



The national composition of Belarus' population was recently announced



The country's only Research and Restoration Centre has appeared in Grodno



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BELTA

Svetlana Mikhailovskaya, from Vitebsk, with her daughter Stefania

Day for mothers

On October 14th, Belarus celebrated one of the nicest and most touching holidays: Mother's Day. Throughout the week, events are held countrywide in honour of women as mothers, workers and keepers of the family hearth. In different parts of Belarus, all mothers receive the warmest words and compliments. Over 108,000 large families live in the country and the number of mothers awarded the Order of Mother is growing annually.

This highest award for women who have given birth and raised 5 or more children was approved by a Presidential decree almost two decades ago. This year, 240 women have been awarded. Family support is one of the main priorities of Belarus' state policy and, as a result, the Republic ranks first in the CIS and 25th globally in the ranking of countries favourable for motherhood and childhood.





Belarusian experience in fighting coronavirus, support for doctors and citizens' responsibility were the focus of attention at the President's meeting where the country's readiness to counteract the second wave of coronavirus was discussed. Aleksandr Lukashenko highlighted the significance of the accumulated experience, saying, "The experience we have gained is invaluable. And the path that we chose is also invaluable for the whole world today."

Not only heads of the Healthcare Ministry but also leading specialists in infectious diseases from medical universities were invited to talk at the Palace of Independence.

The President immediately outlined the relevance of the topic under discussion, noting that the coronavirus infection has again entered an intensive phase of spread, "The second wave is coming. Some of our neighbours are close to the spring peaks of morbidity. A similar trend is observed worldwide. There are suggestions that the virus has changed and its virulence is different.

However, the fact is as it is. We can't ignore this. We don't have such rapid growth, but it does exist."

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew special attention to the personnel issue. "I am told that, in spite of the tough restrictions of this year, more than Br300m [over \$115m] worth of support has been already paid to healthcare personnel working with COVID-19 patients. I reiterate that people working with such patients and fighting against infectious diseases should have their money. This is a special area, everything can happen. People are at risk, and we must take care of our doctors."

Fighting coronavirus: our own experience and strategy

Medical practice in the fight against coronavirus in Belarus during the spring peak period of morbidity has developed well. The Head of State added that the Healthcare Ministry should develop its own recommendations but it is necessary to act rationally, without excesses and not recommend what is basically impossible. He said, "I want to make my position clear: today I have no plans to isolate the country and impose a lockdown. Had we done it in February, March or April, we would have faced consequences similar to those observed in Kyrgyzstan. We would not have jobs, we would have delivered a heavy blow on the economy, we would have no salaries to pay."

The President concluded: everything is in our hands to make sure the situation does not spin out of control. Staying healthy, taking precautionary measures is

not a problem for doctors. "Their job is to help us when we fall ill. Everything else is in our hands. We need to learn to listen to doctors and strictly follow the recommendations. A set of minimum things that anyone can do is to get a flu shot if you think you need it, and follow hygiene rules," he said, adding that other recommendations should not be neglected as well — such as a reasonable social distance. At the same time, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that it is necessary to adhere to the advice of doctors in a meaningful way, not blindly follow the instructions.

"The most important reason why we take these measures is not to overstretch the healthcare system. So far, according to the information I have, the situation is normal. We need to make sure that the stock of extra beds remains unused. Let them stay idle," the President concluded.

With maximum effect

The most important investment projects, export diversification and advanced production were on the agenda of a meeting with the President which focused on topical issues of the woodworking and pulp and paper industry development



Forest resources are a true treasure of our country and the state of affairs in woodworking is constantly monitored at the highest level. Large investments in the industry have already brought returns: enterprises operate with good profitability, provide a high share of exports and develop, including at the expense of profits. However, prospects in the industry, given the implementation of major investment projects, are even greater. At the Palace of Independence, the President was recently given a report on topical issues of the development of the woodworking and pulp and paper industry. The focus was not only on fulfilling the tasks set previously, but also on discussing the goals for the coming years. Aleksandr Lukashenko said, "Having considerable reserves of renewable forest resources, we need to ensure their rational use with maximum effect."

Profitable return

Sustainable economic performance, efficient production, employment and wages, exports and promising investment projects were the focus of the President's attention.

At the meeting, the Head of State indicated that, in terms of monitoring the implementation of his instructions, he would primarily like to hear answers to a number of questions. Moreover, the woodworking and pulp and paper industry, according to him, is one of the most important strategic sectors of our economy. "We've decided that we should get all the added value here, at our enterprises. We should in no case delay the solution of this issue. Much has been done towards this," Aleksandr Lukashenko stated.

He reminded people that the main area of woodworking enterprises has been modernised, projects are being implemented in the pulp and paper industry, and considerable financial resources have been allocated to the industry. "We must admit that the invested funds have paid off. Labour teams at the enterprises that would not have existed now without modernisation have been preserved. Thousands of new jobs have been created, and the volumes of wood processing and exports of high-value-added products have increased several times," the President added.

He then focused on exports, saying, "As for exports, I see that the mass media reports on 75 percent of the manufactured products. It's good. However, the price of these products matters greatly and the efficiency of production is even more important."



In the workshop of Dobrush Paper Mill

According to Bellesbumprom, the role of forestry in Belarusian industry has increased significantly after the modernisation of basic wood processing, pulp and paper companies. The wood processing industry was increasingly buoyant, its output exceeded 20m cubic metres in 2019. The modernisation of board production enterprises has made it possible to process low-grade wood (balance and technological raw materials). Its consumption will reach 5.2m cubic metres in 2020, while the establishment of fuel pellet bio-energy production will additionally process 2.8m cubic metres of hardwood by 2025.

The Head of State noted that the price of export products and final profitability play a role. He stated that the industry as a whole is developing confidently — demonstrating positive results. Moreover, the state pays close attention to it: top officials are designated as co-ordinators for the implementation of major projects.

Market diversification

"I would like to hear answers to the following questions. Firstly, what is the general situation in the woodworking

industry regarding export, financing, enterprises' performance and salaries? Has the coronavirus epidemic affected the industry?" asked the President. According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, in January-August 2020, Bellesbumprom's industrial output exceeded last year's figures by about 2.5-3 percent. The export figures were also higher.

"The second question: what is the progress in the implementation of the most important investment projects? We have made decisions on Svetlogorsk, Dobrush

and Shklov. Are these projects on schedule? Question number three: what prospects are there for the construction of paper and packaging facilities? We have discussed it with you already. Here are the reforms: we need to develop manufacturing based on forest resources," the Head of State stressed.

He added that Belarusian enterprises have already learned to make the so-called semi-finished products: pulp and paper. The time has come to progress in processing. "Let's make, for example, cardboard to substitute imported cardboard from Poland and Germany. Let's make it here instead of exporting pulp and buying finished cardboard. We need to do it immediately. We need to install a machine to produce cardboard and packaging," the President stressed.

This issue must be settled promptly, with specific dates. "Let's agree to make the end of the major work next year — whatever the cost," the Head of State said.

Mikhail Kasko, the Chairman of Bellesbumprom Concern, informed the President that the woodworking, pulp and paper industry works steadily, saying, "The task of exporting to the European Union and China is being completed. We have achieved an optimal distribution between the markets — 30:30:30 [30 percent to EAEU, EU and outside CIS]. We have no dependence on a single particular market today."

"It's good that you have diversified the markets," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

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About a peaceful life, order, the welfare of Belarusians and the country's future

The President spoke about these and other important issues at a meeting on topical matters

The meeting on topical issues, attended by more than 20 officials at the Independence Palace — from security officials to governors and deputy prime ministers — lasted almost 3.5 hours. The Head of State described this meeting as a continuation of the conversation started during the September meeting with the country's political activists. Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled, "We have a rule-of-law that states, we must not allow crime to go rampant, so that some think that the law doesn't apply under these conditions. The Belarusians voted for peace and order in the country, and we are obliged to fulfil this order of the people."

By Dmitry Umpirovich, Varvara Morozova

About the situation inside the country

The scenario of the 'colour revolution' has been thwarted. The situation is under control. Even though government agencies have already got used to street actions, even though many have stopped taking them seriously, one cannot be complacent or be under any illusions. The Head of State warns that no one has made new attempts to blow up the situation in the country. He concludes that either they have taken a wait-and-see attitude, or this is a new stage in that same 'revolution'.

"These are also technologies aimed not only at getting us to drop our guard, but also at forming new, radical forms of organising protests. Yes, they are, as many say, blown away. It's true. But more radicalism has appeared. Maybe because there is no one to hide behind — we see them clearly. These radicals (this applies primarily to Minsk) are trying to drag these onlookers, young people and children into some kind of provocation," said the President.

About the work of the security forces

The Head of State pays tribute to them saying that, "For all their shortcomings, they did not succumb to provocations. Law enforcement agencies have learned to work with (we have never had such a situation) and have adapted to this situation, maintain self-control, calmness, and where necessary — reasonable flexibility."

The President especially noted their decency, "These are honest, intelligent people whom the people have fed, in order to call on in difficult times and say: protect peace and quiet. We did this. What's so surprising? We have done our job and we will continue to do so."

About external threats

It is by no means easier on the 'outer fringes' since the West continues its attempts to rock the country. Aleksandr Lukashenko notes that the 'signature' is the same: political, economic, and especially informational pressure. Moreover, sanctions have been added.

"I see that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has begun to work more actively," noted the Head of State. "But that's not enough. We must firmly defend our rights and raise questions with our counterparts, especially with the politicians of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and partly, Ukraine."

The request is as follows: among the population of these countries, the President assured, there are many supporters of co-operation with Belarus. This means that efforts should be directed at explaining to the residents of these countries the perniciousness of the confrontational path chosen by their politicians.

"They [politicians] can lead to what is happening in the Caucasus. For example, Riga is facing a difficult choice between the current situation and the benefits of interaction with Belarus. We need to show them what they can lose," stressed the President.



There are separate questions about Poland. However, the Head of State advises to wait a week, "You will see what will happen in Poland. Why do Lithuanians, Poles and Ukrainians look to us? Because the situation is very bad there and they need to distract people and put the blame on us. Therefore, have patience, their people will soon start asking questions," asserted the President. "They say our 'election was unfair with the 80 percent win'. Andrzej Duda won 50.5 percent of the vote in Poland. Some say that the election was rigged. This is the situation they should be dealing with."

About maintaining a normal life

Now there are many calls to return the country to a creative course. According to the Head of State, they are unnecessary, because we, in fact, did not leave this course,

"Calm down, the country has not lost its balance. If it were, you would see my harshest reaction: this is the most important issue for the President. Therefore, there is no need to call for us to get back to the creative course."

Belarusians continue to work, as do villagers, residents of small towns, regional centres and the capital. Our enterprises did not surrender to the coronavirus, nor did they succumb to destructive calls. Even despite the repeated shutdown of the world's economy, Gomselmash just recently managed to sell 30 harvesters. Citing this company as an example, Aleksandr Lukashenko praised the work of this and other Belarusian manufacturers. "People do their job as far as possible," he concluded.

However, while some in their free time from work violate the law and interfere with decent citizens, others unite to support their chosen course. Rallies for the current government — unlike unauthorised actions — are attracting more and more citizens.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that during such rallies and demonstrations Belarusians, among other things, emphasise that they want to see the country as it has been for the last quarter of a century: safe, calm, socially oriented and confidently developing.

"I must tell people that such a country will always remain as long as we are alive. At least as long as I'm alive. I want everyone to understand this: we will not have another country. We will have neither Kyrgyzstan, nor Ukraine, nor Nagorno-Karabakh... Don't even worry about it."

About the work of social institutions and economics

Speaking about current affairs, the Belarusian leader particularly underlined that all social institutions in the country are working properly today, without exception.

Despite global shocks, the Belarusian



economy remains stable, fulfilling both external debts and social obligations. The Republic even finds new opportunities to build up investment and industrial potential. The Head of State has stated this more than once, and repeated again,

"The main thing is to ensure a decent standard of living for the population. Despite all the problems, I emphasise once again: the main thing is the economy."

About the new Constitution and the All-Belarusian Assembly

At the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled the main tasks for discussing the



country's development prospects, which are to be settled in the near future. This is not only constitutional reform.

"We will write the Constitution; even several options. This is not a question, we have experience. We will make the Constitution as promised, in consultation with everyone. The main thing is the economy, social sphere, ecology, youth policy and local government," he said.

Even within the framework of the current Constitution, the President delegates more and more powers to the governors and the Government. It's a gradual, calm, non-revolutionary process that spans from land to management.

Work has already been organised in many areas that have been selected for improvement. In accordance with the instructions of the President, local dialogue platforms have been created and are expanding on issues of the upcoming constitutional reform, alongside other topical problems of the country's and regional development.

The President noted,

"You have to listen and hear different points of view. When we study these issues — the Constitution, governance, self-government, economics — we will discuss them here in the centre, up to the President. We will bring it to the All-Belarusian People's Assembly. This is the formula that it should be."

About stability

Today Belarus is experiencing conditions of unprecedented external turbulence. The President is convinced that there is only one thing to do to oppose it,

"Only internal stability is a guarantee of the survival of Belarus. If we keep stability inside Belarus, we will survive. If not — we will be divided."

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled his words said earlier: that after the elections it would be even more interesting, and that the pandemic would go away, and that Belarus would be put to a test. All his predictions came true,

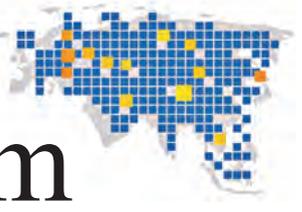
"All this has materialised and is happening now. We should survive. If we want to be called Belarusian people, if we are a nation, we should stand together and endure it."

FOCUS

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Verona preparing to host 13th Eurasian Economic Forum



ECONOMY



Palazzo della Gran Guardia in Verona

By Marta Astreiko

Among the topical issues to be discussed at the Verona meeting are international trade and macroeconomics, energy, finance, digitalisation and infrastructure development. One of the new topics announced is the international study of the genome which, according to Antonio Fallico, can make an important contribution to overall innovative development.

“Greater Eurasia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is one of the most fragile but also promising areas for international co-operation and recovery at the global level in the current situation,” the President of the Conoscere Eurasia

Association is convinced. “We live in a world where the political and economic situation is uncertain due to the coronavirus. It’s an incomprehensible and uncontrolled phenomenon. However, we are all now fighting against this invisible enemy to preserve our future and the future of our generations.”

Antonio Fallico added: COVID-19 continues to hit the international community, and this will probably be one of the few forums that will be held offline. Therefore, it will receive special, close attention.

Interestingly, on the eve of the 13th Eurasian Economic Forum business talks, two Italian cities — Caldiero and Verona — will host commemorative

This was announced by the President of the Conoscere Eurasia Association, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Banca Intesa — Antonio Fallico. “We hope the conference will be held on October 22nd–23rd in Verona, in the presence of an audience. The speakers immediately agreed to participate, with interest and enthusiasm; all want to meet and communicate with the public in person rather than online,” he stressed.

events on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory.

“This year, the Verona forum will be unusual from all points of view, and it will not be limited to a two-day economic dialogue. We are preparing an extensive programme of cultural events dedicated to an important topic which still affects our lives. We cannot forget that, in 2020, we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory,” Antonio Fallico said.

In particular, on October 20th, an assembly dedicated to the memory of Soviet partisan Vladimir Tulisko (battle nickname Willy) is planned to be held in Caldiero — followed by a solemn reburial and opening of the monument to partisan ‘Willy’. Vladimir Tulisko was killed by Germans near Verona on April 25th, 1945 — the day of Italy’s liberation from fascism.

There will also be a presentation of a thematic photo exhibition about the role of the Red Army in the liberation of European capitals, and the opening of a film festival — a retrospective of films about

the war. Italian viewers will be able to see such iconic films as *The Ballad of a Soldier*, *Ascent*, *A Road to Berlin*, *The Star* and *Ivan’s Childhood*.



Antonio Fallico

A scientific conference of Russian, Italian and European historians dedicated to the 75th anniversary of victory in the Great Patri-

otic War and WWII is expected to be held on October 21st. In the evening, there will be a concert — *Songs of Our Victory* — by Russia’s musical *Turetsky Choir* band.

The Eurasian Economic Forum in Verona annually attracts well-known politicians, scientists and businessmen from the EAEU, China, Italy, Western Europe, and other regions of the world. Among the permanent participants of the Verona event is the State Secretary of the Union State, Grigory Rapota.

Assessing the level of growth

Ivatsevichdrev JSC hosted presentation of Belarusian export-oriented woodworking companies as part of the annual Day of the Commercial Counsellor. Representatives of over 20 diplomatic missions took part.



Representatives of foreign diplomatic missions on a tour through Ivatsevichdrev

By Olga Korneeva

The presentation was arranged by Bellesbumprom Concern jointly with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The diplomats in attendance represented embassies from all the continents. The guests toured the company’s premises and studied the production of furniture and chipboard.

Ivatsevichdrev is one of the leading woodworking enterprises in the country which, with the support of the state, has become the flagship of the furniture industry. The modernisation has enabled the company to significantly increase its production volumes and presence in foreign markets. Ivatsevichdrev’s annual turnover exceeds 50m Euros and the main product is particle board. Three years ago, the company started produc-

ing cabinet furniture, which has become a fast-growing segment of production and is now sold to five countries. In addition, a furniture cluster has begun to be formed at Ivatsevichdrev. Over the next three years, the company plans to increase production by 30 percent on the basis of furniture production.

Ivatsevichdrev is one of the most highly profitable enterprises of Bellesbumprom. According to the Deputy Chairman of the concern, Aleksandr Pshenny, all enterprises are now operating steadily and are set to fulfil their targets. “We have posted an export surplus, that is, we are going above 100 percent of the target in this challenging time. We export to more than 60 countries and are not standing still: we are trying to expand the geography of our supplies. We hope that this meeting will give new impetus to our exports,” he said.



At Ivatsevichdrev JSC production lines

Vladimir Ulakhovich, the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry:

These are traditional meetings that we organise for diplomats accredited in our country and overseeing trade and economic relations. A few weeks ago, we visited the Mozyr District. This traditional practice is of great interest to diplomats, as it envisages direct contacts with enterprises and gives the opportunity to see the level of our technologies. I know several examples when diplomats’ visits to regions ended with concrete results for the supply of Belarusian products. This is the main focus. Today, there is huge interest in the woodworking industry.

Victor Sorocean, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Moldova to Belarus:

We have long-lasting ties with Belarus and know Belarusian products well. I was pleasantly surprised with Ivatsevichdrev: it’s modern and high-tech. There is not even dust on one’s shoes after visiting it. I think I’ll talk to our entrepreneurs regarding the expansion of interaction.

Mudasir Eseldin Ali Hassan, an adviser for economic affairs at the Embassy of the Republic of Sudan to Belarus:

We’ve visited a very modern high-tech enterprise and I think we need to seriously consider co-operation with this company. We are particularly interested in the company’s chipboard. We have one contract so far but I’m convinced other deals will follow soon. There are some difficulties with logistics but I think this problem can be solved. Importantly, we are interested in qualitative Belarusian products.

Speaking of the development prospects for the industry, the official said, “We have recently signed off a five-year development programme where we’ll perfect and build new production facilities. The pulp and paper industry will receive a new lease of life after the commissioning of the Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Mill. Great prospects are ahead for pellet

production and wood chemistry. In other words, we know where to go and which direction to move in. Such enterprises as Ivatsevichdrev, the production of boards (the concern can produce about 1 million cubic metres) paves the way for the development of the furniture industry. Over five years, the number of furniture makers in the country has doubled to reach 1,300.”

Technological solutions to customers' order

Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ) presents new products at the International *Agrosalon 2020* Specialised Exhibition of Agricultural Machinery held in Moscow on October 6th–9th

“The MTZ exposition features six 9-450HP models aimed at selling on the Russian market. Each of them has been upgraded. We listen and take into account the opinions of our consumers and improve our models in accordance with their wishes,” said Vitaly Vovk, the MTZ General Director.

For example, the plant's most powerful tractor — ‘BELARUS-4522’ — is now equipped with wide-profile tyres able to withstand high loads. This model is currently undergoing certification tests. In turn, ‘BELARUS-1025.4’ has received a Russian-made Cummins engine. Initially, this tractor model was equipped with the Belarusian engine but the manufacturers went further to replace it with a new higher-thrust technical level engine. Accordingly, the model has not been simply upgraded: it now boasts an enhanced level of localisation which is important for sales in the Russian market. In addition, it demonstrates that the plant can use the parts which consumers might prefer.

A Cummins engine is also used at ‘BELARUS-2022.4’. This model has a front axle reinforced with large wheels, a cab with improved visibility, climate control, an air suspension seat, a remote mirror control and a multimedia system. The engine compartment is equipped with a cooling system for all climatic conditions.

‘BELARUS-82.3’ has undergone the greatest transfor-

mation: the legendary model has been upgraded in all areas. It now has an ecological Stage II engine, while the old lever controls have been replaced with push-button ones. The cabin's strength and insulation have been improved. The basic configuration has air conditioning, and the tractor can be equipped with a climate control system. However, the main innovation concerns the transmission: it has a hydraulic system that controls the drive of the power take-off shaft of the front drive axle which has increased the reliability of the vehicle and enhanced the resource of the unit and the model as a whole. After clarifying the nuances of the assembly technology, the machine will be launched in series. This is



belarus-tractor.com



expected to happen in Q1 2021.

‘BELARUS-1222.3’ has replaced the popular 1221 model with a capacity of 130HP. The innovation has retained all the best qualities of its predecessor, but at the same time received

several new design solutions and components. The main innovation is a new comfortable cabin with panoramic windows. In September, serial production of this tractor was launched.

A small-sized ‘BELA-

MTZ and Rosagroleasing have expanded co-operation: as part of the International *Agrosalon 2020* Specialised Exhibition of Agricultural Machinery, the companies signed agreements to expand the range of Rosagroleasing at the expense of caterpillar tractors of the Mozyr Machine-Building Plant, which is part of MTZ-Holding, and to sell MTZ-Holding machinery at special prices through an auction.

RUS-132MT’ tractor is actually a modernised popular 152 model, with a modified control post and a Kohler diesel engine. Prior to this, there were only petrol powerplants. The Kohler engine is certified in the Europe-

an Union according to Stage V environmental standards. This more expensive diesel engine is cheaper in subsequent operation.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

The Order of Mother bestowed upon 240 women from all Belarusian regions



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has signed Decree No. 358 on the conferment of the Order of Mother.

The award for giving birth to and raising five or more children has been bestowed upon women from all walks of life, including employees of manufacturing enterprises, the financial sector, the agricultural complex, housing and utilities, trade and communications, education, healthcare, social services, culture and sports, and mass media, as well as self-employed entrepreneurs and homemakers. In total, 240 women from Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Mogilev and Minsk regions were awarded the Order of Mother.

Belarusian Potash Company first shipped potash to China via the Northern Sea Route

For the first time, two vessels carrying Belarusian potassium chloride have arrived from the port of Klaipeda to China along the Northern Sea Route — through the waters of the Arctic Ocean and the Bering Strait. The delivery time of goods on these ships has decreased one and a half times compared to the traditional route, with the cost of freight also decreasing. “This bold project underlines BPC’s commitment to



improving the quality of service while also making a significant contribution to the Belt and Road global strategic initiative,” noted the press office of BPC.

Over the past few years, the Belarusian Potash Company has been a confident leader in the export of potash fertilisers to the world.

A memorial stone at the construction site of a new bell tower laid in Zhirovichi Monastery

This year, Zhirovichi celebrates the 550th anniversary of the acquisition of the miraculous Zhirovichi Icon of the Mother of God and the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Holy Dormition Zhirovichi Stavropegic Monastery. In honour of the anniversary, a new bell tower with a height of more than 50m will be erected at the monastery. A memorial stone was erected on the planned construction site. Bells for the new building were made at the bell-foundry in Voronezh under the care of the presidents of Belarus and Russia. Now the 12 bells, the largest of which weighs 4.2 tonnes, are placed in the temporary belfry. Another significant event was the unveiling of a monument to the monk and martyr, Serafim of Zhirovichi.





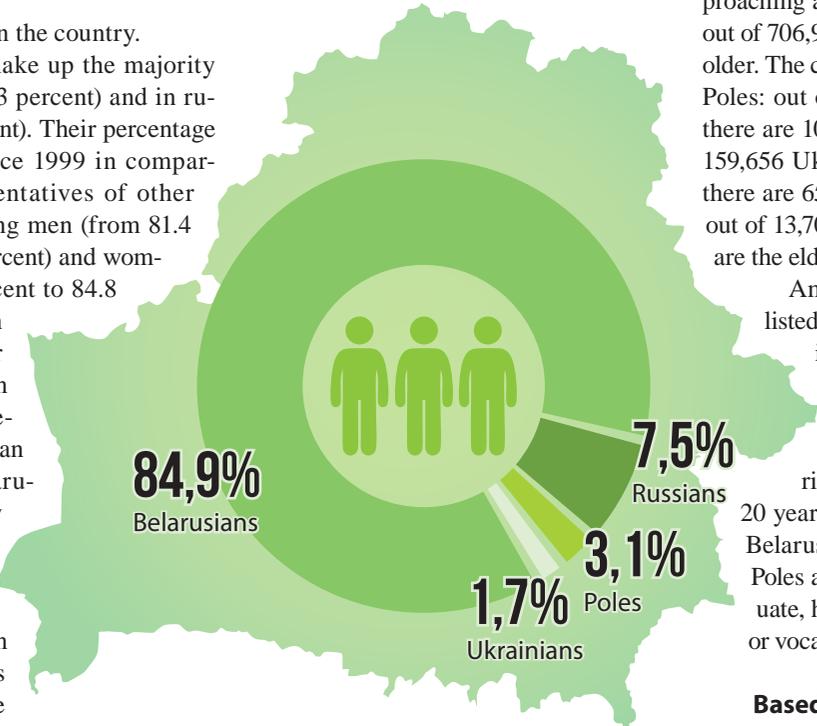
Regarding some parameters, the information is presented in dynamics. For example, in 1999, there were 10,045,237 permanent residents in the Republic — including 8,159,073 Belarusians, 1,141,731 Russians, 395,712 Poles, 237,014 Ukrainians. In turn, in 2019, the total number of the population decreased to 9,413,446, including 7,990,719 Belarusians, 706,992 Russians, 287,693 Poles, and 159,656 Ukrainians. In other words, there are now more Belarusians in the percentage ratio (a rise from 81.2 percent to 84.9 percent) and less representatives of other nationalities.

Jews, Armenians, Tatars, Gypsies, Azerbaijanis, Lithuanians, Turkmens, Germans, Georgians, Moldovans, Chinese, Latvians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Arabs, Tajiks, Chuvash, Vietnamese, Bulgarians, Mordvins, Greeks, Koreans, Afghans, Bashkirs, and Turks live in

smaller numbers in the country.

Belarusians make up the majority both in cities (84.3 percent) and in rural areas (87 percent). Their percentage has increased since 1999 in comparison with representatives of other nationalities among men (from 81.4 percent to 84.9 percent) and women (from 81.1 percent to 84.8 percent), although the total number of Belarusian men in 20 years has decreased by more than 140,000, and Belarusian women — by almost 26,000.

The national composition of the population of the regions is influenced by the



What we are

National Statistical Committee announces national composition of Belarus' population

The committee has published new data based on the census conducted in Belarus last year. This time, it's dedicated to the national composition of the population.

neighbourhood with other countries. Russians make up 138,075 (12.2 percent) out of 1,135,731 residents in the Vitebsk Region, and 62,232 (6.1 percent) out of 1,024,751 residents in the Mogilev Region. In Grodno, with the population of 1,026,816, Poles account for 223,119 (21.7 percent). The largest number of Ukrainians is registered in

the Brest Region: 37,648 (2.8 percent) out of 1,348,115 residents.

Interestingly, among representatives of different nationalities, more than a quarter are people of pre-retirement and retirement age. Among 7,990,719 Belarusians, there are 2,286,633 (28.6 percent) aged 55 and older. Among Russians, the number of such citizens is approaching a half: 307,806 (43.5 percent) out of 706,992 Russians are aged 55 and older. The composition is similar among Poles: out of 287,693 elderly residents there are 102,774 (35.7 percent). Out of 159,656 Ukrainians aged 55 and older there are 65,898 (41.3 percent). Finally, out of 13,705 Jews, 5,987 (43.7 percent) are the elderly.

Among each of the nationalities listed above, more than half the residents over the age of 15 are married or in unregistered relationships. The level of education of these categories has increased over the past 20 years: there are now many more Belarusians, Russians, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews who have postgraduate, higher, specialised secondary or vocational education.

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Crystal crane in his hands

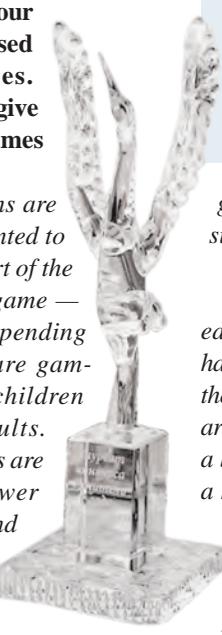
New teaching methods bring the 'Crystal Crane' to Gomel teacher

A non-standard approach to lessons is the major element which has brought victory to a geography teacher from Gomel's school No. 19 — Vadim Losev. During this Teacher of the Year's lessons, pupils play intellectual games on geography — though not forgetting about the school curriculum. As soon as the best teacher in the country returned from Minsk from the award ceremony at the Palace of the Republic, our correspondent talked to him.

By Stanislav Galkovsky

Vadim Olegovich, your teaching method is based on intellectual games. Where did the idea to give knowledge through games come from?

Classic game lessons are not new. However, I wanted to go further and make part of the lesson an intellectual game — team or individual, depending on the topic. People are gambling creatures, and children are more so than adults. Look at how mind games are built: we find the answer through associations and logical chains. This idea was suggested to me by my girlfriend Olga Klimovich — a leader of the White Lynx club of intellectual



It's an important task of a teacher not to impose a solution but to enable a pupil to find it independently

games. Her father is a famous Belarusian expert, Leonid Klimovich.

Do you give grades after a game?

What is the problem with grades in education? On the one hand, children have the right to make mistakes: after all, they are learning. On the other hand, they are very afraid of making a mistake since a bad grade might follow as a result. It's a huge stress for a pupil. In turn, we — adults — make mistakes all the time but we have already gone out of the grading system though easily teaching the younger generation. With this in view, a game as part of a lesson makes it possible to get away from the fear of mistakes.



Vadim Losev, a geography teacher at Gomel's secondary school No. 19, wins the 'Teacher of the Year of the Republic of Belarus' contest

An incorrect answer enables pupils not to score points but not to get a bad grade. If they win a competition, then a victory and the highest grade are ensured. This is a lesson children want to play.

Is it possible to use your teaching methods in all Belarusian schools?

Definitely. We have a strong education system, good staff, constantly improving skills, using new approaches and techniques. I've been proposed to prepare a PhD thesis on the use of intellectual games in the educational process. I'm going to use this material to publish a methodological guide that will help all teachers countrywide.

There is much talk about realising the potential of children, but are there any opportunities for self-realisation of teachers?

Let's start from the scratch. We have free education: at school and higher educational establishments. We have opportunities for professional development,

permanent study and research. To use these, energy is needed and those who are active, creative and ready to change something can enjoy plenty of opportunities. A teacher must constantly learn and develop in order to keep up with their students, especially in our world of accessible information. They must always be on the up. For example, students who follow my Instagram page can find a lot of interesting things about geography, play educational games and quests.

During the awards ceremony, you proposed to your girlfriend from the stage of the Palace of the Republic. Why did you choose to do it like this?

I've got tired of waiting [laughing]. Seriously, we've been together for five years, and I've been waiting for an unusual opportunity to propose. I think the situation was just right. Olga was present in the hall. The whole country was watching. I made up my mind and, most importantly, she said 'yes'!



Being captured by the emerald network

About 13–15 percent of Belarusian territory may be included in the Emerald Network — a regional ecological network launched by the Council of Europe as part of its work under the Bern Convention which provides for the protection of wild animals and plants, as well as their habitats. The Emerald Network also exists in Belarus and new sites will soon supplement it.

By Natalia Yemelyanova

“Some 13–15 percent of Belarusian territory may be included in the Emerald Network,” says a consultant from the Biological Diversity Office of the Biological and Landscape Diversity Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protec-

tion of Belarus, Vitaly Korenchuk.

At the moment, the total number of Emerald Network sites approved by the Standing Committee of the Berne Convention in Belarus comprises 155 sites, with a total area of 2.3m hectares (11.1 percent of the total area of the country). The network unites special-ly protected natural areas where bans

and restrictions on economic activity are established, as well as places subject to special protection: habitats and growth of Red Book listed species of wild animals and plants, rare biotopes and territories that are places of concentration of rare bird species or places of mass nesting.

Conservation of forests, wetlands, meadows and other territorial sites makes it possible to save all the diversity of the animal and plant world.

Vitaly Korenchuk emphasised the importance of joint efforts by different countries for the conservation of rare

species of animals and plants. According to him, measures to protect flora and fauna can be effective only if the states act together. It is especially important for migratory species.

As of January 1st, 2020, Belarus had 1,297 specially protected natural areas: the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve, four national parks, 99 reserves of national significance, 282 reserves of local significance, 326 natural monuments and 586 natural monuments of local significance. The total area of these objects is 1.8m hectares, or 10 percent of the country’s territory.

To the neighbours on a bicycle

Brest launches development of a cross-border route with the ‘Velofort’ mobile app which will unite 10 forts in Belarus and Poland

By Svetlana Savelyeva

The project is funded by the European Union and implemented within the framework of the 2014–2020 cross-border co-operation programme: *Poland — Belarus — Ukraine*. The total budget of the project exceeds 55,000 Euros, the deadline is next June.

“The idea is to promote the cross-border heritage of the Brest Fortress which is represented by forts and located on the territories of Belarus and Poland. Another goal is to support the development of cycling tourism and bicycle infrastructure. Cycling is quite popular in Brest, there are opportunities for its development and interest in the topic,” said Alina Derevyanko, the

Deputy Project Director of the Brest Fortress Development Fund.

The project will create a mobile app — ‘Velofort’ — to unite 10 key forts with the Belarusian and Polish sides. The app will also contain additional information necessary for tourists about the memorial complex, other museums in Brest and the city’s tourist infrastructure. It is assumed that the full route of the bike tour along the Brest Fortress will take two days.

The app is planned to be presented to the public in May, as part of a two-day bicycle ride. English and Polish versions of the app are planned. In addition, the project authors are discussing the possibility of audio accompaniment to the bike trip.



The higher the hive — the sweeter the honey

Ancient tradition of wild-hive beekeeping to be revived in Belarus

By Arina Novikova

“The honey route will connect two areas — the Lithuanian border area, Dzūkija, and the Belarusian Grodno Region — under a new international technical assistance project: *Preservation of Ethno-Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development in the Historical Region Known for Wild-Hive Beekeeping*. It aims to revive an ancient tradition and use it to develop tourism in these regions,” said Olga Lelyukova, a public relations specialist at the Ecological Initiative Belarusian Public Association.

The importance of honey crafts is confirmed by the fact that traditional beekeeping was mentioned in all three statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, issued in the 16th century. With the development of more cost-effective beekeeping methods and changes in the landscape, this native craft has almost disappeared. In Dzūkija, only few rural residents still retain the skills of ancient wild-hive beekeeping, but none of them keep bees. In the Grodno Region, about 38 enthusiasts are loyal to this craft. Moreover, the skills relate not only to

collecting honey, but also to the entire technology of the craft: from preparing a hollow tree in pines, breeding bee families to using unique tools and equipment.

“Now the ancient traditions of beekeeping are not just going to be revived, but made a calling card — known and attractive for tourists. In addition, beekeeping is based on the sustainable use of natural resources. Therefore, the project will contribute to the conservation of biodiversity,” said Olga Lelyukova.

Good examples of beekeeping traditions in the region will be supported by expositions of wild-hive beekeeping. In addition, old beehives will be repaired and new ones will be made. A cross-border tourist route guide will also be launched. Many project activities will focus on informing and teaching ancient crafts.

In addition, it is planned to initiate festivals related to the traditions of beekeeping. As expected, these will become calling cards of the area and, as a result, more guests will come to the Dzūkija National Park (Lithuania), the Ozery [Lakes] National Landscape Reserve (Belarus) and the border region as a whole.





October revolution in Bishkek

After the parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan, representatives of the parties that did not get into the highest legislative body staged riots in Bishkek. They seized the buildings of the Parliament, Government, Presidential Administration, the Prosecutor General's Office and the Mayor's Office of the capital. The protesters released the former president of the country Almazbek Atambayev, ex-premier Sapar Isakov and a number of other politicians from the isolation ward.

The CEC of Kyrgyzstan declared the parliamentary elections held in the country invalid. The Parliament dismissed the country's Prime Minister, Kubatbek Boronov, and his government, and elected Sadyr Japarov as new Head of the Cabinet.

After the opposition took control of the government buildings, a sequence of unauthorised seizures of government positions, enterprises and deposits was observed. The Jerui gold deposit was partially burned and plundered. In the city of Kara-Balta, the only plant in the country that is en-

gaged in the purification of gold from impurities, came under the control of an anonymous group of people. The largest coal deposit in the country was seized in the Naryn Region. According to local media reports, organised crime groups are involved.

Meanwhile, in order to protect citizens and resist looting, voluntary people's guards were created in all districts of the capital of Kyrgyzstan. They were working closely with the police to ensure law and order.

President Sooronbai Jeenbekov called on the leaders of the parties

to return the political process to the legal track and signed decrees on the resignation of the government and the prime minister while also replacing the leaders of a number of security agencies. The country's president ordered a state of emergency to come into effect in Bishkek. The General Staff of the Armed Forces was instructed to bring military formations with military equipment into the city to organise checkpoints, suppress armed clashes, and ensure the protection of law and order while protecting the civilian population.

Call for lifting of sanctions

China, Russia and two dozen other countries called on the United States and Western countries to end the use of unilateral sanctions, which they said make it harder to deal with COVID-19

In a statement read by Chinese envoy Zhang Jun at the United Nations, they accused the United States of violating human rights, systematic racial discrimination and hindering development in countries it places economic sanctions on. "The response to and recovery from COVID-19 requires global solidarity and international co-operation," the countries said in the statement. "However, we continue to witness the application of unilateral coercive measures, which are contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and International Law," they said. "We seize this opportunity to call for the complete and immediate lifting of unilateral coercive measures, in order to ensure the full, effective and efficient response of all members of the international community to COVID-19."

The statement was signed by China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, Nicaragua, Venezuela and other countries against which the United States has placed punishing sanctions.

It was made to the UN General Assembly's third committee, which focuses on human rights and humanitarian affairs.

The statement notes that both UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet have called for the waiving of sanctions that undermine a country's capacity to respond to the pandemic.

Tasmanian devils reintroduced

Eleven Tasmanian devils have been reintroduced to mainland Australia, more than 3,000 years after they died out there

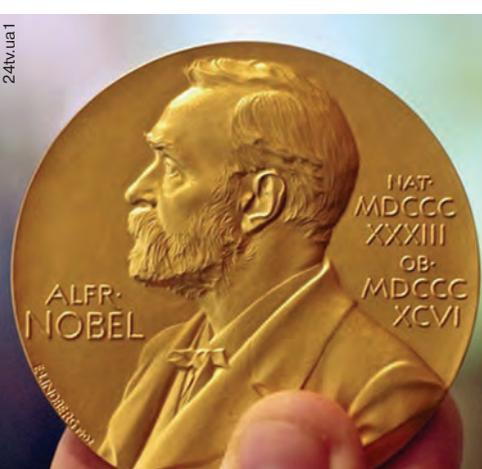
The carnivorous marsupials have been released into a 400-hectare wildlife sanctuary north of Sydney, New South Wales, Australian NGO Aussie Ark said in a statement.

"In 100 years, we are going to be looking back at this day as the day that set in motion the ecological restoration of an entire country," said Tim Faulkner, President of Aussie Ark. "Not only is this the reintroduction of one of Australia's beloved animals, but of an animal



that will engineer the entire environment around it, restoring and rebalancing our forest ecology after centuries of devastation from introduced foxes and cats and other invasive predators."

Tasmanian devils died out on the mainland after the arrival of dingoes and were restricted to the island of Tasmania.



Nobel Prize 2020 winners

Nobel Prize season begins every October as committees in Sweden and Norway name laureates in a variety of prizes in the sciences, literature and economics, as well as peace work

The Nobel prizes most years are presented to recipients in Stockholm and Oslo in December. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the committees have changed their approaches. Some of the events in Stockholm were cancelled in favour of a digital ceremony for the Nobelists, and medals and diplomas were distributed to the recipients' embassies and handed over in their home countries. Recipients may be invited to the award ceremony for 2021, if possible.

Drs. Harvey J. Alter, Michael Houghton and Charles M. Rice received the prize for medicine for their discovery of the hepatitis C virus. The Nobel Committee said the three sci-

entists had 'made possible blood tests and new medicines that have saved millions of lives'.

Roger Penrose, Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez awarded 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics for their discoveries that have improved understanding of the Universe, including work on black holes.

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry was jointly awarded to Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna for their work on the development of Crispr-Cas9, a method for genome editing.

The Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Louise Glück, one of America's most celebrated poets, 'for

her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal'.

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the World Food Programme for its efforts to combat a surge in global hunger amid the coronavirus pandemic, which has swept around the world with devastating impact.

Finally, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2020 was awarded jointly to Paul R. Milgrom and Robert B. Wilson 'for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats'.

The rebirth of artefacts

The country's only Research and Restoration Centre has appeared in Grodno: specialists from the Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum have moved to a separate building in the city centre. Now repairs are in full swing, with equipment being purchased for further research. All these will greatly affect the quality of museum exhibitions and increase the attractiveness of the museum while diversifying its cultural events. The plans by the project developers include joint expositions of artefacts that have undergone restoration in Grodno and Bialystok.



The need to create a Centre for Museum Object Restoration is long overdue

By Tatiana Kondratieva

High level masters

An old building in the very centre of Grodno, near Gilibert Park on Akademicheskaya Street, was transferred to the Historical and Archaeological Museum this spring. Previously, it housed one of the departments of the Emergencies Ministry. The rescuers moved long ago, and soon the rooms of the three-story 19th century building will be transformed into modern restoration workshops.

“The need to create a Centre for Museum Object Restoration is long overdue,” said Yuri Kiturko, Director of the Historical and Archaeological Museum. “Our archives alone boast today more than 190,000 items and about 15,000 of them require the intervention of restorers. The Grodno Historical and Archaeological Museum has three halls where you can see a variety of treasures: one displays icons, the second hall contains objects of decorative-and-applied art while the third showcases paintings. A unique collection of icons occupies a small hall and is called *The Sacred Art*. A total of 105 exhibits are presented here, including the icon of the 19th century entitled *Resurrection and Descent into Hell* with five images of Christ in the central part and plots of the main Christian holidays on eighteen scenes. In fact, about 3,000 icons, more than 900 paintings, and almost 2,000 items of decorative-and-applied art are kept in the store-rooms of the Grodno museum. They all came here in the 1990s and 2000s.”

Art restorers had previously worked at the museum, but with the move to a spacious building, a special department was formed.

“At the moment, we have five restorers and there is a vacant place for a taxidermist. The fact is, that in our museum, there are many stuffed animals from the Grodno Region, many of which are 80-100 years old. We do not plan to expand the staff yet, although there is a lot of work. However, finding restorers of a certain level is not so easy. Our craftsmen restore picturesque canvases, icons, ceramics, wood and metal items.”

Popularisation of heritage

It's symbolic that the workshops will be located in a building that is itself a historic treasure. Its façade is decorated with a sign denoting for ‘Historical and Cultural Value’.

“From March 1st, 2020, the Grodno Historical and Archaeological Museum, together with the Podlaskie Museum in Bialystok, launched the implementation of the international technical assistance project — *Construction of Regional Centres for Research and Preservation of Monuments* — within the framework of the ‘Heritage’ thematic objective of



Over the course of time, an electronic database of objects that have undergone restoration will be created on the museum's website

the *Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2014–2020 Cross-border Co-operation Programme*,” explains the director of the museum. “The project is aimed at creating, on both sides of the border, two similar centres for research and preservation of objects of historical and cultural heritage. The total budget for the project is more than 1,340,000 Euros while the budget from the Belarusian side is 550,000 Euros.”

These funds will be used to repair two buildings to accommodate the Research and Restoration Centre in Grodno. For its operation, it is planned to purchase specialised restoration equipment, a car with a climate chamber for transporting objects of high value, to create conditions for partnership interaction: training, master classes, conferences. In the course of time, an electronic database of objects that have undergone restoration and digitalisation will be created on the museum's website in order to popularise the historical and cultural heritage.

Vacuum table and fumigation chambers

The aim of the project is to preserve the material cultural and historical heritage on both sides of the border. The creation of similar centres for research and the preservation of artefacts at the Podlaskie and Grodno historical and archaeological museums will facilitate timely measures for the conservation and restoration of museum items and other historical values.



The aim of the project is to preserve the material cultural and historical heritage on both sides of the border



“The building itself is in pretty good condition, but the interior needs repairs,” continues Mr. Kiturko. “There are rooms that preserve architectural features and details from the beginning of the last century. One of them has an old fireplace. It doesn't work at the moment, but it will decorate the interior of the future rest room for the restorers. In parallel with the repair work, we search for and purchase the necessary equipment. We are planning to purchase fumigation chambers, which are needed for the disinfection of old books, paper, and wooden items. For painting restoration, a special vacuum table is needed for straightening and restoring old canvases.”

“Our craftsmen are looking forward to new equipment for their work,” notes Mr. Kiturko. “They will have new microscopes, lamps, computers and tables at their disposal. A large amount of work is being done with artefacts found as part of excavations during the reconstruction of the Old Castle. The future exposition will be supplemented with new exhibits discovered during the first stage of reconstruction. More than 3,000 of them have been unearthed. They will wait until the third stage of restoration, when a pavilion will be equipped for both churches: the Upper and the Lower.”

The museum workers are pleased with the project, although they had to go through a rather long process of preparation and approval. The Research and Restoration Centre is ready to help other museums in the region.

Rich palette of colours

By Irina Sergeeva

The annual show of professional artists unsurprisingly has aroused great interest: colleagues, students, friends and art lovers came to appreciate the artists' works.

The exhibition features 60 pieces by 20 artists created in recent years — including painting, drawing, sculpture, decorative and applied arts. Many works are being shown for the first time, and some have already participated in national and foreign exhibitions.

“This show is a significant event for the city — not only because it’s a kind of creative report for Brest’s artists. In this difficult year, people can be said to be hungry for cultural events at

The traditional autumn exhibition of works by members of the regional branch of the Belarusian Union of Artists — *Berestie Colour Range 2020* — opens at Brest Regional Socio-Cultural Centre’s exhibition hall



BELTA



an insight into the creative search of artists of different generations — including veterans such as Lev Alimov, Dot Abdusamatov and many young people.

The famous Vladislav Kufko’s *The Guests of the Minotaur* is a key work of the show. In addition, cheerful watercolours by Anna Chepur-naya-Oleinik, sea-scapes by Tatiana Potvorova, urban



this level. Indeed, the exhibition is a worthwhile visit. I’m impressed by the diversity of works and think everyone will find something to their own taste here,”

said Artem Brukhan, the Deputy Head of the Culture Department at Brest’s Regional Executive Committee, at the opening night.

The Brest regional organisation of the Belarusian Union of Artists is among the oldest creative associations in the area, uniting 50 professional painters. Their joint exhibition offers

scenes by Igor Romanchuk and still-lifes by Tamara Denisova are also presented, in addition to pieces by Leonid Rotko, Aleksei Ulybin, Vladimir Tulupov, Leonid Tarabuko, Anastasia Gurshchenko-va, Oksana Gaidukovich, Piotr Kuzmich and Gennady Vyal.

The exhibition will run until October 25th.

Special view of the world

Graphic design, interior and architecture presented as part of the *Anatomy of Design* book and illustrative exhibition at the National Library of Belarus

By Olga Korneeva

The organisers assert that the world of objects created by human hands and talent is amazing as it contains the memory of history and culture, the fate of peoples, their dreams, hopes and achievements. Design is an important part of our life. It determines what things and objects are in use and how we co-exist with them.

The exhibition is located in the hall of art documents and its visitors can get to know unique developments that reflect the development trends of modern graphic design. The focus is on the work of specialists in the electronic environment: these are new technologies for visual, media and graphic projects.

The exposition helps guests plunge into the logic of design development and

learn about it, to feel the difficulties of the designer’s relationship with society and understand design solutions.

A practical part is also present. The theory is supplemented with interesting tasks from the world’s leading designers. Their solution opens up new facets of creative thinking, and various methods of creating design projects are proposed. Especially interesting is the *Novum* magazine presented in this section; its covers are fascinating, tempting anyone to touch them with their own hands.

Works by world-famous authors are also presented: *Grid Systems in Graphic Design* by Joseph Muller-Brockmann, *The Art of Design* by Paul Rand and *The New Typography* by Jan Tschichold.

There is also a section dedicated to the history of interiors, starting from the ancient world and ending with



modern trends. Well-known interior and architecture magazines — *Schöner Wohnen*, *Maison Française Magazine*, *Architectural Digest*, *Domus*, *AIT*, *Der Baumeister*, *Architectural Design* and *Project International* — are on show.

The publications presented at the exhibition are an invaluable source of information and inspiration for designers and specialists in the field of visual arts history. The exhibition runs until November 24th.

Couple on ice

Figure skaters Viktoria Semenyuk and Ilya Yukhimuk tell us about their long and winding path to the Belarusian national team

She is from Tallinn while he comes from Brest. Before Viktoria Semenyuk and Ilya Yukhimuk became a pair in ice dancing, they managed to travel around many countries and change figure skating partners. They skated in Estonia and the USA, Russia and China, and now they train together in Minsk.

By **Tatiana Pastushenko**

Tallinn — Moscow — Minsk

Viktoria is 19 years old. She was born in Tallinn where she started figure skating. However, unusually, the girl was taken to ice dancing almost immediately, having spent only a year in singles skating.

“Figure skating is not very popular in Estonia. Five years ago, a large ice rink was built in Tallinn, where there are three ice rinks and good conditions for training. Previously, I skated on ice where concerts used to be held. When I was 12 years old, I went to train in Moscow and studied under Yelena Kustarova,” says Viktoria.

Viktoria Semenyuk skated in tandem with Artur Gruzdev for a long time — 9 years. Skaters performed at the Youth Olympic Games, and this, the athlete admits, was the most memorable tournament for her so far. Moreover, there were the Grand Prix, the Junior World Championships, the qualifying tournament for the Olympic Games... and then the Semenyuk-Gruzdev pair broke up.

“Artur decided to leave sport. Of course, I was upset, we skated together for 9 years. He came to one of the training sessions and said: ‘I won’t skate anymore’. After a long break, however, he returned to figure skating and now he performs in tandem with his girlfriend. I posted my profile on a sports site and I received an application from Ilya, who invited me to Belarus, offering me to try. Last October, I came to Minsk for three days. We got to know each other and started training.”

Belarus — USA — China — Belarus

Ilya’s geography of performances is even wider than his 23 years. The skater was born in Brest. There, his parents took him to the ice palace: for a long time, they were deciding between hockey and figure skating, and settled on the second option. In Brest, the athlete trained up to 10th grade, then moved to Minsk and entered the Olympic Reserve School and then the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture. At the same time, his figure skating journey was not always smooth.

“I was a single skater. From the age of seven, when something began to work out on the ice, and until fifteen, I was passionate about with figure skating. Then there were no big successes, and my enthusiasm waned. I thought I should probably finish. Then there was an offer to go to the USA for ice dancing. It looked like a step into the unknown, but there was nothing to lose,” Ilya recalls.

According to Ilya, everything was completely different in the USA compared to Brest. If, for example, in his hometown only one coach was responsible for the preparation of a skater, then in America there was a whole team of specialists, in which each supervised their own area. Ilya was interested in working in a new way: he skated next to the top skaters, looked at them and understood: if you got such a chance, you should try to squeeze the most out of it.

In total, Ilya spent four years in the United States. He skated with the pupils of the Olympic champion, Natalia Lychuk, and the Olympic silver medallist, Anzhelika Krylova.

The skater next received an offer to join the Chinese national team, which, before the Olympic Games, that are to be held in Beijing in 2022, tried to staff the squad with athletes as much as possible, so that if the top skaters are injured or cannot compete for other reasons, they have someone to replace them.

The option to return to Belarus didn’t appear overnight. Even when Ilya agreed to a contract with the Chinese team, he was constantly in touch with the Belarusian Skating Union.

“There was a question about my detachment from Belarus, and when we talked with the Chair of the Belarusian Skating Union, Yulia Komleva, she offered me the chance to return. Now I’m pleased with everything: both the conditions and the squad. Nevertheless, I don’t regret my work experience in the USA and China either: it was interesting.”



Viktoria Semenyuk and Ilya Yukhimuk during the ice performance at Minsk-Arena on the occasion of City Day

“Initially, my Chinese partner Yuhan Feng and I were offered very good conditions, but even 40 percent of them were not fulfilled. While we were training in the USA, everything was fine, but when we arrived in China, we trained by ourselves for two months — without a coach. Then we took part in competitions. To be honest: we skated fairly well, but taking into account the fact that we did it independently and that the skating rink turned out to be a non-standard size, it was predictable. Meanwhile, we were told: ‘Sorry, your result is not high enough, goodbye’.”

Together on the rink and beyond

The Semenyuk-Yukhimuk pair was formed in October last year. Now the young people remember their first meeting with a smile.

“It worked out right away with Vika, because there was no language barrier at least,” says Ilya. “I had a story about the time I skated with a girl for a week, but I couldn’t say anything but ‘Hello’.”

“From the first few days I was comfortable skating with Ilya. Before we paired up with him, I tried to train with a skater from Canada, but it didn’t work

right away. Usually, when you just start skating with a new partner, there is some discomfort, but this time it turned out differently,” adds Viktoria.

How long does it take for partners to skate, and do you think you managed to do this in a year of joint work?

Ilya: *We have not yet become a perfect couple. If only because there is no limit to perfection. However, if we talk about mental comfort, then it appeared already in the first or second week.*

This season will be your first in the Belarusian national squad. The programmes are already prepared. How competitive are they at the international level?

Ilya: *This is the main question now. We work and train a lot, so we want to quickly go to some international competitions in order to get marks and hear an outside opinion on what we have achieved so far.*

Viktoria: *Of course, we film our performances on camera and watch them. Coaches communicate with other specialists and we communicate with athletes from other countries, but we still want to test ourselves in competitive conditions.*

It is clear that you are constantly together during training. And outside the ice?

Also.

Don’t relationships interfere with training?

Ilya: *We manage it like this: everything that is on the ice remains there. This also applies to everything that happens outside the skating rink. We have a common goal for the coming years, and we are trying to move towards it together. Of course, sometimes we argue at training, but when we leave the arena, we hold hands and go home.*

What general goals have you set for the near future?

Ilya: *To perform at the world and European championships. Let’s see how it goes, then we’ll try to qualify for the Olympics.*

Viktoria: *The Olympics are the main goal. We have ambitions and they are serious.*

ARENA

● Footballers of Belarus’ national team lost to the Georgian team — 0:1 — in the semi-finals of the playoffs for the European Championships



The meeting in Tbilisi began with attacks by the host squad, who earned a penalty in the 7th minute, confidently realised by Tomike Okriashvili. In the time remaining before half-time, the Belarusians had only one shot at Georgy Loria’s goal. Immediately after the start of the second half, Mikhail Markhel’s team forged powerfully ahead and created several dangerous moments. The most significant during the 65th minute, when a quick attack from the right flank was completed by the substitute Dmitry Podstrellov, but the ball flew past the target. The Georgian footballers responded with sharp counter-attacks, which were barely challenged by the defenders and goalkeeper, Yegor Khatkevich. By the final whistle, the result hadn’t changed, resulting in Belarusians losing the chance to reach the European Championships final for the first time.

● Tokyo Olympics Organising Committee plans to cut costs by \$284m

The Organising Committee of the Games of the 32nd Olympiad in Tokyo presented to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) a plan to simplify the format of the competition. The new measures will save \$284m, said Toshiro Muto, the Secretary General of the Organising Committee.

The Japanese side proposes to reduce the presence of officials from foreign delegations and the IOC at the Games by 10-15 percent. It is also expected to reduce costs through more economical illumination of sports facilities.

According to representatives of the Organising Committee, Tokyo will set an example for organising sports events in the ‘post-coronavirus era’. It’s become known that the former Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, will become an honorary chief adviser to the Organising Committee.





Vitaly Pivovorchik

Photo of the week

A squirrel at Minsk's Kupalovsky Park

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

October 15th in the Republic of Belarus marks the Day of Workers in the Pharmaceutical and Microbiological Industry, who make a significant contribution to the healthcare system, assisting humans to fight against diseases. The trademarks of the industry are well known in our country and far beyond its borders.



October 15th is Global Handwashing Day, celebrated since 2008 as part of the Year of Sanitation — declared by the UN. The purpose of the large-scale action — organised on this day with the support of the UN around the world — is to draw public attention to the need for this simple but very important hygiene procedure as a key approach to the prevention of many diseases.



October 15th is White Cane Safety Day — a symbol of the blind person. It has been celebrated all over the world since 1969 to solve this problem



of the blind, drawing public attention to the problems of people with visual impairments.

On October 16th, 1955, the Oshmyany Museum of Local Lore named after F.K. Bogushevich was opened for visitors. The museum's collections include ancient tools, fragments of glass and ceramic dishes from the 11th-16th centuries, found during archaeological excavations in the Oshmyany area, as well as 18-19th centuries coins, household items, works of decorative-and-applied-art, items of folk crafts, documents and photographs on the history of the Oshmyany area. Documents and materials from the period of the Great Patriotic War are also preserved in the museum's collections. A significant part of the collection is dedicated to the life and work of F. Bogushevich.



October 16th is World Food Day, celebrated by the decision of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation on the day of its creation (October 16th, 1945). It was proclaimed to draw public



attention to the global food problem and to strengthen the solidarity of the world community in the fight against hunger, impoverishment and poverty.

On October 19th, 1890, Sergei Poluyan was born (Bragin, Gomel Region) — a Belarusian writer, publicist, and literary critic. He is one of the founders of Belarusian professional literary criticism. He is the author of the *Village* prose works and *Christ is Risen* prose poems. He advocated the development of Belarusian language and culture while also compiling a Belarusian anthology for children and acting as a theatre critic and translator. He died in 1910.



October 20th is International Day of the Air Traffic Controller. On this day in 1961, the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA) was established in Amsterdam, which now unites 137 members. Air traffic controllers have a huge responsibility for the safety of flights and the highest demands are placed on their professionalism.



On October 20th, 2005, the decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus 'On the Establishment of the Official Heraldic Symbols of the Gomel Region and Its Administrative-Territorial Units' established the coat of arms and the flag of the Gomel Region.



October 20th is International Chefs Day, when cooks and culinary specialists from all over the world celebrate their professional holiday. The date was established in 2004 on the initiative of the World Association of Culinary Communities. The profession of a cook is one of the most highly demanded in the world and one of the most ancient.



On October 21st, 1520, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan discovered and first passed the strait, which was later named the Straits of Magellan.

