a major contract for over \$200m. The company will supply acrylonitrile, used to produce artificial fibres, to Turkey for six years. In turn, JSC Grodno Azot signed a contract with a Turkish company for the supply of polyamide yarn for approximately \$15m, while JSC

Amkodor (under the terms of the contract) will deliver 30 units of snow removal equipment worth more than \$1m to Turkey.

Mogilevkhimvolokno also signed memorandums of intent with two Turkish companies. The Belarusian company plans to supply up to 20 thousand tonnes of polyester fibre, worth about \$64m, to the Turkish market by the end of 2021. Furthermore, Anatoly Savenok, General Director of the JSC BMZ managing company of BMK Holding, signed framework agreements with Turkish companies for the supply of steel products worth more than \$14m.

Belarusian-Turkish co-operation is clearly rising to a new qualitatively higher level. Since the first ambitious goal has been reached, there is no doubt that another serious benchmark is achievable.



By Vladimir Velikhov

The construction of a facility to assemble Belarusian tractors in the Turkish city of Kirikkale is nearly over. The business is expected to be in operation by July.

Kirikkale is located 80km from Ankara. The construction of industrial facilities continues vigorously outside the city, with space to spare for manufacturing Belarusian products. The assembly of BELARUS tractors is expected to begin in a couple of months

The decision to build an enterprise to assemble Minsk tractors was made with the assistance of the Ganja Automobile Plant (Azerbaijan) which has been co-operating with the Minsk Tractor Works for many years. A special tractor compliant with Euro-4 emission standards has been developed for the Turkish market -- the BELARUS-1221.

The Minsk plant's Director General, Fiodor Domotenko, explains, "Environmental standards in Turkey are much tougher than those in Belarus. We sell Euro-2 products to Russia. Belarus uses Euro-2 as well. We sell Euro-6 tractors to Europe. Therefore, a new Euro-4 compliant tractor model based on the BELARUS-1221 has been developed." He explained how starting proprietary production of tractors in Turkey was expensive for Belarus, but the support of the Ganja Automobile Plant was extremely helpful. Thanks to good relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan, the company saved about \$1m on one building alone.

Choices in Kirikkale

Belarusian tractor assembly enterprise in Turkey expected to start working in July

It is profitable for Belarus to co-operate with Turkey using this scheme. The Minsk plant will continue to supply assembly kits to the Ganja Automobile Plant. The Plant will work on them and ship the products for final assembly to Kirikkale. "The logistics look complicated, but thanks to the preferences Azerbaijani companies enjoy in Turkey, the scheme is profitable. Our sales will rise," Mr. Domotenko added.

The total area of the Turkish enterprise is 7,000m2. Only a half of it is completed right now but it will be open by July 1st. Delegations from Belarus, Azerbaijan and Turkey have arrived in Kirikkale to look at

year. We intend to increase output up to 2,000 ultimately. The enterprise will be capable of assembling up to 3,000 tractors per annum. We just need the personnel."

Specialists from Minsk's Tractor Works and the Ganja Automobile Plant will train local workers in Turkey, with three Belarusians representatives already being sent to the site. "We will teach them the main tuning skills, tractor maintenance and driving. They are very knowledgeable specialists. It is a pleasure working with our Turkish colleagues," said Alexander Zhavrid, an assembly workshop supervisor at the Minsk plant.



At the assembly workshop in Kirikkale

intermediate results. The Belarusian side was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Lyashenko, and the Turkish side by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Bekir Pakdemirli.

Mr. Domotenko commented, "This year, we intend to make 100 tractors and 200 next

According to the Minsk Tractor Works' senior process engineer, Artyom Bulgakov, there are certain peculiarities in BELARUS tractor assembly. "First of all, we need to show the sequence of actions. We demonstrate it and they repeat the process."

Interesting results are promised

By Vladimir Khromov

Belarus wants to use the experience of Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) to set up its own international financial centre -- as noted by President Alexander Lukashenko as he met board members of Dubai International Financial Centre

The meeting was attended by DIFC Chairman Essa Kazim and Chief Executive Officer Arif Amiri. "Thank you for your kind words, undertakings and support. I expect you are already aware of our dream to set up a similar centre in Belarus. I will be very grateful to you if you continue your charitable activities in Belarus, support this project and

provide consulting assistance to us," said the Head of State.

Mr. Lukashenko noted the invaluable experience of Dubai International Financial Centre in setting up such institutions. "I know that your Centre is interested in co-operation in the IT sector and that you are paying close attention to the development of the digital economy. We are doing a lot in this field as well. I believe that if we managed to find common interest, such interaction would help promote the development of the digital economy. If you decide that Belarus has enough experience in advanced technologies, we will be ready to work together," he emphasised.

In turn, the DIFC Chairman remarked that the Government



of Dubai and the Centre management will support the project in Belarus. "Last summer, when we received the first documents on the matter, we made a decision to maintain co-operation in this field. I don't think that this is just a dream. We will bring this idea to life very soon. We've come to Belarus to share our experience. We are ready for this - especially as far as the formation and development of a

finance centre is concerned. We are prepared to contribute to the development of relations between the two states, especially in the IT sector," he said.

International financial centres are large centres with a full range of financial services and modern payment systems supporting large national economies with developed and efficient financial markets, where demand and supply are diversified and legislative and regulatory systems can ensure the integrity of relations between market operators and perform supervisory functions. After his meeting with the President of Belarus, Essa Kazim told journalists that they had discussed the idea of creating an international financial centre in Minsk

and how the 15 year accumulated experience of the Dubai MFC can be used. "We discussed in general how relations between our states can be developed and how we can support the development of the financial centre in Minsk," he said.

Mr. Kazim believes that the integration of modern technologies into a future financial centre in Minsk is promising. "Recently, we have seen some changes in the financial sector, not least because of the development of technology. We know that digital technologies are actively developing in Belarus and we believe that their use in the financial sector will lead to interesting results. Belarus is quite capable of making this idea attractive," he noted.

Press tour of promising projects

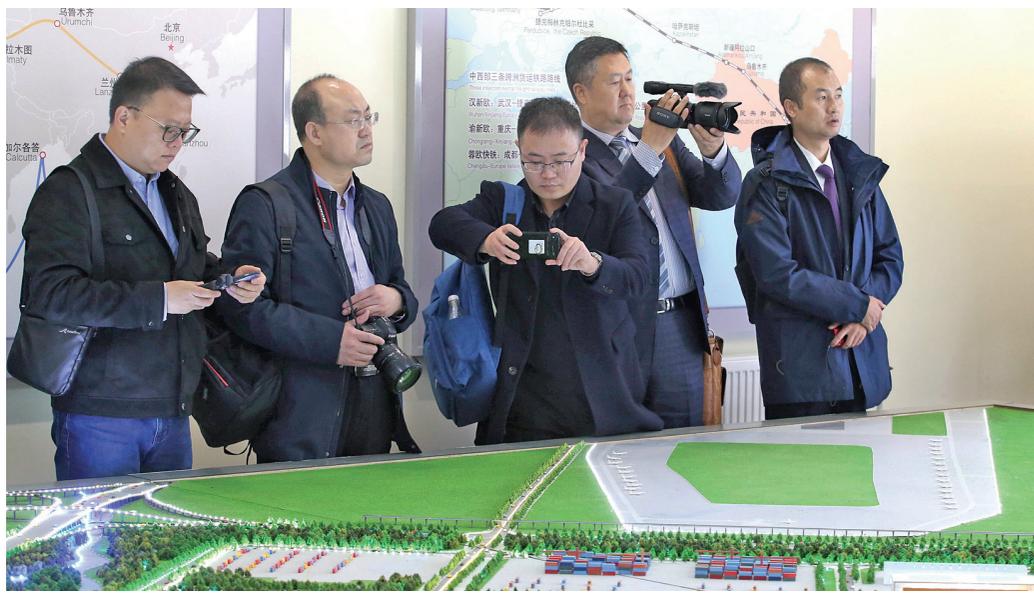
Large-scale press tour of Chinese journalists recently ended in Belarus

By Yulia Demeshko

The tour was organised as part of the cultural exchange liaison to promote Belarusian products and services in the People's Republic of China, as well as to develop economic relations between our countries. On the first day of their visit, the guests went to the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, the Polytechnic Science and Technology Park of the Belarusian National Technical University, the Chinese Language and Culture Department at Minsk's State Linguistic University and the EcoTechnoPark — Volma Resource Centre branch of the National Institute of Professional Education.

The Chinese were primarily interested in the efficiency and viability of the Great Stone Park which is a symbolic example of the successful co-operation between our two states. The journalists appreciated its contribution to economic development and the role of the project in improving the living standards of citizens.

Wang Yuyun, the chief correspondent of the China Radio International in Russia, commented, "We know that the Industrial Park is a very good example of co-operation as part of the *One Belt — One Road* initiative. I work in Russia, where joint Chinese-Russian projects are also being implemented. However, the Great Stone is the biggest one I have seen. This project has very good prospects."



Chinese journalists at Great Stone Industrial Park

It is important that, in the modern era of tough competition, Belarus has created the most favourable investment climate for residents of the Industrial Park — guaranteed by both national legislation and special international agreements.

There are great prospects for China and Belarus not only in economic co-operation but also in the tourism sector -- confirmed by similar press tours. On the second day, the Chinese journalists enjoyed a rich cultural programme of excursions to Mir Castle and the city of Grodno, as well as a visit to the Yanka Kupala University.

Wang Shuchao, from the *Vestnik Gansu* edition, described his impressions, "I was most interested in Grodno, as this city co-operates with the Gansu Province where I live and work. I think such press tours are important for the de-

velopment of our bilateral relations, as well as for attracting tourists to your country. When I return home, our publication will release a report about Grodno and Minsk — so that my compatriots know how beautiful Belarus is."

On the last day of the tour, the Chinese visited the Minsk-Arena Sports Complex and the reconstructed Dinamo Stadium — to enjoy a tour and a presentation about the upcoming sporting event of the year: the 2nd European Games. Zhou Xanguo, a senior correspondent of the Gansu Province's TV company, said later, "I think that sports events held at such large venues as Dinamo and Minsk-Arena have an enviable potential. Competitions at such stadiums can attract foreigners to Belarus — not only as tourists but also as potential investors into the economy."

The *One Belt — One Road* global initiative provides good opportunities for this. If we work together along this path, this will not only strengthen our political relations in the future but also bring practical benefits to ordinary people."

The Chinese journalists' press tour took place on the eve of the 2nd *One Belt — One Road* International Forum in which President Alexander Lukashenko is taking part. The establishment of a trusting all-round strategic partnership and mutually beneficial co-operation between our countries has a positive effect on the dynamics of interaction in all spheres, including in the sphere of mass media. A Belarusian-Chinese media forum — which will be held in our country for the first time in 2020 — will be the next step along this path.

When examples to follow are available

By Olga Korneeva

Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei calls on Swiss and French businesses to invest more actively in Belarus — focusing on the matter as part of the Belarusian-Swiss business forum in the city of Genthod

Vladimir Makei stressed that Switzerland is an important trade and economic partner of Belarus in Europe. Swiss' Stadler-Minsk — which produces rolling stock — is among the best examples of successful western investment in the Belarusian economy. Its success also confirms the stability and reliability of the conditions created in Belarus for foreign companies.

According to Mr. Makei, Belarus has no geographical or political preferences in working with investors. The country is interested in creating a single Eurasian economic space, with a guarantee of freedom of movement of goods, services, people and capital — from Lisbon to Vladivostok, and beyond. The Foreign Minister called on representatives of European companies to become a driver for the implementation of the 'integration of integrations' initiative proposed by the President of Belarus and to start with the establishment of direct and pragmatic contacts between supranational bodies of the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union.

Well-thought-out investment and business portfolio proposed

By Vladimir Velikhov

A representative delegation of business circles of Belarus on a visit to Zimbabwe

As the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry — Vladimir Ulakhovich — informed us, BelCCI has recently carried out significant work on the organisation of national exhibitions on the African continent. Recently, the first such exhibition was held in Nigeria. The organisation of a national exposition in Kenya is also planned for this year.

"Another country in our initiative portfolio is Angola," Mr. Ulakhovich said. "The advantage of African countries is that graduates of Soviet and Belarusian universities occupy good positions in the economy and governments there. For example, in Angola, they work as company heads and members of the Government. We believe that we should try to use this resource."

Zimbabwe is a new country of interest for Belarus. "Its President recently visited Belarus.



The Chamber held a meeting focused on the possibilities of doing business with Zimbabwe. Over 200 Belarusian enterprises took part," said Mr. Ulakhovich. According to him, the President of Zimbabwe assured the business community that he is ready to take all the necessary measures to promote trade and economic co-operation with Belarus.

A Belarusian business delegation is now visiting Zimbabwe. To prepare for the trip, BelCCI has carried out not only organisational but also analytical work. This was worked on during the organisation of the exhibition of Belarus in Nigeria. Before the trip to this country, a road-show was held for Belarusian enterprises and a marketing review was presented. A

similar marketing review has been prepared for Zimbabwe. It objectively reflects, among other things, the country's business risks.

"We can't just show a positive picture to companies. The review also contains information on per capita income, solvency of the market, other risks associated with currency circulation and the repatriation of capital. Everywhere has its own characteristics and limitations. We try to show everything honestly as it is," said Mr. Ulakhovich. "Business is a pragmatic, serious and even tough matter. Mistakes can sometimes turn into serious costs. Our task as a business partner and facilitator is to make conditions as comfortable as possible so that there are concrete results."

EBRD has no intention of slowing down

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to increase volume of operations in Belarus

During the Spring Meetings of the Boards of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG) in Washington, the Belarusian delegation met with the EBRD Vice President, Alain Pilloux. The two parties discussed the current agenda for co-operation. Belarus' Economy Minister, Dmitry Krutoy, noted the record volumes of EBRD operations in Belarus in 2018: they amounted to 360m Euros and were more than doubled, compared to 2017. Mr. Pilloux confirmed the bank's intention to continue to increase the volume of operations in Belarus, while paying particular attention to the importance of continuing works on the pre-privatisation support of JSC Belinvestbank and JSC Bank Dabrabyt, as well as several enterprises in the real sector.

They also discussed the



Alain Pilloux

preparation of new investment infrastructure projects. A large-scale project for reconstruction of the M3 highway and a number of bridges are planned with the help of the EBRD. The total amount of the bank's investments under the planned loan agreement to be concluded this year, could reach about 240m Euros. In addition, the bank expressed interest in financing a project in the field of the thermal renovation of the residential sector in Belarus, the continuation of work on the water supply and the sanitation sector. The two parties agreed to continue their dialogue during the annual meeting of the EBRD Board of Governors in Sarajevo, on May 7th-9th.

Extensive potential for co-operation

This year, Belarus and Pakistan celebrate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations. During this time, mutual co-operation has strengthened, new directions have emerged for further partnership. Moreover, there is a task to increase commodity turnover to \$1bn by late 2020. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Belarus, H.E. Leena Salim Moazzam, explains how relations of the two states will continue to develop



By Anna Yevseichik

How do you evaluate bilateral relations at this stage?

Since 2015, the development of bilateral relations has received an impetus with the establishment of a Belarusian diplomatic presence in Islamabad and a Pakistani presence in Minsk. During this rather short span of time, over 77 agreements have been signed between the two countries. They have laid a legal basis for strengthening co-operation in all areas. Since then, bilateral trade has gradually increased. Three rounds of bilateral political consultations and joint Business Council, five rounds of the Joint Ministerial Commission and the Business and Investment Forum have already taken place. There have been also meetings of working groups on co-operation in the field of agriculture, industry, science and technology. High-level visits of delegations were organised on both sides to expand parliamentary and interregional co-operation. In addition, we actively co-operate in the fields of civil aviation, defence, education and culture.

In what areas do you see the greatest potential for further co-operation with Belarus?

At present, Belarus exports to Pakistan heavy machinery - such as tractors, combines, vehicles, trucks, tires, hydraulic components. We are interested in benefiting from Belarusian experience in these areas by



transfer of technology. Since the balance of trade is in favour of Belarus, we are also working on introducing and expanding exports of Pakistani products to Belarus - such as rice, fruits and vegetables, textiles and clothing, sports goods. Furthermore, there is great potential for cooperation in the spheres of culture, education, tourism. Recently, the Government of Pakistan has reduced the visa fee for citizens of Belarus who wish to visit our country for tourist purposes. We hope that the Belarusian side will reciprocate. To further enhance bilateral trade, it was proposed to allow visa-free entry to Belarus to those citizens of Pakistan who have a valid Schengen visa.

Is the visit of Pakistani representatives to Belarus at the highest level planned for 2019?

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, has accepted the invitation from President Alexander Lukashenko to visit Belarus.

Do Pakistani tourists often visit Belarus? How do

you think we can develop bilateral relations in the field of tourism?

Currently, an agreement on co-operation in the field of tourism is under consideration of the two countries.

Pakistan is always keen to welcome Belarusian tourists. We have not only the highest mountain peaks in the world, glaciers and beautiful valleys, but also deserts and picturesque coastal areas. In the years ahead, we hope to welcome more tourists from Belarus.

March 23rd was a national holiday in Pakistan. What large-scale events are planned for this year?

The highlight of the National Day of Pakistan was the parade in Islamabad, in which military and airborne contingents from many friendly countries participated. Our Embassy held a number of events in Belarus. For example, the 'Art of Pakistan' exhibition was held at the National Art Museum and books about our country were presented at the National Library of Belarus. In March, the Minsk National Airport was presented a football made in Pakistan; it features the both states' flags. In addition, an exhibition of Pakistani arts and handicrafts is now at show at the University of Culture Art Gallery, while the Pakistan Week will soon be celebrated at the Minsk State Linguistic University. Moreover, at the end of April, Pakistani films will be shown in Minsk cinemas.

Thank you.

Meetings of mutual benefit

By Olga Korneeva

Belarus and Lebanon seek to develop co-operation in telecommunications

The issues were high on the agenda during the trip of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Syria and concurrently to Lebanon, Yuri Sluka, to Beirut, to visit the SmartEx 2019 international technology exhibition. The Ambassador learnt about Belarusian IT company products which were being displayed at the exhibition for the first time. The Lebanese Minister of Telecommunications and the Head of the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture -- Mohammad Choucair -- also visited the Belarusian stands. The officials discussed possible areas of Belarus-Lebanese co-op-

eration in telecommunications, trade and the economy as well as relations in general.

During his two-day trip to Lebanon, Mr. Sluka met with the Lebanese Industry Minister, Wael Abou Faour, the Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Hassan Murad, and the Minister of State for Information Technology, Adel Afiouni. The parties discussed promising areas of co-operation in industry and IT, the organisation of exchange visits between the two countries and the possibility of implementing business projects in order to boost trade relations.

The Belarusian Ambassador also met with the Head of the Lebanese-Belarusian Business Council, Michel Abdo, to discuss ways of stepping up trade and economic co-operation between Belarusian and Lebanese companies.

In memory of diplomat and scientist

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

A bust of Iosif Goshkevich -- a native of the Minsk Region and the first consul of the Russian Empire in Japan -- has been unveiled in the Hakodate Cultural Centre, Hokkaido Prefecture

The bust of Iosif Goshkevich, made by Soviet sculptor Oleg Komov, was donated to the Goshkevich Memorial Society in Hakodate by the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1989. In the 1990s and 2000s, repeated attempts were made to put the monument in one of the public places of the city. Thanks to the

joint efforts of the Belarusian, Russian and Japanese sides, the sculpture has finally been installed in the Hakodate Cultural Centre.

Iosif Goshkevich was a diplomat, orientalist, traveller, first consul of the Russian Empire in Japan and author of the first ever Japanese-Russian dictionary. He is a significant figure in Belarusian-Japanese bilateral relations. His memory is equally honoured by both Belarusian and Russian diplomats, and by representatives of Japan. He blazed a trail, laid the foundations and set guidelines for future generations as many Soviet experts in the East have learned from his dictionaries and books.

Belarusian-Chinese institute set up at Belarusian State University

By Oleg Bogomazov

Belarusian State University (BSU) and Dalian Polytechnic University (DPU) establish joint Belarusian-Chinese institute -- as envisaged by corresponding agreement signed by the two universities' rectors, Andrey Korol and Guo Dongming

The Institute will begin working on September 1st, with training conducted in such programmes as 'mechanics and mathematical modelling', 'physics (production activity)' and 'global economy'. The institute is expected to also run Chinese language courses and will apply Belarus' university admission rules. Conditions are the same as for similar majors in the Belarusian State University. The first enrolment will comprise 120 students from among Belarusian citizens.

Representatives of Belarusian and Chinese universities will teach at this joint institute. "All curricula and programmes are developed and approved



with the participation of the two parties and are updated in accordance with the latest achievements of science, technology and industry of the countries participating in the educational project," said the press service. Graduates will receive two diplomas: of the BSU and Dalian Polytechnic University. There are also plans to open a master's programme in 2020.

The BSU and Dalian Polytechnic University have been actively co-operating since 2007. The universities have signed several agreements on scientific and educational liaisons and, in line with one of them, a joint institute was set up in Dalian in 2017. It currently enrolls 159 Chinese students who major in 'applied physics' and 'mechanics'.



Fire guts Notre-Dame

A massive fire consumed Notre-Dame Cathedral, gutting the roof of the Paris landmark and stunning France and the world, though firefighters saved the main bell towers and outer walls from collapse before bringing the blaze under control

Flames that began in the early evening burst rapidly through the roof of the eight-centuries-old cathedral and engulfed the spire, which toppled, quickly followed by the entire roof.

The fire, after burning for

about 8 hours, was largely extinguished. Moreover, in addition to battling to prevent one of the main bell towers from collapsing, firefighters tried to rescue religious relics and priceless artwork. One firefighter was seriously injured -- the only reported casualty.

"The worst has been avoided," French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters at the scene shortly before midnight.

Macron said France would launch a campaign to rebuild the cathedral, which is considered to be among the finest

examples of French Gothic cathedral architecture, including fundraising efforts and by appealing to 'talents' from overseas to contribute.

"We will rebuild it together. It will undoubtedly be part of French destiny and our project for the years to come," a visibly moved Macron said.

The cathedral's main stone structure had escaped complete destruction by the time the fire came under control.

"We will continue to watch over any residual pockets of fire and cool down the areas that are still red-hot, like the wooden

beam framework," a fire brigade spokesman said.

Distraught Parisians and stunned tourists gazed in disbelief as the inferno raged at the cathedral, which sits on the Ile de la Cite, an island in the River Seine and marks the very centre of Paris.

Thousands of onlookers lined bridges over the Seine and along its embankments, held at a distance by a police cordon. Some sang liturgical music in harmonies late into the night as they stood vigil, while others recited prayers.

\$33bn deal in Big Oil: Chevron is buying Anadarko Petroleum

Chevron is paying \$33bn to acquire Anadarko Petroleum in a massive deal that will bolster its natural gas and shale operations

Although Chevron is well-known consumer brand, with eight refineries and nearly 8,000 gas stations, Anadarko is focused on exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas. It sells its product to other companies that refine it.

But Anadarko has significant holdings, with the equivalent of 1.5bn barrels of proved reserves. That makes it one of the world's largest independent exploration and production companies.

Chevron (CVX) CEO Michael Wirth said in a statement that buying Anadarko would solidify his company's position in shale-producing parts of the southern United States.

He said it would also enhance Chevron's drilling operations in the Gulf of Mexico, and give the company access to a promising natural gas field in Mozambique.

"This brings together two sets of assets that fit very well," said Wirth in an interview.

Chevron said it would issue 200 million new shares and use \$8bn in cash to fund the purchase. It will also assume \$15bn in debt.

Annual cost savings of \$2bn will be achieved within a year of the deal closing, according to Chevron, which also plans to sell assets worth up to

Living in a country that thinks green



These five countries are making positive global contributions to the planet and climate, according to the Good Country Index

The latest climate reports look grim: recent research published in Science journal indicates that oceans are warming 40 percent faster than previously thought, while the UN panel of climate-change scientists released a landmark report in October 2018 warning that rising temperatures may cause major flooding, droughts, food shortages and wildfires by 2040 unless drastic action is taken.

Norway

Topping the list for contribution to the planet and climate is Norway, which has led the world in a number of

environmental initiatives, including the highest electric car adoption in the world and a governmental pledge to be climate neutral by 2030. But the relationship with the natural world here goes well beyond policy. Norwegians embrace the concept of friluftsliv, which translates to 'open-air life' and conveys the importance of spending time outdoors to be healthy and happy.

Portugal

Coming in third for its contributions to the planet, Portugal was an early leader in investing in a full network of charging stations for electric cars (which was free until just recently), and has incentivised citizens to install solar power and renewable energy with

lower rates and the opportunity to sell energy back to the grid.

Uruguay

Ranked highest of the South American countries in the Planet & Climate index (coming in 15th) and consistently named one of the most ethical destinations for its social and environmental policies, Uruguay has become a global leader for renewable energy -- as much out of necessity as respect for the planet.

Kenya

With increasingly extreme weather patterns and more frequent droughts, Kenya has already experienced the initial effects of climate change. In reaction, the government is working to protect its heavily agricultural economy, launching a Climate Change Action Plan and committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2030.

New Zealand

Ranked 39th in the Planet & Climate index -- making it a leader in the Asia-Pacific region -- New Zealand takes the protection of its natural resources very seriously, particularly because its agriculture -- and tourism-based economy depends on it.

World's largest plane makes first flight over California

The world's largest aircraft took off over the Mojave Desert in California, the first flight for the carbon-composite plane built by Stratolaunch Systems Corp, started by late Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, as the company enters the lucrative private space market



incredibly proud of the Stratolaunch team, today's flight crew, our partners at Northrup Grumman's Scaled Composites and the Mojave Air and Space Port."

The plane is designed to drop rockets and other space vehicles weighing up to 500,000 pounds at an altitude of 35,000 feet and has been billed by the company as making satellite deployment as 'easy as booking an airline flight'.

The flight, which saw the plane reach a maximum speed of 189 miles per hour and altitudes of 17,000 feet, was meant to test its performance and handling qualities, according to Stratolaunch.

Allen, who co-founded Microsoft with Bill Gates in 1975, announced in 2011 that he had formed the privately funded Stratolaunch.

The company seeks to cash in on higher demand in coming

The white airplane called Roc, which has a wingspan the length of an American football field and is powered by six engines on a twin fuselage, took to the air shortly before 7am Pacific time and stayed aloft for more than two hours before landing safely back at the Mojave Air and Space Port as a crowd of hundreds of people cheered.

"What a fantastic first flight," Stratolaunch Chief Executive Officer Jean Floyd said in a statement posted to the company's website.

"Today's flight furthers our mission to provide a flexible alternative to ground launched systems, Floyd said. "We are

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Objective reality can be transformative

The ability to find the poetry of life in daily routine is not common to everyone. However, artist Gennady Shutov manages this well in his artistry -- as seen by his Materiality exhibition at Belarus' National Art Museum dedicated to the artist's 80th birthday

By Victor Khoroshilov

Gennady Shutov is a Belarusian watercolourist and graphic artist. In 1959, he graduated from the Vitebsk Pedagogical School of Art and Graphics and completed his studies at the Moscow Polygraphic Institute. For many years, he chaired the Vitebsk regional branch of the Union of Artists and, in 1996, was recognised as an 'Honoured Figure of Arts of Belarus'. In 2011, Mr. Shutov received a Special Award from the President of the Republic of Belarus for his significant contribution to the development of modern art and the creation of unique still-lives.

The exhibition, dedicated to the artist's 80th birthday, at the National Art Museum, features works from the 1960s–2010s. The leitmotifs of Mr. Shutov's art are the still-life and landscape genres. The exhibition follows the artistic path of the painter



and contemplates his creative search. Mr. Shutov's works are devoted to daily life and he has the ability to distinguish the poetry of life in its routine and simplicity.

The exhibition is entitled 'Materiality' which stands for reality. His definition of materiality sees reality as the sum of both natural and historical

phenomena. However, at the museum, we find ourselves in the objective reality of the author.

Mr. Shutov's still-lives are composed of well-known objects: keys, parts of wooden house, clay pots, dried bouquets, photographs, glass vessels, scraps of newspapers and magazines... At the same time,

the combinations of these common everyday objects and still-life compositions fill the objects with new meaning, importance and significance. In his uniquely composed landscapes, the artist not only captures the terrain but puts it through the prism of his personality.

The works of Gennady

Shutov are exhibited and kept in various museum and private collections: The State Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), The National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus, and the museums of Paris, Kiev, Ashgabat, Vitebsk, Mogilev and Polotsk.

Way Out preparing for launch

By Alexander Pimenov

National Centre of Contemporary Arts hosts a press conference dedicated to the participation of the Belarusian national pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art

As is traditional, among the organisers of the national pavilion are the Culture Ministry and the National Centre of Contemporary Arts, with the support of the Foreign Ministry and the Belarusian Embassy in Italy.

The theme of the 58th International Art Exhibition -- La Biennale di Venezia -- will be the study of life in an era of change and the place of man and art in it. Belarus will present

its Way Out project by sculptor, Konstantin Selikhanov.

The exhibition is based on the spatial interaction of five multimedia objects, each of which captures a certain event or state. Artistic links are established between the sculpted figures of a life-size man and substantive forms -- such as a TV set, a neon sign and a tray with glasses. The format of the installation combines all these elements into a single whole and creates, in its entirety, an important message aimed at provoking the audience's reaction.

"The Way Out project is multidimensional in its co-ordination of time, history and modernity, marking the 'fracturing' of time and man's search for meaning within it,"



explains Mr. Selikhanov. "In our world of global change, and in the face of possible catastrophic upheaval, man must seek his identity, and his role."

To the artist, everything is philosophically simple. Mr. Selikhanov continues, "While observing the transformations

and changes unfolding in the world, we note the emergence of anxiety about the very possibility of these transformations. The future is unpredictable, and it is difficult to predict a course of events that are random. Undetectable movement with increasing speed is becoming

the dominant experience of the world: without landmarks, pathways or an end point. These processes do not simply transform our surrounding world but can seriously alter it. The person becomes a figure marking the shift of context from Soviet to post-Soviet, local to global, historical to modern, etc. The energy is in the difference between truth and lies, good and evil, happiness and misfortune ..."

Of course, on seeing the installation, the viewer may wish to contradict the artist, but this is the core of his message: to call for dialogue, and not ignore personal concepts and ideas.

There is not much time left to wait to see how the audience will perceive the national pavilion in Venice at the Biennale.

Singer Zena: 'I'd like to be called a Belarusian artiste'

This year, Zina Kupriyanovich, aged 16, has become the youngest participant at Eurovision. She explains how she gained the name of a TV character and the importance of a work ethic

By Anna Popova

With adults on equal terms

Isn't it scary to compete against established artistes?

It's true that I'm the youngest but I don't feel intimidated. On the contrary, I feel empowered.

Have you heard any of the other songs competing?

I'll hear them at rehearsals in Israel. There's no time at all for anything else, not going on online, or anything but rehearsals, as I want to perform perfectly. I feel that there will be some kind of magic.

Is there a difference between adult and junior Eurovision?

This difference lies in the approach. At the junior competition, you worry more and can get upset. Emotions are quieter and more serious at the adult show. There's less rivalry, and participants view it less as a competition, chatting as equals. It's more like a creative project.

Tell us about the Like It song which you'll perform for the competition.

After the final of 'Junior Eurovision', which I hosted, Yulia Kireeva invited me to sing a song she'd written for me. She works with many stars -- including Svetlana Loboda and Olga Buzova. She considered my tone of voice and range and showed it to my producer Victor Drobysch. He approved, saying, "We'll go to Eurovision with this song."

RAPID-FIRE QUESTIONS

Favourite music?

Hip-hop.

Favourite artiste?

Bruno Mars and ASAP Rocky.

Favourite food?

Vegetables and pasta. I like potatoes in any form: French, rustic, unpeeled, or baked -- I'll eat them all! Actually, I'm omnivorous: food must be tasty!

Minsk or Moscow?

Minsk. It's my hometown where all my family lives. I began learning music here and I'd like to be called a Belarusian artiste.

Ordinary 'factory girl'

Do you have time for anything except music -- like get-togethers, for example?

Oh, my get-togethers turn into creative meetings. My friends are artistes, dancers and directors so, when we spend time together, new ideas are born. For example, we wanted to watch a film but ended up recording a song instead. This happened with Olga Dorozha. We talked so much that we eventually wrote the songs 'Shine' and 'Golden Brick'. Friendships and work go together.

What other goals do you have?

I'd love to appear in a film. I'm busy at the moment with my musical career

but I want to move to another level. I've many opportunities and goals, and I want to keep developing. I'm not afraid of experimenting, and I don't care about others' sidelong glances.

That must be why your creative pseudonym is Zena. The TV character was a real Amazon warrior.

The pseudonym appeared when I participated in 'New Star Factory'. Victor Drobysch saw my strong, determined personality. I was focused on work. It seemed we had to transform into TV stars, but I was more like a 'factory girl', like a girl next door.

Do you have time to work on a new album?

Many songs have already been recorded. I'm trying new styles: hip-hop and rap, as well as modern western music.

Aren't you tired?

No! After all, it's not a regular job. Like everyone, I sometimes want a break. I've not travelled anywhere for five years.



Not only a vocalist but a fashion designer -- recently launching her own brand of clothing

PERSONAL FILE

Zina Kupriyanovich was born in 2002 in Minsk. At the age of six, she joined the Pesnyary Ensemble's Zarnak band. At the age of eleven, she became a finalist at the Children's New Wave and, a year later, was placed first at the junior competition of the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk. She was among the finalists of the New Star Factory and began her solo career last year.

Last Hero for famous theatre

Moscow's Gorky Art Academic Theatre stages play based on Brest playwright's script



By Olga Korneeva

The Moscow theatre has prepared a premiere of the play based on *The Last Hero*, a modern work authored by the chief director of Brest's Academic Drama Theatre, Timofey Ilyevsky. The show has been staged by a laureate of the Golden Mask Russian Theatre Award, Ruslan Malikov. Veterans and young people of the legendary theatre are engaged in the production. The main characters are played by two actors: A People's Artiste of

Russia, Ivan Krivoruchko, and Lidia Kuznetsova.

The plot of the production is built on the eternal theme of fathers and children, the conflict of generations which develops in the cruel realities of our time. The hero of the play is a former officer-rocketeer who survived the collapse of the USSR. *The Last Hero* is about human dignity, the drama of the older generation, love and loyalty, courage and duty.

"The play was written last spring and to some extent completes the tetralogy where the main character is an old man who is in a state of either dependency or despair, struggling -- as in a popular TV show -- with circumstances and time, and cannot forgive himself or others for the loss of his homeland and parts of his life. Much of his character comes from my loved ones, both departed and living. This is a topic that



concerns me, and it seemed to me that it might worry others," said Mr. Ilyevsky.

Unlike the other three pieces of tetralogy - *Western Fort*, *Foxtrot* and *Penates* -- *The Last Hero* has proved luckier. The play was noticed at one of the drama competitions in Moscow. It fell into the hands of a famous Russian theatre producer, Eduard Boyakov, who was soon appointed Artistic Director of Moscow's Gorky Art Academic Theatre. It turned out that he had long sought a hero

for a new, modern drama. "This should not be a psycho bandit, a neurotic intellectual, a tired oligarch or a hipster. This should be a hero of direct action -- responsible for the survival of society. We've managed to find such a man and we are presenting him to the audience," said Mr. Boyakov.

The stage version of *The Last Hero* and the interpretation of the personality of the main character is somewhat different from what was conceived in the play. Mr. Ilyevsky, as a theatre

director, forgives his Moscow colleague for some liberties related to the text. "A director should have a certain framework of freedom, in which they can refract the material from a slightly different angle: to isolate some aspects and to some extent veil the others," the playwright believes.

According to some Moscow theatre critics, *The Last Hero* is likely to become one of the most important productions of the famous theatre led by the new Artistic Director.

Games oblige athletes to win

It is important that Belarusian athletes perform successfully at the 2nd European Games, Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko emphasised, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Olympic Committee

By Natalia Yemelianova

“What results are we aiming for? Medal plans for the Games have not yet been made public, but the goal is to win at least as many medals as in Baku,” the President said. Belarusian athletes are competing on home turf, in front of their home crowd. “Of course, everyone in Belarus will support our athletes. So, we have no right to show poor results at these Games. I would like this to be conveyed to the athletes and coaches. Encourage them to compete and win,” said Mr. Lukashenko.

The President pointed out that Belarusian athletes are capable of winning and showing good results in

the international sports arena — as the recent European Weightlifting Championships has confirmed. “Yet, there are other examples, among them is biathlon. We have invested a lot of money and not yet achieved. The same is true about football and ice hockey. However, this follows the World Championship where our hockey players have dropped down to a lower group. As regards the biathlon and other winter sports, we'll investigate the situation later,” he said. Mr. Lukashenko added that medals are not only a sporting reward but also won for the honour and glory of the country. “Sport now is not just entertainment. It is an ideology



that raises the spirit of people in any state.”

At the 1st European Games in Baku in 2015, Belarus won 43 medals — including ten gold, 11 silver and 22 bronze. The country was placed seventh in the official overall medal standings.

Another piece of news is that Viktor Lukashenko, aide to the Belarusian President for national security affairs, will perform the duties of the First Vice President of the National Olympic Committee. The decision was taken at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Olympic Committee. Viktor Lukashenko's candidacy was proposed and unanimously supported during the meeting of the NOC Executive Committee. He will perform these duties on a temporary

and voluntary basis and combine it with his duties as the Belarusian President's aide. Once the major international sporting events in Belarus are over, the Olympic committee will decide on the nominations for the post of NOC First Vice President.

As Acting First Vice President, Viktor Lukashenko will oversee international co-operation and preparations for the major sporting forums in Belarus: the 2nd European Games and Europe vs United States athletics meeting, which will be held later this September. He will work in co-operation with the Sport and Tourism Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister supervising sports.



Dunes are child's play for MAZ

Belarusian crew wins Morocco Desert Challenge

By Vladislav Khmyrev

The last stage of the Morocco Desert Challenge rally was completed with no surprises. Belarusian Alexey Vishnevsky posted a stellar result, coming fourth in the eighth stage of the race — 7 minutes behind the winner: Dutchman Gert Huzink, in his Renault. Our MAZ crew, led by Sergey Vyazovich, came eighth, losing about 13 minutes. However, in the overall truck standings, it proved to be a winning time.

Second place, with a 22-minute delay, went to another driver from the Netherlands, Peter Versluis, (in a MAN truck), while Alexey Vishnevsky (MAZ) finished third.

“It's always nice to win, especially when you compete with such serious opponents. The race has become both difficult

and interesting. We will bring home not only the championship title but also a wealth of experience that can be applied to any rally — in whatever part of the world it may be held,” said the leader of MAZ-Sportavto team, Sergey Vyazovich. He also noted that once again, MAZ trucks have proven to be the most reliable and resilient. “The trucks covered the sections with extremely high loads without any problems. To be honest, we thought that the race would be more a test of strength for our truck, but it exceeded all our expectations, bringing us victory. This will allow us to strengthen our position in the world of motorsport and enhance the image of the Minsk Automobile Works,” added Mr. Vyazovich.

The 2,700km rally was held in Morocco on April 12th-20th. Most of the Morocco Desert Challenge ran through desert and sandy terrain and among the obstacles were dunes, fine sand and dried riverbeds.

Rivals prove stronger

National team of Belarus loses to Australians in semi-finals of Federation Cup

Svetlana Yegenieva

Sadly, our national tennis team failed to repeat their achievement of two years ago when it reached the finals of the Federation Cup. The fate of this season's semi-final confrontation against the Australians was decided in a doubles match. The Belarusian duo of Victoria Azarenko / Arina Sobolenko lost to Samantha Stosur and Ashleigh Barty in three games — 5:7, 6:3, 2:6.

The first day of the competition ended in a draw — 1:1. At the start, Arina Sobolenko defeated Samantha Stosur in three sets with considerable effort, but Ashleigh Barty took her revenge, easily beating Victoria Azarenko.

The next day, Arina Sobolenko (WTA:10) and Ashleigh Barty (WTA:9) met. The two are neighbours in the world rankings, but there was no real competition between them: Belarus' number one tennis player lost two of her serves in each of the sets and failed to make a break. As a result, Sobolenko lost with a score of 2:6, 2:6.

In the next match, Victoria Azarenko (WTA:61) played Samantha Stosur (WTA:77), another defeat would have secured the Australians a ticket to the finals. However, Azarenko won even more confidently than Barty in the previous meeting (6:1, 6:1) —



prolonging the intrigue to the decisive fifth match.

Initially, the doubles match was to be played by Vera Lapko and Lidia Morozova, but team captain, Tatiana Puchek, replaced them with Victoria Azarenko and Arina Sobolenko just before the match. We can only guess what the result would have been without the reshuffle.

In the final match, the Belarusian pair showed fierce resistance to their hosts, despite their higher rankings (Barty is 9th, Stosur 17th, Sobolenko 23rd, Azarenko 99th). However, at key moments of the game, the Belarusians wobbled. In the first set, Azarenko and Sobolenko took two serves from their rivals but the Australians made one more break in the important eleventh game, which determined

the outcome of the match (7:5 to the Australians).

In the second game, all the fun happened after the score reached 3:3. After playing three break points, our players pulled out their hardest seventh game and, on a wave of enthusiasm, won the next two (6:3).

Alas, in the decisive game, the Australians — fervently supported in their home stands — put across the winning point (6:2), completing the doubles match and the confrontation in their favour.

We failed to repeat the success of 2017. However, it's impossible to reproach the team for lack of character or desire to fight to the end. The semi-final against the Australians was on equal terms and it was only the details that decided the final outcome.

