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Aleksey Bibikov



Nadezhda and Margarita Volchkevich near the Church of St. Kazimir in the agro-town of Putryshki, Grodno Region

Easter joy

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has congratulated the Christians of Belarus celebrating Easter on April 4th. "The resurrection of Christ symbolises spiritual revival: life has won the battle against death, kindness has triumphed over evil, and the light has dissolved darkness," the greeting reads.

The Head of State remarked that the joy of this holiday is an encouragement for new good deeds, a reminder to take care of those in need, a symbol of unity for peace and social accord. "Only together, relying on Christian values, can we cope with all difficulties, reach happiness and prosperity. May the light of Easter days fill your hearts with wisdom and hope," the President said.



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New stage of development

The meeting at the Palace of Independence focused on the meaning of constitutional reform, redistribution of powers between Government bodies and functions that should remain exclusively within the competence of the Head of State — among other issues

By Yevgeny Kononovich,
Varvara Morozova

Over almost thirty years of its sovereignty, Belarus has passed through all the stages of formation. The development process is never simple, and it's sometimes necessary to redefine many things. The President has previously stated that it's time to review the approaches to state management: in particular, about the redistribution of powers between Government bodies. What decisions should be made and at what level? There may be many options here, but the main message from Aleksandr Lukashenko was clear,

“The redistribution of powers doesn't happen often, so we need to weigh the pros and cons of all aspects. Put our unshakeable priorities — the comfort and well-being of the population — at the forefront.”

We have preserved the state

Our country initially chose the path of a strong Presidential power, leaving the decision of many issues to the Head of State. As Aleksandr Lukashenko explained, this measure is tough, but necessary, “This was done in order to sort out the budget, to retain state property, mineral resources, everything that belongs (and I hope will belong) to Belarusian people, to prevent the oligarchy, landslide privatisation and — as a result — stratification of our society, while building key institutions of power. The country has established a smooth system of control and mechanisms to handle finances in an efficient and prudent way, while decisions made at the top levels of Government are impeccably communicated to each executor.”

Although some aspects are still in place. This refers to the performance discipline which, as the President noted, is inadequate. He said,

“The Government has kept its footing and will continue to do so, we have preserved the state and will keep strengthening it. Therefore, whoever wants to work — start working. We have too much work to do.”

Personal responsibility

Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke about amendments to the Basic Law several years ago when delivering his annual address to the Belarusian people and Parliament.

As a result, two versions of the Basic Law were prepared.

At present, the 36-member Constitutional Commission is preparing amendments to the country's Basic Law. These

Aleksandr Lukashenko added, “So that people don't think that everything is concentrated in the hands of the President and he makes all the decisions. The President will keep his basic authority to influence any decision at any level. No matter where Lukashenko is and no matter who will be the next president, he will be a Head of State with strong authority, because if we strip the President (future President, this is not about me) of his strong powers, the country will be lost. It will cease to exist.”

Based on the instructions of the Head of State, the Government, local authorities and parliamentarians have prepared a package of proposals that can expand the scope of activities of the Government and other state bodies. Aleksandr Lukashenko carefully studied them and made the following conclusions, “My first suggestion is

So this year we have to make the final decision on the powers of the President, Government, Parliament, governors, and even lower tiers, if necessary.”

No to taking away land

Among the issues that only the President can be responsible for are land use and the use of the forest fund. Decisions on them are beginning to mature locally and then — along the power vertical — go to the President. Without his signature, such documents are not valid. Therefore, Aleksandr Lukashenko is categorical: the powers here should remain under strict control of the Head of State,

“Here is my strict requirement: agricultural lands and forested areas can be given away only by the decision of the President. I have been informed that there are thousands of unused land

with the document, empty houses can now be sold for a basic amount. The President called this decision unprecedented for Belarus, “We are speaking of empty houses that seem to be no longer needed, no one lays claims to them. Land lots are not small there — up to half a hectare. Decisions are made virtually by district executive committees, not even governors. However, this doesn't apply to the land near Minsk and regional centres, near reservoirs and nature reserves. These territories will remain under the strictest control.”

Well thought-out solutions

In general, transferring additional powers is not a problem. However, are those who would accept them ready to take on additional responsibility?

“Responsibility is the key aspect! Legal acts on the transfer of powers should contain a clear answer to the question of who exactly will be responsible for the decisions taken. There should be no double interpretation here,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

According to him, the process of redistribution of powers should be closely linked to constitutional reform, “We shouldn't make decisions that, as a result of working on the Constitution, will then have to be cancelled or brought to a different state.

Therefore, it will be necessary to work closely with the Constitutional Commission. On the basis of the new Constitution, we must come to a verified and perfectly thought-out vertical of power with renewed powers.”



people will be personally responsible for the proposals that they will make to the Head of State.

However, before the Basic Law is corrected, the powers will be redistributed.

that you shouldn't pass them instantly and indiscriminately. It should be an evolutionary process. We have to finish the process before the draft of the new Constitution is submitted to a referendum.

plots in the regions. Those who want to improve their housing conditions can even get one of them for free.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also recalled Decree No. 116 signed on March 24th. In line

Telephone conversation



The presidents of Belarus and Russia had a very intensive phone conversation on the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia. Apart from congratulations, they focused on problems, tasks and common goals in their talk — as the press service of Belarus' Head of State has announced.

“The phone call was prompted by a common holiday: the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia. Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin exchanged official greetings in the morning and personal ones in the afternoon. They also stressed once again that the two countries are interested in the progressive development of integration processes and strengthening of multi-dimensional co-operation. This is why their thirty-minute conversation turned out to be not simply holiday-based but also work,” the press service said.

The heads of state touched on all the main topics and matters of current interest. They also discussed the implementation of previous agreements.

“The epidemiological situation was one of the key topics discussed by the presidents. The focus has now been shifted to population vaccination and vaccine production. It's a positive example of close interaction between the two countries — an area where Belarus-Russia co-operation is most productive,” the press service noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin also touched on the domestic political situation in Belarus and Russia. The situation concerning Belarus was mentioned as well as external threats, which have been specifically coming from the western direction lately (in particular, from Poland and the USA).

The positive agenda included the organisation of events within the

framework of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, including a regular session of the Supreme State Council of the Union State of Belarus and Russia and the 8th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. The latter will be held in July in the Moscow Region and will be dedicated to Belarus-Russia R&D co-operation.

Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin also talked about the operation of the Standing Committee of the Union State of Belarus and Russia. Ways to enhance its role and improve its performance were discussed.

Steps need to be made to resume full-scale transportation between the two countries, particularly transportation by

rail, received much attention. “Taking into account the need to return the economy and people back to normal lives, Belarus looks forward to the lifting of all restrictions on crossing the Belarusian-Russian border and to the resumption of all kinds of passenger service soon. The point was emphasised,” the press service said.

“Of course, the overall development of trade and economic co-operation was also discussed. Moreover, the presidents discussed our own professional topic: the interaction of central mass media and work in the sphere of information security,” the press service added.

Based on materials of belta.by

Personnel day

Aleksandr Lukashenko has made personnel decisions. Igor Lutsky has been appointed Deputy Head of the Belarus President Administration. The post of Information Minister, in which he worked until now, was taken by Vladimir Pertsov, who headed the Belarusian office of the Mir Interstate TV and Radio Company.

Making these decisions, the President noted, “An information war is underway. It is no longer a confrontation (I wish it were just that). I’m afraid it is going to get worse in terms of this information conflict. Of course, we’re now selecting each specialist very carefully — there aren’t many of them — who can deal with this counteraction. It is probably one in thousands.”



Addressing Vladimir Pertsov, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he had known him for a long time, was watching him personally and his candidacy had been considered for various positions previously. But there was a restraining factor, “I’m just afraid you don’t drown in this bureaucratic vastness. Frankly speaking, I’ll be very sorry if we lose a good journalist, political scientist and politician.”

The President addressed Igor Lutsky, “It wasn’t easy to find a person in the President Administration who would be involved in organising this process. You are a reliable person, ideologically verified and self-possessed — I have no doubt about that.”

The Head of State noted that Igor Lutsky and Vladimir Pertsov will have to organise a very serious and important process of co-operation, “As a person who worked in the Information Ministry, you can give a lot of advice, suggestions and maybe connect to some issues. It’s impossible without this. Meanwhile, Vladimir Borisovich — as one of our strongest political scientists, journalists and politicians — can lend his shoulder

at any time in this organisational structure, which you have to build together.”

Also, new Presidential Aides have been appointed: inspectors for the Minsk and Gomel regions.

Nikolai Rogashchuk will fill the vacant position of Aide to the President — Inspector for the Gomel Region. He worked as Deputy Chairman of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee.

The current Chairman of the Gorki Regional Executive Committee, Aleksandr Butarev, has been appointed to the vacant position of Aide to the President — Inspector for the Minsk Region.

“These jobs are challenging, even for such experienced officials as you,” stressed Aleksandr Lukashenko. “The situation is difficult because some people are increasingly trying to create

economic problems for Belarus. Your main tasks will be, of course, personnel issues (who to support, who to promote, who to demote) and economic affairs. In Soviet times, people said that if the economy is fine, people will work well. If the economy is failing, hard work will bear no fruit.”

The Head of State noted that the two newly appointed officials have considerable experience of work in the regions and are well informed about the problems of both urban and rural residents. Now they will represent the President, which is a great responsibility. “These are our agents in the regions. You should be objective, without trying to please anybody for the sake of good relations. You can do it when you work towards the results. If the results — primarily, economic — are good, then you should team up with certain people and select personnel appropriately,” noted Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The Head of State also agreed on the appointment of new deputies in the Information Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.



Nikolai Rogashchuk, the Head of the President Administration — Igor Sergeyenko, Igor Lutsky, Vladimir Pertsov and Aleksandr Butarev in the Palace of Independence hall

Based on materials of belta.by

Domestic market is paramount Protocol

Protection of the domestic market and Belarusian producers, supply of critical imports, control over inflation and pricing were among the key topics of the report to the President by the Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade — Vladimir Koltovich, and the First Deputy Prime Minister — Nikolai Snopkov. In the foreground, of course, is the domestic market and producers as a support for solving other economic issues. Stable support for enterprises is key and Aleksandr Lukashenko paid special attention to this, “The protection of the domestic market and national producers is the number one issue. We are a producing country, although our market is small. We need to protect our market, of course, in a competitive manner.”

By Dmitry Kryat,
Polina Konoga

State interests above all

The Government understands that there are objective factors that require keeping an ear to the ground. Among them is COVID, for example. Moreover, the external political and economic background allows no possibilities to relax. The President clearly outlined his personal position, “We produce a huge range of consumer goods today. However, we can’t see this variety in some of our so-called supermarkets and stores.” Obviously, such facts cannot be attributed to external objective circumstances.

True, the topic of market protection is subtle and delicate and it’s necessary to act in concert with our partners in this respect. However, our domestic interests remain to the fore — in any case. The Head of State noted,

“Of course, we should keep in mind our obligations within the framework

of the Eurasian Economic Union. However, there are also serious questions to the management bodies which should monitor and take appropriate measures to protect the domestic market and our producers.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also asked how issues with the supply of critical imports are being resolved. Prices were also tackled, “How do you assess the situation with prices? It is necessary to monitor prices for all products and take action... The most important thing is to prevent unreasonable price increases.”

Creating a comfortable environment

Measures to protect the domestic market are taken by almost all countries. As Vladimir Koltovich told reporters after the meeting, in this sense, the national market is the priority, and domestic producers should feel comfortable in it. To increase the share of Belarusian goods in the

domestic market, it is necessary not to fight against imports, but to create a system of support for our own manufacturers and stimulate the development of production, the Minister believes.

Mr. Koltovich mentioned some figures: in the total volume of food products, the share of domestically made items is 77 percent, in the non-food sector — about 43 percent, in total turnover — around 60 percent. Such statistics could be estimated satisfactorily, if not for the downward trends. Mr. Koltovich noted,

“We are not in any way aiming at introducing a ban. At the meeting with the President, it was discussed that we should take measures to combat imports not in stores but rather to create systems to support domestic producers, stimulate the development of production, produce competitive goods for trade and establish our own technological processes.”

The Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, jointly with the Industry Ministry, the Economy Ministry and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is working on approaches to defining the concept of ‘domestic goods’ to further improve the system of public procurement with an emphasis on such goods.

Temporary yet necessary measure

Since March 2020, our country has been applying various price regulation measures. Mr. Koltovich stressed,

“In these tough times, we have come to the conclusion that price regulation is a forced necessity to ensure that all those who are involved in the supply chain of goods (from the manufacturer to the counter) — don’t overestimate their expectations and don’t play on the possible deficit.”

President Aleksandr Lukashenko signed an executive order on creating a Belarusian vaccine against the infection caused by the coronavirus on April 1st

In line with the document, the Healthcare Ministry and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus will have to accomplish a series of measures to create the relevant vaccine in 2021-2023. In particular, the document specifies organisations in charge of doing the work to create the vaccine, the main stages and funding sources of the work, the timeline for pre-clinical trials and clinical trials.

In line with the executive order, research institutions of the Healthcare Ministry and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus will be provided with the equipment and component parts they need to create the vaccine. The centre for experimental and applied virology of the Biophysics and Cell Engineering Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus will also be reconstructed as part of the project.

Based on Presidential press service materials



Underground highways of the capital

Trains with a self-driving system, payment for travel using biometrics and a new transport triangle: plans for the Minsk metro development are considerable

Tens of kilometres of tunnels, 33 stations, 2 electric depots, complex engineering communications and a developed social infrastructure with underground passages, shopping centres and pavilions... The metro is now the most popular public transport in Minsk. Every day, over 1,000 trains travel along its three branches, transporting almost 600,000 passengers. The metro has grandiose plans for the future and they relate not only to the construction of new stations, but also to the introduction of new methods of paying for travel and replacement of rolling stock.

By Inna Gorbatenko

Lucky those who are on rails

The metro has been and remains the main transport artery of Minsk: in 2020, over 36 percent of passengers chose it for city transportation. Moreover, this figure is higher than that of other types of urban passenger transport. However, the epidemiological situation has influenced the sphere: passenger traffic decreased last year. Over the year, more than 219m people used the metro services — against almost 294m in 2019.

Biometrics and more

Belarus is one of the leading countries in the CIS and Eastern Europe in terms of development of payment solutions for urban infrastructure. The country maintains its leadership and remains a priority market for attracting innovative transport solutions. Unsurprisingly, the Minsk metro has become the third underground in the world — after London and Vancouver — to introduce a system of fare payment at all stations using contactless bank cards and various mobile devices that support bank payment systems.

Holders of bank cards, of international and Belarusian national payment systems, can now pay for their travel in a contactless way. To do this, various digital mobile devices with NFC technology — tablets, smartphones, iPhones, smart watches, keychains — are applicable.

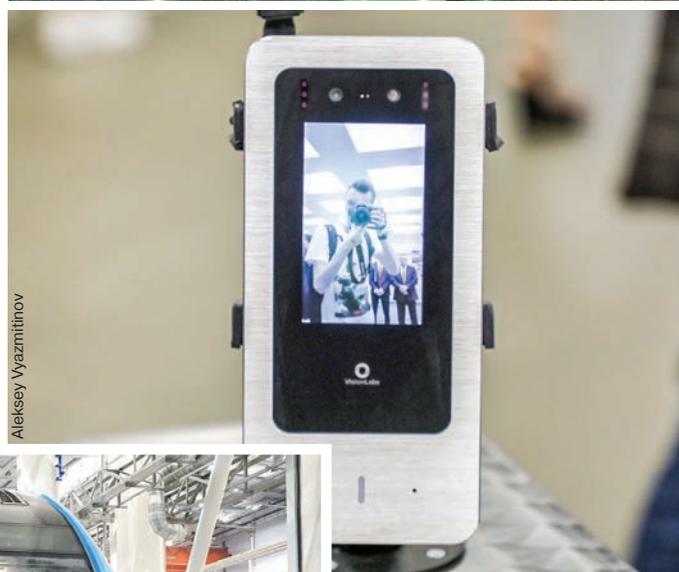
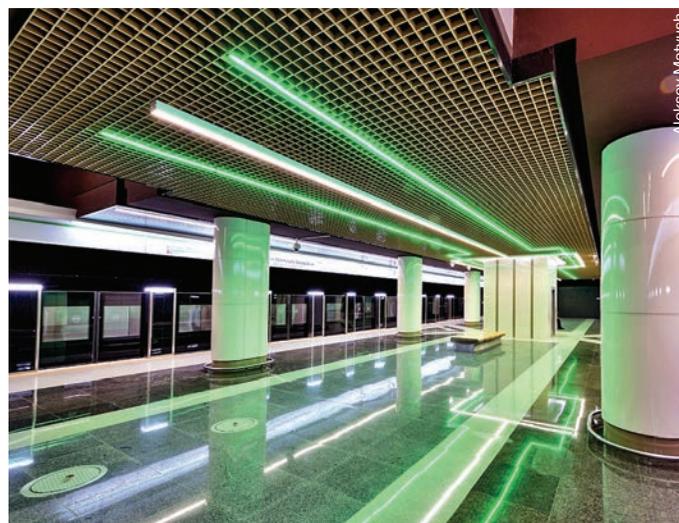
Fans of Apple technology already appreciate the 'Apple-Express' service to make travel payments. It was launched last September jointly with the Visa international payment system and IBA Group. Our country has become one of the first in the CIS, where a promising technology has been introduced. With the launch of

'AppleExpress', a kind of fast-track opened in the metro for holders of Apple devices. The algorithm of payment actions resembles those used for electronic travel cards: 'take out — tap — pay'. The secret is rooted in the use of a 'transport' card which is automatically recognised by a validator at the turnstile.

It seemed no further progress could be made but the metro has managed to surprise us once again. For Mastercard holders, a fare payment service using face recognition technology has been launched at the 'Nemiga', 'Institut Kultury' and 'Ploshchad Lenina' stations. The technology was launched for testing in mid-2020 and, as a result, ASB Belarusbank JSC joined the metro to test the innovative technology using the 'Watch and Pass' biometric service.

How does it work? When passing through the turnstile, the biometric system reads a person's facial features and money is withdrawn from their payment card. To register in the

stations with wireless Internet will continue. In all tunnels of the metro, cellular communi-

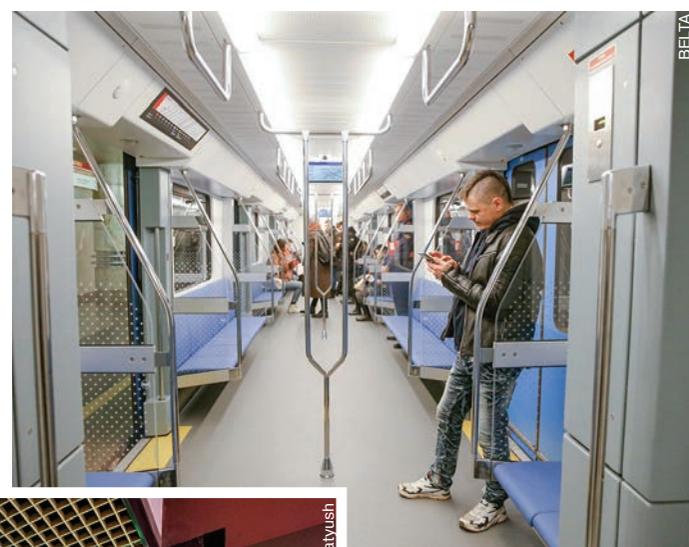


service, it's necessary to download the mobile application of Belarusbank, register the card and send a picture of one's face taken with the smartphone camera to the bank's server. Moreover, several metro stations already have free Wi-Fi, and this work on providing

works and Internet access is organised through mobile operators.

Trains to impress

Apart from its design, the third metro definitely attracts passengers with its new carriages. Passengers have al-



air conditioning and ventilation systems, automatic fire extinguishing and passenger information. Inside, there are also places for charging electronic devices.

To ensure traffic control and safety, and to reduce power consumption, electric trains are equipped with an auto-driving system. It primarily aims to strictly ensure the train schedule. The metro has developed a plan to update its electric trains until 2025 — for both the new Zelenoluzhskaya and the existing Avtozavodskaya lines. The latter now has the largest number of trains with an expiring service life. By 2025, it is planned to purchase 12 five-car trains to replace trains with an expiring service life, and 7 four-car trains are to be purchased for the extension of the third line.

The contact is here!

In autumn, the Minsk underground was enlarged. Four new stations were launched: 'Yubileynaya Ploshchad', 'Ploshchad Frantishka Bogushevicha', 'Vokzalnaya', 'Kovalskaya Sloboda'. Their major task — like that of the whole third line — is to connect the city's south and north, while unloading the 'Kupalovskaya' — 'Oktyabrskaya' transfer hub. Metro builders are now working in the Slutsk area to extend the line with the subsequent commissioning of the 'Aerodromnaya', 'Nemoshansky Sad', 'Slutsk Gostinets' stations. In total, there will be 14 stations along the Zelenoluzhskaya line, which will connect the southern and northern sectors of Minsk with the central part of the city from Zeleny Lug to Kurasovshchichna districts.

ready experienced a noticeable difference between the comfort of travelling on the new trains and those of the previous generation. A new Stadler train is less noisy and has a smoother ride. In January 2017, a contract with Stadler Minsk JSC was signed, following a bidding process, for the supply of 10 metro trains for Minsk.

At present, 6 four-car trains are operational on the third line, while 4 five-car trains are used on the second line. These new trains are unique since they have 'walk-through' cars allowing passengers to move from one carriage to another. Another nice advantage is their salons which are equipped with

A step away from launch

Oil refining depth will increase to 90 percent: Mozyr Oil Refinery completes modernisation of the largest project in the company's history



H-oil complex will be launched this year

By Vladislav Sychevich

A factory within a plant

The construction of a heavy oil residue hydrocracking complex is, without exaggeration, the largest investment and production project in the entire history of the Mozyr Oil Refinery. Its estimated value exceeds \$1.4bn and, in fact, the complex is a factory within a plant. It includes three main installations: hydrocracking of heavy oil residues, hydrogen and sulphur production, as well as 21 general plant facilities. Realisation of the project will increase the oil refining depth to 90 percent — against no more than 84.4 percent at the moment.

Experts note that 5 years for the implementation of such a major project is a very short time. Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties, the complex is being built one day at a time. This year, construction and installation works will be fully completed, as Aleksandr Gud, the Director of the Reconstruction and Development Directorate, has announced. “Last year, we maintained the momentum we had gained by providing financing and performing construction and installation work on this complex,” he said.

There is very little left to finish at the sulphur production plant; it will be finished and ready for start-up in the near future. The hydrogen production plant is ready, put into operation and



Much attention is paid to the training of technological personnel at the new facility

Photos courtesy of Mozyr Oil Refinery

DIRECT SPEECH

Vitaly Pavlov, General Director of Mozyr Oil Refinery JSC:

Although 2020 wasn't easy for our company, we worked successfully in all areas, also fulfilling the production programme: we processed the volume of raw materials that was optimal for ensuring the operation of all technological facilities and obtaining an economic effect. In addition, we carried out major repairs at a good level and in the shortest possible time and managed to complete all the planned construction and installation works at the facilities under construction. We provided the oil refining depth at the level of 84.4 percent, the yield of light oil products — at 65.2 percent. These figures were higher than in 2019. The production of high-octane petrol also increased: as for the octane rating of 95, the growth was 118 against the level of 2019, while the octane rating of 100 increased 2.9 times. Another positive aspect is related to the production of bitumen which became the driver of last year: 605,000 tonnes of bitumen were produced and sold. In comparison with 2019, the growth reached 116 percent. This is a significant increase, and we have received a good economic effect.

its first products have already been out.

As for the hydrocracking plant, construction and installation works are 89 percent complete. Circuit tests are being carried out; at the request of the licensor, these can only be conducted in conditions of positive temperatures. In addition, control instrumentation is being prepared, as well as electric heating and installation of thermal insulation.

“This year, we are to finish all construction and installation works, approach the start-up operations and get the products,” continued Mr. Gud. “I think if we were able to perform such a large amount of work and reach the finish line, then we will master the start-up. In fact, the launch of such a facility is primarily a matter of security; we must ensure it. Much work is ahead to commission and put into operation the complex. We'll work hard: we have all the necessary trained staff and strictly selected engineering and technical specialists. We work with the commissioning organisation and the project licensor in accordance with the contract. Therefore, we are moving forward.”

Much attention is also paid to the issues of training of technological personnel at the new facility. The staff have studied the installation on a computer-based hydrocracking simulator and gained their first experience in managing the heavy oil residue hydrocracking process.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aleksandr Lukashenko signed a decree on the introduction of reciprocal sanctions



On March 30th, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, signed Decree No. 128 ‘On Applying Special Measures’. This was reported by the press service of the Head of State. The document has been passed for the sake of ensuring security and protecting national interests of the Republic of Belarus.

The decree provides for the introduction of a ban on the import of certain categories of goods into the country, as well as on the import of works (services) performed by legal entities and individuals of states that have taken special measures (sanctions) against Belarusian legal entities or individuals.

The Council of Ministers will have to determine the specific list of goods and services and, if necessary, foreign corporations and individuals that the decree applies to.

First commercial batch of ‘Sputnik V’ vaccine soon to be released in Belarus

Belmedpreparaty will release the first commercial batch of ‘Sputnik V’ vaccine in mid-April. This was announced by the Healthcare Minister, Dmitry Pinevich.



According to him, monthly vaccines for vaccination of 500,000 people will be produced at Belmedpreparaty. In April-May 2021, there are plans to vaccinate about 1 million people and a further 4 million by the autumn.

Dmitry Pinevich drew special attention to efficient co-operation between the two health systems: Belarus and Russia, which was clearly manifested in the fight against coronavirus infection, e.g., the willingness of the Russian side to provide a technology transfer for the production of vaccines against COVID-19.

Unique 17th century engraving presented at the National Library

The *Recreated Masterpiece* exhibition, which has recently opened at the Museum of Books of the National Library of Belarus, presents a copper plate from the 17th century — made using the technique of cut engraving. This is one of the most ancient techniques of engraving on metal, in which the deeper elements of the pattern are obtained using a sharp cutter.



A fundamentally new technique of printing on metal replaced wooden boards in Belarus at the end of the 16th century. This art flourished in the second half of the 17th century. The exhibition also demonstrates an engraving with a portrait of the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania Jan III Sobieski — recreated on the basis of a board using old technology.

Exhibition of patterns and symbols of Belarusian ornament held in Oman

At the National Museum of the Sultanate of Oman in the city of Muscat, the *Patterns and Symbols: Heritage of the Belarusian Ornament* exhibition has completed almost a year. It enabled the Omani viewers to get to know the culture of Belarus better while taking an excursion through the Belarusian patterns and symbols embodied in the details and embroidery of national clothes. The exhibition reflected a variety of Belarusian folk customs, shown in symbols, decorative patterns and woven prints. Several museum items of historical and aesthetic value from artefacts and crafts were demon-



strated outside the Republic of Belarus for the first time.

It is the first international exhibition in Muscat to be digitised and continues to run on the museum's official website.

Fraternal friendship is 25

Exhibitions, concerts and an official meeting held in Minsk and Moscow on the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia



By Valentina Stepanova

The Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia is celebrated annually on April 2nd — which is actually the birthday of the Union State: 25 years ago, in 1996, our countries signed a treaty on the establishment of the Union of Russia and Belarus.

The holiday is usually

widely celebrated — in Slavic style: with songs and dances. However, for the second year in a row, it has taken place under coronavirus restrictions. Many events had to be cancelled, though business meetings were held as planned.

The *Union State: Opening Up New Opportunities* meeting — dedicated to the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Bel-

arus and Russia — was held in a combined format (online and offline) in Minsk and Moscow. Its participants discussed the common legal space, defence, security and economic potential of the Union State. Social projects and the Union State youth were also on the agenda. The programme included an official part and thematic expert discussions: ‘Common Legal

Space, Defence and Security as Grounds of the Union State’, ‘Economic Potential of the Union State: State and Paths of Development’, ‘Social Projects and Youth as a Resource for Innovative Development of the Union State’.

The event was attended by

the State Secretary of the Union State, Dmitry Mezentsev, representatives of the state administration bodies of Belarus and the executive authorities of Russia, prominent public and political figures of the two countries, representatives of the expert community, and the mass media.

IN THE REGIONS

Ave Motherland and the Forum of Leaders

In Bryansk, on the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia, the *Gavriil Vashchenko. Ave Motherland* exhibition opened, while the local museum presented works from Gomel Art Gallery's collection.

A lecture hall of the History of Partisan Movement in the Bryansk Region Museum hosted a free screening of *The Girl Searching for Her Father* film. The story of the little daughter of the partisan commander, Father Panas, who was left alone on the Belarusian land occupied by the Nazis, was filmed at the Belarusfilm Studio back in 1959. It was directed by Lev Golub.

The Forum of Young Leaders of the Border Area was held in Belarus' Dubrovno District, gathering heads of organisations, public associations, deputies of several districts of the Republic and representatives of the Youth Parliament of the Russian Federation. Guests were introduced to local traditions, history and sights. A delegation from the Smolensk Region was even greeted theatrically at the border. The participants visited businesses, museums and the Rylenki Memorial Complex, laying flowers and making a heart out of lighted lamps. The meeting ended with a concert of artistic teams: *Two Sisters — Belarus and Russia*.

What the Union State gives to the citizens of Belarus and Russia

Free movement

Citizens of Belarus and Russia, regardless of their place of residence, have the right to freely enter, leave, stay, transit, move and choose where they live in the territory of each of these countries, with the exception of places to visit which, in accordance with national legislation, a special permit is required, using valid documents without a migration card.



Up to 90 days without registration

Citizens of Belarus and Russia are allowed to stay in the second country of the Union State without registration for 90 days. If a citizen of one country intends to stay on the territory of the second for more than 90 days, they must obtain a temporary or permanent residence permit.



The right to choose a place of residence

The fact that a person belongs to the citizenship of Belarus or Russia is the basis for obtaining a permanent residence permit (filing an application for a residence permit) without taking into account the period of temporary stay and obtaining a temporary residence permit on the territory of both countries. Moreover, citizens' applications for obtaining a permanent residence permit (issuing a residence permit) are considered by the competent authorities of the second country as a matter of priority.

Social security rights

The agreement between Belarus and Russia on co-operation in the field of social security entered into force on March 29th, 2007. Citizens of the two countries are absolutely equal in pension rights. At the same time, there are two options for retirement for both Belarusians and Russians: according to the principle of citizenship and that of proportionality (the final option is chosen by the person himself). The principle of citizenship says that it doesn't matter where a person worked: in Belarus or in Russia. He can choose the appointment of pensions according to the legislation of the state of which he is a citizen. The proportional principle assumes the accrual of two pensions — for the length of service in the territory of each state.



Allied roaming

All measures to cancel roaming charges between Belarus and Russia will be completed in the near future.

Property rights

Belarus ensures Russians, and Russia ensures Belarusians, the right to acquire, own, use and dispose of property on their territories on an equal basis with the citizens of their states.

When making a transaction for the acquisition of a land plot on the territory of Russia, it is sufficient for a citizen of Belarus to present a Belarusian passport.



Health rights

Since 2017, citizens of Belarus temporarily staying and working under labour contracts in Russia have the right to free medical care under the compulsory medical insurance. The compulsory medical insurance policy issued in one of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation is valid throughout the territory of Russia. Belarusians temporarily staying and not working on the territory of Russia have equal rights with Russians to receive emergency medical care, as well as medical assistance if they develop diseases that pose a danger to others during their stay in Russia (the list of such is determined by the government of the Russian Federation).

In state healthcare institutions of Belarus, Russian citizens permanently residing in the Republic have equal rights to receive medical care.



Equal access to education

In December 2020, an agreement was signed on the creation of a unified educational space in the Union State. Citizens of Belarus enter Russian universities for all forms of education: for paid education, by passing the Unified State Exam (USE), within the quota allocated to Belarus.

CT = USE

Already in 2021, Belarusian applicants will be able to enrol in Russian universities not only on the basis of the USE results, as it was previously, but also on the basis of the Centralised Testing (CT) results. The corresponding order has been sent to Russian universities. The new rules will apply to undergraduate, specialist and Master's degree programmes. On admission, Belarusian applicants will only need to present a certificate with the CT results. Russian educational institutions retain the right to conduct internal entrance examinations and interviews for Belarusian applicants.

In addition, the Russians who passed the CT have the right to participate in the competition for budget education, and if they did not pass the application process, to enter on the same conditions as other paid students from among the citizens of Belarus.



Based on materials of sb.by

New life for Old Castle



The Old Castle in Grodno to welcome its first visitors after total restoration this summer

The first stage of Grodno's Old Castle reconstruction is soon to be complete. The project, which started out as an ordinary construction site — with a fenced-off area, piles of bricks, kilometres of wooden beams, trucks scurrying back and forth, construction machinery and workers dressed in neon — has suddenly been transformed into the main calling card of the regional centre. The architectural 'gem' has been painstakingly restored to perfectly fit into the scenery of the ancient city. Weather vanes on its towers now join company with the once lonely weather vane of the neighbouring ancient fire tower. The majestic and simultaneously elegant structure attracts the attention of passers-by with the variety of its artistic details and the alluring power of the historical charisma that this place has always been known for.

By Katerina Charovskaya

Waiting for guests

The Director of the Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum, Yuri Kiturko, shares the good news that the construction works of the first stage, including the interior decoration, are close to completion. If the pace continues, the Old Castle will be able to open its doors to visitors by this summer.

"The interior finishing works are on their final stage now and all communications are laid — including water supply, sewerage, alarm systems and high-tech elements necessary for multimedia. All are hidden inside the walls, so as not to affect the appearance of the castle. I'd like to clarify that we are close to the commissioning of another complex; it will include almost all the premises on the site with the exception of four rooms. The latter are complex in terms of their interior design: the alabaster hall, the royal bath, the chapel and the so-called official's dwelling. They will move to a new area, while the remaining sites from the first stage will be commissioned and start operating."

The museum staff are now working on the compilation of four exhibitions which will open in the castle after most of the first stage works are complete. One of them will be dedicated to the archaeology and history of Grodno's Castle Hill. Another will tell visitors about Grodno in the 12th-15th centuries. An exhibition about King Stefan Batory is also being prepared; the castle is being reconstructed for the period of his reign. Another show will feature Grodno during his reign. Museum furniture is already being made to a specific brief. A large number of different multimedia effects will be used in the museum rooms. For example, it will be possible to see in a 3D projection showing what the castle looked like, or view from different sides the item that is in the window. In addition, visitors will have access to an observation deck next to the dome; it opens up to a beautiful view of the Neman River.

Secrets of history

Historians complain that there are very few written records and artifacts to allow us to make a complete picture of what Grodno was like in the 10th-12th centuries. The fragmentary information, revealed in part by archaeological excavations during the restoration, suggests that it was a large and rich centre of transit trade. For example, in those days,

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The first outpost on Grodno's Castle Hill was built in the 11th century. Wars and enemy raids repeatedly turned the buildings of these ancient architects into ruins. Despite this, there are still architectural monuments on the site of the castle complex which historians date to the 12th, 14th and 16th centuries. Attempts to put in order the dilapidated palace and surrounding areas were made repeatedly: at least three times in the last 40 years alone. However, it seems, this time, the plans will be fully realised. Construction works will take place in three stages and the first is coming to an end: the entrance and half of the wall above the Neman River, with the tower, have been restored. Designs for the next two stages — reconstruction of the palace, construction of the administrator's house and landscaping of the site — haven't yet begun. There are no metrical references for the castle's dimensions and decorative designs in the archives. Specialists have to be guided by ancient engravings, archaeological excavations and the study of analogues.



Aleksey Bibikov



not every city could afford the construction of a stone temple: that required much money, with no financial return. However, in Grodno, there were four churches on a very small square close to the Old Castle; Kolozha — another old stone Grodno church which has preserved to modern times — is also worth mentioning in this respect. There's another fact: during the laying of a heating line to the Old Castle, more than 80 lead seals (once used for bales of goods) were found in the filling layer in almost

one single place — becoming the first large-scale discovery of so many lead seals in Belarus. Previously, just over a dozen had been discovered in a single place. This means that, many centuries ago, major activities took place here and the life was in full swing. However, the details of the archaeological mosaic discovered are still not enough to accurately represent what Grodno looked like in times of princes and kings.

Those who saw the Old Castle before the restoration work began would agree:



much has been done. A two-level gallery was erected over the remains of the walls, a tower with a stone building was built, the dome over the entrance was carefully restored, the remaining buildings were rebuilt on the basis of historic proofs and the artistic decoration of these buildings is being completed. Despite the undeniable scale and effectiveness of the result, experts believe that only about a fifth of the planned work has been done. The extremely difficult task of restoring the royal palace lies ahead. It will be done by the method of recreating possible analogues found in Poland, Italy and France. The deadline for the completion of the project for the second stage of construction works has already been determined: by the end of the year.



Anti-COVID protests are frequent in European cities now

WHO's COVID report

The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 probably spread to people through an animal, and probably started spreading among humans no more than a month or two before it was noticed in December 2019, according a new 120-page report from the World Health Organisation

But the search for the origin of the virus is ongoing. "As far as WHO is concerned, all hypotheses remain on the table," the WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said in a statement. "This report is a very important beginning, but it is not the end. We have not yet found the source of the virus, and we must continue to follow the science and leave no stone unturned as we do."

The released report lists four commonly discussed scenarios for the virus' introduction to humans, including two it says are unlikely.

It says a scenario where the virus spread via an intermediate animal host, possibly a wild animal captured and then raised on a farm, is 'very likely'. But the investigation has not found what other animal was infected by a bat — considered the most likely original source of the virus — and then may have transmitted it to a human. "The possible intermediate host of SARS-CoV-2 remains elusive," the report reads.

Next likely is direct transmission from one of the animals known to carry a similar coronavirus, such as a bat or a pangolin.

The WHO report was written by a joint international team made up of 17 Chinese experts plus 17 experts from other countries, WHO, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network and the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Protests sweep Europe

A year after European leaders ordered people into their homes to curb a deadly pandemic, thousands are pouring into streets and squares. Often, they are met by batons and shields, raising questions about the tactics and role of the police in societies where personal liberties have already given way to public health concerns.

From Spain and Denmark to Austria and Romania, frustrated people are lashing out at the restrictions on their daily lives. With much of Europe facing a third wave of coronavirus infections that could keep these stifling lockdowns in place weeks or even months longer, analysts warn that tensions on the streets are likely to escalate.

Dutch riot police used water cannon and batons to disperse a crowd of several thousand anti-lockdown protesters gathered in Amsterdam. Police took action after the protesters flouted social distancing rules, ignored warnings to disperse and threw fireworks and other objects at the police.

Meanwhile, police deployed water cannon and pepper spray after a gathering of some 20,000 protesters against lockdown and other coronavirus rules in cen-

tral German city of Kassel. About a thousand people marched through the central districts of the German capital where the detained protesters were forcibly put on masks. In general, the authorities, without unnecessary sentimentality, dispersed the 'anniversary' manifestation of the opponents of quarantine measures.

In Austria, e.g., about 1,000 protesters participated in a demonstration against the government's virus measures near Vienna's central train station. Police reprimanded several protesters who were not wearing masks and remaining too close together.

More than a thousand people gathered in the Romanian capital, Bucharest, sounding horns and chanting 'Freedom!' as they marched to the government headquarters in central Victory Square. Smaller protests were held in other parts of the

country. The demonstrations were largely organised by the far-right AUR Party, which has spoken out against pandemic restrictions and supported a number of recent anti-vaccination protests.

Meanwhile, several European countries are tightening restrictions as the health authorities grappled with a third wave of COVID-19 cases while also strengthening control over their observance. For example, Spanish police have carried out a series of raids against illegal parties in Madrid, with law enforcement officials preventing more than 350 illegal gatherings — organised in violation of the imposed restrictions.

Moreover, residents of Germany's capital city Berlin are now expected to provide negative COVID-19 test results when visiting non-food shops, hairdresser salons and museums.

Holi festival

Millions of Indians are celebrating the festival of colours despite a sharp spike in COVID-19 cases and lockdown in several states

It is known as the festival of love, colours and spring and involves people throwing coloured powder and water at each other. The two-day festival also celebrates the Hindu God Krishna and the legend of Holika and Prahlad.

The coloured powder is thought to be a reference to Krishna throwing coloured water at people when he was a boy. The story of Holika and Prahlad symbolises good overcoming evil.

This year, celebrations have been banned in some areas because of coronavirus restrictions but normally huge crowds gather in the street and throw paint at each other.

People of all backgrounds get involved in the fun and it is a chance for families to play tricks on each other.

On the first day people light bonfires and eat special food and on the second day the paint fight takes place.



Bread of heaven

France has chosen the baguette as its candidate for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status

France has nominated its staple bread stick for inclusion on the UN intangible cultural heritage register. Separate from the UNESCO World Heritage Site List, the status aims to protect traditions, knowledge and skills, so they are not lost over time.

Some 10 billion baguettes are consumed in France each year, according to data site Planetoscope, but about 20,000 bakeries have closed since 1970, as shoppers go to bigger supermarkets instead, where the baguettes are typically not made using traditional methods.

French bakers say the listing would safeguard an art that has been passed down

through generations and would protect the baguette from global plagiarists.

"This title would comfort bakers and encourage the next generation," Mickael Reydellet, owner of eight bakeries, said.

There are concerns that traditionally crafted loafs in French bakeries are being increasingly replaced by those made on giant assembly lines and sold in supermarkets.

Flat breads from Iran and Kazakhstan have already made the UNESCO List, along with the Neapolitan art of pizza twirling.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Witnesses for the era

From a flask belonging to the Fuhrer to a jet attack aircraft: what unique exhibits have been collected over fifteen years in the Regional Museum of Military Glory in Gomel

The Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory is a real treasure trove for those interested in weapons, uniforms and equipment from different eras. The institution recently celebrated its 15th anniversary: an excellent occasion to recall the history of the museum itself and, of course, to describe the most interesting exhibits in its collection.

By Ruslan Proleskovsky

It all started with a thematic exposition at the Gomel Museum of Local Lore. Over time, a growing number of collections led to the idea of establishing an independent institution. A former kindergarten on Pushkin Street was allocated for it. They say that its building was built by German prisoners of war who worked to restore the destroyed city.

Nowadays, eight halls on two floors house an exhibition reflecting the events of the military history of the Gomel Region from antiquity to the present day. Naturally, most of it is devoted to the period of the Great Patriotic War. Chronologically, it's preceded by the First World War, the October Revolution and the hard times of the Civil War. This is illustrated by the pointed helmets of the soldiers of imperial Germany, propaganda posters of tsarist Russia, ammunition and the first awards of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

A large range of weapons used by Soviet soldiers is also on display, including the Shpagin system submachine gun (PPSh) with a round disc. In line with the usual nicknames, the infantrymen affectionately called it 'daddy'. Even more interesting are handcraft samples made in one of the detachments of the 8th Rogachev partisan brigade. Of course, the homemade items couldn't compete with the originals. However, the main purpose of 'hitting the hated enemy' was flawlessly performed by machine guns. There is also a German PPSH antagonist — the MP-40 assault rifle — more familiar to the layman under the erroneous name 'Schmeisser'. Its mass usage in the armament of the Wehrmacht soldiers, thanks to the clichés of Soviet cinema, is greatly exaggerated.

Some of the exhibits look quite ordinary, but resound with the history of their origin. Fragments of a belt, a spoon, a smoking pipe, scraps of wire used to tie hands — all of this was found at the site of a concentration camp in the centre of Gomel and at the sites of mass executions of civilians. Glass containers have ash from the ashes of villages burnt by the invaders, including the notorious Ola, now a memorial complex in the Svetlogorsk District.

Perhaps the most exotic item was donated to the museum by a Gomel resident who took part in the storming of the Reichstag. This is a flask with the inscription that this vessel is a gift to the Fuhrer from the Church of Bulgaria. The front-line soldier said that he took the trophy from the bunker of the

Reich Chancellery, where Hitler was hiding in the last days of the war.

One of the museum halls is dedicated to the post-war period, particularly, local conflicts in which the USSR participated. The most famous of these is the war in Afghanistan. Fate also threw Belarusians serving in the Soviet army to other parts of the world, including Angola, Vietnam, Egypt, Cuba, Libya, Yemen and Syria.

Connoisseurs of bladed weapons will be attracted by the premium jaeger dagger, daggers of naval officers, bayonets, knives and even samurai katanas. The latter were seized by customs while attempting to smuggle them into Belarus.

The museum courtyard, which accommodates more than 40 pieces of military equipment, deserves a separate review, demonstrating tanks and artillery pieces, the legendary 'Katyusha' rocket launchers, armoured personnel carriers, an anti-aircraft missile system, a couple of helicopters and jet attack aircraft, one of which flew combat missions in Afghanistan.

"Every time, when we're squeezing in the next vehicle, we think this is definitely the last one and nothing more can be placed here," the chief custodian of the archives, Igor Khorishko, admits with a smile. "But as soon as there's an opportunity to purchase something else, a place is found as if by magic. We can't pass up an exhibit."

The last of the acquisitions is the 'Aist' patrol boat, which was handed over by the Gomel border group. The vessel began service in the Gulf of Finland, then ploughed the waters of the Dnieper River at the Belarusian-Ukrainian border in the area of Loev. Moreover, just before its write-off, it managed to get itself into the film of the *State Border* series.

The largest exhibit of the museum is visible from the street. This is a medical train with a locomotive. The vehicle, weighing 120 tonnes, had to be cut into pieces and, using various transport methods, including water transport, were taken to the museum one by one. When everything was installed in an eternal parking lot, the locomotive was reassembled.

The enthusiasts working here are full of ideas for the further development of the museum. The Director of the institution, Svetlana Yarkovaya, talks about one of these, "We are currently developing our own logo. We want to make it in compliance with all standards and officially register with the Heraldic Council under the President of the Republic of Belarus. The process is painstaking, but we are making every effort and I hope everything will work out."



In the museum courtyard, there is a place for more than 40 units of military equipment

Ivan Yarivanovich



Fighting suit of the Golden Horde warrior



The exhibition presents weapons from antiquity to the present day



Ammunition of the First World War soldier



The Great Patriotic War naturally became the main topic

HISTORY

The Minsk Times
Thursday
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Ruzhansky Sanatorium is also called Ruzha Khutar Resort

By Yevgenia Zabolotskikh

Representatives of Belarusian health resorts, agro-towns and parks came to Moscow for an annual tourist exhibition. *MITT 2021* was organised for the 27th time, at the Crocus Expo and the Business and Cultural Complex of the Embassy of Belarus. All the attractions of Belarusian holidays were demonstrated there.

“The tourism potential of the Republic is based on the diversity, beauty and primeval features of Belarusian nature, on the uniqueness of our cultural heritage,” said Vadim Senyuta, the Minister-Counsellor of the Belarusian Embassy.

There are over 15,000 objects of historical and cultural significance in the country and, in 2019, Belarus was named among the top ten countries for travel.

“Despite the proximity, Belarus is unlike Russia in many ways, and this is why it can be interesting,” said Mr. Senyuta. “Although the European wars brought destruction, we still have many historical sights preserved, such as the medieval castles in Mir and Nesvizh; these are included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.”

The Director of the National Tourism Agency of Belarus, Pavel Sapotko, also spoke about the intangible objects of UNESCO. Its List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding includes the ‘Kalyady Tsars’ (Christmas Tsars), ‘Yurievsky Khorovod’ (Yuriev Round Dance), and ‘Celebration in Honour of the Budslav Icon of Our Lady’ (Budslav Fest). At the end of 2020, the ‘Tree Beekeeping Culture of Belarus and Poland’ was also added to the list.

Military-patriotic tourism is actively developing. Guests are now more often coming to visit memorials; volunteer camps and historical reconstruction clubs are operational.

“Belarusian tourism has become more inclusive,” Mr. Sapotko noted. “Many institutions are ready to welcome people with disabilities and disorders of the musculoskeletal system, or those who are visually impaired.”

Is there a ghost in the castle?

Do you want to feel the spirit of the Middle Ages, with its castles and knights? If so, then go to the Grodno Region. The Studia Otdykha [Holidaying Studio] offers a related tour: ‘Along the Road of Castles’. “Let’s walk together through Mir Castle — which is a diamond of the Grodno Region, and the Puslovsky Palace in Kossovo,” invites the company’s Head, Konstantin Karachentsev.

Kossovo’s palace has recently been completely restored and guests can walk around without fear. It’s also possible to visit Lida Castle — built in 1323 on the orders of Duke Gediminas. Moreover, once the borders are opened, a direct Mos-



Guests at Ruzhansky can appreciate the unrivalled beauty of the turquoise-azure ‘Belarusian Maldives’

cow-Grodno train — operational before the pandemic — will be renewed.

BC open-air world

It would seem unwise to come to Belarus for a holiday and fail to visit its Belovezhskaya Pushcha which has been protected for six hundred years. In 2020, the country’s first unique open-air archaeological museum opened there — featuring demonstrations of how our ancestors lived in the 3rd century BC.

“If you get up at four or five in the morning and go deep into the wild, you can see herds of grazing aurochs and be amazed by their indescribable beauty,” smiles the Deputy General Director of the Reserve, Nina Bogush.

In addition, the forest is a paradise, oddly enough, for hunters. It is allowed

the reserve. It is called the ‘Belarusian Maldives’ as it’s located on chalk quarries and sand on the shore of the picturesque white lake.

“The pandemic has forced us to look for new forms and measures of rehabilitation. Since its first days, we’ve been dealing with diseases of the bronchopulmonary system,” says the resort’s Director, Vladimir Karpechkin.

It is also possible here to recover the musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, and vascular systems. Reha-



Mir Castle — a pearl of Belarusian architecture — is among the most beautiful castles in Europe

to hunt, in particular, hares, martens, minks and ferrets here.

Take a deep breath!

In Belovezhskaya Pushcha, you can easily say goodbye to the COVID after-effects. 15 years ago, the Ruzha-Khutar eco-resort was established in the heart of

rehabilitation programmes for those suffering from cancer or gynaecological diseases are also available. Moreover, 12 banyas and saunas are open to the resort’s guests, in addition to five swimming-pools.

Pour out forest tea

It was noisy, while masks were low-

Holiday romance

Swimming in the ‘Belarusian sea’, getting rid of the virus’ after-effects, breathing air filled with the scent of herbs and walking around palaces... What else do Belarusian health resorts offer?

ered a little to taste Belarusian delicacies. One’s mouth waters on seeing the treats on offer. Among them are a chocolate cake, Vitebsk condensed milk, waffle tubes, cheese balls and ‘potato’ cakes. Mushrooms from the Belovezhskaya Pushcha looked still alive: placed on a ‘lawn’ and having brown hats. It’s a pity to eat them!

The Pushcha tea was poured out. The drink can be bought in the local Museum of Folk Life and Ancient Technologies. As people say, it is a true panacea for all diseases. Those who wish might add the famous herb balm ‘Black Knight’ to the tea.

Meet the stork and check the time at the Town Hall

“This is a busel,” says Yekaterina



Historical reconstructions organised at the open-air archaeological museum in Belovezhskaya Pushcha

Plytnik, from the Vitebsk City Executive Committee, while keeping a bird in her hands. “It’s a Belarusian translation for the stork. However, though we speak Russian, we still call it this.”

The lady believes that Vitebsk is a city that can be talked about endlessly, “Be sure to take a walk through the historical part of the city. It is better to do this in the evening, when twilight is just beginning, or in the early morning. Then the sun wonderfully illuminates the domes and the clock on the Town Hall. One of the most interesting topics is the artistic heritage. Marc Chagall, Yudel Pen and Kazimir Malevich lived and worked here. Ilya Repin purchased an estate near Vitebsk.”

Burrow into golden sands

The Zoloty Peski [Golden Sands] sanatorium, in the Gomel Region, occupies a huge territory of two hectares just 30km from the city. It has fresh air, coniferous-deciduous forest and numerous eco-paths.

“We also have two mineral springs: for drinking purposes and for balneological procedures,” adds Irina Bakun, from the Marketing Department.

Ball vs puck

Young Belarusian talents Yegor Sharangovich and Vitaly Lisakovich — who is cooler?

By Sergei Kanashits

In recent years, there have been lots of talk about a crisis in Belarusian football and hockey: there is no young talent. This really does seem to be the case, as the meagre statistics fully confirm. The national hockey team fell into the lower division and only with enormous efforts managed to pull itself back while Dinamo Minsk led a miserable existence as an outsider for several seasons in a row in the KHL Championship. Footballers also fell into a tailspin, with clubs not caring at all about raising their own pupils while solely relying on middle-class legionnaires. As a result, the national team didn't receive an influx of fresh blood and had to exploit the veterans.

In this respect, the current season in football and hockey has become a bright ray against the grey background of the cloudy sky. Dinamo Minsk flashed with young talents in the KHL, showing the world a whole scattering of diamonds. Competition in the national team immediately increased. The 'Bisons' forward, Yegor

Sharangovich, having gone overseas in winter, became the first Belarusian ice hockey player in the last five years to play in the world's strongest league: the NHL. It's gratifying that Yegor not only goes on the ice as part of the legendary New Jersey Devils, but has managed to become a real leader of the team in a short time, being recognised as the star of the match more than once.

The stars also shone in football. They have talked about the prospects of the striker Vitaly Lisakovich for a long time, but they invariably added a couple of words that the player has a peculiar and hot-tempered character. All talented people, as a rule, can be rough and difficult, but history knows many examples when it was waywardness that ruined the most brilliant careers. It seems this didn't happen with Lisakovich: he left for Moscow Lokomotiv, managed to win a place in the squad in fierce competition, and also became the real leader of the national team. It's difficult today to imagine Mikhail Markhel's team without him. So, which of them is cooler: Sharangovich or Lisakovich? How are they similar and what paths did they take to their current success?

Yegor Sharangovich

He was born in Minsk on June 6th, 1998. He is 22 years old. His height is 187cm and weight — 92kg. He played 13 matches and scored 4 goal points (3+1) for the national team of Belarus. In the NHL, he played 31 games for New Jersey — 12 (7+5). In the KHL, he has played 81 games with Dinamo Minsk — 37 (21+16).

Biography

Yegor, like his brother, was brought to hockey by his parents. From early childhood, mom and dad taught their children to skate, and therefore in SDYUSHOR-12 they were well-liked although both at first didn't show any special talent. In the end, his brother stopped playing hockey, but Yegor continued his studies and soon became the leader. He's gone through the crucible of national teams of all ages, and everywhere he was in good standing. It's not surprising that Sharangovich's talent didn't go unnoticed by the coaches. At the age of 18, he'd already made his debut in the KHL as part of Dinamo Minsk and performed at the adult world championship in the uniform of the national team of Belarus. In summer 2018, he was selected by the New Jersey Devils in the fifth round of the draft under the overall number 141.

Love

Yegor has a girlfriend. Her name is Darya, she's 22 years old, and graduated from BSEU. She says about meeting her beloved: 'In 2020, I met the best person in the world, with whom I spent the most awesome (albeit semi-quarantine) summer (and not only summer). In general, thanks to COVID-19, we met,



so as they say: you never know where you'll lose and where you will gain'.

Hobbies

Fishing. "For some reason, my friendship didn't work out with spinning," said Yegor in an interview. "So I switched to the feeder and everything went well, especially when my father's colleague gave me a couple of lessons: I brought in a full cage of bream and scoundrels — 25kg. But that's just the luck of the draw. Another time I got out to a paid lake, where, in theory, there should always be a bite, but I sat for seventeen hours — and nothing..."

Vitaly Lisakovich

He was born in Minsk on February 8th, 1998. He's 23 years old. His height is 179cm and his weight — 73kg. He played 13 matches and scored 4 goals for the national team of Belarus. In the national championship, he played 61 matches and hit the opponents' goal 20 times as part of the Shakhtyor squad. In 2020, he moved to Moscow Lokomotiv, holding 23 meetings and scoring 3 times.



Biography

Vitaly has two more brothers and they are all professional footballers. Their childhood wasn't easy, but Lisakovich still calls it a very happy time. After being abandoned by their parents, the boys moved to Uzda, where they were raised on the street and by their grandparents. "As a child, no one believed in me. They said: 'Since your mom and dad are bad, you'll grow up the same way'. This made me angry. I said that I would be a thousand times better than my parents. I will always strive for this... I remember the first time I came to the yard and that was it, after that I couldn't imagine my life without football. At school, during breaks, we played football using a ball made of paper and scotch tape," Vitaly recalls. "We had a simple schedule: going to the stadium in the morning, then to sunbathe on the river and then back to the stadium. We played football for ten hours. In the seventh grade, together with my friend we gathered the ninth grade and the two of us played against ten."

Love

Vitaly married early and became a father at the age of 21; together with his wife Polina, he is raising a daughter, Olivia, whom he loves with all his heart and soul. "When a family appeared and a child was born, I grew up dramatically," says Lisakovich. "Before that I was angry and could fight with anyone. Now I've learnt to control myself, I have become calmer. I'm responsible for my family and my child. If something happens, I'll be guilty not only to myself, but also to my daughter. I love her madly and I'm ready to do everything for her sake."

Hobbies

He's keen on movies, enjoying *Joker* most of all, which he has watched dozens of times and even got a tattoo of the main character on his shoulder. "But I'm not the Joker," Vitaly clarifies. "Although he didn't listen to anyone and walked his own path, just like me. Nobody will persuade me otherwise if I'm right. But if I'm not right, then I apologise. I stand for justice."

SPORT

ARENA

Belarusian athletes to train for Tokyo Olympics at Russia's seaside bases

It has been agreed to use Russian bases in the Far East for training of Belarusian athletes for the Tokyo Olympics in certain sports. For example, the Boxing Federation and the Athletics Federation have plans to use the facilities.

In turn, Russian sportsmen regularly use Belarusian bases at Staiki, Ratomka and Raubichi for joint training.

Belarusian boxer Yevgeny Dolgolevets wins WBA Intercontinental title



He claimed the WBA Intercontinental super lightweight champion title in a fight against Russia's Fiodor Papazov. Our sportsman's victory followed an unanimous decision of the judges. This is the fifth win for Yevgeny in the professional ring.

Belarus' ice hockey team begins preparations for the World Championship

Head coach Mikhail Zakharov called up 15 players for the training camp; the line-up will be replenished as the World Championship approaches and the players performing in playoffs of club tournaments will be exempt. It's planned that, before the world event in Riga, Mikhail Zakharov's team will play six friendly away matches: on April 16th-17th in Budapest, our hockey players will play

against Austrians and Hungarians, on April 23rd-24th in Moscow — against Russia, on May 7th-8th in Nuremberg — against Germans.

In the group stage of the World Cup, our team will compete with Slovaks, Swedes, Czechs, Britons, Danes, Swiss and Russians. The top four teams in the group will advance to the quarterfinals of the tournament.



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Photo of the week

Anton Shepanishchev

Birdhouses are ready for the birds returning from warm countries

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

On April 8th, 1991, *Respublika* social and political newspaper was founded. It covers political, economic, social and cultural events in Belarus and abroad, as well as problems



of economics, education, sports, activities of legislative and executive authorities.

On April 11th, 1896, Aleksei Zygin was born — a military leader, lieutenant general (1943), participant of battles against the Nazi invaders on the territory of Belarus during the Great Patriotic War. He organised and took part in the defence of Polotsk. Having united all the military units of the Polotsk fortified area, he led the defence of the city for 18 days, holding back large enemy forces. He also participated in the battles of Moscow, alongside Sychevsko-Vyazemskaya, Rzhevskaya, Rzhevsko-Sychevskaya operations. He commanded armies on the Western, Kalinin and Voronezh fronts. He was killed in the battle for the Dnieper River in 1943.



On April 11th, 1996, the Cabinet of Ministers of Belarus issued a decree on the establishment of the Republican biological reserves of Zvanets and Medukhovo. They

were founded to preserve areas of natural marsh-meadow and forest lands with a complex of rare and endangered plant and animal species — listed in the Red Book of Belarus.



On April 11th, 2011, a terrorist attack in the Minsk metro happened: at 17.55 at the Oktyabrskaya metro station, an unidentified explosive device was detonated, resulting in human casualties. As a result of the explosion, 151 people were injured, 15 were killed. The identified organisers of the terrorist act — 25-year-old citizens of Belarus Dmitry Konovalov and Vladislav Kovalev — were sentenced to death.

April 11th is the Day of the Air Defence Forces in the Republic of Belarus. The Air Force and Air Defence Forces of the Republic of Belarus occupy a respected place in the system of ensuring the security of the Fatherland. The air defence units are equipped with modern anti-aircraft missile systems and



new generation automated control systems — created by the domestic military-industrial complex, as well as the MiG-29 and Su-27 fighters — modernised at Belarusian enterprises. Since 1995, Belarus has been a member of the Joint CIS Air Defence System.

April 11th is International Day of Fascist Concentration Camps Prisoners Liberation. In 1945, amid the defeat of the Nazi troops in World War II, the Buchenwald prisoners — led by an international political centre — raised an armed uprising, as a result of which they seized the camp and held it until the arrival of the allied forces.

On April 12th, 1541, Potey Ipaty was born (secular name Adam Lvovich) in the Brest Region — a polemic writer, Belarusian statesman and church leader. From 1566, he was a Brest territorial record clerk, in 1569 — a deputy of the Sejm, in 1588 — Senator of Rzecz Pospolita and Brest chatelain. In 1593, he was tonsured as a monk. He was one of the initiators and organisers of the Brest Church Union (1596). From 1599, he was the Uniate Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia. He is known as the author of polemical works in defence of union. He died in 1613.



On April 12th, 1976, the Svisloch Museum of History and Local Lore was opened. The museum showcases stone

tools of the Mesolithic era found in the area: scrapers, choppers, axes, hoes, moulds for iron tools and ceramic dishes. One of the topics is devoted to the history of the Tyshkevich family: a model of Svisloch in the late 18th and early 19th centuries — reconstructed by the owner of the town — Duke V. Tyshkevich, is on display, with a guest house, a gymnasium, a theatre, a menagerie, a park and a trading square.

On April 12th, 1961, the first manned flight into space took place. Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin took off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in the Vostok spacecraft, completed one orbit of the Earth and successfully landed in the Saratov Region. The flight duration was 1 hour 48 minutes. On April 12th, according to the decision of the International Aviation Federation (FAI), World Aviation and Cosmonautics Day is celebrated.



On April 13th, 1936, for the first time a telephone connection was established between the USSR and the USA. A Moscow-New York telephone line was put into operation.