



What Belarus  
will be showing  
at the World  
EXPO 2020  
in Dubai

5



Famous sculptor  
Sergey Bondarenko  
tells us of his artistry,  
dreams and love  
to horses

9

INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 06 (820) ● THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020 ● WWW.SB.BY



At 27th Minsk International Book Fair

## Paradise for readers

Minsk transforms into world's book capital for several days. About 400 exhibitors from 30 countries both near and far presented their publishing innovations at the 27th Minsk International Book Fair, with over 500 events held during the five days of the forum — including numerous meetings with publishers, autograph sessions with poets and writers, round table discussions and book presentations. An awards ceremony for the winners of the *Art of the Book* national contest was a significant event. → 7



# Substitution as cure for imports

The Head of State made a working trip to the Gomel Region, focusing on an investment project to re-equip the Dobrush Paper Factory. Aleksandr Lukashenko paid an unscheduled visit to another Dobrush enterprise: the Porcelain Factory. The main message voiced by the President after his trip was: we must seriously turn to import substitution.

## Major project

In Dobrush, the Head of State examined the progress in the construction of a plant for the production of coated and uncoated cardboard, which was planned to be put into operation in 2015. However, the site is mothballed due to errors on the part of the Chinese contractor. As a result, the country still has to spend more than \$100m annually to import the products we need.

Yuri Nazarov, the Chairman of Bellesumprom Concern, said that the plant is 90 percent ready. Only finishing of some minor construction details remain. Importantly, the equipment is to be

**The Head of State stressed, “We must produce all these domestically, if we need. We have no oil, as Russia does. We must earn foreign currency, so it is advisable not to export it. We must turn to import substitution seriously as the situation now is unacceptable.”**

Mr. Lukashenko visited the company’s wood preparation shop, energy centre and cardboard machine shop, also learning about the facility’s technical re-equipment. The President set a goal to launch cardboard production at the plant by December, adding that, by this time, the

these companies will regret what they have done.

Initially, it was planned that the President would visit only the Dobrush Paper Factory but he decided to also familiarise himself with the state of affairs at the local Porcelain Factory. Mr. Lukashenko visited the main production site and was informed about its produce and technological processes.

“We need to save it and give it a helping hand from time to time: if we ruin the plant, then much money will be needed to restore it,” the Head of State stressed, adding that the company’s products will always be in demand. With this in mind, it’s important to ensure that the Dobrush facility does not lose its markets.

## The cold season is over

While visiting the Dobrush Paper Factory, the President spoke with journalists and answered a question about relations between Belarus and the United States. “I wouldn’t say that the United States were such great friends of ours. However, the period of this cold relations, when we looked at each other over some kind of reinforced concrete wall, is over. There is no need to worry in this regard. We are forging relations with the greatest empire, the leading country in the world,” he stressed.

The visit of the US Secre-



Dobrush

tary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, to Minsk has aroused some nervousness and anxiety among Russian politicians, experts and journalists. Mr. Lukashenko advised them not to worry, saying, “True, they created some hysteria over the visit of the Secretary of State. Really, he did visit us. I didn’t conceal it, I hinted that we had a long-standing relationship in absentia. If we declassify all the materials, the world will applaud us. Jointly with Mr. Pompeo, when he was the CIA Director, we conducted some major operations here. They contacted us, provided us with information. We detained people with nuclear materials here on the border. This issue is number one for them and they appreciated us for that.”

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, the United States appreciated the friendly policy of Belarus, including our position on resolving the Ukrainian conflict and the proposal to involve the Americans in this process. “They saw the real Belarus. They saw that this is a normal

country. There are enough rights here and we don’t interfere with anyone’s life,” he said.

Mr. Lukashenko recalled that, in recent years, he had met with many high-ranking US representatives and various experts and political scientists. Moreover, even the Hi-Tech Park in Belarus was founded with the participation of the US representatives. Speaking about the meeting with Mr. Pompeo in Minsk, Mr. Lukashenko stressed that it was a really friendly exchange of views, “We discussed everything. It was a truly friendly exchange of opinions. They are well aware, even sometimes better than me, about issues in our relations with Russia. He told me not to worry, that they will help Belarus. He said that the USA will deliver oil to Belarus at competitive prices.”

**The cardboard production facility in Dobrush will begin working by the end of the year.**

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## A workshop at Dobrush Hero of Labour Paper Factory

launched into operation. Belarusian enterprises cannot do this independently since they have no capabilities: no production of this kind has previously functioned in the post-Soviet space. If necessary, the Austrians will also supply equipment to Dobrush and, in the future, it will be possible to establish production of such units in Belarus.

production of cardboard packaging material should have begun.

The work of the Chinese contractor was also discussed as a separate issue. The Head of State intends to seriously discuss the actions of the unscrupulous Chinese experts who have failed projects in our country with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Aleksandr Lukashenko is certain

# New steps towards rapprochement of interests

By Olga Korneeva

**Last week marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of the agreement on good-neighbourliness and co-operation between Belarus and Lithuania and the agreement on the Belarusian-Lithuanian state border. “The signing of these documents laid the foundation for the development of bilateral relations. Our major task now is to continue following the principles of good-neighbourliness and mutually beneficial co-operation for the benefit of both countries,” Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei said on meeting Lithuania’s Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius, when he visited Belarus.**

Vladimir Makei drew attention to the symbolism of the fact that the two-day visit of the Lithuanian Foreign Minister began with the agro-town of Rymdyuna in the Grodno Region, which can be seen as an example of good neighbourliness, a friendly place where both Belarusians and ethnic Lithuanians live side-by-side. Here and in neighbouring Gervyaty, 1,000 ethnic Lithuanians live. “In total, the Lithuanian diaspora in Belarus exceeds 5,000,” the Belarusian Minister said, adding, “The state policy of Belarus is aimed at preserving peace, tranquillity and stability in our society and avoidance of any



BELTA

## Linas Linkevicius and Vladimir Makei

inter-faith or inter-ethnic conflicts.”

The foreign ministers of Lithuania and Belarus also met in an expanded format at the Foreign Ministry in Minsk, and then made a joint statement to the media. According to Linas Linkevicius, the time has come for more intensive contacts between Belarus and Lithuania. “There are also disagreements but these differences are not a reason not to talk. We must do this,” he later told Belarus’ Prime Minister Sergei Rumas who, in turn, noted that Belarus and Lithuania are neighbours and the proximity of their markets, historically deep cultural and kinship contacts create a solid founda-

tion for establishing mutually beneficial Belarusian-Lithuanian liaisons.

“Trade and economic co-operation with Lithuania is developing very well today. In 2019, trade turnover was close to \$1.5bn. Over the past five years, Belarusian cargo provides 30 percent of the load at the Klaipeda state sea port,” Mr. Rumas said.

The Prime Minister also noted that Lithuanian businesses are doing very well in our Republic: about 600 companies from this country operate in Belarus. Investment projects created with participation of the Lithuanian capital are successfully implemented here — focusing

on retail trade, construction, agriculture, woodworking, transport and logistics.

During the meeting with the Belarusian Government, the parties discussed issues of Belarusian-Lithuanian co-operation, including in the petrochemical field and alternative gas supplies. Lithuania offers Belarus intensive use of its infrastructure to establish regular supplies of oil and gas. “We are ready to continue the practice of alternative oil supplies, which we have already experienced. We can discuss a more permanent process. This was just discussed at a meeting with the Prime Minister of Belarus. We must consider technical solutions and gas supply opportunities. There is a lot of work to be done,” Mr. Linkevicius said.

Answering journalists’ questions, Mr. Makei noted that the possibility of gas supplies through Lithuania has not yet been worked out in detail. “We discussed these issues but the specifics must be considered at expert level,” he noted.

As planned, the Belarusian-Lithuanian Economic Forum will be held in Klaipeda this May and the two states’ prime ministers will then be able to meet and discuss the entire range of issues.

“We agreed that — as for the development and deepening of trade and economic co-operation — it is desirable that we build them without politicising certain sides,” Mr. Makei stressed.

# Negotiations in Sochi: details and results

The presidents of Belarus and Russia held an effective meeting, covering pre-existing issues as well as present co-operation in the energy sector

The many hours of the marathon negotiation between the presidents took place on a wave of positivity. A range of effective measures ensued including: the Russian Government will contribute to the achievement of commercial agreements for the supply of oil to Belarus and gas on 2019 terms (more on this topic below). Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised at the start of the meeting,

**“Indeed, we have discussed many things, including issues from the old days when we lived in one state, discussed many historical dates and events. We didn’t just discuss issues, as Vladimir Vladimirovich said, of mutual interest but also those involving our neighbours, former countries of the Soviet Union, our policy and their policy. We discussed many things, from the old days to now, and decided to continue the conversation with those who are also engaged in this process.”**

## Meeting in good mood

Negotiations took place in several rounds. At first, the heads of state talked face to face in a working breakfast format. Then they held consultations in an expanded but shortened format, as higher powers ‘put a spanner in the works’. Part of the Russian delegation was delayed in Moscow due to inclement weather, and later were unable to land in Sochi for the same reason. The plane was sent to Mineralnye Vody. As a result, the presidents spent the next three sessions of the meeting on the Galaktika Ice Arena.

**Aleksandr Lukashenko (numbered 01) and Vladimir Putin (numbered 11) took to the ice in the same White team and won a landslide victory over the Blue team with a score of 13:4. As the journalists covering the visit immediately noted: it would have been great if our governments also boasted such teamwork...**

In the meantime, members of the Russian delegation who were late due to unavoidable circumstances pulled up at Polyana (this is the nickname of the five-star Gazprom Grand Hotel in Krasnaya Polyana, where the meeting was held). By the time the presidents arrived, there were no empty chairs at the negotiating table. The Belarusian side included the First Deputy Prime Minister — Dmitry Krutoy, the Belarusian Ambassador to Russia — Vladimir Semashko, Energy Minister Viktor Karankevich and the Chairman of the Belneftekhim Concern — Andrei Rybakov. The Russian side was represented by Dmitry Kozak — the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Aleksei Overchuk — the Deputy Prime Minister, Presidential Aide Yuri Ushakov, Energy Minister Aleksandr Novak and the Russian Ambassador to Belarus — Dmitry Mezentsev...

However, let’s return to the beginning of the presidents’ working day in Krasnaya Polyana, which began on a positive note. The heads of state did not hide the fact that they enjoyed the meeting. They smiled and joked a lot. In good mood, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin arrived on the ice of the Galaktika and this is clearly seen in the photos and videos from Sochi...

They also energetically returned to expanded business negotiations in order to, as Mr. Putin noted, clarify issues that were discussed in some detail during the previous rounds of the meeting. In a word, if in the first part of the meeting the presidents went ‘to the depths of old times’, then the second part was devoted to the pressing issues of today and tomorrow. In addition, Mr. Putin noted that this is an opportunity for the Belarusian side and the President to get acquainted with the new members of the Russian Government [there have been thorough personnel changes there recently].



“Thanks. I’ve already met them and we’ve talked,” responded Mr. Lukashenko.

## Effective dialogue

Then the conversation went behind closed doors. Media representatives patiently waited for the outcome of a long negotiating day, which began at about 1pm and officially ended at half past ten in the evening. The results at the end of the meeting were announced by Dmitry Kozak, the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration. Regarding the prospects for oil supplies to Belarus, he said the following, “We will assist in reaching agreements between Belarusian consumers and oil producers in our country.”



Dmitry Kozak

According to Dmitry Kozak, the Russian and Belarusian oil markets are united, and oil is sold under the same conditions, and to provide discounts it would be necessary to introduce state regulation of this market. “What we cannot do. We cannot constantly change the rules of the game, we will put our oil companies in an incomprehensible position. Therefore, we will

contribute to the achievement of commercial agreements,” he noted.

For the same reason, the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration was unable to clarify how much Russian oil will be delivered to Belarus in the first quarter of this year. “It all depends on reaching agreements. We do not regulate volumes and price of deliveries,” he asserted.

Dmitry Kozak also commented on the natural gas supply agreement, “The talks were held in a very positive manner. We’ve agreed to continue consultations at the level of governments, ministries and departments on improving integration mechanisms.”

**“As far as co-operation in the oil and gas sector is concerned, we’ve agreed to maintain the terms for gas supply as they were in 2019.”**

He specified that the terms for gas supply were agreed only for 2020. It will be appropriate to recall here that, in 2019, the price of gas for Belarus was fixed and amounted to \$127 per thousand cubic metres at the border. Under similar conditions, gas will be delivered in January and February this year.

**Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by**

While ordinary citizens of Her Majesty are getting used to the new reality of life outside the European Union and European politicians are speaking of the forthcoming difficulties and the transformation of the UK into ‘a second-rate country’, the Government is starting to implement the ambitious ‘Global Britain’ concept

By Marta Astreiko

During a media breakfast, Jacqueline Perkins — the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Belarus — explained the idea, “Leaving the EU is our opportunity to show what ‘Global Britain’ is: it’s new relationship with our partners in the European Union and around the world, the conclusion of trade deals in new markets — which will confirm the UK’s position as a liberal and free trading nation, and the defence of its strong moral principles acting as a force for good in the world.”

According to the diplomat, the UK confidently extends a helping hand to everyone. “We are an ambitious nation with large-scale ideas, driven by new aspirations and aimed at maximising new opportunities,” she emphasised.



European Union, the UK entered a transition period that will last until December 31st. So for now, there will be no changes in immigration and trade laws.

Jacqueline Perkins confirmed that officially London is ready to continue dialogue with Minsk, including on sensitive topics. For her part, the diplomat intends to help organise the visit of the British Minister to Belarus. “I will personally advocate that we have a ministerial visit. Since Belarus and the UK have many areas for co-operation, this may be not only a visit from the Foreign Minister, but also a visit from different industries,” she stated.

## Life after Brexit

Jacqueline Perkins also answered the main question that concerned journalists: will Brexit somehow affect Belarusian-British co-operation? According to the Ambassador, no particular changes are expected in this regard, “I don’t think that after the UK leaves the European Union, my work here will change much.”

An important point is that, after leaving the

Brexit will not affect the visa policy in relation to Belarus: it will remain unchanged. The diplomat noted with satisfaction that Belarusians enjoy a high percentage of successful applications for a UK visa: only about 2 percent of applicants are refused.

**“We observe an increase in Belarusians’ applications for British visas. We also annually register around a 30 percent rise in the number of Britons coming to Belarus. I think more UK residents should visit Belarus to see what a beautiful country it is,” she said.**

Jacqueline Perkins also drew the media’s attention to the fact that bilateral relations between Belarus and the UK have been developing well in recent years and the British side is now interested in further expanding trade and economic liaisons with the Republic, “We are working to strengthen our co-operation in trade. To achieve this goal, we closely interact with the Embassy of Belarus in London... During my stay in Belarus, I’ve been surprised by the number of forms of co-operation we have.”

At the request of journalists, Jacqueline Perkins also commented on the recent visit of the US Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, to Minsk, saying, “The UK very much welcomes the development of relations between Belarus and the United States. The United States is our friend, and Belarus is our friend. We are very happy when our friends are on good terms with each other.”

## Belarus sent the second humanitarian aid plane to China to prevent and control the epidemic caused by a new type of coronavirus, with military aircraft IL-76MD leaving for Beijing from Machulishchi

Representatives of the Health Ministry, the Emergency Ministry, the Defence Ministry and the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park came to the airfield. The Chinese Ambassador to Belarus, Cui Qiming, also arrived in Machulishchi to thank the Belarusian side and the crew of the aircraft personally. "You have provided help to the Chinese people at the right time. Your support is very important to us at this difficult time," he said.

# Assistance at the right time

The diplomat noted that Belarus was the first country to send aid to China to help fight coronavirus. This, he said, is not the only time Belarus has provided humanitarian support to China. "A friend in need is a friend indeed. Assistance and support of our peoples are mutual. I hope that this will become a tradition," added the Ambassador.

This time Belarus has sent mainly personal protective equipment, means of decontamination, disinfection of tools and premises and other medical products — all in all about 20 tonnes of cargo. The Great Stone Park has contributed one tonne of protective equipment (masks, respirators and robes).

The first aircraft with medical aid from Belarus was sent to China on January 29th carrying about 20 tonnes of cargo: antibiotics to cure complications of viral infections, as well as disinfectant and both protective and antiseptic materials.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, ordered to provide assistance to China to help fight the virus. The Head of State also sent a personal message of support to China's President Xi Jinping, underlining that the Belarusian side is ready to continue supporting

China in overcoming these difficulties. According to the latest data, over 40,000 cases of the new virus has been so far confirmed. The death toll has risen to 910 people. More than 170 cases of the virus have been confirmed outside China.



Aleksandr Kulevsky

## Germany ready to promote Belarusian exports to EU

**Belarus views Germany as a key partner within the European Union: we are interested in the German experience of co-operation of business and society, harmonisation of interests of different social groups within a single policy and the programme for the country's development**



Meeting participants during their visit to High-Tech Park

This was stated by Andrei Savinykh, the Chairman of the Standing Commission on International Affairs at the House of Representatives of the National Assembly, at a meeting with the German parliamentary delegation led by Mark Hauptmann, a member of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Energy of the German Bundestag, head of the German-Belarusian parliamentary friendship group.

"In general, we view Germany as the main partner of Belarus in the field of economic modernisation and supply of high-tech equipment," Mr. Savinykh said during the meeting, noting that it's necessary to study the possibility of rapprochement between the two countries in the fields of energy, the chemical industry and machine and instrument making. Co-operation in the development of electric transport and information technologies is also promising.

"I believe we should continue dialogue on all topics without restrictions. From a practical point of view, we need to pay

the most serious attention to co-operation links. Belarus can be more closely linked with Germany in the automotive sector and instrument making through the production of components for its machinery. We already have positive experience in the automotive industry and this practice needs to be expanded. In this area, Belarus can also be competitive on the world stage," Mr. Savinykh stressed.

In turn, Mr. Hauptmann emphasised that Germany is ready to promote Belarusian exports — in particular, electric transport — to Europe. "I think Belarusian electric vehicles will enjoy demand in Europe. However, you will first have to overcome barriers by bringing certain standards into line. As for German investments in Belarus, there are many opportunities in this area. First of all, there are High-Tech Park technology start-ups — small businesses that begin working on the basis of new ideas. There is huge potential here," he said.



## Real common markets until 2025

Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission, Mikhail Myasnikov, outlined the priorities the commission should focus on during the session on 3rd February, stressing that the Eurasian Economic Union is entering a new phase in its development



"Primarily, in accordance with the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty and decisions made by EAEU heads of state, it will be necessary to set up genuinely working common markets by 2025. We should be objective: more effective measures to achieve that goal are now necessary," Mikhail Myasnikov stressed.

The fine-tuning of strategic guidelines on advancing Eurasian economic integration to 2025 and forwarding the document for the consideration of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council is the second task. Mr. Myasnikov reminded the audience that the work has to take into account the address made by the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, who presides over the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in 2020. It is also necessary to analyse whether other instructions given by EAEU heads of state have been fulfilled.

Bolstering international respect for the Eurasian Economic Union is the third task. It's important to substantially increase the share of the Eur-

asian Economic Union in the world's GDP and international trade. These indicators are currently rather modest. For instance, the level of interaction between the Eurasian Economic Union and the global Chinese Belt and Road initiative is insufficient.

It is then necessary to make sure Eurasian Economic Union member states benefit from mutual trade. Mr. Myasnikov stated that the countries sometimes introduce new barriers and it is the commission's job to improve ways of monitoring the union's law. "We have to prepare convincing materials about the problems and losses created by these barriers and unilateral decisions of the member states, which run contrary to domestic trade rules. We need systemic communication with the private sector of the member states and foreign partners. We will bolster trust in integration as a whole in this manner," the official stressed.

Based on materials of belta.by and sb.by

## Powerlifters come into the arena

By Natalia Yemelyanova

**BelAZ launches updated range of equipment for airport maintenance**

These are primarily airfield tractors for towing aircraft with a take-off weight of up to 600 tonnes. The machinery has passed factory and operational tests and fully complies with the technical requirements of the IATA (International Air Transport Association). In comparison with the previous generation, modern airtows have received a completely new design and some technical solutions that

will be attractive for a potential customer.

Russia is the main market for the new production. Last week, BelAZ presented updated special-purpose equipment at the 7th national exhibition and the NAIS 2020 Forum of Civil Aviation Infrastructure in Moscow. The company's specialists not only demonstrated the serial and new special-purpose equipment presented at the BelAZ stand but also introduced promising developments.

In the near future, the range of aircraft tow tractors will be replenished with popular products for airports. A vehicle is currently being assembled to tow



belaz.by

'BelAZ-74270' aircraft tow tractor aims to tow planes with a take-off weight of up to 600 tonnes on airfields with artificial turf

aircraft with a take-off weight of up to 150 tonnes and a tractor to tow aircraft with a take-off weight of up to 260 tonnes

is being designed; the latter is expected to fully replace the commercially available model.

# Illusion of a forest, innovation and wow-zone

The World EXPO 2020 in Dubai will launch in less than a year and a national pavilion will be the hallmark of each country. Valery Sadokho, the Director of the National Marketing Centre at the Foreign Ministry, tells BelTA what Belarus will be showing to the world.



**The EXPO is viewed as the world's most significant exhibition and is even known by many countries as the exhibition world cup. What's the reason for this?**

Indeed, EXPO is the most significant international event of the exhibition business. The history of the world's universal EXPO shows began in 1851 and it was first organised in London's Hyde Park. Over time, the world fair has become a platform for demonstrating the most advanced technologies and achievements.

The forthcoming EXPO will be held from October 20th, 2020 to April 10th, 2021 in Dubai (UAE), with the main theme announced as 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future' and three related sub-themes: 'Opportunity', 'Sustainability', and 'Mobility'.

The new Dubai Trade Centre with an area of almost 450 hectares, designed specifically for the exhibition, will be the venue and, so far, over 190 countries have confirmed their participation. The organisers expect about 25m guests to visit the exhibition.

**What does Belarus expect from participating in the world fair?**

An international project is always an opportunity to study and use the experience of other participants to develop new technologies domestically. Participation in the world exhibition in Dubai will contribute to the development of scientific, economic and political dialogue with the UAE, Belarus' partner countries in the Middle East region, and other interested parties.

We first participated in the EXPO in 1998 in Lisbon, and the country's national pavilion was



Belarus to present 'Forest of Future Technology' at EXPO 2020

shown for the first time in 2010 in Shanghai. In 2015 in Milan, our pavilion with the 'Circle of Life' project was one of the most popular among visitors.

We'll also present our national pavilion in Dubai. For us, the EXPO 2020 is primarily an image event aimed at positioning Belarus in the international arena as a promising and reliable partner. This is a good platform for finding new markets, strategic partners, attracting investment and demonstrating the country's tourist attractiveness.

Preparations for the exhibition have been underway since 2017. An organising committee was set up to create a national exhibition, and an action plan has been approved. The exhibition is organised by the Foreign Ministry, and the National Marketing Centre at the Foreign Ministry acts as the operator.

**What will our national pavilion surprise with at EXPO 2020?**

Belarus' pavilion will be located in the 'Opportunity' zone, covering an area of 1,200 square metres. Its concept is based on

three 'Ts': 'Innovations. Investments. Individuality'. The 'Innovations' zone will feature the latest domestic developments in science and technology and the country's success stories and potential investment projects will be presented in the 'Investments' zone. In turn, the 'Individuality' zone will present people who've contributed to the progress and development of Belarus and also show our historical, cultural and tourist potential.

It should be noted that the information will be presented on interactive screens, touch-screens and through info-kiosks — using holograms, five-sided projections, etc. National Belarusian motifs and symbols will be presented in thematic areas and exhibits.

A 'forest' area will be created at the entrance to the national pavilion — to symbolise the unity of the multitude. The forest is a natural heritage of Belarus and, with the help of modern technol-



In 2015 in Milan, our pavilion with the 'Circle of Life' project was one of the most popular among visitors

ogy, it will welcome guests with the authentic sounds of Belarusian nature. In the entrance there will be a stage for performances of the best art groups. Guests will then proceed to an interactive corridor, where they will learn about the symbol of Belarus' fauna — the bison: the animal will welcome visitors and tell interesting facts about the country. Thanks to the interactivity of the image, the animals will respond to people's movements.

An electronic showcase of Belarusian goods, services and technologies developed by the National Marketing Centre will be used to demonstrate the coun-

try's export potential: portal export.by. At the moment, it has over 6,000 registered companies and about 20,000 products.

In the 'Doors to Belarus' zone, visitors will get to know the country's culture and identity, its natural resources, artistic heritage and national cuisine. A large concave screen with an interactive projection image will open the 'doors' to Belarus and enable visitors to feel the effects in its different corners.

To get to the wow zone, visitors will have to pass through the 'Water corridor' which symbolises the water resources of Belarus. A 9 metre textile art installation — 'The Tree of Knowledge' — will be the central element of the wow zone.

The Belarusian pavilion will offer visitors an entertainment zone, virtual tours of the restored Krevo and Golshany castles, an art corridor of modern art and a gift shop where they can buy embroidery, linen products and many other souvenirs.

The third floor of the pavilion will be used for business events.

**When will the national day of Belarus be held at the EXPO?**

The national day of Belarus will be held on November 22nd, while the exhibition itself will open on October 20th, the EXPO's first day of work. November 23rd will become another important day for the country at the exhibition: the Belarusian Investment Forum is scheduled to be held. The national pavilion will also host days for the regions of Belarus, presentations of companies, Tourism Day and Science Day.

ECONOMY

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Border guards from the Brest Fortress start Victory Relay

The Victory Relay campaign was launched at the Brest Hero Fortress Memorial in a celebratory atmosphere and will take place along the borders of the CIS countries.

The relay race is dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory



and is held following a decision of the CIS heads of state from a proposal by the CIS Council of Border Guard Commanders. Beginning in Belarusian Brest and Russian Murmansk, two routes will pass through ten countries. The events will be attended by border guards, veterans, schoolchildren and members of the public. The relay race will end on May 28th on Poklonnaya Gora in Moscow.

### New development by BSU scientists being tested at the International Space Station

BSU scientists have developed an orientation system for video-spectral equipment SOVA-1-426. The innovation is designed for the automatic control of filming devices and tracking objects on the Earth's surface without operator intervention.



The SOVA system is a guidance platform mounted on a porthole inside a space station. The mobile platform greatly expands the capabilities of the International Space Station to study the planet and its atmosphere. Monitoring data makes it possible to quickly assess the scale of industrial and natural disasters. The innovation was delivered aboard the Russian segment of the ISS in early December 2019.

### Minsk named one of the most romantic cities in Belarus

The capital was among the five most romantic cities in the country, according to a rating by Picodi analysts. Analysts compiled a 'romantic' rating on the eve of St. Valentine's Day. It used 21 cities, where the population is at least 50,000 people. The basis for the rating was the



analysis of the number of 'romantic' search queries on the Internet, for example, such as 'Valentine card', 'declaration of love', 'date', 'flowers', etc.

The first in the list of cities of love was Zhodino, followed by Novopolotsk and Pinsk, then Polotsk. The capital is placed fifth. It seems those in Bobruisk, Gomel and Borisov are looking forward to St. Valentine's Day the least of all.

### Prizes for winners of the largest world sports forums determined

Belarusian athletes who win medals at the 32nd Summer Olympics and 16th Summer Paralympic Games 2020, 24th Summer Deaflympics 2021, 24th Winter Olympics and 13th Winter Paralympic Games 2022 as well as the 20th Winter Deaflympics 2023, will be awarded



prizes in cash. For gold at the Olympic Games, they will receive a cash prize of \$150,000 (equivalent), silver — \$75,000 and bronze — \$50,000. The prizes for similar awards at the Paralympic and Deaflympic Games will be \$50,000, \$30,000 and \$20,000 respectively.

Coaches will be paid remuneration amounting to between 20 and 100 percent of the value of the Olympians' prizes.

Most recently, World Wetlands Day was held under the motto: ‘Life Thrives on Wetlands’. At present, wetlands are disappearing faster than any other ecosystem in the world. Their conservation and restoration are crucial for biodiversity, as well as for climate change and sustainable development. Belarus is often called ‘the lungs

of Europe’ and our wetlands are of international importance. To date, our country has preserved more than 860,000 hectares of swamps in their natural or near-natural state. Approximately two-thirds of the country’s wetlands have a special or special protection regime, but the goal is to establish such a regime on all natural wetlands.



bestbelarus.by

By Natalia Yemelyanova

The law establishes the legal basis for the protection of peatlands and the rational use of their resources. It is aimed at preserving swamps and restoring their biosphere functions. It is also a step towards the realisation of citizens’ rights to the favourable environment and nature management.

Under the Paris Agreement, Belarus has made voluntary commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35 percent by 2030. Re-waterlogging and restoration of peatlands will result in a

reduction in CO2 emissions across the country.

According to the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Andrey Khudyk, about 60,000 hectares of inefficiently drained swamps have already been restored in Belarus under international technical assistance projects. “Our country is now rightfully among the world leaders in restoring swamps. We are confident that the new law on the protection of peatlands will help Belarus fulfil its obligations under the Paris Agreement and will enable us to make a significant contribution to the effective fight against

## Steps in the right direction

The adoption of the Law ‘On Protection and Use of Peatlands’ in Belarus in late 2019 was an important step towards the conservation and protection of the country’s wetlands

climate change at regional, national and global levels in close co-operation with our partners,” he commented.

A major project preceded the adoption of the law. The first step was an inventory of all wetlands in Belarus, which was carried out in accordance with the UNDP-GEF (Global Environment Facility) projects: *Peatlands-2* and *Wetlands*. The next stage was the development of a strategy for the conservation and rational use of peatlands and a scheme for the distribution of peatlands in areas of use for the period up to 2030: these were adopted by the Government of Belarus in 2015. On this basis, a law was developed that, for the first time in the world, comprehensively establishes the legal framework for the protection and sustainable use of peatlands at the level of a legislative act.

“For more than 20 years, the UNDP

— jointly with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus and other partners — has been working purposefully in the field of sustainable management of Belarusian wetlands, which are of international importance. Six large-scale projects were implemented, which became the foundation for the adoption of the law. This is a unique experience for the entire region in preserving vulnerable natural ecosystems, which Belarus can share at a global level,” said Alexandra Solovieva, UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus.

The *Wetlands* project is expected to reduce CO2 emissions by almost 3.2 million tonnes over 20 years. This will be possible by restoring forest peatlands, preventing deforestation and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy from marsh plant biomass.

By Maria Druk

World tourism trends like to predict the discovery of something new and, evidently, our country fits the brief. Belarus made a significant statement when it hosted the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship. It didn’t simply show nature in all its glory but also proved that the infrastructure is developing well for the needs of foreigners. Visa exemptions are being introduced and, since then, tourists have shown an increasing interest in the country.

### Promising markets

To have all the necessary information, it would be good to know not only favourite but also potential guests. Progress is unlikely without an understanding of the new and promising markets. Recently, the latter were discussed at a press conference hosted by the National Press Centre.

Great interest in the country is primarily shown by Poles: the capacity of the outbound market is estimated at 10 million people in the country of about 40 million people. An average Polish tourist spends around 800 Euros in our country — which is comparable to the expenses of Russians. There is the opinion that, in terms of demand for Belarus, our eastern and western neighbours will compete in the future — despite an extensive flight programme by the national air carrier to major Russian cities. As a result, residents of Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod and Voronezh now visit us more often. Demand is seen among those coming from all the major CIS cities. However, this year, our travel business still intends to

## Wide open doors

Surge of interest in Belarus: experts on promising tourism destinations



Aleksey Stolyarov

focus on weekend tours and excursion products for Kazakhs and Uzbeks.

In addition, the Scandinavian countries are a promising market. For example, we expect an influx of tourists from Finland on weekends, as well as tour groups from Denmark and Norway. “Despite the fact that the capacity of this region is not as large as that of China, India or Germany, I would put important emphasis on it. For us, this could become a targeted, high-margin market — given that Belarus and Latvia will host the World Hockey Championships in 2021. We must promote all our tourism products under the flag of the future championship,” said the Chairman of

the Board of the Republican Union of the Tourism Industry, Filipp Guly.

### We have something to offer

The three-year work of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, the National Agency for Tourism with the travel businesses of the United States and Canada is also bearing fruit. It is also planned to consolidate the results next year during the hockey battles. In addition, these countries are interested in military tourism and we have something to offer here also.

According to Mr. Guly, we should not forget Germany, Belgium and the UK. “This year, Germany has hosted several

workshops and presentations for members of the Union and those who want to join. I think, this year, we will be able to reach the same situation as with Finland: to organise regular weekend tours. The negotiation process will enter the final stage in early March at the Berlin exhibition. I want to note that there has never been such a serious and massive demand from the West for Belarus, and this chance should be maximised,” he added.

At the same time, we need to think of who are these guests from the West. Most of them are people of pre-retirement and retirement age, travelling in families, couples or large groups, educated and curious people who are interested in architecture, ethnography and nature. They like to stay in three-star hotels and do not mind visiting several countries at once, for example, landing in Poland, flying out of Lithuania, and visiting Belarus for 3-4 days. Therefore, the unification of visa-free zones in the Grodno and Brest regions is useful.

Moreover, the Indian market has a large unrealised potential, despite the lack of direct flights. The negotiation process has been going on for the past three years and is about to yield results. This also includes the countries of the Persian Gulf and the region of South and South-East Asia. Among these countries, China stands alone. However, until March, it seems, we must forget about guests from China. The reason for this is the coronavirus. As Aleksey Strelchenko — who heads Tsentrkurort Republican Unitary Enterprise which is Uralkali’s branch — notes, if the world manages to contain it in February, it will be possible to return to normal operations in May.

# Paradise for readers

Minsk transforms into world's book capital for several days



By Lyudmila Kovaleva

It's no accident that Minsk International Book Fair attracts the attention of publishers, writers, literary critics, printers and marketers from all over the world, as it opens the international calendar of professional book exhibitions and allows visitors to become the first to get to know new products from both domestic and foreign publishers. This year, the Belarusian book forum was held for the 27th time. From February 5th to 9th, about 400 exhibitors from 30 countries presented their products at the exhibition pavilion in 14 Pobediteley Avenue.

In his greeting to the participants and guests of the fair, President Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the book forum has become a bright event of the cultural and spiritual life of Belarus. The Head of State expressed the belief that the exhibition will continue promoting high-quality literature and a reading culture and serve to strengthen international humanitarian co-operation.

This year, the fair was held under the 'Belarus is an Open Book' slogan, with the Russian Federation being guest of honour — presenting one of the largest expositions with an area of 200 square metres and featuring new products of 80 publishing houses from its 15 regions. The Russians pleased not only with many interesting books but also with popular authors and Tatiana Ustinova — a popular detective writer — was among those present at the neighbouring country's stand.

"We are grateful to the organisers that the Russian Federation is an honorary guest of the exhibition. This is an amazing celebration of books, creative discoveries, new meetings and contacts," said Dmitry Mezentsev, Russia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Belarus, at the opening of the forum.

In turn, the United States was the central exhibitor and the US Charge d'Affaires in Belarus, Jenifer Moore, said that the US Embassy in Belarus has been participating in the Minsk International Book Fair for 22 years — revealing the history of America through different themes, genres and formats. This year, the theme of the stand was 'On the Road: American Travel Literature' — aiming to show the magic, mystery and diversity of American roads, landscapes and cit-



ies. The American stand proved to be one of the most original at the exhibition as it was decorated as a classic American restaurant in the art deco style.

There was something to be surprised by on each of the stands and the variety of books on show was truly amazing, including small books for children and folios weighing up to 15kg. This is how much the facsimile of the Brest Bible of 1563, prepared last year by the staff of the National Library of Belarus, weighs. The National Library was awarded a 'Golden Folio' and winner's diploma in the 'For Contribution to the Preservation of Spiritual Heritage' category of the national *Art of the Book* contest — held annually in Belarus — for its facsimile of the Brest Bible. This contest is used by professionals in the field of book creation, decoration and design to name the best works over the past year. Traditionally, the award ceremony is held as part of the book fair and, in 2020, the best of the best were chosen in 17 categories (thematic, special and personal), as well as the Grand Prix. The



Russian Ambassador to Belarus Dmitry Mezentsev, Belarus' Information Minister Aleksandr Karlyukevich, US Charge d'Affaires in Belarus Jenifer Moore during the grand opening of the exhibition



main prize went to publisher Denis Romanyuk for his Belarus: *Church and Landscape* book.

The international symposium of writers — *The Writer and Time* — was another significant event, gathering prose writers, poets, publicists, literary critics and translators from 20 countries who held several round table discussions, seminars, meetings with students and literary evenings.

"The symposium of writers is a platform for peace and good-neighbourliness," said Belarus' Information Minister Aleksandr Karlyukevich. "Belarusians know the price of peace and many generations of people who have lived in the most dramatic periods of history remind us that this is the most important value of human life." The books presented at the exhibition also reminded us of this.

One of the leading topics of the book forum was the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory. In addition, many books were dedicated to the Year of Small Homeland declared in Belarus and the 90th anniversary of a popular Belarusian writer, Vladimir Korotkevich. In particular, the exhibition visitors were shown a collection of the writer's works in 25 volumes, published by the Khudozhestvennaya Literature Publishing House.

This year, the exhibition was visited by more than 60,000 people.

## Unique story of monastic convent



By Svetlana Savelieva

**The Holy Dormition Zhirovichi Monastery has presented the *National Intercession Belaya Rus* book dedicated to the 550th anniversary of the miraculous Zhirovich icon of the Mother of God and the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Holy Dormition Zhirovich Stavropegial Monastery which will be celebrated this May**

The history of the monastery is presented in a colourful book through written sources, legends and memories. Unique materials and illustrations cover over 120 pages. The author of the book is the prioress of Grodno's Holy Nativity of the Mother of God Stavropegial Convent — Mother Superior Gavriila.

The preface to the book was written by His Eminence Metropolitan Pavel of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus. It refers to the beauti-

ful Zhirovichi land, where 'a delicate fragrant aroma of wild flowers blends wonderfully with the beauty of a slender stem and elegant petals, filled with a variety of wonderful colours...'

Mother Superior Gavriila told that, while working on the book, she tried to fill every line with great meaning. "It was important to present the book not for any reflection or discussion. On the contrary, it is aimed at ordinary people — so that every reader can feel the heart of it. It was written from the heart — with love and gratitude to the brothers and sisters I've known before," the Mother Superior said.

The publication introduces the monastery in different historical eras. Each of the eight chapters tells readers about a specific time and life of the convent. Especially interesting is *Priceless Treasure of the Zhirovichi Monastery — Spiritual Elders*, and *Holy Dormition Zhirovich Stavropegial Monastery in Modern Times*.

The vicar of the monastery, Archbishop Gury of Novogrudok and Slonim, noted that the monastery is actively preparing for the celebration. In particular, its bell tower is being restored, the fraternal building is being reconstructed and the holy springs are being beatified.

Zhirovichi is also being landscaped, with significant objects being put in order — including major repairs of housing, roads and engineering networks. Parking lots for tourists are being arranged and overall restoration of the town continues.



## Centre of Chinese language and culture

By Irina Sergeeva

**Chinese library opens at Belarusian State University**

The library is expected to become a single information centre in Belarus aimed at the study of the Chinese culture and language. The facility is based on the BSU's Confucius National Institute of Chinese Studies and acts as a division of the Fundamental Library of the University.

At the moment, the library holds over 6,500 educational, scientific-and-popular and electronic publications, multimedia materials about politics, culture, history and the socio-economic development of the Celestial Empire in Russian, Chinese and English. In addition, it includes a large amount of educational literature for learning the Chinese language. The library's collection has been formed with the support of the Chinese Government and the global network of Confucius institutes.

The interior is designed in traditional Chinese style. The reading room is equipped with almost three dozen seats, five of which are automated.

INSIDE

The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
February 13  
2020

7



## WHO says Wuhan coronavirus outbreak is not yet a pandemic

The Wuhan coronavirus outbreak is not a pandemic, World Health Organisation officials said, adding that they're hopeful transmission of the virus can be contained.

The agency acknowledges that it's challenging to contain the virus because of global mass movement.

"We are not in a pandemic," Dr. Sylvie Briand, the Director of the World Health Organisation's Infectious Hazards Management Department, said in a press conference, explaining that the virus is currently considered to be an epidemic with multiple locations.

"We will try to extinguish the transmission in each of these," she said, adding that the agency believes this

'can be done with containment measures currently in place'.

Current control measures in place include early case detection, early isolation and treatment of cases, contact tracing and social detention measures in places where there is risk of transmission. These are the core elements of any outbreak response and might be enough to stop an infection from spreading.

A pandemic is defined as the worldwide spread of a new disease, but it's not quite as simple as that. The finer details are debated as many factors, including population immunity and disease severity, need to be taken into account.

An epidemic is more than a normal number of cases of an illness, specific health-related behaviour or other health-related events in a community or region. A disease outbreak is the occurrence of disease cases in excess of what's normally expected, according to WHO.

The last pandemic reported was the H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009, which killed hundreds of thousands worldwide.

WHO declared the novel coronavirus outbreak to be a public health emergency of international concern, which it calls 'an extraordinary event' that constitutes a 'public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease' and 'to potentially require a co-ordinated international response'.

## Donald Trump acquitted in Senate impeachment trial

**The US Senate acquitted President Donald Trump of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress charges following a historic two-week impeachment trial in the Upper House**

Donald Trump was acquitted on impeachment charges by the Senate but was denied the full support of Republicans as Mitt Romney became the first senator in US history to vote to convict a president from his own party. The US President was acquitted by a vote of 52-48 on the first charge of abuse of power, as Mr. Romney voted with Democrats. The Senate found Mr. Trump not guilty on a second charge of obstructing Congress by a party-line vote of 53-47.

Mr. Trump's acquittal had been long expected — a two-thirds majority is required to remove a president from office — but the dramatic rebuke by the senator from Utah gave bipartisan credibility to an impeachment that was otherwise steadfastly opposed by the President's party.

Mr. Trump was only the third occupant of the White House ever to face an impeachment trial in the Senate. The vote was the culmination of a



months-long process that has sharply divided US public opinion and split Congress largely along partisan lines.

The President has not shifted from his position that he did nothing wrong and that Democrats have simply been engaged in an effort to undo the results of the 2016 election.



## Solar Orbiter launches on historic mission

**The European-built Solar Orbiter spacecraft is officially on its way to the Sun**

between the European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA. The mission is expected to return unprecedented data and images, as well as our first views of the Sun's polar regions, and the team of people behind it are thrilled.

"Whenever you launch something, it's incredibly exciting," Günther Hasinger, ESA's Director of Science, said. "The biggest relief comes when you see the light from the rocket and then when the sounds waves hit you."

"This mission is such a treasure and important to science, we all want it to go well," he added.

Scientists first proposed this mission over two decades ago, in 1999. ESA officials originally planned for the mission to launch sometime between 2008 and 2013. However, technical difficulties and some mission reshuffling ultimately delayed the launch to 2020.

"The thermal protection system for the spacecraft has been one [of a few] challenges," said César García, Solar Orbiter project manager at ESA.

The 1,800 kilograms spacecraft lifted off atop a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket, rising off a pad at Space Launch Complex 41 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. The veteran launcher flew in a unique configuration featuring a 4 metres fairing and a single solid rocket booster.

Solar Orbiter separated from the rocket as planned 53 minutes after liftoff. And, a few minutes later, the mission team had established communications with the spacecraft. So this launch, the first of the year for ULA, seemed to go swimmingly.

Solar Orbiter is a collaboration

## Rijeka inaugurated as 2020 European Capital of Culture

A cultural awakening is set to overcome decades of political and historical struggle as Rijeka in Croatia and Galway in Ireland take up the crown of European Capitals of Culture



The historic Croatian coastal city of Rijeka marked the start of its year as European Capital of Culture 2020, with a spectacular opening ceremony. The European Commission Vice President for Demography and Democracy, Dubravka Suica, presented Rijeka Mayor Vojko Obersnel at the opening ceremony with a European Capital of Culture plaque and a plaque for the Melina Mercouri Prize, awarded by the EU for the excellent preparation of the programme.

Over 70 events for all ages and interests took place, culminating in a performance called 'Industrial Opera' representing the city's heritage as a port.

Irena Kregar Segota, on the Cultural Committee for Rijeka European Capital of Culture, said the programme of events

is inspired by the city's industrial heritage, migration and the sea. "They really describe the history and the identity of Rijeka as a city that is surrounded by water, by the sea, that has many sources of fresh water. It's a city that has always been a workers' city, industrial city," she said.

Rijeka resident Marijana Boroja Uremovic said, "I am so happy that this has happened to my city where I live and [which] I adore."

From opera to art, music and photography, the programme has been designed to appeal to both tourists and residents. During the year Rijeka would be in the spotlight as a unique 'Port of Diversity'.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**

# Power over bronze

The name of the famous sculptor, Sergey Bondarenko, is well known both in our country and abroad. He was nominated for the State Prize for works of monumental art, which have long been an integral part of the culture of Belarus. These include a relief panel *Song About the Bison* for the lobby of the National Library of Belarus (2006), the *Triumph* stela and the Alley of Olympic Glory (Minsk-Arena cultural and sports complex, 2009), an equestrian monument to Prince Olgerd (Vitebsk, 2014) and the *Hospitable Belarus* sculptural composition for the Palace of Independence (2015).

Sergey Bondarenko thinks unconventionally, always struggling with clichés and stereotypes. The rich imagery of works, scrupulous attention to details and aesthetic completeness are all peculiar to his relaxed, but at the same time majestic and composed style.

By Valentin Pepelyaev

Mr. Bondarenko, how did you come to your precision casting technique? Was it facilitated by the fact that your father practised casting?

I always carry out all the stages of creating a sculpture myself. I started at a time when nobody used the precision casting technique in Belarus, and it was simply impossible to cast sculptures of this quality. Since my student days I have had to invent my own technology for my work by trial and error. Now the whole world is open, there is the Internet, and everything can be seen. At that time it was different.

My father was a foundry engineer, but, unfortunately, he died early. In addition, he had a lot of in-plant inventions, perhaps some of this inventive blood was passed on to me.

You were made in an era when great Soviet style and socialist realism dominated sculpture, and you were taught by its prominent representative, Zair Azgur...

Studying under the People's Artist of the USSR, Zair Azgur, is already a post-institute education. Those ties were truly dominated by socialist realism and an austere style. I wanted to create something contrary to it. My interests lay in other directions and styles: Ancient Greece, the Renaissance, art nouveau, art deco... I tried all artistic areas, alongside quite advanced ideas and the other genres that I wanted to work in.

How are your monumental images born?

I always try to do what I enjoy myself. If you work on a topic that's of no interest to you, nothing practical will come of it. When a project arose for the lobby of the National Library, I immediately hit on Mikola Gusovsky's poem 'Song About the Bison'. This is not an illustration, it's more a generalised image, as it contains hunters, dogs, a tur antelope, and a bison — animals characteristic for Belarus. When I was engaged for the 'Triumph' stela and the Alley of Olympic Glory near Minsk-Arena, I understood that first of all it was necessary to create a symbol. I relied on the Olympic slogan 'Faster, Higher, Stronger!'; there are only three words in it, and there are three buildings nearby. The idea of a torch is the idea of an architect while my idea is the completion of this torch.

I presented the Alley of Olympic Glory in the form of round modules that would formally correspond to the figurative arrangement of the main buildings of the



Aleksandr Kulevsky

## FACT

Figures of winged athletes invented and created by Sergey Bondarenko are used as prizes in the championships and cups of Belarus. The well-known actor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, presents the same statuettes at the prestigious Arnold Classic International Tournament to both male and female amateur winners.

oughbred horses. I brought everything into my memory box.

I selected a breed for Prince Olgerd that corresponded to his image. I took into account that the rider on a horse would be in armour and analysed which horses were present in Belarus. I took as a basis our most famous breed — the Belarusian harness. There was historical integrity in the image of the horse, which could be found near Olgerd.

Many Minsk and guests of the capital enjoy your sculptural compositions at the Belarusian State Circus. They warm the soul and delight the eye.

The stylised Circus sign — a horse with a ballerina-rider — had to be installed closer to Yanka Kupala Street and not on a column, but on an arch so there was clearance. But they put the sign in the centre, because there was a risk of damage to metro communications. The new place didn't fit my author's concept. I had to change the composition and came up with a pyramid of animals, which everyone now enjoys taking photos of.

What do you think of the traditions where tourists rub part of a sculpture 'for luck'?

The sculpture, which is actively communicated with by local residents and tourists, becomes interactive, which is good. This probably applies more to genre sculpture. The pioneer in this direction was Vladimir Zhibanov. His works can be seen in the Mikhailovsky Public Garden, at Komarovskiy Market and near the Otkrytaya Cinema. This is his theme: a sort of theatre in sculpture. I like when there is symbolism in the work and some generalisations can be made. If there are any traditions associated with a sculpture, I'm all in favour of them.

I heard that you were dreaming of a composition dedicated to the mythical character of Menesk?

It would be an interesting job for Minsk. There is a beautiful tradition connected with Menesk. It says that Minsk, aka Mensk, was named for the mythical



## ACCENT

Sergey Bondarenko's foundry was used by such masters as Aleksandr Rukavishnikov and Zurab Tsereteli. For Rukavishnikov, Bondarenko cast a sculptural composition as a gift for Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. For Zurab Tsereteli — small models of Columbus. One of the works — *The Birth of the New World* monument — was installed in Puerto Rico in 2017.

miller-hero Menesk. His seven-wheeled watermill travelled around the neighbourhood and milled stones rather than grain. Unfortunately, this proposal has not yet been approved.

How do you feel about the fact that, in the early 1990s, some monuments to historical figures in Russia, in particular Feliks Dzerzhinsky, were demolished and removed?

If we talk about this particular example, then it fits very well into the space and the square. The work was done professionally. I cannot give advice: either to demolish or leave them. I believe that there is our cultural heritage, our past. And there is a time that we cannot cross out. Probably, bad monuments to Lenin were erected, but the work of Matvey Manizer at our House of Government is a masterpiece, a super-monument! This is an excellent work in the way it is designed and how it fits into the space.

Do you accept avant-garde art?

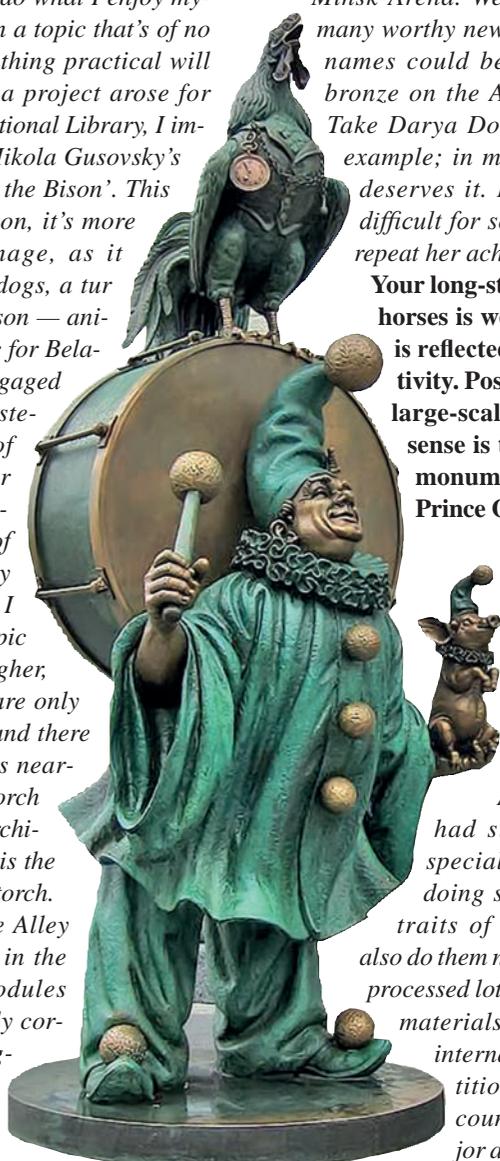
If done with talent, why not? The avant-garde art has only one big problem: it is easy to repeat. The main thing in avant-garde is the concept. When an artist works in a realistic manner, they acquire their own complex nuances — it's necessary to catch the character.

You said that your son Matvey helped you cast some details of the *Hospitable Belarus* work. Can we talk about your legacy?

Yes, he really helped me with the most difficult details. So, the line of casters continued; however, he has already changed his job. He said that he didn't want to be a sculptor. He is more interested in technology and machinery. Matvey has his own garage and a locksmith workshop with complex machines.

Do you have pupils?

There are a lot of people who work with me. I try to attract the most talented for myself, so you could say that I have pupils. Many who worked for me are now independently realising themselves in this area. I have had something to teach them and to share. I was one of the first to travel to the West, to use new technologies and materials.



Minsk-Arena. We already have many worthy new heroes whose names could be embodied in bronze on the Alley of Glory.

Take Darya Domracheva, for example; in my opinion, she deserves it. It will be very difficult for someone else to repeat her achievements.

Your long-standing love of horses is well-known and is reflected in your creativity. Possibly, the most large-scale work in this sense is the equestrian monument to Vitebsk Prince Olgerd?

Of course, I've gained some experience: I moulded the first horse from nature in 1990. At one time I had such a narrow specialisation: I was doing sculptural portraits of horses, and I also do them now... For this, I processed lots of specialised materials, visited many international competitions in different countries and major auctions of thor-

# Legendary Minsk Town Hall

There are buildings that can be called real historical characters, with a vibrant biography and portraits created by artists and poets. One of these buildings is just celebrating its birthday. 420 years ago, according to a document found by researcher Olga Bobkova, the construction of the stone Town Hall was completed in Minsk.



The Town Hall drawn by an unknown late 18th century artist

By Lyudmila Rublevskaya

It all began in 1499, when the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the King of Poland, Aleksandr, granted Minsk the Magdeburg Right, that is, self-government, and in one of the paragraphs it said: ‘And you can put up a town hall in a suitable place, where there will be a shop, bakehouses and a barber’.

Time passed, but the townspeople did not manage to complete the construction of their town hall. They erected a wooden one, but it burned down... Finally, 420 years ago, a building appeared, written about in 1656 by the Moscow governor to his Tsar: ‘It’s a good stone tower’ and, in 1678, the Czech traveller Bernhard Tanner confirmed: ‘The main decoration of the city is the town hall that stands in the centre, surrounded by many shops’.

Let’s take a look at the portraits of the Town Hall that remain in history.

## City’s defence

Arthur Conan Doyle also left a portrait of the Town Hall in the *Adventures of Brigadier Gerard*. In the story, during the war of 1812, the building becomes the site of an ambush for the French, who are lured there by Captain Alexis Barakoff and his bride Sophie. Gerard is convinced that a large supply of grain is stored in the Town Hall and leads the detachment to capture it: ‘And when the sun was already beginning to tilt to the west, we found ourselves on a wide main street and rode along it under the cries of men and screaming of frightened women, until we faced

A city orchestra used to play on the balcony of the Town Hall and the first city clock appeared on the tower



Vladimir Shlapak

the town hall. I stopped my cavalymen in the square, and with two sergeants, Oudin and Papillette, I rushed inside. Lord, I will never forget what I saw there! Right in front of us, the Russian grenadiers were lined up in three rows. When we entered, they threw up their guns, and a volley struck us directly’.

The French were captured, and the Town Hall became a symbol of the unconquered city

## Place of legality

The Town Hall had many functions. Its tower served as a fire tower. The first city clock appeared on it, the banners of craft workshops were kept here, alongside meas-

ures of weights and volume. The police and the guardhouse were stationed here. But, of course, first of all it was a building for the bodies of the city’s self-government.

## A home for muses

In the 19th century, the city orchestra, including the Belarusian cymbals, played on the second floor of the Town Hall, in the gallery, in summer every day from 7 to 8pm. At the beginning of the century, this orchestra was led by musician Vincent Stefanović. Under his leadership, a music school operated in the Town Hall. Piotr Shpilevsky wrote in his book *Travel across Polesie and the Belarusian Edge*: ‘On the right side of the main merchant centre there is the Town Hall, whose buildings, by the way, house a theatre, which is currently under the auspices of the local governor... The Town Hall theatre is small, but pretty beautiful and elegantly trimmed’.

## Revived for ages

The Town Hall was demolished in 1857 by an order signed by the Russian Emperor. In modern sovereign Belarus the building was restored. In 2012, it opened its doors to visitors, becoming a branch of the Museum of the History of Minsk. In the book of honoured guests there is an entry left by President Aleksandr Lukashenko: ‘In this building, you especially feel the connection with previous ones and the responsibility to future generations... I believe in the long life of the Town Hall, in the fact that future Minsk residents will not have to rebuild and open it again’.



Anton Stepanishchev

By Anna Naumova

The Vitebsk resident called his channel ‘Madman’. Indeed, it’s incredibly interesting to watch, especially to those keen on technology! The engine from a washing machine, a piece of plastic pipe, bicycle inner-tubes — the craftsman finds non-standard uses for all of these. He shows viewers how to make powerful acoustics from unnecessary rubbish, and, if you want, even to assemble a sawing or milling machine.

Aleksandr has always wanted to figure out how certain mechanisms work. Curiosity prompted his experiments. As a child, he studied the ins and outs of all the equipment and mechanisms in the flat, ‘Everything that I could reach was used: old TV sets, electric calculating machines, even table hockey with LEDs. When I was about eight years old, no one could get any peace from me, although in craft lessons they taught us completely different things: to file with a file and burn with a soldering iron. Meanwhile, I wanted to create and unravel the essence of things.’

Aleksandr graduated from the Polotsk State University, received a diploma in civil engineering and worked in his specialty. He tried to open his own business and earned his living by renovating flats. However, blogging turned his life upside down when he accidentally became a hit on YouTube. Aleksandr does not have many videos (about 50), but he has spent a lot of time and effort on each of them. For example, a video about how to create a portable speaker for a phone from scratch required almost a month of painstaking work.

‘Before that, there were stories dedicated to acoustics, but it was the video about the speaker that ‘shot’ up the number of views. And I knew there could be more in the future. Within a couple of days, I was driving to the garage to record how to get a modern speaker system from an old Soviet model...’

In summer of 2018, Aleksandr Yatsuk received a prestigious award — a YouTube Silver Play Button. This means the channel has reached 100,000 subscribers. Today, the figure is five times more. In

# Skilful hands

Vitebsk resident Aleksandr Yatsuk is the inventor and rising star of YouTube. His most popular video scored over 4.5 million views. 517,000 people signed up to Aleksandr’s channel. All are closely watching how something complex and unique is born out of outdated things.

another year he may be awarded the Gold Play Button for video hosting.

Aleksandr Yatsuk shot his first videos on a mobile phone. Later he borrowed a professional SLR camera. His wife Irina supported the idea. She was close to him when he edited videos at night, in his spare time away from his main work. Irina is still the main adviser and connoisseur of her husband’s ideas, and sometimes a generator of interesting ideas. It was she who, in 2018, prompted him to create an unusual Bluetooth speaker in the form of a ball.

‘One of my most beloved and at the same time complex projects is dedicated to the UEFA World Cup. One of the new favourites is the three-headed list bending machine: a machine that easily bends metal. The device will definitely come in handy in the future.’

A garage became an improvised workshop-studio for the inventor. Aleksandr goes here as if to work but refused the chance to set up a small business. He says that there are more prospects on the Internet, the schedule is more flexible, and work related to creativity inspires him. He records his useful videos in the garage in order to later share them with the world. According to the audi-

ence of the channel, you can easily study geography: Belarus and Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, all of Europe and even Indonesia. The mechanical transformations enthrall the viewers and dozens of interested people write to him daily.

The Vitebsk blogger and inventor shared his plans, ‘During the founding of the channel, I believe that we have a lot of creative and smart people. So, I hope there are many super-projects ahead. I’m ready to offer co-operation to the ‘Kulibins’. It’s more interesting together. I’ve recently acquired 13 acres of land — enough for a house and a fully-fledged workshop. Building experience will come in handy. It’s also an option to expand the content. Soon followers are to see videos from the construction site. The format is new, but the idea is the same: if you dream of something — put your hands, soul and head into it.’



# Fast and furious

You look around and you barely have time to notice how rapidly a seemingly familiar life is changing. Once a modern, early 1960s centre of motor sports in Borovaya is now a dilapidated anachronism. The legendary Zarya Stadium there, which has seen thousands of races in its lifetime, is living out its last days, as the houses of a residential neighbourhood will soon grow in its place. However, Belarusian motorsport will not remain without its place: the construction of the modern Republican Sports and Technical Centre DOSAAF has entered its final stage. We visited the facility with a guided tour.

By **Sergey Kanashits**

The location of the Centre is more than convenient: not far from Minsk and near the Staiki Olympic Complex. The facility is almost within the city itself, just 15 minutes by bus from Mogilevskaya metro station and even quicker by car. On the spot we are met by the Centre's Director, Dmitry Klishevich.

Similarly equipped complexes are available in only three cities within the post-Soviet space: Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kazan. In Europe, there are no such multi-technical sports centres at all. Everything has been done here to get official approval and qualifications from the International Automobile Federation (FIA) and International Motorcycling Federation (FIM) by the start of operation. According to Mr. Klishevich, these will be received: the smallest details were taken into account during the design stage.

"The track for motocross was originally made to meet all FIM standards: both length and width correspond to them and there's an indoor park. In the same way, taking into account all the peculiarities of the FIA, a go-karting track and a motor-stadium were built. For the go-cart track, 5,000 new tyres were specially purchased,



which, according to the rules, should be used along the perimeter as safety bumpers. Incidentally, these tyres were bought from a Belarusian manufacturer at Belshina. When the complex is ready, delegates from the FIA and FIM will visit, conduct a strict review and issue their verdict," explains Mr. Klishevich.

An online video surveillance system, garages and professional repair shops, enabling them to conduct a full service of auto and motor vehicles, car washes, driver training areas for all driving categories, paddocks and indoor parks for campers, medical care, classes for theory training, comfortable locker rooms and much more... The complex makes a powerful impression, bringing to mind pictures from the sensational film *Ford v Ferrari* — in such conditions it seems quite possible to build, improve and conquer new horizons.

It's important to understand that the new sports and technical centre is a story not only about sports, but it also boasts a perfect educational base for both amateurs and professionals. Our ath-



letes will no longer need to spend money to go training outside the country, while our young racers will have a unique opportunity to polish their skills in professional conditions.

Everything has been thought out thoroughly. Mr. Klishevich continues, "Nobody will disturb anyone even during competitions. Special equipment, fans, participants' cars — everyone has their own area and their paths don't cross. Security is also in order: it will have its own security service and technical reserves. As far as sports are concerned, it will be possible to conduct competitions at the highest level in motocross, go-karting, motorcycle football, track and drifting..."

The track for motocross is very fast, enabling riders to



European countries was taken into account. The track has five configurations, three of which are designed for drifting. This type of motorsport is rapidly gaining popularity both in the world and in our country. The width of the track, special composition of the roadbed and depth of the plating are designed to easily withstand the weight of even powerful bodied cars."

The tribune, the starting tower, as in Formula 1, traffic lights, a tricky, winding section... The surroundings are amazing: true 'royal races' in miniature!

Our country is rich in talent. There are strong racers both in motorsport and in motor competitions. Another issue is that Belarus had few conditions for the development of these areas. Now there is a unique opportunity to develop our abilities and to personally observe the races of professional athletes. The 2020 season is already very tightly scheduled at the Centre and includes go-karting competitions (including the prestigious Rotax series) and two stages of the Belarus Open Motocross Championship, track races and drifting championships... and, of course, a motorcycle football tournament. Even the question of holding the European Championship in the near future is being discussed.

It only remains to wait for the official opening of the ultra-modern complex which is scheduled for the second half of May.



## Worthy acknowledgement of qualitative work

The organisers of the 2nd European Games have received a special prize AIPS Europe at the 83rd AIPS Congress held in Hungarian Budapest last week

By **Arina Novikova**

The award for the organisers of the 2019 European Games recognises a high level of working conditions created for the press at the multi-sport event and will go to the Museum of the National Olympic Committee to occupy its worthy place in the exposition dedicated to the 2nd European Games.

According to the Chair of the Belarusian Sports Media Association, Anastasia Marinina, MEGOC, the NOC, the Sports and Tourism Ministry, the Information Ministry, the national federations, the Sports Press Association did a lot to

make working conditions for journalists meet the world's highest standards. It is very important that our efforts were assessed by AIPS Europe. Many journalists visited the Belarusian capital and made part of such a big event as the European Games.

AIPS Europe President, Charles Camenzuli, said that the sport event in Minsk became a real mini Olympics. Great conditions were created for the press. The competitions were held at the highest level. Working at the multi-sport event in Minsk were journalists from 52 countries, including Europe, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, India, the United States and Sri-Lanka.



## ARENA

● **Belarusian ski acrobat Aleksandra Romanovskaya wins gold at Freestyle World Cup in Deer Valley (USA)**

The sportswoman performed a triple somersault with two pirouettes to score 106.74 points. This result is much higher than those of runner-up Megan Nick of the United States (83.89) and Australia's Abbey Willcox, who was placed third (81.78).

Aleksandra Romanovskaya now occupies 6th position in the overall World Cup standings among all the freestyle disciplines and is among the contenders for the Small Crystal Globe.

Another Belarusian — Anna Guskova — was placed 13th, with 72.45 points. Alla Tsuper failed to perform in Deer Valley due to a minor injury sustained during training.

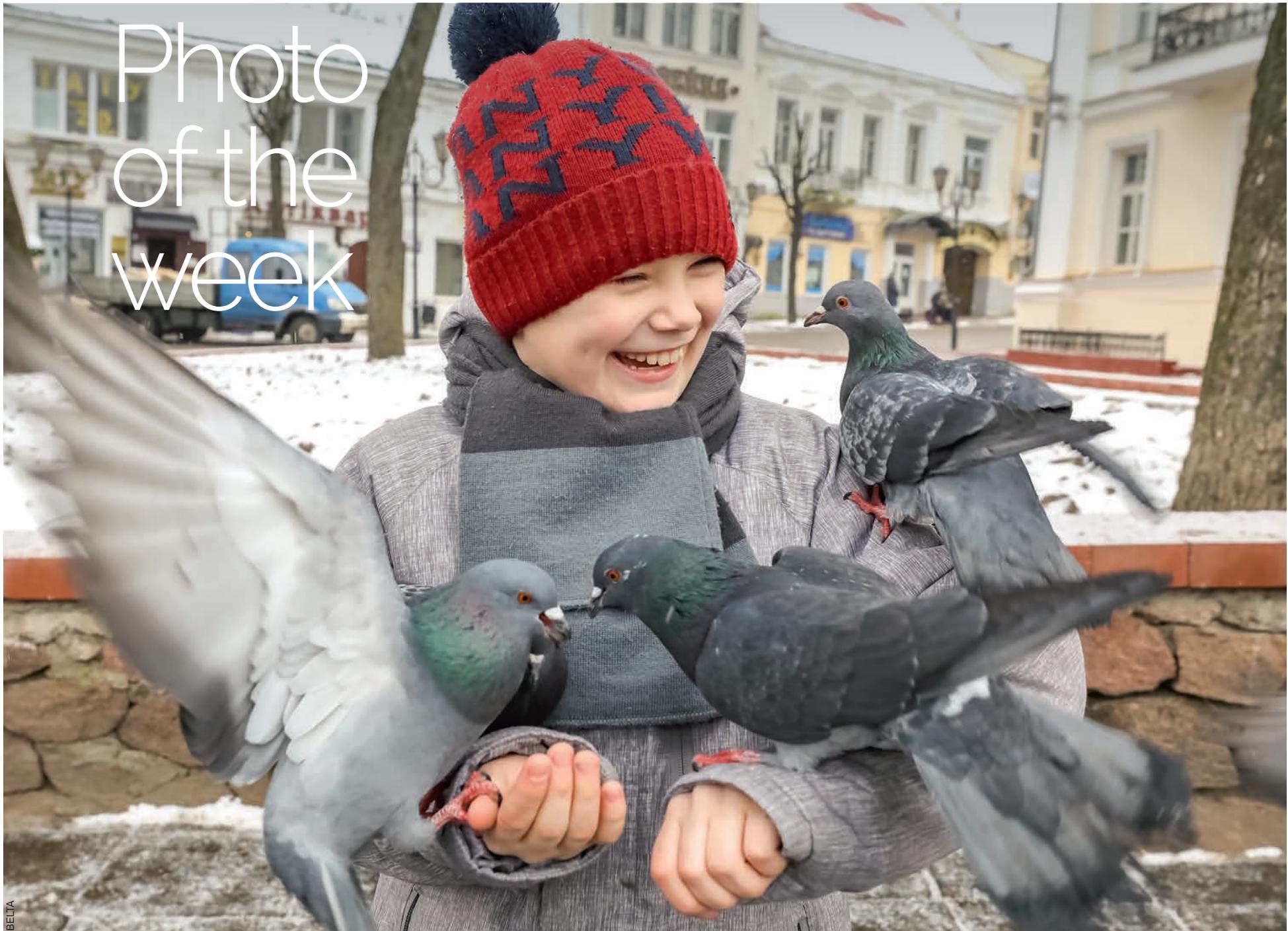
● **Belarusian athletes capture gold and bronze at Bocskai Istvan Memorial International Boxing Tournament held recently in Debrecen, Hungary**



Dmitry Asanov (weight category 63kg) initially defeated Kazakh, Sanatali Toltayev, by unanimous decision and then successfully won against Treasure Moremi from Botswana. In the semi-final stage, the Molodechno-born Belarusian's opponent - Hungarian Milan Fodor — failed to come to the ring and, in the fight for gold, Dmitry proved stronger than Hungary's Richard Kovacs.

Earlier, Belarusian Alla Starodub (60kg) won bronze. Overall, more than 270 boxers from 33 countries took part in the Bocskai Istvan Memorial International Boxing Tournament which was a preparation stage for Olympic qualification tournaments for the Belarusians. The European event will be held in London from March 13th to 23rd, while the world tournament will be hosted by Paris from May 13th-24th.





## Photo of the week

A boy and pigeons

### EXHIBITIONS

#### NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street  
Until 17<sup>th</sup> February. *Without Glass. 12 Water-Colours* by Vyacheslav Pavlovets  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> February. *Schraga Zarfin. Leading to the Light*  
Until 15<sup>th</sup> March. *Enchanted with Homeland*

#### NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> March. *Yan Komar: a Photographer from Nyankovo*

#### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 15<sup>th</sup> February. *Light and Air. Piotr Sharipo's Pictorial Art*  
Until 17<sup>th</sup> February. *Encyclopaedia. National Project*  
Until 23<sup>rd</sup> March. *Return*

#### BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM

13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> February. *1692-1696 Biblia for the Nation of Vasily Koren*  
Until 25<sup>th</sup> March. *Wisdom of Centuries*

#### VILNIUS

55 Kalinovsky Street  
Until 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Exhibition of Yelena Doroshenko's batik printing

#### NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> March. *Horizons*  
Until 8<sup>th</sup> March. *Tangency of Light and Shadow*

#### MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL CULTURE HISTORY

5 Muzykalny Lane  
Until 24<sup>th</sup> February. *A Ticket to Soviet Childhood*

#### TROITSKY SUBURB

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

#### GALLERY ARTEL

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

#### HIGH PLACE

2A Gertsen Street  
Until 16<sup>th</sup> February. *Own Face*

#### LIBRA

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

#### MUSEUM OF MAN

1 Oktyabrskaya Square  
Until 31<sup>st</sup> December. *Museum of Man*

### THEATRES

#### BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square  
13.02. Strauss Invites  
14.02. Romeo and Juliett  
15.02. Miraculous Flute  
16.02. Esmeralda / Young Vices of Opera  
18.02. Grey Legend  
19.02. Giselle, or Vilisy  
20.02. Carmen

#### YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street  
13.02. Pinsk Gentry  
14 and 19.02. Nobleman Zavalnya, or Belarus in Fantastic Stories  
15, 16 and 20.02. Kalyady Night  
18.02. King Lear / Elza's Land

#### MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street  
14.02. A Husband Leaving His Wife / Circle of Love  
18.02. Bridal Shower  
19.02. He and She

#### YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street  
13.02. Goat's Island  
14.02. Caught by Love  
15.02. Dear Pamela  
16.02. An Ordinary Story  
18.02. Love Until Unconsciousness  
19.02. About Fedot-Archer  
20.02. Double-Double

#### BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street  
13 and 19.02. Mad Woman  
14.02. Lift  
15.02. Grandfather  
16.02. Marriage with Wind  
18.02. Wisdom Measurer  
20.02. This Is All She

#### THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Masheroov Avenue  
13.02. Even a Wise Man Stumbles  
14.02. Unnamed Star  
15.02. Abduction of Yelena  
16 and 18.02. False Note  
19 and 20.02. Mixed Feelings

#### CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street  
14 and 15.02. Luxurious Wedding  
19.02. Night at a Hotel

#### BELARUSIAN ARMY THEATRE

3 Krasnoarmeiskaya 3  
13.02. Star Hour  
14.02. Last Fervent Lover  
20.02. I'm Your Officer

#### NEW DRAMA THEATRE

16 Liza Chaikina Street  
13.02. Tribunal  
14.02. How Much Is Love  
15.02. Zhanna  
18.02. Christmas  
20.02. I Will Live!