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\$7m worth
in contracts
at the food expo
in Dubai

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Nature, yoga and
even modern art
of Belarusian
villages and
agro-towns

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INTERNATIONAL

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A scene from *Paulinka*. A second year student of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts — Anastasia Voronkova — performs *Paulinka*, while Agatha is played by Honoured Artiste of Belarus, Tamara Mironova

National culture's brand

The Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre opened its 101st season with a remastered and sparkling *Paulinka*. The scent of flowers once again embraced the theatre and, it seemed, their fragrance penetrated deep into the soul — awakening it to spring and renewal. Emotions on the premiere night were on the high. Theatre-goers took photos against the elegant interiors more often than usual, until the lights went out in the hall and the theatrical miracle began. → 9



The union worthy of our peoples

Details of negotiations with Vladimir Putin and fakes about them, joint projects with Russia in the military sphere, Union State construction and the socio-political situation in the two countries are among the results of the meeting at the Palace of Independence

To begin with, the Head of State spoke in detail about the agenda of his recent talks with Vladimir Putin, and also debunked all the speculation and false assumptions that have arisen about this. Similar top-level meetings are commonly accompanied by the latter. Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, "We share a firm understanding that this is our common Fatherland — from Brest to Vladivostok where two independent states now exist."

By Dmitry Umpirovich,
Polina Konoga

On the way to rapprochement

The heads of state had much to discuss in Sochi. They talked about co-operation, military and military-technical liaisons, implementation of joint projects, sanctions and countering various challenges, including from outside. Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the context of their talks was limited to the Union State agenda, though adding,

"Belarus is a sovereign and independent state. The world has changed so much that talks about Belarus joining Russia, or Russia joining Belarus, or any other kind of merger with a single administration.... The world has changed so much that it would be foolish even to consider it."

The President noted that the sides share a common goal, "We are determined (we share this opinion) to make the Union State a perfect association of Belarus and Russia. No one will reproach us for impinging on someone's independence or sovereignty. We will do it in a sympathetic and decent manner."

During their talks in Sochi, the two leaders discussed the so-called roadmaps. Aleksandr Lukashenko explained that the majority are ready and can be signed right now. However, it's essential to address some remaining issues. For example, the parties have long discussed the possible approximation of the tax systems. The presidents agreed to return to the issue; specialists will negotiate it later.

We are stronger together

The Head of State considers all further actions in the economy should be carefully planned. It's not for nothing that, during the talks between Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin, almost all the industries where the two countries have



common ground were subjected to a thorough analysis. Serious attention was also paid to the issue of co-operation. There are plenty of areas where such interaction can be established. The President, in particular, spoke about co-operation in the military-industrial complex, also mentioning repair plants and the Integral Plant. "These Belarusian plants are in demand there. I proposed co-operation. The Russian President said that it's very interesting for them. Therefore, the Government, the State Secretariat, the Defence Ministry should step up efforts in this area," he said.

'Civil' projects are also in focus. The President recalled that the topic of possible co-operation in the aviation industry was discussed at the EAEU summit. Russia has recently developed a midrange jetliner and is likely to transfer the maintenance and production of some components to the partners who are ready to oversee these. It seems Belarus is ready — on the basis of its Minsk Civil Aviation Plant No. 407.

On fakes

Another myth was debunked by the President: during his meeting with Mr. Putin, the topic of opening new loans wasn't discussed. It wasn't even present in the relevant Presidential documents.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed,

"Therefore, if they want to reproach us for begging for money again, it's not true. Thank God, we are doing well amid all the difficulties caused by the pandemic and the closure of borders, we have enough resources."

The only proposal of the Belarusian side in the financial sphere at the talks in Sochi concerned the possible participation of Gazprom in the construction of a new nitrogen production facility in our country. The Corporation would be likely to show an interest in this.

QUOTE

President Aleksandr Lukashenko:

I'd like to stress once more: whatever is the situation in Belarus, I — as the first President of Belarus — am more interested than anyone else in preserving the sovereignty of our state. Otherwise, you can cross out the entire quarter of a century that I have worked as President.

Defence topics

Aleksandr Lukashenko called defence issues the most extensive area in the negotiations with his Russian counterpart. To begin with, he analysed the situation developing at the external borders, "We see what's happening, they have become brazen... Just a couple of weeks ago, NATO jets flew straight to our border. What were we supposed to do? We scrambled Su-30 to intercept them. They turned away. This means they will constantly put us to the test, and we will have to respond."

Among the proposals was the following: Russian and Belarusian aircraft can carry out joint combat duty in the airspace of our country. This practice was previously in place: in 2014, during the Ice Hockey World Championships.

The President stressed that the parties intend to continue acting within the framework of the joint grouping of troops in defence matters. He added that the Russian army is one of the most powerful in the world, with the most modern weapons. Accordingly, joint projects should be built so that 'our guys can learn the most advanced methods of warfare, defence and so on'. Co-operation with Russia should be developed in all areas: from armoured vehicles to aircraft.

"This direction was enthusiastically supported by President Putin," Aleksandr Lukashenko added.

Information space

During the meeting, close attention was paid to the socio-political situation in each country. "Of course, we were rocked and they are being rocked. There is no longer a confrontation, but a war in the media," Aleksandr

Lukashenko said, adding that they exchanged classified information and various secret documents — including those obtained by the State Security Committee of Belarus, the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian General Staff and other agencies — with Vladimir Putin.

The Head of State stressed that destructive forces will now try to support protest activity with the help of various kinds of fake news.

However, transfer of power wasn't discussed in Sochi. This topic is in the minds of the opposition and some media have even written about it. Aleksandr Lukashenko said firmly, "There cannot be any transfer of power in Belarus... Everything will be done in accordance with the Constitution and the law. We will adopt the Constitution, as I said, in January-February 2022. That's all."

On the multi-vector principle

Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out that some people still criticise Belarus for its

multi-vector policies. He added that such people don't even know the essence of the foreign policy of the Belarusian state, explaining, "Our multi-vector foreign policy is conditioned, first of all, by our economic policy. If the Russian Federation is ready to consume all of Belarus' exports today, then we'll channel all our exports there. Russia, however, isn't ready to do it. We have to sell our machinery, food, petrochemicals, and chemicals in third markets. We have to ensure this using both diplomatic and political means."

Belarus is trying to build friendly relations with other neighbours. The country is interested in co-operation with the West, where there are financial and technological resources, and with China. The Head of State added, "At the same time, we say that Russia is unshakable, it's the main direction in which we're ready to move. I'm very glad that the Russian leadership understands us in this regard. This doesn't mean that we're going separate ways."

All our negotiations were based on the platform of creating a unified system in all areas, so that it would be even closer than the co-operation between the districts and republics in the Russian Federation itself."

MEETING RESULTS



The Head of the International Military Co-operation Department, Aide to the Defence Minister for International Military Co-operation, Oleg Voinov, talked to journalists after the meeting. He commented on the co-operation of Belarusian and Russian defence agencies.

"Russia is a strategic ally for Belarus;

this also applies to the military sphere. For the first time, we've signed a 5-year strategic partnership programme between the defence ministries of Belarus and Russia. This will enable us to clearly build a perspective and develop our co-operation with the Russian Federation," Mr. Voinov said. In general, he stressed, the plan for military co-operation between the countries includes more than 160 activities; 40 percent of them are of a practical nature.

Forces for good in our lives

Backbone of the country

More than 30 people took part in the ceremony. They were representatives of the army, law enforcement and security forces, as well as mothers with many children and women who have reached great professional heights.

The path to state awards always lies through the hard work and responsibility of people in a strong civil position. The Head of State noted that each of them works for the Fatherland and its people, making our country stronger and more beautiful,

“Over the years of independence, we have grown into a society that knows well that the unity and successful future of a nation are underpinned by persistent work, solidarity and mutual assistance.”

It shouldn't be otherwise. After all, we live in our native land, we're one nation, we love our country and we'll do everything to make sure our children and grandchildren live in peace and harmony.”

The President also addressed the military officers, “In line with tradition, today we present general's epaulettes to real men who are used to confronting danger and know the true value of peace and human life. I also greet all those who serve to protect Belarusians' peace and work. I especially thank policemen who celebrate their professional holiday today. Let me express my great appreciation to all of you on this day on behalf of all Belarusian people.”

“Men are born to protect, while women are born to make a home, to cherish family values and support national traditions,” continued Aleksandr Lukashenko. Speaking to the award holders, he directed his remarks at all Belarusian women, “Dear ladies, your role in our lives is truly

A solemn ceremony of presenting state awards and epaulettes for high-ranking officers was held in the Palace of Independence. The event is traditionally organised between Defenders of the Fatherland Day and Women's Day — creating a lively atmosphere and giving a positive feeling at the turn of winter and spring.

Aleksandr Lukashenko addressed those present, “No matter how pompous it may sound, for me, you represent the vanguard of the forces for good in our lives, you are creative people, and most importantly — you are focused on achieving results. This is very important. After all, a nation that cares about tomorrow can pull together and develop successfully only on the back of positive ideas and deeds.”



‘For Service to the Motherland’ order of the 3rd degree went to the Head of the Emergency Rescue Services and Emergency Response Department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, Sergei Novik

great. You are literally life-givers, help a little person take their first steps and open up a huge world for them. You find time for everything: to take care of family and friends, to create an atmosphere of comfort and warmth at home, to study continuously, to achieve great professional success, to be socially and politically active... Belarusian women are not simply our wealth: they are the treasures of the Belarusian nation.”

On the frontline

The Deputy Interior Minister — Commander of Internal Troops, Nikolai Karpenkov, was among the guests of honour at the Palace of Independence: he was awarded the military rank of Major General. The epaulettes were handed over by the Commander-in-Chief — as is traditional.

Mr. Karpenkov confessed to journalists: he was not only grateful for such high

regard for his work for the defence of the Fatherland, but also felt excitement and pride in the team he heads, “The internal troops are the main strength and power of the Interior Ministry. The most loyal and reliable people, the defenders of our Fatherland, serve there... We faced many decisions and received clear orders and, in the most difficult moments, the Head of State joined us in the battle lines — setting an example of courage and showing how to we need to love and protect our Motherland.”

The General noted that the internal troops intend to fulfil their duty to protect and ensure the security of the country and preserve national sovereignty.

For the common good

The ceremony participants represented various fields of activity but they are all united by a desire to make Belarus even more beautiful, richer, stronger and successful. The Head Doctor of Vitebsk's Regional Clinical Maternity Hospital, Yelena Leonovich (awarded the Order of Honour), assured the President, “For each of us, receiving a state award is a great honour. We rightfully share it with those who accompanied us on the path towards it — with our work teams.” She thanked the Head of State for his support of the healthcare system, “The availability and quality of medical care, the success of domestic medicine is always a priority and is always at the centre of your special attention.”

Presenting orders, medals and general's epaulettes, Aleksandr Lukashenko once again stressed that, in the current situation, these awards have special significance.

Plants the country needs



Proprietary approach

At a February meeting, the President set a clear task: to develop an unambiguous, economically feasible and effective model of production development with a guaranteed payback period of about five years. If there is such a plan, it can be considered and financing can then be discussed.

Immediately on arrival at the plant, the President demanded a business-like and nationally attractive approach to the development of the sites of Motovelo JSC which is now at the stage of liquidation. 27 hectares are in focus; of them, four are occupied by production and the lion's share is offered for rent. Many unused sites are also in place.

The Chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee, Vladimir Kukharev, made

some proposals to the Head of State: in particular, to increase the area for production and to set up a Minsk technopark on the site. In addition, there are plans to place the State Corporation of Agricultural Industry here, establish a single marketing centre and open stores for the Industry Ministry.

A project with an eye to the future

Aleksandr Lukashenko concluded that no time should be wasted, “We'll have to take risks, make decisions. I'm ready to make these decisions. Make suggestions without delay. In March, I should receive these documents for consideration. If we want something to be done, we need to start today... We should develop a promising production facility and bring it to an ideal state by the end of

Results of President's visit to MotoVeloZavod JSC

Aleksandr Lukashenko came to the factory, talked to its employees and announced a fundamental decision on its future, “We expect that, during this five-year period, Motovelo will turn into an exemplary enterprise and will become the household name for Belarusians as it once was. We need to do everything to ensure the exemplary enterprise is operating.”

the five-year period.”

In general, the President supported the proposals but drew attention to the fact that the plant should still be located in the third building. During its modernisation, the focus should be placed on the establishment of import-substituting production to maximise the localisation of production.

The President added that diverse products can be manufactured here — including electric vehicles. The first stage of modernisation covers 2.5-3 years. To stimulate work, preferential conditions were proposed for development at the venue.

Decision made

The President drove along the large area of Motovelo and approached staff with a virtually immediate decision, “It's impossible to live this way. You won't live like this... A Minsk technopark will be established here, and MotoVeloZavod will become the major production of the technopark site.” Its oth-

er residents will be selected on condition they meet high environmental standards.

“We'll keep this production site in the centre of the city, but it will be a clean site. There will be no casting, no petroleum products here. Another feature of this venue will be that it will be a purely manufacturing site,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said, adding, “The second part of this building should be upgraded for localisation. In other words, we must produce components and spare parts here. Everything that's to be assembled must be produced here, in Minsk.”

The Head of State summed up, “Within the next three years, we need to bring this site into perfect condition — putting an end to all actions related to MotoVeloZavod and other premises. What isn't needed will be taken away by autumn. We'll set up good production within three years. Motovelo Plant should regain its Soviet-era glory within the next five years.”

People's transport

The factory workers asked about the prospects for the development of cycling in the country and the Head of State's personal attitude to this method of transport. Aleksandr Lukashenko said he's an ardent supporter of the bicycle production development and cycling itself.

“It's primarily important to understand that a bicycle is the best thing for your health. It is better than football or hockey,” the Head of State said, adding that the domestic manufacturer now occupies only about a third of the bicycle market in Belarus. Over the next five years, this share should be increased to 50-60 percent, and then developed further.

In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko instructed, “We should occupy our own market and not give it to anyone. How to do this is up to the Government... You are responsible for quality. Produce qualitatively — and we'll help you.”

Based on materials of sb.by

Hard work yields results

In late February, the major international exhibition of food and beverages, *Gulfood 2021*, ended its work in Dubai — with a success for the 25 participating companies from Belarus. Contracts worth over \$7m were signed with partners from the UAE, Bangladesh, Ghana, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Syria.

“A total of 25 Belarusian food manufacturers showcased their products in the *Belarus. The Taste of Nature* national exposition at the major international exhibition of food and beverages, *Gulfood 2021*, in Dubai. Domestic manufacturers displayed meat and dairy, poultry and egg products, groceries and confectionery. Their participation in the expo resulted in contracts worth a total of \$7m. Contracts were signed with partners from the UAE, Bangladesh, Ghana, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Syria,” Belinterexpo, from the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has announced.

In particular, Primemilk will supply products worth \$5m, Grodno Tobacco Factory Neman signed a \$1m contract and Belpishcheprom and Emirati partners signed a contract worth \$500,000. The Rogachev Milk Canning Factory signed a contract to ship 25 tonnes of butter with 82.5 percent fat content to the UAE. The company’s sterilised milk caught the eye of customers



Any exhibition has both short-term and long-term effects



Dairy producers played a special role in the conclusion of contracts

from Yemen, while companies from Bangladesh and Ghana were interested in condensed

milk and representatives of the Libyan delegation, in sugar-free evaporated milk.



25 Belarusian companies took part in the major food industry exhibition — *Gulfood 2021* — in Dubai

The Soligorsk Poultry Factory reached the final of the *Gulfood Innovation Awards 2021* in the ‘Most Innovative Meat or Poultry Product’ category. The products that caught the attention of the panel of experts were chicken and quail eggs smoked using unique technology with natural alder chips.

Frozen beef on the bone with a shelf life of 12 months, as well as chilled beef from the Slonim Meat Processing Plant won over customers from the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. The company’s representatives discussed supplies of natural canned beef to the UAE and Saudi Arabia with buyers from these countries.

In turn, representatives of the UAE, Yemen, Lebanon, Libya expressed interest in purchasing products from Vitba Confectionery.

Although the expo is over, the virtual mirror on the Belinterexpo website is still running. The online platform enabled participants and visitors to the forum to better navigate the pavilions, find out all the

necessary information about the products of the Belarusian companies and get contact details of company representatives for further business communication.

“Any exhibition has both short-term and long-term effects. The former are achieved with good partnerships and when the products are already known. In this case, we have used the exhibition site for signing contracts. In turn, long-term effects are evident when companies sign contracts two or three years after participating in the show. These are the conditions for conducting commercial relations at international level. As a rule, it’s necessary to pass a quality check and trust in our counterparts’ respectableness. I’m convinced that *Gulfood 2021* will definitely produce long-term effects,” said Vladimir Ulakhovich, the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Geography of deals expanding



Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange facilitates first deal with Egyptian company

The Egyptian company Sama Al-Jazeera for Import and Export has bought a test batch of Belarusian sawn timber. It’s the first time an Egyptian company has completed a deal via BUCE. According to the company’s CEO, Mahmoud Kandil, the strategic goal of his company is to become the largest importer of Belarusian sawn timber to Egypt and to other North Africa countries later on. The first step in this direction has already been made.

In his words, the deal has demonstrated that Egyptian

companies can use BUCE to freely trade with Belarusian producers without any intermediaries. “We are pioneers in this regard. Despite the difficulties involved in mastering the new tool we are completely satisfied with the result. Naturally, it’s just the first step. We intend to become the largest supplier of Belarusian sawn timber to the Egyptian market and to markets of neighbouring countries where woodworking products also enjoy strong demand,” the Egyptian businessman noted.

Mahmoud Kandil also didn’t rule out the possibility of his company acting as a BUCE exchange broker. “We consider brokerage as the next step in co-operation with BUCE. Truth be told, we are not ready to assume the responsibility now. This is why, for now, we’ll endeavour to accumulate as much practical experience of participation in exchange trade as possible and will study the Belarusian market in detail. At the same time, the prospects of becoming BUCE’s first broker in Egypt are very appealing,” he stressed.



Ensure reliability

An association of light industry enterprises registered in Belarus

The main purpose of the association is to co-ordinate and protect the member-companies’ common interests. Its founders are representatives of major private businesses: Marko, Furnitur-BY, Solo-Pinsk, and the IPM Business School. Hundreds of Belarusian enterprises, both large and small, can become potential members of the organisation.

“Today’s reality shows that the presence of light industry enterprises in an open market is becoming more challenging.

Joining the association will enable them to form a consolidated opinion, free from specific economic interest; it will influence decision-making in the field of light industry,” said Bellegprom Concern. “The merger of light industry enterprises into a self-regulating organisation will ensure both an increase in their presence in foreign markets and the consolidation of positions in the domestic market.”

Based on materials of belta.by

Minsk — Tashkent: new facets of interaction

By Vladislav Sychevich

Tashkent hosted the eighth meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission on bilateral co-operation between Belarus and Uzbekistan and our country's delegation was led by Deputy Prime Minister, Aleksandr Subbotin. The main focus of attention was paid to the consideration of results of trade and economic liaisons in 2020. Last year, trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$280m, while exports of Belarusian goods reached \$237.5m.

The meeting identified tasks for the further development of trade, economic and investment co-operation. In addition, specific measures to enhance interaction in the field of industry, agriculture, transport and logistics, education, research and innovation, cultural and humanitarian spheres were developed. The possibilities of strengthening the interregional component in the two states' relations and expanding the legal framework of bilateral co-operation were considered.

All agreements of the parties were reflected in the final minutes of the meeting; the document was signed by the heads of delegations at the end of the event.

One of the issues on the agenda concerned liaison in the field of standardisation.

Results of trade and economic liaisons in 2020, new directions and strengthening of the regulatory framework were among the issues in focus at the meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission on bilateral co-operation between Belarus and Uzbekistan



Belarus' State Committee for Standardisation and Uzstandard Agency signed a 2021–2023 co-operation programme

Co-operation programmes between Belarus' State Committee for Standardisation and Uzstandard Agency were signed, as well as an agreement between the Belarusian State Institute of Metrology and the Uzbek National Institute of Metrology (under Uzstandard) on co-operation in the field of metrology.

The first meeting of the Belarusian-Uzbek Business Council was also held in Tashkent and our country was represented by over 70 managers and representatives of organisations and enterprises, including the flagships of mechanical engineering, leading enterprises of the

Last year, the trade turnover between our countries exceeded \$280m

food and pharmaceutical industries, logistics and insurance companies, scientific, practical and educational institutions. The sides discussed promising areas of Belarusian-Uzbek trade and economic co-operation, as well as opportunities to improve the efficiency of interaction between business circles. The Belarusian

participants familiarised themselves with projects of Uzbek companies in the field of agriculture and food industry, as well as the work of several associations. Uzbek businessmen were presented with the major project in the Belarusian bio-industry sector: the Belarusian National Biotechnological Corporation.

The official part of our delegation was represented by heads of the ministries of industry, agriculture and food, education, foreign affairs, transport and communications and healthcare. Those from the State Committee for Standardisation, the National Academy of Sciences and other agencies were also present. The business part included heads of the largest Belarusian enterprises from various industries, as well as rectors of the leading Belarusian universities.

During the visit, negotiations were held in the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, ministries and departments. The Belarusian delegation also visited joint ventures and Uzbek companies that actively co-operate with partners from our country. In addition, inter-ministerial political consultations were held.

As part of the programme, the Belarusian delegation is to visit the city of Samarkand to hold meetings with heads of the region and the city, as well as the local business community. Visits to production facilities of the area are also planned.



Belarus' Ambassador discusses promising areas of co-operation with Swiss businesses

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Swiss Confederation, Aleksandr Ganevich, has visited the head office of Swiss Burckhardt Compression AG in Winterthur.

As announced by the Belarusian diplomatic mission, Mr. Ganevich held a meeting with the Concern's General Director — Marcel Pavlicek — who is also President of the Switzerland-CIS / Georgia Joint Chamber of Commerce (JCC). The

meeting was attended by representatives of the Concern's management and JCC Director, Dorit Sallis.

The Ambassador learnt about the company's activities and development strategy. "The meeting discussed promising areas of co-operation with Burckhardt Compression, taking into account the positive experience of Swiss companies investing in the Belarusian economy and the Joint Chamber of Commerce," said the Belarusian Embassy in Switzerland.

Belarus plans to increase sales to Pakistan's mostly populated province

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to Pakistan, Andrei Metelitsa, has visited Lahore — the capital of the mostly populated province of Punjab. He met with Punjab's Governor, Muhammad Sarwar, who was invited to visit the Minsk and Mogilev regions — which are partner-areas of Punjab.

The head of the Belarusian diplomatic mission also held a series of meetings aimed at strengthening economic co-operation with the Pakistani province. He

talked to the heads of the municipality and the city's Chamber of Commerce, as well as local companies, associations of industrialists, dairy processors and one of the leading medical centres in Pakistan, Chughtai Labs. Co-operation in the field of industry, agriculture and pharmaceuticals, including the prospects for increasing the supply of Belarusian products to Punjab, was discussed.

Based on materials of belta.by

Backlog for the future



NEWS IN BRIEF

Top countries named in terms of number of tourists to Belarus



In 2020, 81,000 organised foreign tourists and sightseers visited Belarus, the National Statistical Committee reported.

The majority (64.5 percent) of tourists arriving in the Republic are Russians. Also among the most frequent visitors are residents of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Turkey, Ukraine, Iraq, Israel, Switzerland, Bulgaria and the UAE. On average, foreigners stayed in Belarus for six days. More than 250,000 organised tourists left Belarus in 2020. The most popular destinations were Egypt, Turkey, Ukraine, Poland, Montenegro, Albania, Russia, Lithuania, Tunisia, and UAE. Almost 600,000 Belarusians went on tours around the Republic, and about 500,000 people made one-day excursions. Out of the total number of ecotourists, citizens of Belarus accounted for 98 percent.

Eurovision-2021 will be held in a new format

The new rules for the competition in Rotterdam are related to the situation regarding the pandemic. All participants in the Eurovision Song Contest are advised to comply with quarantine for 5 days prior to departure to the Netherlands and to have a negative COVID-19 certificate. In the Netherlands, the delegations must stay at their hotels, with the exception of rehearsals and live performances at Rotterdam's Ahoy Arena.



Everyone who works at Ahoy Arena will be regularly tested for coronavirus. The number of people in each delegation will be reduced. No more than 500 journalists will be able to attend the site, and another 1,000 will be able to work in the online press centre. It's not yet known whether spectators will be able to attend the competition in May.

Greater spotted eagles begin to return to Belarus after over-wintering

It's possible to track their migration online on the website of the APB-BirdLife Belarus public organisation.

The greater spotted eagle is one of the rarest birds of prey in Europe and is threatened with extinction. One of the largest populations in the world nests in Belarus. In recent years, APB specialists have tagged several birds and equipped them with transmitters to track their migration routes. In total, 21



greater spotted eagles (including two crossbreeds) have been 'marked' in Belarus. The migration of birds that have wintered in Botswana, Zambia, Southern Greece has already begun. The early dates for the start of their migration were record-breaking. Spotted eagles wintering in the Balkans, Israel, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia and South Africa are also under observation.

The number of HTP residents exceeded 1,000

The Supervisory Board of the Hi-Tech Park made a decision to register 65 companies as HTP residents, said the Park's press service. It currently unites 1,021 companies.

"The trend of active development of start-ups continues: more than half of the newcomers were registered in 2020-2021," the HTP noted. Further information reveals that representatives of various fields of activity have become the new residents of the HTP, including medicine, fintech, e-commerce, gaming, transport, industry and agriculture.

The Park also added that they were joined by residents with foreign capital,



including two development centres for foreign corporations: Altoros Bel — as the development centre of Altoros Corporation (USA) — and Deriv BY, which represents the transnational group of companies Deriv.

Mansion house petting zoo

A stork and a camel live peacefully with a large family in the Molodechno District

Guests are surprised arriving at Tividovka. Here, in Prigorodnaya Street, live the large Chernyavsky family, in the company of a real petting zoo. To be honest, the livestock on their estate, horses, ponies, cows, goats, sheep, geese and other farm animals, makes a city resident surprised. Furthermore, the large family keep dogs, a rat and a Maine Coon cat. However, these animals aren't alone: those approaching the manor notice a two-humped camel in the snow, while the most unusual member of the family, the stork, didn't migrate in autumn. Nicknamed Malysh, the bird has spent winter in the garden.

By Tatiana Shimuk

An unexpected addition

Anastasia tells us how Malysh joined their family, "It so happened that, in the summer, the stork fell out of his nest. A resident from the village of Latygol in the Vileika District picked him up and brought him to us in a saucepan. We nursed the bird like a child, giving him water and food from a syringe. Malysh needs to eat different worms, fish and loves sprats. Friends and many kind people helped the bird in every possible way, also bringing food. When he got stronger, we began to send him away to be with other birds but, even after spending a night with the flock in the field, Malysh always returned to us. This is how it's stayed with our family. He's now 'a teenager'."

The stork is cheerful and healthy, it even has a passport. The bird's character is quite combative: it protects the area and doesn't like other people's cats and dogs, hissing at them. Malysh lived in a greenhouse when the frosts came.

We go inside the house of this large family and notice Malysh, who is always either looking at the fish tank or at us. In the house, the bird has its own corner but is not allowed to walk around without supervision since it wants to fly and flap its wings. If someone turns their back, Malysh is instantly on the table.

Polina, the eldest daughter of the Chernyavsky couple, follows Malysh while it is sitting in front of a camera. The girl supervises it in the kitchen and explains, "Our 'unplanned child' loves the warmth and in winter stays in the house. In April, the storks will return, and we hope he'll eventually join them."

Anastasia also briefly tells us about another exotic pet: the camel, Shisha. "Actually, this treasure was given to our family in exchange for a horse. It's young and we don't let the children ride it. This is our unusual petting zoo," she said.

An idea transformed into reality

It's interesting to learn how the couple manage

their estate and farm on the outskirts of the village. Anastasia and Yuri have three daughters. The eldest, Polina, is 18 and studying at college to become a baker. Masha is 15 and Yulia is 13. The girls study in Molodechno secondary school No. 9 and actively help their parents with the farm.

Anastasia explains, "I came from a village in the Logoisk District where I worked as a teacher in a preschool, while my husband is from Molodechno. We both didn't want to live in an apartment. We always dreamed of a house in the village. Being a large family, we were given a subsidy for a house ten years ago by the state. We were happy and were looking for a house for farming, away from the hustle and



Alekssei Stolyarov



bustle of the city. When we found it, we realised that this is the place for us. Actually, the house was in disrepair and uninhabited. My husband is a carpenter by profession, so he did most of the repairs himself. Initially, we had 2.5 hectares of land and now, almost 25. The state didn't give much land for an estate, so we registered a farm."

To gain a new status, the couple had to work hard: solve a number of paperwork issues, write a business plan with descriptions of their activities and accurate calculations of profitability. After a while, they succeeded.

During the first three years of farming, the family are exempt from paying all taxes, except for the tax on income from non-agricultural activities, in line with the law. "Initially, we began breeding pigs and that was the beginning. Gradually animals were added and, at present, with such a large household, someone needs to be at home all the time," Anastasia says. "We continued developing and now sell cow's milk, meat and eggs. People have come to know about our farm products, and we have regular customers. The fact the new farmers need to pay no taxes in Belarus in the first few years of their work is great. It's essential support to gain strength. We are engaged in raising and breeding horses. We teach them everything while they are foals and then they are not afraid of cars or people."

The pandemic and Tividovka

As Anastasia says, modern villagers are now showing an interest in using horses on the farm. Horse and pony rides are also popular; children are fond of it.

During day visits from different groups (schoolchildren, families or newlyweds), the Chernyavsky family organise costume parties or horse festivals, also treating guests to tea and biscuits and taking memorable photos.

Yuri, Anastasia's husband, willingly joins our conversation, "The parents bring their children to us to teach them how to ride properly, to be immersed in nature in the company of beautiful animals. We also have an invited specialist who offers therapy classes. The coronavirus, of course, has affected our farm and, last year, we had to stop our activities for a while. All entertainment programmes are now held exclusively in the open air and we have plenty of new plans: to finish the rooms for guest stays in a separate house and build a bathhouse. In the future, we plan to organise various events, gatherings and camps for children, with the involvement of horses, the camel Shisha and our charming Malysh. Unless, of course, the latter flies south."



Ordinary and unusual pets at the Childhood Dreams farmstead



Ahead of the rest of the whole world

The scientific head of the Belarusian National Technical University's laboratory of sports biomechanics tells us about innovations and digital technologies which have helped us take a new look at human capabilities

Faster, higher, stronger... Sports have always been about overcoming performance. Human capabilities are expressed in figures: how far and how fast people run, how many kilograms they lift, how accurately they hit the target. Physics and mathematics are most important here. Athletes spend years polishing their skills and their desire, but good calculations also matter. Smart technologies are used in training, in addition to intelligent products. The latter digitally reflect the biomechanical parameters of movements when interacting with equipment. Today, athletes from our national teams are trained using the developments of the BNTU Polytechnic Technopark's laboratory of sports biomechanics.

By Veronika Malyshchits

Helping in small ways

In the sports engineering market, there are few companies that work for the needs of individuals. The laboratory specialists have managed to develop solutions that create unique technologies for assessing the key dynamic and spatial-temporal parameters of sports movements over the course of the leading Belarusian athletes' training. For example, if a sportsman is in contact with a support, it's important to measure how stability is being distributed and with what power the athlete is making a push.

"Another thing is when a sportsman interacts with equipment: a barbell, a racket, a paddle or ski poles," says the Head of the BNTU Sports Engineering Department, Valery Vasyuk. "For such cases, we've developed special sensors: microelectromechanical systems that are directly attached to the projectiles. When performing exercises, an athlete must develop maximum power in the shortest period of time, and this needs to be fixed. We are ahead of the rest of the world in this respect: our sensors are wireless, weighing only 15-20 grams. No one in the world makes such sensors. They don't limit the conditions for performing exercises and athletes don't feel tied to the equipment."

Sensors have microelectronics which make it possible not only to register a signal but also to process it (convert it from analogue to digital), as well as store it in the computer memory or transmit it to the smartphone of an athlete or a coach.

Digital brain

To better understand how it works, Mr. Vasyuk explains, "An athlete, when interacting with the barbell, should get a reading, as their performance fluctuates. We install sensors on the grip; they scan movements, which are then displayed as a graph on a computer. The information obtained shows



Valery Vasyuk (left)



Until devices of the kind were launched, coaches had determined the effectiveness of athletes' movements by sight



In the meantime, graduate students work as researchers and technicians, providing training for the sports teams they are to oversee

the pattern of when and in what phases the interaction with the barbell is most effective. Furthermore, the athlete can track their actions on the screen in real time and, if necessary, correct them during the execution of one of the elements, and this is done by marker-free technology using a video motion capture system."

Previously, coaches determined the effectiveness of athletes' movements by eye and their tips are sometimes not enough since the athlete is not always able to control the motions of all parts of their body.

"Simply put, our development enables sportsmen to see themselves from another point of view. The system maps the trajectory of movements from the point of view of spatial kinematics. Such systems are not used in all countries where sports are developed, apart from smart assessment devices, specialists are needed," notes Mr. Vasyuk.

The question might arise of how the method works outside the gym, i.e. when movements of a rower or canoeist need to be tracked. As a rule, the coach accompanies the athlete on a boat from a distance of 15-20 metres. Sensors are attached to the athlete and transmit information to the coach via Bluetooth on a smartphone or laptop. There is also another option: if a sportsman swims alone, then information from sensors is recorded to a flash card attached to the belt. After crossing the

finish line, the data is sent to the laptop, and the coach sees all phases of the exercise, how effectively energy is spent, and how much power is demonstrated.

"Previously, no one has measured how athletes distribute effort in the underwater part of the stroke, or in the phases of rowing. We help, in addition to controlling the power of movements, to see how rationally and proportionately the leading muscle groups are involved in the work," adds the expert.

Find the best at the start

For Belarus to have more promising athletes, it's necessary to identify gifted children in the types of movements that determine the success of their further training.

"Biathlon is the greatest sport. High functional potential and technical readiness in ski movements on the track is combined with the ability to switch to the firing lines in a complex mental activity. All the coaches in the

world are working to combine and bring to an integral level the correspondence of movements in shooting and skiing. In biathlon, there are difficulties with the selection of children from training groups. Our technologies then come to the rescue," says Mr. Vasyuk.

A method has been developed that can assess the rationality and cost-effectiveness of the techniques of ski movements over a distance, as well as how well young athletes know the so-called reciprocal or cross co-ordination in the interaction of the upper and lower limbs. The laboratory has developed methods to help young athletes see how efforts are distributed in the dynamics of performing control exercises in conditions created using a special simulator.

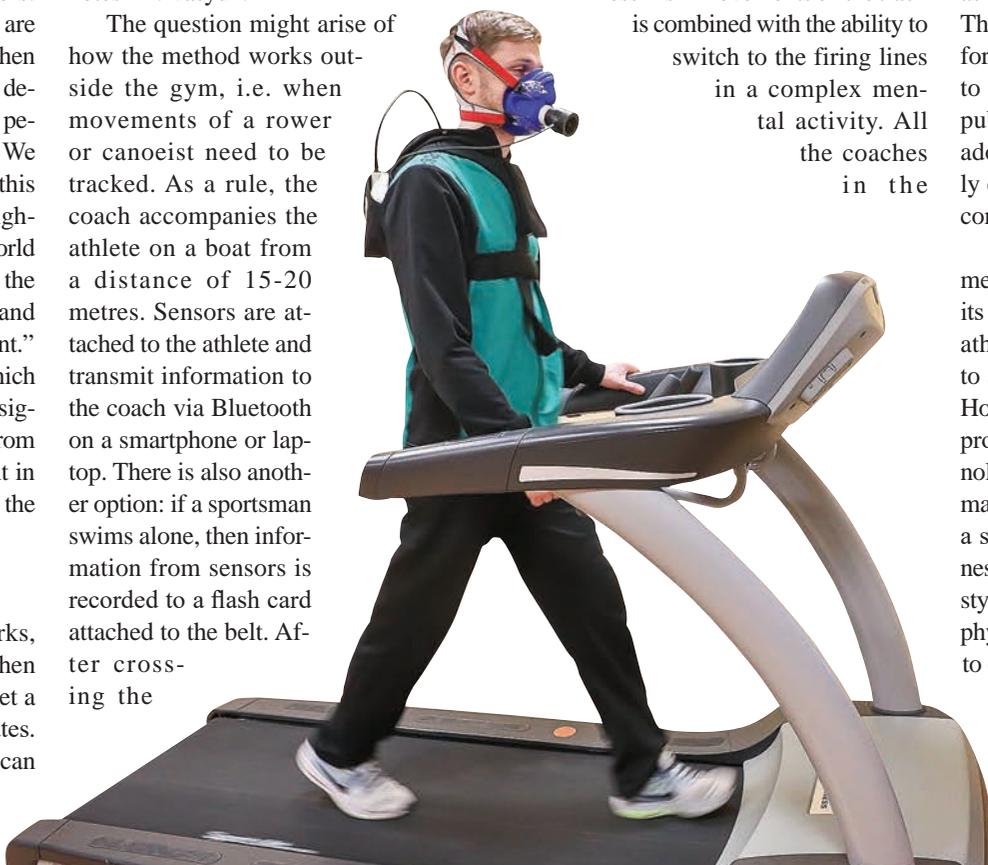
"A sportsman stands on the platform and simulates a skating movement. The screen simultaneously displays the parameters of these actions, in the form of bar charts. The athlete tries to compare them so that they have the regularities of the correct motor stereotype. In this way, athletes quickly learn the motion. Today, these simulators are being tested in one of the sports schools in Minsk," adds the expert.

'Closed' technologies

At the request of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, the State Committee for Science and Technology allocates funds for the development of the laboratory of sports biomechanics on a competitive basis, as part of innovative projects. "So far, we've had to develop single copies of our products, implement and use them in the training and testing of our sports teams. It's not possible to distribute them as patents and solely descriptive articles. The explanation is simple. An application for an invention is considered within two to three years and is then placed in the public domain. Foreign companies can adopt them, reproduce them and quickly establish serial production and sales," comments Mr. Vasyuk.

Commercialisation of the development is now carried out only in terms of its social effect, improving the training of athletes and improving the opportunity to achieve at international competitions. However, as Mr. Vasyuk notes, it would be profitable for the technopark to sell technologies both on the domestic and foreign markets. For example, all developments in a simplified form can be used in the fitness industry. Supporters of a healthy lifestyle want to know how the body tolerates physical load, how to support it and how to choose the right exercise.

The scientific and educational Intelligent Technologies in Sports cluster, established in the country, makes it possible to ensure the integration and mutual influence of engineering and sports activities.





Virus refuses to yield

Central European leaders are pushing for faster deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines from every reliable manufacturer to speed up inoculations

World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Director for Europe, Hans Kluge, expressed concern about the worsening coronavirus situation in Europe on his Twitter account, "Following a decrease in COVID-19 incidence in the region since early February, there are concerning early signs of a resurgence in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. 4 out of 10 of the world's countries, with the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, are in the European region."

Moreover, the Nigerian variant of COVID-19 was isolated in Brescia

north of Milan (Italy). Arnaldo Caruso, the President of the Italian Society of Virology, said that "for the first time we have managed to isolate the virus bearing these mutations which concern us because they could confer resistance to COVID vaccines today available."

Meanwhile, according to the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, the European Union failed to cope with the task of "quickly and efficiently" supplying the Europeans with the vaccine. He explained the need to use the Russian 'Sputnik V' vaccine in his country by the fact that the European Commission can-

not ensure the supply of citizens with alternative vaccines registered in the EU.

Nevertheless, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has begun a consistent examination of the registration dossier of the Russian anti-COVID vaccine 'Sputnik V'. The agency will test the vaccine against EU standards for efficacy, safety and quality.

After a video summit of EU leaders, the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, said the positions of countries had moved closer on the travel certificates but that differences remained.

EU 'bulging at the borders'



Will COVID-19 spark reform of the EU's borderless Schengen zone?

Several EU countries are moving to reinstate border checks and travel restrictions over a troubling surge in coronavirus variants.

Germany announced that travellers from France's north-eastern Moselle Region will face additional restrictions because of the high rate of South African variant cases there.

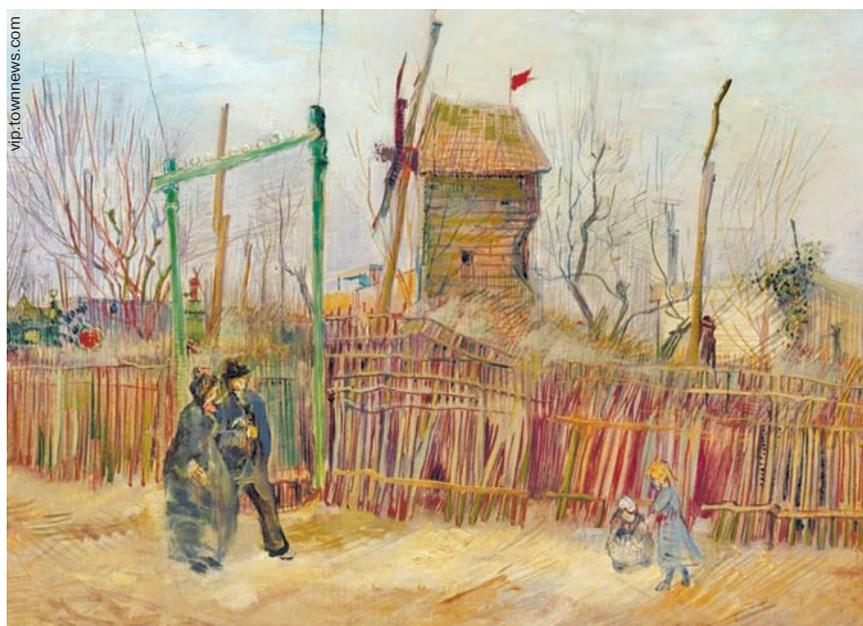
The developments at the French-German border are only the latest in a long series of Schengen exceptions in several countries including Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Sweden.

Belgium banned all non-essential travel to and from its territory in late January. The measure has been extended until April 1st. Germany partially closed its borders with the Czech Republic, Austria's Tyrol and Slovakia in mid-February.

French MEP Fabienne Keller (Renew Europe), who is also the former mayor of Strasbourg, said that some territories have developed across borders as 'little Europes', living spaces where national frontiers are irrelevant. "These territories need to be better taken into account in the health crisis," she said.

Denmark, Finland, Hungary and Sweden are also among the six EU countries that have been urged to lift border restrictions in a letter sent by the EU Commission last month.

While free movement is the rule in the Schengen zone, EU law foresees exceptions in case of threat to public policy or internal security.



In public for the first time

A Vincent Van Gogh painting of a Paris street has gone on display for the first time after spending more than 100 years behind closed doors

A *Street Scene in Montmartre* has been owned by a French family for most of the time since it was painted in 1887.

Sotheby's estimates it could fetch up to 8m Euros when it is sold at auction this month.

Van Gogh expert Martin Bailey said that this is "the first time we are able to see it properly".

Small reproductions have been made in the past, often in black-and-white. "What is exciting is that it is a Van Gogh painting which has been hidden away ever since it came off the artist's easel," Mr.

Bailey said. "It has always been in private collections, so only the owners and their friends knew it. It is an interesting picture because it is a transitional work between Van Gogh's Dutch years, when he painted in dark, earthy colours, and the exuberant works that he did in Provence. It was in Paris that he discovered the Impressionists, and this led him to explore colour."

It is one of a series of works Van Gogh created while lodging with his brother Theo in 1886 and 1887 a short distance from the street depicted in the painting.

Archaeologists found ceremonial chariot

Officials at the Pompeii archaeological site in Italy announced the discovery of an intact ceremonial chariot, one of several important discoveries made in the same area outside the park near Naples following an investigation into an illegal dig

The chariot, with its iron elements, bronze decorations and mineralised wooden remains, was found in the ruins of a settlement north of Pompeii, beyond the walls of the ancient city, parked in the portico of a stable where the remains of three horses previously were discovered.

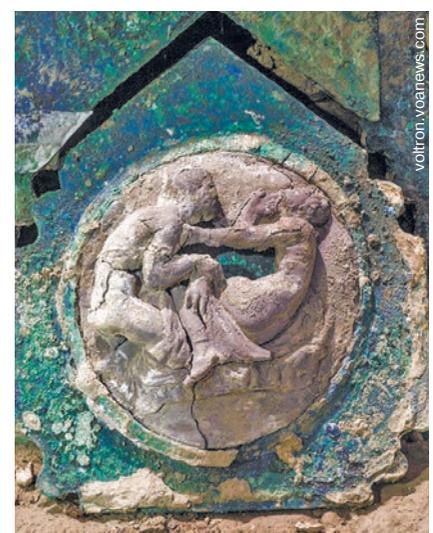
The Archaeological Park of Pompeii called the chariot 'an exceptional discovery' and said 'it represents a unique find — which has no parallel in Italy thus far — in an excellent state of preservation'.

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD destroyed Pompeii. The chariot was spared when the walls and roof of the structure collapsed, and also survived looting by modern-day antiquities thieves, who had dug tunnels through to the site, grazing but not damaging the four-wheeled cart, according to park officials.

The chariot was found on the grounds of what is one of the most significant ancient villas in the area around Vesuvius, with a panoramic view of the

Mediterranean Sea, on the outskirts of the ancient Roman city.

Archaeologists last year found in the same area on the outskirts of Pompeii, Civita Giuliana, the skeletal remains of what are believed to have been a wealthy man and his male slave, attempting to escape death.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

National culture's brand

The Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre opened its 101st season with the renewed *Paulinka*. For about seven months, the theatre hasn't received audiences and didn't show any performances. The hallmark of the troupe, the performance that always started the new theatrical season at the Yanka Kupala Theatre, has undergone a reboot, yet remains an invariably high theatrical product in its classical and traditionalist basis.

By Olga Korneeva

It is this performance that traditionally opens a new season at the Yanka Kupala Theatre every year. People's Poet of Belarus Yanka Kupala vividly embellished the usual story of how a girl chose a groom for herself against her parents' will with national flavour and folk humour. "*Paulinka* is a brand of national culture. In particular, this classic production is one of the hallmarks of the Yanka Kupala Theatre and the whole of Belarusian drama. The play reveals a folk character and social context that goes beyond the boundaries of family conflict. In addition, the literary Belarusian language is skilfully reflected. An interesting plot touches on the conflict of generations while showing the desire for a new way of life," notes the Director General of the Yanka Kupala Theatre, Aleksandr Shestakov.

According to him, not only Yanka Kupala Theatre's actors from the pre-existing troupe, but also young people — students of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, who came to the theatre as a result of the casting — play in the updated performance. The project was directed by a student of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, Zinaida Vedenina, while actress Olga Nefedova became artistic director. "The new cast is, in fact, the main update of *Paulinka*, because the artists have a different vision and demonstrate a new presentation. Moreover, they are distinguished by a great desire to work in the Kupala Theatre. The team has a responsible attitude towards the opening of the new season. Alongside *Paulinka*, we also have plans for this season to be eventful and interesting for the audience," emphasises Mr. Shestakov.

The legendary performance is an integral part of the repertoire of the Yanka Kupala Theatre. The premiere — staged by the Honoured Figure of Arts of the BSSR, Lev Litvinov — took place in 1944 in Tomsk where the theatre had been evacuated. The theatre's oldest performance is greatly enjoyed by the audience and over the years has become a real business card of the Kupala Theatre stage. As noted in the theatre, the secret of such unique success lies in the combination of vivid folk characters, an interesting plot, folk songs and dances, the harmonious language of the classic of Belarusian literature, Yanka Kupala, and the



skill of the performers. During the life of the performance, several generations of the best artists in the country took part in it, and the performance itself became a real school of stage skills. At the end of 2019, the play *Paulinka* was included in the list of historical and cultural values of Belarus.

For the Yanka Kupala Theatre actress, Olga Nefedova, the premiere continued the next day as the drama artist visited the Palace of Independence for the first time. The reason was more than significant: Olga Nefedova was awarded the Francysk Skaryna Medal.



On the eve of the state awards ceremony, the actress told reporters, "It was surprising for everyone that we still opened the 101st season on March 3rd — seven months after a long wait. How the audience received us is, of course, something incredible, amazing, unforgettable. We are so grateful to them! Afterwards, behind the scenes, the actors joked that it was probably in



1944, after the liberation of Minsk, that *Paulinka* was welcomed like this. People didn't let us go, shouting: 'Thank you!'. All the Kupala Theatre actors were moved to tears, to the depths of their souls."

Olga Nefedova noted that the preparation for the premiere was difficult and required a lot of work, "There are very few of us left to release a fully-fledged new performance. Since November, we have been listening to students and new actors for the new *Paulinka*. During the casting, we realised that there are a many worthy ones among them, and it was a joy! We understood that there are people to work with, with whom to re-build the theatre. The premiere became a baptism of fire for young actors.

has never been such a reception as during the recent performance in her acting life, "I don't remember such a warm audience atmosphere in my entire acting career. Our young people were also inspired, and we, the 'old people', were also happy. Both the actors and the audience wanted the same thing: for life in our theatre to revive and to continue at the proper level."

A People's Artiste of Belarus, Zinaida Zubkova, can't hide her emotions either, "I had a holiday feeling. There was a full house. We were all overwhelmed with flowers. But after the performance we all cried as when we bowed, the whole audience shouted: 'Thank you!' — and at that moment we



Many of them say that even yesterday, in their wildest dreams, they couldn't imagine themselves on the main theatre stage, they thanked us for the opportunity to be on the stage of the Kupala Theatre. I think that everything will work out well for us. I invite all loyal spectators of the theatre to the premiere and all subsequent performances of the Kupala Theatre actors. We are here for you!"

An Honoured Artiste of Belarus, Tamara Mironova, admitted that there

understood that the theatre had got back on its feet, and people wanted it so much. She said, "With what energy our youth performed in *Paulinka*! Their eyes shone so brightly! They didn't let us down, there was an exciting and forgotten feeling of a theatrical team and the unity of generations. Some of them aren't yet twenty years old. This charge was transferred to the audience. I have been working in the theatre for sixty years, and this show will remain in my memory forever."



CULTURE

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9



Kudrichi is home to the largest stork settlement in Belarus



A Polesie 'Venice': the village of Kudrichi

Spending the weekend in the countryside

Welcome to visit Belarusian villages and agro-towns. Here, holiday-makers will be sure to enjoy the weather, nature, yoga and even modern art.

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Survive on the island

Kudrichi attracts visitors with its wooden houses and reed roofs, fishing spots right behind the vegetable garden and boats as the only available transport to reach neighbours. The famous Polesie 'Venice' is located on the islands in the Pinsk District. It remained unnoticed for centuries, being surrounded by swamps and marshes at the confluence of three wayward rivers: the Pina, Pripyat and Yaselda. It was in the 1990s when a sandy road was laid here; during the floods it is always close to disappearing. Only about a dozen villagers live in Kudrichi and, accordingly, the site resembles an isolated farmstead. However, the locals have no wish to leave their houses for urban amenities. They are pleased to meet new guests, and tourists often come to visit. The unique natural environment with the largest colony of storks in Belarus, and the colourful village life attracts them. It's possible to stay at a local farmstead and borrow a boat to take photography trips to see the birds.

Plunge into the village atmosphere

Many people say 'I'll give up everything and go and live in

a village!' but never realise their plans. The wonderful village of Kholmy a hundred kilometres from Minsk is a unique eco-settlement against the backdrop of picturesque nature. It was founded by former city residents who were tired of the noise, dust and endless



Pancake Week in full swing in Belarus

bustle. These are young, creative and friendly people. Some sculpt dishes, draw and play folk music, and others collect herbs and grow unusual vegetables in the garden. They could be seen as modern Belarusian hippies.

In reality, there is no seclusion here as the locals organise many holidays for tourists, mostly following Slavic traditions, with a local touch: Maslenitsa, Kupala Night, Bagach. They also offer fashionable retreats with yoga and meditation, master

classes in gusli playing and unusual excursions in the surrounding area. 'Winter reigns outside the city' goes the famous song. Those wishing to be converted are welcome to visit Belarusian villages and agro-towns. Here, holiday-makers will be sure to

enjoy the weather, nature, yoga and even modern art.

Follow the smell of fillet steak

People come to Tula to try the gingerbread, and to Motol for the sausages. The most delicious point on the map in Belarus is located in the Brest Region. Meat traditions here date back to the 1930s when a local resident, Stepan Minyuk, was the first to make sausages for sale. Today, the agro-town has three sausage

shops, a bakery, a fish smoke-house and other food production facilities. Once every two years, the famous gastro-fest *Motol Delicacies* is held here. Lovers of the delicacies come to decide which variety is fatter, juicier and more flavoursome. People spend three days on the site, taking home bags full of sausages, fillet steak and bacon. "Once you try it, then you'll dream about the taste and aroma every night," Motol residents say about their products, but don't reveal their grandfathers' secrets to anyone. That's why long queues gather in Minsk's shops for sausages from this Polesie village.

Visit the cucumber maze

The largest village in Belarus is Olshany. 8,000 people live here, and the population continues to grow. Furthermore, two schools, three churches, restaurants, a large supermarket and a market are situated in Olshany. What's the secret to successfully resisting urbanisation? Locals have a favourite and profitable business: growing cucumbers in greenhouses.

The scale of the vegetable business is impressive: even from space, the agro-town is recognisable by the labyrinths of greenhouses that frame the village on all sides. That's why

Olshany has gained the title of the cucumber capital. The earnings here are good, comparable to Minsk salaries and especially successful farmers are among the top Belarusian businessmen. From April to August, dozens of loaded trucks are sent to Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad every day. Belarusian cucumbers in Russia are loved for their taste and eco-friendliness.

Find masterpieces in the forest

Do you like modern art? Then you should go to Salatit! This is not a village but an open-air gallery and an art settlement at the same time. Each house stands out: they might be decorated with giant guitars, sculptures of animals or patterns on theme of the leaning Tower of Pisa. Works vary — being comic, children's, philosophical. There are so many of them here that they have long since begun to go beyond the village into the neighbouring forest. Who is the creator of these attractions? About two decades ago, Salatit was inhabited by artists from Grodno who decorated the derelict village. At some point, they got so carried away that even the road signs were subject to their imagination. They jokingly called their home the BSSR: the Belarusian Salatit Free Republic.



A nil-nil draw

The Super Cup of Belarus went to Shakhtyor Soligorsk, but BATE did not lose

The teams were fighting desperately on the field for ninety minutes, but no winner emerged: both Shakhtyor and BATE turned out to be equally strong. The opponents competed with new attacks and tested each other's strength, there was tension throughout the entire area, but no one gave in, leaving the score at 0:0 in regular time. Everything was decided by a series of post-match penalties. In this lottery, Soligorsk were more fortunate, and the game was won by the goalkeeper of Shakhtyor and the Belarusian national team, Aleksandr Gutor; he not only saved the decisive goal, but also took a controlled shot himself, scoring against his Borisov counterpart, Anton Chichkan.



Hero of the match: Aleksandr Gutor

By Sergei Kanashits

The game was equal, as often happens with early football matches. It's like the first rehearsal of a play for the new season, when everything is still out of place, the scenery is hastily put together and arranged chaotically, the script hasn't been learned, the actors are tired and incoherent, but the audience is still interested. They're inspired not so much by what's happening on the stage, but from the expectation of an imminent premiere and a desire to predict what the results will eventually be.

The expectation of the holiday, as a general rule, is nicer than the holiday itself, and this expression has long been true for Belarusian football. Exhausted by long winters and missing live football, we put it on a pedestal in our dreams and look forward to seeing it, imagining the day with hugs, smiles and grimaces. But life, alas, as a rule, is stereotyped and banal; and in response to inflated and unreasonable expectations, it is inevitable that reality hits home, knocking out any romantic thoughts. In truth, rose-tinted glasses are good for admiring yourself in front of a mirror, while stark reality can be inevitable and relentless.

To call the football a success and the game spectacular with final zeros on the scoreboard would be an opinion of those wintery romantic souls. Frankly speaking, there were few interesting moments, and the speed of the game left



Aleksandr Kulevsky

Scoreboard

Super Cup of Belarus

Shakhtyor, BATE, 0:0, on penalties, 5:4

much to be desired, the technical abilities of the performers was also not very impressive. All this is obvious, especially when you have the opportunity to watch the championships in England, Spain or Russia every day, where football is of a much higher quality. If BATE and Shakhtyor had demonstrated such a match somewhere else in the second round of the national championships, they would have received hardly any kind words from fans and experts. However, now everyone has had a taste of some football. In some places it was really enjoyable, because, as you know, hunger makes us appreciate



BELTA

ciate food all the more. Furthermore, what certainly cannot be blamed on the players of both teams is the lack of desire to

play and to win: they fought competitively, sparing neither themselves nor their opponents. With this sincerity and desire, a lot can be forgiven. We may recognise that, despite all the above-mentioned 'buts', the opening of the football season can be considered quite successful. At the same time, it should be noted that the merit is not only (and maybe not so much!) by the teams on the field, but, of course, the football federation, which organised the pre-

match performance perfectly, fuelled interest in the game, and indeed with its last innovative solutions added a hint of spice to the match.

Shakhtyor won the Super Cup on their fourth try, but BATE didn't lose either. Perhaps, there is nothing more to say, because it's not worth making any drawn-out conclusions for this game; it's like trying to predict what winter will be like from the first snow that fell in November. It's clear that the rivals are approximately equal in strength, but this strength is by no means heroic, and in the European arena they will have to surpass themselves in order to pave their way to the group stages. Shakhtyor didn't impress at all with their expensive foreign newcomers, bought in the winter transfer, while BATE is still clearly mastering the principles of the game that Vitaly Zhukovsky has tried to instil in them. The coaching style of the team is already evident: angry and aggressive. This contrast in comparison with the lacklustre performances of Oleg Dulub's period or the tricky tactical escapades of Kirill Alshevsky is still noticeable to the untrained eye. The current BATE team is clearly more charismatic. All other things being equal, it is determination, strength and spirit that will surely become the decisive factors in the struggle for the championship. Something tells us that Borisov footballers will be going for gold this season.

ARENA

• Above all

Belarusian jumper Maksim Nedosekov won gold at the European Indoor Championships, held in Poland.



The representative of the Vitebsk Region in the national team showed a result of 2m 37cm in his best attempt. This is a personal and national record in this discipline. Thanks to this achievement, Maksim Nedosekov moved to first place in the world rankings.

Silver went to Italian Gianmarco Tamberi, who showed 2m 35cm while the bronze medal was claimed by Belgian Thomas Carmoy, who finished the compe-

tion with a result of 2m 26cm.

This is the second medal for the Belarusian team at the continental forum in Poland. The day before, Irina Zhuk had earned a bronze medal in pole vaulting.

• A second from gold

The Belarusian women's national biathlon team won silver in the 4x6 relay at the eighth stage of the BMW IBU World Cup Biathlon in Czech Nové Město na Moravě.



Irina Krivko, Dinara Alimbekova, Anna Sola and Yelena Kruchinkina covered the distance 1.2 seconds behind the winners. (0 misses + 9 extra rounds). Athletes from the

Swedish team finished the race in first position. Mona Brorsson, Hanna Oeberg, Linn Persson and Elvira Oeberg showed a final time of 1 hour, 03 minutes, 26.6 seconds (0+6). Third place was taken by shooting skiers from France. Anais Bescond, Justine Braisaz, Chloe Chevalier, Julia Simon were 27.8 seconds behind the winners (1+8).

For our team, this is the second silver relay medal won this season: before that, our girls were among the top three medallists at the event in German Oberhof.

• Perhaps without a foreign audience

The Japanese Government is considering banning foreign fans from attending the Tokyo Olympics. The reason is fears about the spread of coronavirus during the

main event of the four-year period.

The country's authorities are also continuing to ponder over the admission to the stands of spectators from Japan and on limiting their number. A decision on the issue will be made after negotiations with the IOC and other organisations involved in the preparation process for the Games.



At the end of February, Seiko Hashimoto, who heads the Tokyo Organising Committee, said that the organisers aren't yet considering the option of holding the competition with empty stands. However, as the Japanese media has reported, more than half the population of the Land of the Rising Sun opposes the Games in Tokyo.

Photo of the week



An observation wheel at Minsk's M. Gorky Central Children's Park

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On March 14th, 1936, during the worst spring flood, the water level in the Svisloch River exceeded its usual level by more

than 1.75m (reaching 368cm), as a result of which part of Gorky Park, the stadium, Pulikhovskaya Sloboda and other areas of Minsk were flooded. In the spring of 1940, to protect the capital from destructive spring floods, the construction of Komsomolskoye Lake was launched, formed by a dam across the Svisloch River and an artificial pit. The solemn opening of Komsomolskoye Lake was scheduled for Sunday the 22nd of June 1941 but was disrupted due to the outbreak of war.

March 14th is International Day of Action for Rivers, formerly known as International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water and Life. It was established in March 1997 at the First International Conference against the Construction of Large Dams, held in Brazil. It is celebrated by the International Rivers Network public organisation (USA) under the motto 'For Rivers, Water and Life'.



March 15th is Constitution Day of the Republic of Belarus. The first Constitution of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic

(BSSR) was adopted at the 1st Congress of the Soviets of Belarus on February 3rd, 1919. It later changed several times. The new Constitution for the Republic of Belarus was adopted on March 15th, 1994. In 1996 and 2004, additions and changes were made. The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus is the main law of the country and consists of the introduction and 9 sections, in which there are 8 chapters and 146 articles.



March 15th is World Consumer Rights Day. On March 15th, 1962, in a message to Congress, US President John F. Kennedy formulated four basic consumer rights: the right to information, the right to safety, the right to choose, and the right to be heard. It has been celebrated since 1983 by the decision of the International Union of Consumers. The Consumer Day is celebrated on this day in the Republic of Belarus.



On March 16th, 1946, Nikolai Kirichenko was born (Molodechno, Minsk Region) — an actor and People's Artist of Belarus (2006). He worked at the Brest Regional Drama Theatre and, since 1971, at the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre (from



2005-2009 as its Director). From 1987, he taught at the Belarusian Academy of Arts as a Professor. He created vivid characters. These include the pagan wizard, Kholod (*Ringing Is Not a Prayer* by I. Chigrinov), Jagailo (*Prince Vytautas* by A. Dudarev), Vagin (*Children of the Sun* by M. Gorky) and others. He died in 2018.

On March 17th, 1911, Tikhon Litovchik was born, a participant in Belarus' liberation from the Nazi invaders during the Great Patriotic War. He was a member of the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-1940. From the first days of WWII, he commanded a machine-gun crew and a platoon of submachine gunners at the South, North Caucasian, 1st and 3rd Belarusian, as well as with the 1st Ukrainian fronts. He participated in the battles for the Caucasus, the liberation of Poland, and the capture of Berlin. He was awarded the Order of Glory of the 3rd and 2nd degrees (twice) and of the 1st degree for courage and bravery shown during the crossing of the Yaselda and Bug rivers, during the liberation of Pinsk, the capture of Konigsberg and Berlin. He died in 1980.



On March 17th, 1856, Mikhail Vrubel was born (1856-1910) — a Russian painter and academician at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts (1905). From 1884, he lived in Kiev, created icons and painted the Church of St. Cyril. From 1889, he lived in Moscow. He is the creator of the paintings: *Morning*, *Faust*, *Demon* triptych, *The Swan Princess* and others. He designed stage sets, mainly for operas by N. Rimsky-Korsakov while also creating illustrations for M. Lermontov's works, and portraits.



On March 17th, 1441, the Drutsk Gospel, a manuscript monument to Church Slavonic writing from the 14th century, was transferred to Vilno, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was written in the Church Slavonic language on 376 parchment pages. The records at the end of the manuscript, already testifying to the existence of Drutsk in the 10th century and the erection of the first church in it in 1001, are of great cultural and historical significance. In 2001, the Drutsk Gospel was published in a facsimile edition from a photocopy kept in the Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

