



27th Minsk International Book Fair has many surprises — such as augmented reality, culinary secrets and those of elite troops



The National Art Museum has presented an exhibition of paintings by Konstantin Kachan: *Enchanted with the Motherland*



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At the Art Is visual art festival

Experimental format

The National Art Museum of Belarus has hosted the first visual art festival: *Art Is*. It's become a kind of creative experiment, an attempt to capture the present state of the Belarusian art not only in the format of a usual exhibition, but also by lifting the veil over how works of art are created.

The artists have presented their works at the National Art Museum and also demonstrated a creative process which precedes the result. Visitors were offered master classes in pictorial and graphical painting, sculpture, mosaic, drawing and photography.



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In an atmosphere of trust and understanding

Aleksandr Lukashenko meets US Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, at the Palace of Independence

Addressing the guest, the President of Belarus noted, "I'm sincerely glad to see you, for at least two reasons. First of all, you are seen as one of the architects of modern politics in the United States of America. Secondly, it's very good that, after misunderstandings in relations between Belarus and the United States of America, absolutely groundless misunderstandings shown by the previous authority, you ventured to come to Minsk and look at our country: what kind of people are here, what kind of democracy we have... Of course, you won't be able to study all the issues in just one day, but as a first step you will get to know Belarus. I want to tell you that we are a peace-loving country, with peace-loving people."

The Head of State explained: not only is our mentality pushing us towards this, but also the history that the Belarusian people have experienced, "Especially during our joint struggle against Nazism, against fascism. Every third Belarusian in this war died. The whole country was covered with concentration camps and

Jewish ghettos. Therefore, the history and mentality of our people are peaceful. And I think that even during the short period of time you are in Belarus, you will feel it."

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that he is ready to discuss with the US Secretary of State all issues on the agenda between the two countries today, "I'm ready to sincerely and honestly answer all the questions that are concerns of the United States of America. But you should know that you have come to a normal country where normal people live: people and a country who are ready to work

for stability and peace, at least in this region."

The President noted, "I have known you for a long time, despite not meeting you before. When you served at your previous post [as the Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency], I'm able to say we were involved in a number of operations together with the US special services," noted the Head of State.

He explained that those activities were related to the fight against terrorism and people trafficking. "We have a small but joint history of working for the sake of peace and the fight

against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Today you, as the US Secretary of State, and your leader, Donald Trump, pay great attention to this topic. As you can see, we have something in common, something which is very important for our people," concluded the Head of State.

During a conversation with the Belarusian leader, Mr. Pompeo noted constructive co-operation between Belarus and the United States in various fields, in particular, in countering terrorism. He said the United States appreciates the role of Belarus in this context. Mr. Pompeo added that the US also appreciates co-operation on issues of sovereignty and independence, "I hope that we can further develop our relations in the direction of investments so that Belarus has sovereignty and independence."

He noted that he has studied several reports on this issue and was aware of the long history of Belarusian-Russian relations. "But we are not talking about a choice between us and them. We're talking about diplomatic relations," emphasised the US Secretary of State.

It was decided that as part of the development of bilateral relations, ambassadors will be returned to the capitals of the two

countries after a 12-year break.

"In the near future, we'll appoint an ambassador. You will see that we are working to ensure your economic development, so that American enterprises come here, and people make an appropriate contribution to the development of their community, the creation of jobs. We are ready to support you in that direction," noted Mr. Pompeo.

The visit of the American delegation led by the US Secretary of State to our country was part of his Eurasian tour. In addition to meeting with the President of the Republic of Belarus, the distinguished American guest held a joint briefing with Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei and visited the High-Tech Park.

The US Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, was inspired by what he saw at the High-Tech Park of Belarus. Later, the politician wrote about this on his twitter account: 'Inspired by what I saw at Hi-Tech Park #Belarus. A great example of how Belarus can seize its extraordinary growth potential by embracing forward-looking economic policies and smart regulation. It's clear how impactful American investment can foster prosperity across the globe'.



BELTA

Results of the negotiations

After meeting with Aleksandr Lukashenko, Vladimir Makei and Michael R. Pompeo held a joint briefing for Belarusian and foreign journalists. Mr. Makei noted that the meeting of Mr. Pompeo with the President of Belarus took place in an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding. "The parties came to the conclusion that, in a number of areas, our approaches and interests coincide or overlap. The political will of the parties to further develop bilateral relations was noted."

"The significant and still underutilised potential for bilateral economic and investment collaboration was noted," added the Belarusian Foreign Minister. Emphasis is also placed on interaction between the law enforcement agencies of the two states. The parties confirmed their intention to continue dialogue on regional and international security issues. In particular, there was an

exchange of views on the situation in the region and prospects for co-operation between Belarus and NATO. The intention of Belarus to make efforts to maintain peace and security on the continent was noted.

The position of our country, according to Mr. Makei, is as follows: even despite certain disagreements between our states, there are a number of areas where we have a common interest and can liaise more effectively. "We had a long discussion on economic issues. Mr. Lukashenko said that Belarusians have their own country — sovereign and independent — and they cannot be part of any other state. The United States wants to help Belarus be a sovereign state," the Secretary of State stressed. "Our energy producers are ready to provide you with the necessary oil at 100 percent competitive prices. We're the largest energy producers in the world, and all you need to do is to contact us."

The US Secretary of State also noted successful co-operation between the countries in the field of security, which, he expects, will be further expanded. He went on to stress that diplomatic relations between Belarus and the USA have significantly improved. He recalled that recently the Belarusian side lifted restrictions on the number of diplomats in the US embassy, and now the countries intend to appoint their ambassadors. "This is already good news for the USA and Belarus," noted Mr. Pompeo.

"We fully support the desire of Belarus to make its own choices and play a constructive role in the region. You should not give in to any strong pressures, but you must determine your own priorities and that will be the best for you," he added.

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Tonnes of necessary cargo

The airport in Beijing accepted the Il-76MD military transport from Belarus. The airborne relief flight delivered humanitarian aid to the People's Republic of China: medicines and other medical supplies. The total weight of the cargo is 20 tonnes. The Head of State instructed to assist the PRC, which is now fighting the coronavirus nCov-2019.

By Dmitry Umpirovich

"4.5 tonnes of antibiotics most in demand for treating complications of a viral infection, more than 10 tonnes of disinfectants for various applications, protective equipment for medical personnel, in particular, gloves, masks and disposable clothing, as well as air disinfectants, were loaded on board," explained Health Minister Vladimir Karanik. "The cargo was formed in accordance with requests from the Chinese."

The decision to provide humanitarian assistance to China did not arise spontaneously. Vladimir Karanik underlined

that no one doubts the ability of the specialists of this country to control the situation. However, according to him, all resources are now concentrated in areas with the most unfavourable epidemiological conditions, "In other areas, periodically, including against the background of panic, excessive demand arises, which must be quickly met. And therefore, any help and reserves that are available to Chinese health care will be in demand."

Mr. Karanik noted that leading doctors from our country may soon go to China, including the chief specialist of the Health Ministry for infectious diseases, the chief anaes-

thetist-resuscitator, the chief pulmonologist, hygienist and specialist in the fight against especially dangerous infections in order to assess the situation and exchange views.

"It's necessary to understand that, at present, the virus has not been studied enough, and our specialists have extensive experience in combating infectious diseases, including particularly dangerous ones. This experience will be positive for us, because we will get an opportunity to analyse and choose the most optimal methods of preventing the importation of the virus into the country and combating it, if the infection reaches us," he said.

DIRECT SPEECH

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Belarus, Cui Qiming, noted the highest level of Belarussian-Chinese interaction and the strongest friendly ties. In particular, he said, "China and Belarus are good friends and sincere partners. In a special message to Xi Jinping, the President of the Republic of Belarus said that China and Belarus are reliable and loyal friends. The traditional friendship between the Chinese and Belarusian peoples has been there for 28 years, since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Our relationships are developing steadily and dynamically. The leaders of our



countries determined their course: Chairman Xi Jinping and President Aleksandr Lukashenko. These are the relationships of mutual trust, comprehensive strategic and mutually beneficial co-operation. We call them 'all-weather friendships'. Together we create a community of one destiny and a community of common interests. This is stipulated in an agreement on friendship and co-operation between our countries.

Our relations are a model for other countries of how interstate relations can develop on the basis of mutual respect, equal rights and mutual benefit. We greatly appreciate the results of such interaction between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus."

Dialogue on regional security problems

On the initiative of the Americans, the State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus — Andrei Ravkov — met with the Charge d’Affaires of the United States of America in Belarus, Jenifer Moore, with military attachés of the USA, Germany, and Poland accompanying her

The meeting touched upon matters of Belarus-USA co-operation, problems of international and regional security, considering plans to arrange the large-scale military exercise *Defender Europe 2020*, which will involve army

units from the USA and a number of European NATO member states. The foreign partners talked in detail about preparations to redeploy the army units ahead of the forthcoming exercise.

Jenifer Moore and the military attachés of NATO member states confirmed their readiness to make the *Defender Europe 2020* exercise as transparent as possible in the spirit of effective international agreements and commitments concerning trust and security measures.

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Think globally and act locally

Contacts with the regions help enhance co-operation between Belarus and the European Union, as noted by the Head of the European Union’s Delegation to Belarus — Dirk Schuebel — while taking part in the EU-Belarus Co-operation: Mogilev Region information meeting

Mogilev Region. A project in the power industry that is worth 700,000 Euros concluded in the Chausy District several days ago. In 2020, a business advice hub is set to open in Bykhov. It will provide guidance and advice to local residents on how to start and run a business. It will be a one-stop-shop for those who want to turn their business idea



Andriy Sazonov

“Regional development, environmental protection, promotion of small business and tourism, healthcare and social integration are among the most important areas of our co-operation. We focus on small and medium-sized towns because it is important to create conditions for their stable economic growth and development. Co-operation at the local level and contacts with the regions will help advance interaction between Belarus and the European Union,” said Dirk Schuebel.

So far, projects worth a total of over 2m Euros have been or are being implemented in the

into reality. The project budget will be around 100,000 Euros.

The Belarus Regional Investment and Competitiveness Programme for 2020-2024 provides for the allocation of 18m Euros for projects in the Mogilev, Vitebsk and Gomel regions. “Belarus and the EU are going through one of the best periods in their relations. In co-operation with the local authorities we can now implement projects that seemed impossible several years ago. Considerable work is in progress not only at national but also at local level,” said Mr. Schuebel.

About achievements and possibilities

By Natalia Yemelyanova

A presentation of the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park and a review of promising avenues of investment co-operation with Belarus have taken place in Moscow. The event — *Republic of Belarus: New Investment Opportunities* — was organised by the Association of European Businesses, which unites over 500 companies from 50 countries.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Russia, Vladimir Semashko, has taken part in the presentation. He noted that, as an open economy, Belarus trades with over 190 countries and occupies a decent position in many segments of the market. Belarus accounts for around one third of the global market of potash fertilisers and is also a top five producer of medium and large-capacity dump trucks, butter, cheese, and milk powder. The Ambassador talked about the country’s achievements in conventional industries — mechanical engineering, radio electronics, instrument engineering, petrochemical industry, metallurgy and agriculture — and promising industries such as information and communications technologies, microelectronics, pharmaceuticals, nano- and biotechnologies.

The Ambassador stressed



Vladimir Semashko

that the IT sector is a priority for Belarus. Belarus’ Hi-Tech Park is one of the largest IT clusters in Europe, with annual exports close to \$1.5bn. Another major innovative cluster will soon be set up in Belarus to focus on nano- and biotechnologies — Belbiograd.

According to Vladimir Semashko, Belarus is now a promising investment venue for building and developing a business. The country has created an effective system to support investors. Comprehensive work has been done to improve investment regulations. At present, almost the whole of Belarus represents an array of successfully operating different preferential regimes.

The First Deputy Head of the Administration of the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park, Igor Leshchenok, arranged a presentation of promising development areas in the Park, business operation terms, and preferential regimes for foreign investors. He re-

marked that, at present, the Park is home to nearly 60 resident companies from 16 countries, including China, Russia, Austria, Germany, Israel, Canada, the USA, Switzerland and the UAE, with the planned volume of investment in high-tech economy sectors in excess of \$1.2bn. The Park’s residents are guaranteed unprecedented preferences that are unparalleled in the Eurasian Economic Union, the European Union and Asia. As many as 18 countries have already started making products and providing services in the Park.

The Deputy Head of the Investor Support Department of the National Agency of Investment and Privatisation of Belarus, Aleksandr Kononchuk, presented detailed information about the investment climate, conditions and promising avenues for doing business in the country. Opinions about the prospects for mutually beneficial co-operation were exchanged. Opportunities for implementing bilateral projects with Belarusian companies generated strong interest among the participants of the event.

The presentation attracted about 40 participants from the Association of European Businesses, who represented business circles, consulting companies and financial institutions of Russia, the USA, the CIS states, the European Union, Southeast Asia and international organisations.



Movement towards each other

Belarus and Norway are working on visa facilitation and nuclear security co-operation agreements

By Olga Korneeva

The issues were discussed during Belarus-Norway ministerial consultations in Norway (previous consultations took place in Minsk in 2018). The Belarusian delegation was led by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Oleg Kravchenko, and Norway’s team was led by the State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry — Audun Halvorsen.



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The ministerial consultations touched on the development of political dialogue, co-operation in trade, economy and investment, the development of the legal framework and co-operation in international organisations — primarily, the OSCE and the UN. The talks also focused on the regional agenda and international security,

relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe and third countries.

“Keeping in mind the recent signing of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements between Belarus and the European Union, an agreement has been reached to promptly prepare the appropriate documents for signing between Belarus and Norway. The parties also hailed the efforts of the ministries of the two countries in co-ordinating the draft agreement on co-operation in nuclear security,” announced the Ministry’s press service.

The diplomats praised the recent vibrant co-operation between Belarus and Norway, including in trade, emphasising a mutually-beneficial and balanced trade turnover. They stressed their readiness to

take joint efforts to address any emerging issues and also use new opportunities to expand liaisons.

Oleg Kravchenko also spoke at the Belarusian-Norwegian business breakfast meeting prior to the ministerial consultations. The major topic of the event was the export of Belarusian IT services to Norway. Attending the event were about 50 business representatives of Norway, including the Investment Fund for North-West Russia and Eastern Europe. Protocols on co-operation were signed between the Belarusian National Biotechnology Corporation and Nordic Molecule Group AS for the production and sales of compound fish feed and other biotechnological products.

Belarus and Mongolia to develop co-operation in the field of transport and logistics

By Svetlana Mikhovich

Transport agencies of Belarus and Mongolia — represented by Belarus' Transport and Communications Minister Aleksei Avramenko and Mongolian Road and Transport Development Minister Byambasuren Enkh-Amgalan — have signed a memorandum on co-operation in Minsk.

The document is expected to last for five years and aims to develop co-operation and implement joint projects on a mutually beneficial and equal basis. The free exchange of information and experience, the introduction of advanced technologies, collaboration in the fields of education and science and the creation of a simplified system for conducting inspections related to the transportation of goods between countries are also in focus.

Roads intertwine



mintrans.gov.by

After the talks, Mr. Avramenko said, "Belarus and Mongolia have good relations — especially if we're talking about joint projects in the field of transport." In particular, co-operation between the two countries in the field of railway transport is steadily developing. Last year, the Belarus-Mongolia route transported over 50,000 tonnes of

cargo (an increase of 7 percent compared to 2018). "At the same time, we are now admitting the presence of reserves in terms of increasing transit by rail. Container transportation is a primary focus," he added.

Last year, the China-Europe link transited more than 13,000 containers in the twenty-foot category via Mongolia

and Belarus. At the same time, there are opportunities for a considerable increase in the volume of container traffic.

One of the topics of conversation was the development of road transport. Belarus and Mongolia are now exchanging the universal permits necessary for carriers to operate. The quota for 2019 for Belarusian and Mongolian carriers was 600 permits, and the Mongolians allocated an additional 200. At the same time, Belarusians used 744 permits (an increase of almost 25 percent), and Mongolian carriers used 334 permits (an increase of more than 50 percent). The Ministry of Transport noted that there are no problematic issues for Belarusian carriers in this area.

Among the issues discussed were a number of proposals in the aviation sector and for the training of specialists. The Mongolians are interested in purchasing Belarusian road construction and MAZ equipment. Foreign partners are also interested in the experience of Belarus on issues related to the maintenance and repair of roads.

Quarry conquerors

BelAZ shipping first batch of dump trucks to India

By Irina Sergeeva

The first batch includes eight BelAZ '7513' dump trucks which make a part of a major contract for the delivery of 77 haul trucks signed by the Belarusian company with Coal India Limited in October 2019.

The company staff note, "The Indian market is a promising area for BelAZ to explore. The shipment of dump trucks to the coal quarry Gevra represents the first confident step towards a stronger BelAZ presence in India."

The state-run company Coal India Limited accounts for around 80 percent of coal mining in India and is the world's second largest coal mining company. Over 500m tonnes of coal is mined in India every year. The Indian Government has set a task to increase this figure to 1bn tonnes by 2025.

A modern maintenance centre for BelAZ trucks is being built near the

quarry. In line with the contract, BelAZ will offer spare parts and maintenance for eight years.

It's recently been announced that the average load capacity of BelAZ trucks sold last year was 123 tonnes — which is the highest annual figure over the years of the company's operation. Dump trucks of the '7513' series are popular with mining companies all over the world. The model accounted for almost 30 percent of the total number of BelAZ vehicles sold in 2019.

The public joint-stock company BelAZ JSC is the managing company of the holding company BelAZ. BelAZ is the world's leading manufacturer of haul trucks and transport equipment for the mining and civil engineering industries as well as other heavy transport vehicles. The company makes the world's largest dump truck with a load capacity of 450 tonnes.

The company's foreign trade partnership reached 48 countries last year and the top five partners by share of foreign trade turnover (exports and imports) included Russia, the UK, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the USA.

Presenting the country in Spain

Belarus' national stand represented at the FITUR 2020 International Tourism Trade Fair held in Madrid in late January

By Natalia Yemelyanova

According to the National Tourism Agency, Belarus was represented at the expo by such travel agencies as Prime Tour, Vokrug Sveta and Viapol. Their specialists provided detailed and visual information about the country's tourism opportunities, its natural resources, historical and cultural heritage. Representatives of the travel agencies also presented information about medical spa and recuperation services in Belarus, business, healthcare, sports and other types of tourism, individual and group tours.

FITUR 2020 featured over 100 stands from the travel agencies from 165 countries.

This year, Belarus' tourist potential will be presented at 17 international tourism exhibitions.



belarustourism.by



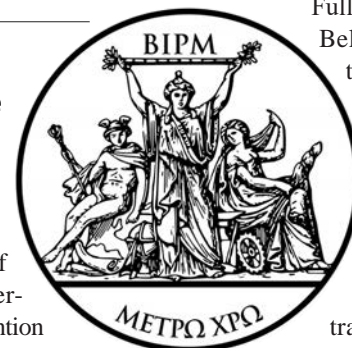
eurasia.expert

Comparing standards

By Olga Korneeva

Belarus becomes full member of the Metre Convention where it has been an associate since 2003

According to the Belarusian State Institute of Metrology, full membership of the Metre Convention offers great opportunities for national metrology and industry. Being a full member of the convention and an active participant of the general conferences on weights and measures, Belarus will be able to take part in key comparison tests at the highest level and work on technical committees of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM).



Full membership will enable Belarus to compare its national standards with international ones and get them internationally recognised. Measurements of quantity and quality of raw materials and products and safety parameters for transport and the environment are taken into account in international trade and economic co-operation.

The Metre Convention is an international treaty that was signed by 17 countries in Paris in 1875. Since then, 62 more countries have joined the convention as full members and 40 countries as associates.



Building a new type of garden

The first kindergarten in the Brest Region has recently opened in Drogichin — built into a multi-storey residential building

By Irina Sergeeva

An unusual five-story building was erected in an actively developing residential district, in the northwest of the city. Four floors of the building are occupied by apartments, while the ground floor is reserved for the kindergarten. The construction cost was approximately \$1m.

The institution will be attended by 60 children: there will be three groups of 20 each. There is a separate entrance, a fenced area with a large platform for exercise, entertainment and sports.

Anatoly Lis, the Chairman of the Brest Regional Executive Committee, came to congratulate the teachers, parents and children on this significant event. He explained why such a solution is beneficial for cities where the problem of lack of places in kindergartens is especially acute. “Last year, 14,500

children were born in the Brest Region. The necessary conditions must be created for them. This issue is especially relevant for new residential districts. A kindergarten built into a residential building is a good type of preschool. Firstly, it is compact and located next to housing. Secondly, such a kindergarten is much cheaper than if it was in an independent building. Thirdly, even if in the future the preschool institution loses demand, the premises can be easily redesigned, for example, into a shopping facility,” he noted.

The new kindergarten is in no way inferior to a usual preschool institution, as it meets all the required standards. Based on this facility, the technology for further work on similar projects will be worked on.

In the future, kindergartens built into residential buildings are planned to be built in Brest, Baranovichi and Pinsk.



BELTA



BELTA

By Igor Svetlov

Director General Pavel Sluchak has explained that the company is growing with new manufacturing divisions. A new shop is being built and is expected to open this year. Teams responsible for repairing electric equipment, aviation weapons and equipment will then move into the new premises. It will be a large shop, three floors in some places. The plant is undergoing modernisation

in line with the Belarusian President’s Decree ‘On the Development of the Orsha District’. The company has started repairing more Mi-24 helicopters for the Belarusian Defence Ministry since the state took over the management of the company.

“The plant now operates in strict compliance with its development programme. All the financial, economic and social targets were hit last year. The company operated in the black.

Modernisation meets plan

Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant to build a new fitting and machining shop this year

Production figures increased considerably, while salaries almost doubled,” the official noted.

The Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant provides services domestically and to foreign partners from African and Asian countries. The company has its hands full for the year. Representatives of the Belarusian army came to the Orsha Aircraft Repair Plant last week to perform acceptance trials of a Mi-24 helicopter the company had repaired. After turnaround maintenance, the repaired hardware gets a new lease of life, even the paintwork is renewed in a new coating chamber.

Major Dmitry Chopko of the Belarusian Air Force noted that the army is satisfied with the Orsha Aircraft Re-

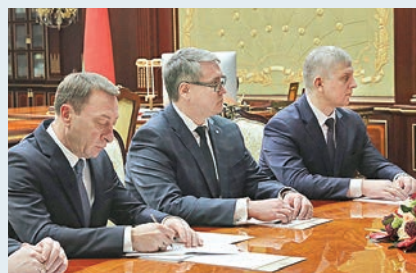
pair Plant’s work and the quality gets better every time. “Acceptance trials represent a great deal of work. Six specialists are involved, with each of them taking care of his own area of expertise,” said the officer.



NEWS IN BRIEF

President Aleksandr Lukashenko makes new appointments

Among the most significant is the appointment of a new Deputy Head of the Belarus’ President Administration (overseeing economic issues): the post went to the Director of the Institute of Economics of the National Academy of Sciences, Valery Belsky (right in



the photo). During the initial stage, his predecessor Nikolai Snopkov (left in the photo) — who’s been appointed the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the People’s Republic of China — will help and support him. Through them, the President set serious tasks for the entire economic bloc, which has to plan work for the next five years.

Pinsk takes the baton of the youth capital of Belarus from Orsha

Youth capital is an initiative born in the Year of Youth; many cities around the country responded to it. This large-scale creative, cultural and educational project is a tradition aimed at the development of cities in



Belarus. The first youth capital was the city of Baranovichi, then Polotsk, Mogilev and Orsha. This year, Pinsk has taken the baton. This old city is a cultural and industrial centre of modern Belarusian Polesie.

Various Republican events will be held in the youth capital throughout the year, the city will become a platform for youth projects.

Unique veterinary drug developed at Belarusian State University

The ‘Tsipropig’ veterinary medicine has no analogues worldwide and is a universal remedy for the prevention and treatment of breeding pigs’ diseases. It is used as an injection solution with antibacterial, antiviral,



immunomodulating and anti-stress properties. Active use of the drug will stabilise the epizootic situation in the country and will help reduce the incidence of disease by 40-60 percent and increase the safety of livestock by 20-30 percent.

At the moment, the drug is undergoing registration at the Belarusian State Veterinary Centre.

Belarus to be involved in exercises in the format of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in 2020

Several joint exercises are planned for all collective security regions. During the *Indestructible Brotherhood* command-and-staff exercise — which will be held in the Eastern European region of collective security, issues of the use



of peacekeeping forces in the interests of maintaining international peace and security will be worked out.

In general, the CSTO exercises will be held in Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. Last year, the CSTO exercises were held in three countries: Belarus, Russia and Tajikistan, involving about 10,000 people and 1,900 units of weapons and equipment.



Written word prevails

27th Minsk International Book Fair has many surprises — such as augmented reality, culinary secrets and those of elite troops



By Oksana Nevmerzhitskaya

Avid readers who like to flip through pages and admire the typographic smell of the printed sheet, are interested in the history of creating books, follow the appearance and creative evolution of writers and the novelties of world literature, may enjoy the current event. A few days ago, the 27th Minsk International Book Fair opened its doors, representing over 300 participants from 30 countries who have put their literary achievements on show. The organisers have scheduled many events — such as meetings with writers, publishers, artists, presentations of new books, round table discussions, autograph sessions and much more.

The meeting place cannot be changed

The main venue of the largest book forum is at the administrative complex in 14 Pobediteley Avenue. In addition, interesting events related to the world of books are planned in corresponding stores, libraries and museums.

For the convenience of visitors, a free 'Poetry' bus is running from Nemiga metro station to the exhibition complex during all five days of the exhibition. The Union of Writers of Belarus and the Belarusian Republican Youth Union have organised recitations of poems during the trip along the route.

Open book

This year, the fair is held under the *Belarus is an Open Book* motto, symbolising the constant hospitality of our country, its readiness for dialogue, openness to new opportunities and achievements.



Not a single day without a line

The *Writer and Time* international symposium of literary people will traditionally become a landmark event of the book exhibition. Representatives of 25 countries, including Austria, the United Kingdom, India, Iran, the United States, Palestine and Mongolia have confirmed their participation.

The main themes of the exhibition are: the Year of the Small Homeland, the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory and Vladimir Korotkevich's jubilee.

Representatives of 30 countries take part in the book forum. All have brought many new products and promised interesting meetings with top writers. The Russian Federation is an honorary guest. A 225-square-metre platform has been provided for its exposition. The United States is the central exhibitor, with 100 square metres

provided for their new books.

The National Library, the Presidential Library, and the National Book Chamber of Belarus have their expositions on the improvised pages of the stand. A large-scale platform for meetings with authors has been provided by the Union of Writers of Belarus. The book keeps up with the times: a site is open for interactive communication and an important place here is occupied by audiobooks and augmented reality in books.

Creative movement schedule

● **Day 1:** opening of working stands, presentation of exhibitors, meetings with top writers and stars from the socio-political circle. The exhibition is visited by officials, heads of state administration bodies and representatives of diplomatic missions.

Highlight: Presentation of military stories about heroes grouped by military branches, *'Constellation of Heroes of the Belarusian Land'*.

● **'Thoughts Aloud' author's day:** Writers Vyacheslav Bondarenko, Ivan Antonovich, Igor Marzalyuk, Andrey Korol, Aleksandr Radkov and others will present their books to visitors.

Highlight: Igor Marzalyuk — a historian, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Education, Culture and Science of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus — will present his *'100 Years of the BSSR. Realities and Myths'* book.

On a competitive basis

The winners of the *Art of the Book* contest will receive diplomas. This year, more than 200 books have been submitted to the jury. The competition is held in 17 categories, also featuring the 'Triumph' Grand Prix.

● **'Belarus is an Open Book' day:** presentations of creative projects dedicated to the Year of the Small Homeland and 75th anniversary of the Great Victory.

Highlight: The project by cook Yelena Mikulchik which reveals the long-standing traditions and secrets of our national cuisine.

The *'Autographs'* project — a collection of signatures of the most famous writers of Belarus and other countries prepared in the Borisov District — will continue: autographs of all the writers who have come to the exhibition this year and will attend in the following years are planned to be collected.

● **'Tip-Top' children's day** is dedicated to book projects for children and parents, as well as for the social network Tiktok. Interactive performances will be held at one of the exhibition centre's venues.

● **On the closing day,** the exhibition is not slowing down: meetings and presentations are planned. The Presidential Library will present books dedicated to the special forces of the country's Armed Forces, while the field kitchen complete with soldiers' porridge will help enhance the visitors' impressions.

Highlight: *'The Last of the 'Jack' Group'* book of memoirs — by a veteran of the Great Patriotic War, former military intelligence officer Gennady Yushkevich — will be presented.

Fascinating wildlife of Belarus

France's Nomades joins University of Lorraine to make a documentary about Belarus' wildlife

By Svetlana Savelieva

The documentary will feature Belarus' nature reserves and their inhabitants: wolves, lynxes, and bears. The film will aim to show how people and predators can coexist. "Most French people fear predators. They believe that it is impossible for them to coexist with people. We would like to prove



them wrong and show that predators do not have a significant negative influence on people's lives through Belarus' example," said Alain Chretien, one of the authors of the project, as he met with senior officials of the Forestry Ministry of Belarus.

If the Belarusian side gives the green light to the project, the shooting will take place in the Naliboki Reserve and the Berezinky Biosphere Reserve. Alain Chretien noted that Belarusian nature reserves differ from French ones. "Of course, there are specially protected natural areas in France, including very beautiful forests. But

there are no predators there, while Belarus has all of them. This is why we would like to shoot the film here," he added.

The Belarusian Forestry Ministry is willing to assist the company with the project, the First Deputy Forestry Minister — Valentin Shatravko — noted. "Belarus is proud of its nature and indeed has something to show Europeans," he said.

The French company intends to obtain all the necessary approvals and start shooting the film in the near future. The documentary is expected to be aired on French national television.

Programming is essential

With two pilot projects, forty thousand participants and a focus on the regions: the High-Tech Park is expanding its educational programmes



Aleksey Vyazmitinov

By Veronika Malyshchits

The High-Tech Park (HTP) is aware of the need for digital education in the country. Its residents did not immediately become experienced programmers, they also once sat at a school desk. As HTP Director Vsevolod Yanchevsky says, a relationship with those who educate future specialists is needed. At present, about 1,500 teachers teach children programming in more than 1,000 schools in the country. Since last week, fifth and sixth graders from the towns of Bereza, Stolin, Nesvizh, Borisov, Orsha, Dokshitsy, Smorgon and others have begun to not only programme, but also create various technological devices. This is a pilot educational project entitled *Programming Microcontrollers in the Scratch Environment*. This year, 27 educational institutions and 28 teachers will take part in it.

Little assistant

The word 'Scratch' is familiar to many schoolchildren. And those who are especially enthusiastic about programmes, technology and gadgets create their own products during optional courses: video games, cartoons, music videos, etc.

"The High-Tech Park, together with the Ministry of Education, is launching an interesting new initiative that complements a large project that has existed for many years: teaching the Scratch programming language to schoolchildren. Now we want to ensure that youngsters learn not only programming, but also



acquire engineering and design skills. The most important event in the world is the unification of the virtual and real worlds. We'd like our students to learn how to use software, as well as hardware. Programmes are written not for the sake of it, but to use them to manage real things in the real world," explains HTP Director Vsevolod Yanchevsky.

Four HTP resident companies have supported the project financially by purchasing teaching materials and kits, which include microcontrollers and necessary components, and donating them to schools. To keep the classes interesting, the High-Tech Park has developed the *Micro Programming: Bit in the Scratch Environment* educational programme.

The project participants were determined by a competition between hun-

dreds of applicants. The experience of each teacher was taken into account, as well as the material and technical equipment of the school. Last year, HTP residents equipped 70 educational institutions across the country.

The developers of the training sets are confident that children will have no difficulties with the programming. They say that these are the simplest and most basic skills in this area.

The microcontroller is a micro-computer, which includes a basic set of sensors. In general, microcontrollers are everywhere: in washing machines, TV sets, slow cookers and even in modern cars. In practice, pupils will be able to create models of robotic manipulators, unmanned vehicles and self-propelled robots, enabling them

to understand how programming can be applied to solving practical problems. Talented children will later be able to find jobs in engineering, machine building and technology.

Another goal of the new project is to create a community of teachers who have knowledge of the basics of programming in both the Python and Scratch languages.

Both users and creators

HTP Deputy Director Aleksandr Martinkevich noted that subject teachers and primary school teachers are now taking online courses. It's very important for them to be shown how to teach children and how interesting it is. He added, "The rapid development of technology affects the system of education. We used to ride in horse-drawn carts, then cars, today we've moved to electric cars, but we still sit at school desks. In fact, people haven't changed in this respect in 150 years. From birth to seven years, the maximum development of the brain occurs. If a child begins to learn to read and write from the age of five, this is wrong. We should not talk about early learning, but about early development. Regardless of whether you will be a programmer, understanding the basics of computer science helps make life easier. The goal of all our educational programmes is the development of logical and algorithmic thinking. The latter is being developed at the expense of the subject of 'Computer Science'."

Stars don't go out

Belarus honours the memory of its heroic past. This year, the 55th international campaign — *The Star Expedition* — is dedicated to the 75th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. About 300 people have taken part in it: students and teachers of six universities from Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

By Olga Kruchenkova

The campaign started on last Monday of January in Minsk. Within four days, students, consisting of nine delegations, visited nine districts of Belarus. The areas were not chosen by chance: foreign guests travelled to the points where their countrymen were buried. So, fifteen participants of the action were welcomed in the village of Shapury, in the Vitebsk Region. Here is the largest mass grave of Soviet soldiers and partisans in Belarus (17,311 people who died during the war are buried in the Vitebsk Region).

Among those who arrived was the great-grandson of Kamali Zhuvanshpayev, buried at the memorial complex. A student of the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Adil Yeginbai, doesn't hide his emotions, "It's very exciting to be here. I'm the first of my family who's managed to come to honour the

memory of my ancestor. The Zhuvanshpayev family experienced a great tragedy during the war: all four sons who went to the front died. For 75 years the descendants searched for the burial places of their relatives. It's an honour for me to visit the grave of my great-grandfather. He went to war on August 8th, 1941 and died in the spring of 1944. Thank you so much for keeping in your memory everything that is sacred to us."

Students laid flowers at the memorial and took part in another action, entitled *The Glory of the Shared Victory!* The soil from the military burial in the Vitebsk District will be transferred to the crypt kept in the All Saints' Church.

Veronika Skok, a Candidate of Historical Sciences and the Dean of the History Faculty at the Belarusian State Pedagogical University, noted that May 9th is a special holiday for Belarus, "There was no more tragic and fateful event in the history



Anton Stepanishchey

Adil Yeginbai

of mankind than the Second World War. The main lessons of the Victory are unity, courage, solidarity and friendship. Our ancestors won because they were together, shoulder to shoulder."

Today, the international star squads comprise Russians and Belarusians, Uzbeks and Kazakhs — great-grandchildren of those who defended our right for a peaceful sky at the cost of their lives. *The Star Expedition* is a tribute of honour, a relay race of memory, a tradition that is carefully passed on from generation to generation at our university.

The Star Expedition along places of military and labour glory of the Belarusian people has been held since 1966. Its organiser is Belarus' Maksim Tank State Pedagogical University. This year, its participants visited the Borisov, Vileika, Pukhovichi, Slutsk, Soligorsk, Pinsk, Orsha, Smorgon and Osipovich districts. They met with veterans of the Great Patriotic War, rendered them patronage, held rallies and laid flowers at the mass graves of soldiers and civilians who died during the war.

On a rainy evening of dampened festivities, its epoch-making departure stirred hopes and fears, but also relief that the ordeal is finally over

To the recorded peals of Big Ben and the gentle fluttering of Union Jacks, Britain bade farewell to the European Union at 11 pm last Friday, severing ties to the world's largest trading bloc after nearly half a century and embarking on an uncertain future as a midsize economy off the coast of Europe.

It's a departure that will upend settled relations in virtually all areas of society, the economy and security matters, while confronting Britain with new questions of national identity. Three and a half years after the former prime minister, Theresa May, proclaimed that 'Brexit means Brexit', the British Government will finally have to decide precisely what that means.

Britain must still negotiate its future trade relations with the European Union, a thorny process that could take through the end of the year, or longer.

On Friday, the departure elicited both hope and trepidation from Britons. Many simply were relieved that the bitter and divisive debate over Brexit is over.

"This is the moment when the dawn breaks, and the curtain goes up on a new act in our great national drama," said Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in an address to the nation that he also posted on his Twitter account. Brexit, he said, was a chance to 'spread hope and opportunity to every part of the UK'.

Mr. Johnson, whose vow to 'Get Brexit Done' won him a commanding majority in elections, vowed to knit together a country that had been split geographically and generationally by the Brexit debate. Even the future of the UK now seemed uncertain, with Scotland threatening to renew its drive for independence and Northern Ireland musing about unification with Ireland.

At the stroke of Brexit Britain steps into new dawn



REUTERS

Tokyo 2020 to power Olympic torch with hydrogen for first time

Hydrogen will be used for the first time to power the Olympic torch during its journey through Japan, organisers said, as part of Tokyo 2020's efforts to hold an environmentally friendly Games



Organisers aim to offset all carbon emissions generated during the Games and also use the Olympics to boost awareness of environmental issues in Japan.

The Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee said certain stages of the torch relay will use hydrogen, which emits no carbon dioxide when it is burned, and it will also fuel the ceremonial Olympic Cauldron featuring in the Games' opening and closing ceremonies.

Hydrogen will be used to power the torch on its journey through the prefectures of Fukushima and Aichi, as well as parts of Tokyo, with gas used in other stages of the relay.

"During its preparations for the Games, Tokyo 2020 has consistently promoted energy conservation and the use of renewable energy with the aim of supporting the realisation of a carbon-neutral society," the organisers said in a statement.

About 500 hydrogen-powered fuel cell vehicles will also be used during the Olympics, which run from July 24th to August 9th.

Other initiatives to cut the environmental impact of the Games include beds made from recyclable cardboard in the athletes' village, Olympic medals made from recycled consumer electronics and the torches themselves, formed of aluminium waste.

The art of buildings

After thousands of public votes, the winners of the Art of Building Photographer of the Year 2019 have been announced

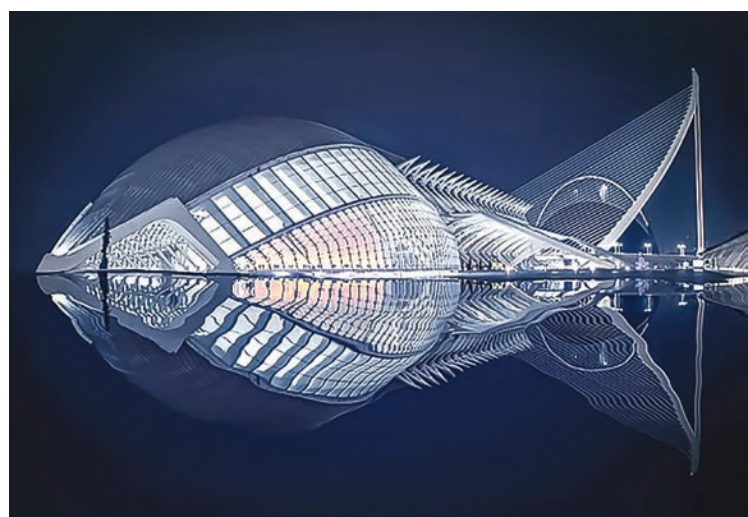
The competition, run by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), celebrates the creativity of the construction industry and the built world around us.

Judges voted for Pedro Luis Ajuriaguerra Saiz's photograph entitled *Fish*, that shows Valencia's science museum over a body of water. The Spaniard

said, "Due to the reflection of the water at night, the architecture of the buildings shows us the figure of a fish, perhaps prehistoric with its heart still alive."

The Public Choice Award was won by Russian photographer Aleksandr Bormotin. His image of the futuristic Savelovskaya metro station in Moscow gained 30 percent of the vote. This category is decided by online voting.

Photographs of window cleaners on a building in Abu Dhabi, an aerial shot of Wrocław's National Forum of Music and a minimalist view of London across the Thames made the final shortlist of twelve.



in5.googleusercontent.com

French firefighters scuffle with police during protests in Paris



s.france24.com

Thousands of firefighters across France have travelled to Paris to join a protest calling for better working conditions and a rise in risk pay

Videos of the protest posted to social media showed firefighters responding to tear gas being fired at them by police, and scuffles with officers using their batons.

Firecrackers could also be heard being deployed, while orange flares doused parts of the protest route in an orange glow.

According to the Paris police department, officers intervened after several hundred protesters broke away from the main procession,

while others attempted to break down safety barriers keeping them on course.

"Respect for the rules applies to everyone, whatever the nature of the event," the force said alongside a video of protesters who appear to ram a barrier.

The demonstration, which comes after similar action in October, was organised to call for a rise in firefighters' risk pay — something that hasn't been increased since 1990 — from 19 percent of their salary to 25 percent.

They were also calling for better recognition of the riskiness of their profession, and a response to the number of attacks against personnel — which they say are on the rise.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

More than landscapes

The National Art Museum has presented an exhibition of paintings by Konstantin Kachan: *Enchanted with the Motherland*. This series of works has been nominated for the 2020 State Award. The author's lyrical landscapes with views of nature, images of temples, monasteries and other architectural monuments evoke feelings of patriotism and nostalgia for their small homeland among Belarusians, and they certainly inspire foreign viewers to travel around our country.



By Lyudmila Kovaleva

Artist Konstantin Kachan has long been named a promoter of the Belarusian land. His paintings not merely depict fields and forests: each work radiates the atmosphere of a particular town, a unique flavour of provincial life, the charm of ancient architectural monuments.

“It is not enough for me, as a naturalist, to convey the beauty of nature. I'm looking for something more. Nature in my paintings is like scenery in a theatre. Man is always at the forefront,” the artist explains.

Konstantin is attracted by provincial small-town life. As a child, he felt its originality and enchantment as he was born and grew up in the village of Lavrishevo in the Novogrudok District. “Lavrishevo is a historic place. In the 13th century, one of the first Orthodox monasteries in Belarus was built here — which is now being revived. I remember discovering the unique world of provincial life bit by bit. I remember the smell of incense in church and how I first went with my family to Novogrudok and my heart was taken by the castle ruins, urban architecture, the clatter of the iron rims of a cart on the stone pavement. All these childhood memories still live inside me — exciting my soul and inspiring the birth of unique images,” he says.

The landscapes of his native Novogrudok District occupy a special place in the artist's work. However, Mr. Kachan believes every corner of Belarus is amazing. He knows it well since, over several decades, he has visited perhaps every Belarusian small town.

Konstantin Kachan seems to stop time with his pictures, which feature narrow country roads, wooden sheds, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches... “We've stepped into the epoch of globalisation. Centuries-old traditions are now being violated and we are following other laws. Wooden houses are covered over and stone roads are replaced with asphalt... It's convenient but the authenticity is lost,” says the artist.

True, many people lack authenticity and, with this in mind, Konstantin Kachan's art gal-



lery in Novogrudok and exhibitions of his works are touring the country, especially in the Year of Small Homeland, and they always attract a large number of visitors.

Konstantin Kachan's pictures are kept at the National Art Museum, the National Centre of Contemporary Arts, the archives of the Russian Culture Ministry, the State Tretyakov Gallery, the Belarusian Union of Artists' archive and private collections all over the world. His paintings depicting the life of provincial Belarusian towns are often bought by our compatriots living abroad, who say that Mr. Kachan's works help them feel connected to their homeland.

The exhibition at the National Art Museum presents about 60 paintings by Konstantin Kachan from different years — all created during his trips through Belarus. Accordingly, visitors may easily find their small homeland depicted in them. The exhibition will run until March 15th.

DIRECT SPEECH

Gleb Otchik, Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Artists:

Artist Konstantin Kachan is unique in that he constantly communicates with nature, drawing from it. After all, many people prefer to work in workshops and from photos. I am amazed by his work-efficiency and sincerity. He tirelessly searches for plots and motives — which is rare in our modern times. Our new information age dictates other approaches. We have many landscape artists, but Mr. Kachan has his own language, his own mystery. His paintings attract viewers, make people stop, think about the past and the present.

Svetlana Aneiko, Deputy Director General of the National Art Museum:

Thanks to the artist's works, every viewer has an opportunity to experience the beauty of small parts of our country, to see what, perhaps, in the daily rhythm of life remains unnoticed, because it is not so sophisticated and spectacular. The master's works reflect the poetry of Belarusian nature, the architectural details in the natural environment, and the organic life of the Belarusian village. That's why they are so interesting to the audiences and find a wide response from the public all over the country.

Frants Korzun, researcher at the National Art Museum's Exhibition Department and curator of the *Enchanted with the Motherland* exhibition:

His works attract admiration with their special atmosphere. Many recognise cities and towns where they were born. The artist's style is distinguished by the plasticity of the pictorial texture, plot, compositional harmony, completeness of images, and coloristic integrity.

First-hand details of the *X Factor* project in Belarus

By Viktoria Popova

Last week, the National State Television and Radio Company announced the release of the licensed show *X Factor*. The popular project was invented in Britain by Simon Cowell in 2004; since then, the show has been growing confidently around the world and today more than 50 countries have acquired a license to show it.

Mr. Cowell's right-hand man, executive producer Jonathan Bullen, arrived in Minsk last week to share his wealth of experience with our television crew. From the very first day and for the next seven years, Bullen was the producer of *X Factor* in England, then for three years he worked on the production of the show in the USA. Recently, he has been travelling around the world, passing hand-to-hand the rules of the 'X Factor production Bible'. This is 500 pages of type-written text, which considers every frame and every reaction from a jury member or participant. We asked Jonathan a few questions. The first thing that interested us was: What do the copyright holders themselves expect from a show in Belarus?

Do not listen to the voice — listen to the personality

"We are happy that *X Factor* has come to Belarus, and we want to find the best performers in your country," says Jonathan Bullen. "The most important thing that people should know about this show is that the casting has already begun! We're absolutely open to everyone, for people of any age, starting from 16 years and above, even your grandmother can participate in the project if she has a fantastic voice. People often ask me who we expect to see in the auditions. For myself, in the first place I define it as people with a wow factor. Those who go on stage to sing, and we both watch and say: 'Wow! This is an amazing artist!' So, we're not necessarily looking for those who sing well. We're looking for artists with great personality and charm, most importantly, the personality plus the voice of those who take the stage and immediately make the audience fall in love with them. Look at the Grammy 2020 triumph Billie Eilish. I mentioned her at a lecture for the Belarusian casting team yesterday; she is not an outstanding singer, but she is different, her unique personality has helped her make millions of people around the

The contract signed and the deadlines set



cdn0.twimg.com

Chairman of National State Television and Radio Company, Ivan Eismont:

Why not the 'Golos'? Firstly, it would be wrong if we had two such shows in our country on two channels. The ONT TV Channel has been broadcasting the Russian version for a long time and this programme has a great history in our country. Suddenly to appear with the same project? It makes no sense. And people did not watch 'X Factor' in our country, except for those who are really passionate about this show and watch it on the Internet. Who will we put on the jury? It's a complex question and, perhaps, the most important. The British have probably told you that contracts with superstars cost millions of US Dollars for projects in some countries, and in the end they uttered



20 words per episode on air — and it was a failure and wasted money. The British insist that the jury does not necessarily have to comprise of well-known artists or composers, it must be primarily interesting people. There is an option to take a superstar from Russia — this is a good move in the hope that the star will ensure the future of the show. But what will the other three judges do against such a background? In fact, we have been negotiating and discussing this issue in recent days, and so far I have no answer. One thing I can tell you for sure is that, in mid-March, we start shooting castings in cities. We'll start in Grodno. Let's see how it goes. We must try to make it a success.

world fall in love with her. If, thanks to the *X Factor*, we find a new Billie Eilish in Belarus, I'll be happy, and we'll consider our mission accomplished. But get it right, *X Factor* is not a karaoke show, we don't want a second Whitney Houston or Adele, we are waiting for unique people, each with their own twist. Indeed, there are no restrictions on genres, even if you are a classical singer but are able to perform pop songs — then you're welcome to our casting."

You know, Jonathan, Belarusians are a very modest nation. For the casting team it will be a difficult task to find good participants for the show.

And I have an answer: the British are also not very emotional, nevertheless the 'X Factor' helps them open up one hundred percent. The skills that we develop for those who select the participants are useful here. They should help people trust the team. We never say to those who come to the audition: 'You look stupid'. We say: 'Be yourself!' Every time



Vitaly Pivovarchik

Jonathan Bullen and Anne Kirsipuu

'X Factor' starts in a new region, we expect first of all that artists through their songs will be able to show their national character. If there are any emotional features that can be expressed in a song, this is cool. And the project's ultimate goal is to find talent in the smallest towns across Belarus, people who sing at home, in a church, school or in the house of culture, and whose existence no one knows about. And within just a season we turn them into superstars so that their songs lead the charts.

Money but not crazy amounts

Anne Kirsipuu, Format Sales Director for the CIS & Baltic States, probably best knows the answer to the question on how much did the National State Television and Radio Company spend to purchase the *X Factor* franchise.

"The information in your press about the approximate cost of the *Golos* (Voice) show, and the *X Factor* similar to it, is absolutely implausible. Formats are sold according to the level of income in a particular country. For Belarus, the purchase of *X Factor* costs money, but not crazy amounts, by no means millions of US Dollars. It's about more than money. I can't name a specific amount — this is a trade secret," she says.

All taxpayers breathed a sigh of relief at that moment. Anne, do you believe in the success of the project in Belarus?

The National State Television and Radio Company is an excellent partner. Two and a half years ago, we began to negotiate with it on this project. Since the contract is complex, several years for approval is quite normal practice. We are impressed by the level of professionalism of our Belarusian colleagues, their understanding of legal and creative procedures. Your technical capabilities allow you to shoot shows of any complexity here — everything is in place. So, the contract has been signed and the deadlines have been set. Our role with Jonathan today is more help than control. The show has worked in more than fifty countries, there is a certain format in which everything is provided for, and it cannot be altered. Yesterday, for example, together with the casting team, we spent the whole day analysing information on how and where it is good to find participants for the project, what to look for, and how to work with them further. The work ahead is considerable, but very interesting.

ACCENT

For 16 years, the *X Factor* project has been implemented in 56 countries; more than 500 million viewers have watched it. The format is mostly popular in England, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, Lithuania, Ukraine and Georgia. Each episode's videos on YouTube regularly attract millions of people.

Belarusians become European indoor hockey champions for the first time

By Tatiana Pastushenko

“We will fight for victory, we want to become champions!” said our women’s team at the start of the EuroHockey Indoor Championship, recently hosted by Minsk. Their words proved true. After beating the unyielding Dutch in the final match, the Belarusians won gold at the continental forum for the first time in history.

The path to the top of the medal podium for our girls was not easy. In the group stage, they proved confident against teams from Austria and Switzerland but lost to the Netherlands. In the semi-finals, the Belarusians played against no less formidable opponents: the world ranking leaders — the Germans — who had won the European championships 15 times. Our girls won — 5:2. The final, in which our team once again met the Dutch, was the highlight of the tournament.

Having missed the ball in their own goal in the first quarter, the Belarusians continued to attack and, just a few seconds before the final whistle, they equalised thanks to a goal by Marina Nikitina. The match turned into a series of shoot-outs. Emotions on the court were high and, after getting ahead, the Belarusians ran to celebrate the victory to the goalkeeper of our national team, while the fans ran onto the pitch with flowers. It turned out to be premature: the judges announced a false start and the shootout continued. In fact, the result wasn’t affected: the Belarusians won with a score of 4:3 — the winning penalty was also produced by Marina Nikitina — and became the champions of Europe. The girls accepted congratulations, wiping tears

Gold suits them well



Vitaly Pivovarchik

of joy from their faces, while the Dutch left the playground disappointed.

The head coach of our team, Dutch Herman Kruis, did not skimp on praise for his team after the match, revealing the secret of their win, “At first, the girls were a little shy, they were not completely confident in their abilities. We played against Germany and the Netherlands, and I agree that we still lack a little experience in playing against such opponents. In order to overcome this uncertainty, we invited Aleksandra Gerasimenya, a multiple Olympic medallist, to join the girls, and she helped our players find a way to believe in themselves. We repeated her words every day, and we did it! Of course, I am happy that our team won the European Championship. I can’t say that it was fundamentally important for me to beat the Netherlands national team: any team is an opponent during the game, no matter what country it represents. But I was a world champion with the Netherlands, and now I am a European champion with Belarus. This is unique and very cool!”

Belarus’ opponents viewed the team a little differently after winning the final.

Dutch hockey player Donja Zwinkels, who was recognised as ‘the player of the tournament’, said, “The Belarusians played a great match. We’ve met many times on the pitch but, in this game, your team had a strong line of defence, and the goalkeeper played great — it was very difficult to get to the goal. I feel that your team has a lot of experience; it’s united and well-organised. Actually, it was great to play in Minsk again. We always feel huge support from the fans here!”

The German hockey players sensationally left without medals at the European Championship in Minsk after losing to the Czechs in the penalty shootout

for bronze. They also paid tribute to our team, organisers and fans, stating, “Despite the fact that we were left without medals, the European Championship in Minsk was just fine. Everything was organised perfectly, the fans supported and inspired us throughout the tournament, and this support is often a very important component of winning.”

The Belarusians have taken a long time to win on their home turf. We have won bronze medals at the European championships more than once, and twice left the tournaments with silver. This small thing separated us from victory but everything has changed already. Together with the European Championship gold, our team won a ticket to the World Championship which will be held next year.

After the EuroHockey Indoor Championship, which Minsk hosted in 2016, the number of children involved in grass hockey in our country has more than doubled. There is no doubt that this sport will become even more popular now.

Following the results of the European Championship in Minsk, the teams of Belarus, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Germany, Ukraine and Austria won tickets to the World Championship.

SUPPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

The President congratulated the women’s national team on their victory at the 20th EuroHockey Indoor Championship. His message reads: ‘Throughout the tournament, you showed the highest sporting skill, strong character, team unity and will to win against the world ranking leaders. Let your success serve as an example for other Belarusian athletes’.

The Head of State also expressed gratitude to the coaching staff and all those who contributed to the Belarusian team winning the title of European champions.



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End of a sporting career

Two-time champion of the European Games and 2015 world champion in the individual time trial — Vasily Kirienko of Belarus — has called time on his career, said the British Ineos cycling team, who the Belarusian has recently been riding for, posting the news on its website

By Irina Sergeeva

The sportsman has announced his retirement from cycling due to a cardiac issue. The Ineos rider made the decision following medical advice. The 38-year-old athlete joined Ineos in 2013. He had to miss the start of the 2019 season.

“It’s a really sad day for me, but it’s the right decision based on the advice I’ve been given by the medical team,” Vasily said. “I’ve had a wonderful ca-

reer and enjoyed every minute racing with this team. It’s been an incredible journey and I am so grateful for all the support I’ve received throughout my whole career.”

Mr. Kirienko’s career highlights include gold, silver and two bronze medals at the Road World Championships in the individual time trial. He won twice at the European Games. He also took three stage wins at the Giro d’Italia and one at the Vuelta a Espana.

ARENA

● Dmitry Lazovsky of Belarus wins Biathlon Youth and Junior World Championships bronze

For our athletes, this is the only award at the world forum, held in Swiss Lenzerheide. In the 10km sprint event with two shooting stops, Dmitry Lazovsky took bronze, while gold went to the Norwegian athlete, Vebjoern Soerum, who reached the finish line in 24 minutes and 2.7 seconds with one miss at the shooting range.

Czech Jakub Stvrtecky was placed second, and despite accurate shooting, was 25.1 seconds behind the winner. Dmitry Lazovsky was also accurate in the shooting but reached the finish line 31.5 seconds later than the Norwegian biathlete.

In the pursuit race, Belarusian athlete Ivan Tulatin took 5th place. He made five misses and lost 1 minute and 22.3 seconds to the winner — Norwegian Martin Nevland — who finished in 26 minutes and 28 seconds. Czech Ondrej Manek earned silver: despite accurate shooting, he lost 25.5 seconds to the Scandinavian. Slovenian Lovro Planko, a bronze medallist with three misses, lost 52 seconds at the finish line to the Norwegian.

● Belarusian long jumper Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova wins VIActiv Race Arts international tournament held in German Bochum

In her best attempt, the Belarusian athlete posted a result of 6.71m. German Maryse Luzolo, with 6.30m, was placed second



while her teammate, Jovanna Klaczynski, who jumped 6.27m, finished third.

● Belarusian hurdler Alina Talay placed second at the Meeting de Paris international athletics tournament

In the final race, she ran the 60m hurdles in 7.97 seconds, finishing second. The Belarusian demonstrated the best result among European athletes this winter season. Gold at the prestigious tournament went to American Christina Clemmons (7.91 seconds), while her teammate — Payton Chadwick (8.08 seconds) — finished third.

● Belarusian athletes win two silver medals at the international Meeting d’Athletisme Mondeville tournament

In French Mondeville, Belarusian Vitaly Parakhonko finished second with the result of 7.79 seconds in the finals of the 60m hurdles. Jarret Eaton, from the USA, was first (7.63 seconds) and Moroccan Mohamed Kussi won bronze (7.85 seconds). Belarusian Kristina Timanovskaya took silver in the 60m race, covering the distance in 7.23 seconds — her best time ever shown in foreign competitions. Moreover, the result is the best for a European athlete this winter season.



Gambia’s Gina Bass (7.22 seconds) won gold, while bronze went to Anna Bongiorno of Italy (7.29 seconds).

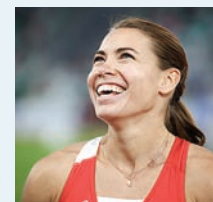


Photo of the week



Wild horses of the Konik horse breed in Nalibokskaya Pushcha

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

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

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

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

YANKA KUPALA LITERARY MUSEUM

4 Yanka Kupala Street
Until 8th February. *Art of Calligraphy*

BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM

13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street
Until 25th March. *Wisdom of Centuries*

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 6th February. *Children's Colours in Poet's Wreath*
Until 12th March. *Robo Art*
Until 26th July. *Live Exotics*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street
Until 1st March. *Horizons*

MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL CULTURE HISTORY

5 Muzykalny Lane
Until 24th February. *A Ticket to Soviet Childhood*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 9th February. *Geografia*

HIGH PLACE

2A Gertsen Street
Until 16th February. *Own Face*

VILNIUS

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

LIBRA

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

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 9th February. *Arkady Stepin's Facet*
Until 8th March. *Women's Tricks*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
06.02. Eugene Onegin
07.02. Anna Karenina
08.02. Tsar's Bride
09.02. Sleeping Beauty
11.02. Prince Igor
12.02. Romeo and Juliet / From Opera to Romance
13.02. Strauss Invites

CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street
07.02. Clinic
08.02. Featherhead

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
06.02. Grandad
07.02. Doctor Raus' Career
08.02. Adam's Jokes
09.02. Concrete
11.02. Serezha
12.02. Medea's Syndrome
13.02. Mad Woman

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 MasheroV Avenue
06.02. Battlefield
07.02. Who Laughs Last
08, 09 and 11.02. Nobody Promised Easy Life
12.02. Macropulos' Means
13.02. Even a Wise Man Stumbles

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
06.02. Evening / Love as Militarism
07.02. Local Cabaret
08.02. People on Marshes / Elza's Land
09.02. Artistic evening of Tamara Mironova
10.02. Musical evenings at Kupala Theatre: Winter Path by Shubert
11.02. First / Inspector
12.02. Pan Tadeush
13.02. Pinsk Gentry

MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
07.02. Oscar and Pink Lady
11.02. Lady for a Day
12.02. Summer Cottage Residents

BELARUSIAN ARMY THEATRE

3 Krasnoarmeiskaya 3
06.02. Sparrow Night
07.02. Romeo and Juliet
08.02. Once in Verona
13.02. Star Hour

MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
06.02. Grooms
07.02. Silva
08.02. A Glass of Water
09.02. Mister X
11.02. True Story of Lieutenant Rzhnevsky
12.02. Jewish Happiness
13.02. Wedding in Malinovka