



Vectors of friendship
and partnership
of 30 years
of diplomatic
relations between
Belarus and China **6**



The splendour
of the palace
in Mosar
can now
only be seen
in photographs **9**

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 4 (914) ● THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 2022 ● WWW.SB.BY



Talented folk craftswoman Olga Reut from Gorodok creates solar miracles from straw

Straw masterpieces

The works of the talented Olga Reut from Gorodok captivate at first sight. She turns the gold of the Belarusian fields — straws — into airy spiders, elegant headdresses and even ... shoes for Cinderella.

Olga Reut is a member of the Belarusian Union of Folk Art Masters and one of the few who stood at the origins of the Gorodok Centre of Crafts and Folklore. She has been here for almost 30 years. → **7**



Ready to multiply the volume of trade

Agriculture, food, construction, timber processing — these and other areas of cooperation were in the spotlight during the meeting of the President of Belarus with the Head of the Republic of Tuva Vladislav Khovalyg



By Dmitry Kryat,
Polina Konoga

Aleksandr Lukashenko is sure of good prospects for working with Tuva, “I am convinced that your visit is a landmark event that will allow us to open new horizons of cooperation together, and this must be done in the name of our fraternal peoples... We must lay a strong foundation for our cooperation.”

Great potential

The President drew attention to the fact that the indicators of foreign trade between Belarus and the Republic of Tuva are modest for various reasons, but the potential is significant, “There is some room for growth. There is something to work on.

“I am convinced that the potential is huge, we only need our desire to make our aspirations come to life. And we are (just like you, I believe) are ready to multiply our trading volume in the near future.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko assured that the Belarusian side is ready to promptly take any decisions necessary for the development of cooperation.

According to the President, taking into account the needs of the Republic of Tuva and the industrial potential of Belarus, it makes sense to pay special attention to engineering products, “You know the level of our engineering industry. You can visit any enterprise.

“The doors of any enterprise are open for you: be it a defence (military-industrial complex), agricultural, or any industrial enterprise. We have no secrets from you.”

The President drew attention to the fact that he quite often discusses the prospects for the development of industrial cooperation, technology transfer, and export of services with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. In these areas, we can also cooperate with Tuva. Particularly in food production.

According to the Head of State, several facilities in the Russian Federation are currently being considered, the construction of which may involve large Belarusian enterprises. Tuva is also invited to take a closer look at this experience. The President said,

“I know that in 2021, the construction of the Ak-Sug Mining and Processing Plant began in your region. Our specialists could help you create the appropriate transport infrastructure if you need it.”

The President noted the uniqueness of nature in Tuva, “This suggests that we should, simply must develop tourism between Belarus and Tuva. Tourist relations leave much to be desired.”

The Head of State continued, “I am convinced that there are great opportunities for strengthening our friendship and cooperation in science, education, culture, and the information sphere. Of course, we need to talk more about Tuva, so that we know not only from Russian channels that there is such a beauty, but also that you are present in Belarus, and Belarus is present in your information space.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated the guests on the approaching New Year according to the lunar calendar, which will begin on February 2nd. The holiday is called Shagaa and is widely celebrated in Tuva.

A reliable partner

Vladislav Khovalyg warmly thanked the President for the opportunity to meet and noted that he had been heading Tuva for just over three months. The country is developing several promising areas right now, as well as searching for reliable partners. Belarusian enterprises are already showing a certain

interest in the region and are planning to implement various projects there.

The Head of Tuva told Aleksandr Lukashenko about one of the youngest regions of Russia. In the past, the republic went from a Manchurian colony to a protectorate of the Russian Empire, it was also an independent state (Tuva People’s Republic). By the way, it was Tuva that became the first foreign ally of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War. Vladislav Khovalyg added that those events connect Tuvans and Belarusians,

“We know how carefully the memory of the Great Patriotic War is treated in Belarus, we also preserve the sacred pages of this history. Both Tuvans and Soviet citizens who lived at that time in Tuva participated in this war. Some of them travelled the roads of the war to Berlin. The war connected us with Belarus as well.”

Later, Vladislav Khovalyg talked to Belarusian journalists and shared the results of the meeting,

“We definitely agreed that a dairy farm with at least 200 livestock will be built in the territory of the republic.”

The complex will be fully equipped, moreover, animals for

the farm will be delivered here from Belarus. The leadership of Tuva hopes to subsequently replicate this experience throughout the republic. The agricultural sector is extremely important for the region. Tuva is an agrarian republic, however, in the structure of the agro-industrial complex, personal subsidiary farms occupy a significant share (about 80 percent). The republic fully provides itself with meat, but it needs dairy products. Vladislav Khovalyg said,

“We agreed that the Belarusian side will help in the construction of dairy farms with equipment. We would like to completely meet our needs for milk and dairy products by creating our own base. You have a lot of experience.”

There are promising areas of cooperation in other areas as well. Thus, for the extractive industry, quarry equipment is needed. Mining enterprises in Tuva are located in the taiga wooded part, so roads need to be built here, which means that road equipment will also be required. The leadership of the republic is also ready to consider, together with investors, the participation of Belarusian companies in the construction of the mining and processing plant.

Border security

The President of Belarus approved the decision on the protection the state border with the engagement of the border service in 2022



Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that 2021 was a difficult year for the Belarusian border troops, “The situation of the last year will still have to be analysed in the most serious way... However, I feel (and I am rarely deceived) that for the first time in a quarter of a century the border troops were at the forefront and were tested in a real-life situation, and did not disappoint.”

The President expressed gratitude to the Belarusian border guards, noting that they are on duty around the clock,

“They do not need the announcement of the emergency situation — they always work as if in a state of emergency. Well done. They coped with all the difficulties that hit them last year.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that in 2021, due to the influx of refugees and the concentration of troops from neighbouring countries along the Belarusian borders, the border guards had to be more vigilant, participate in reconnaissance activities together with the military personnel of the Armed Forces and employees of the State Security Committee, “There is a lot of talk now about our southern borders. The situation is getting worse all the time. They are pointing fingers at our joint exercises with the Russian Federation...”

“Literally, a day ago, the threatening position of the US State Department was brought to my attention. They came to our diplomats in New York and threatened us: yes, if you allow Putin and Russia this or that, then we will impose sanctions. If you return these nuclear weapons to Belarus, this and that will happen. There is some kind of mentoring

tone in relation to Belarus. I want to point their attention to what I said in Luninets. I do not think there is anything to add here. We do not need any war. However, these same Americans, through the Poles and Latvians, are pushing us towards these actions. We have been a security donor in the region. We have always been appreciated for this. Why are you pushing us in 2020 and making us aggressors (in their terminology)? And today they threaten us.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko added that Belarus did not initiate this escalation of relations, “We were just responding. Therefore, we will act in the interests of our state, no matter what they tell us, no matter how they threaten us.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The place of the third meeting of the Commander-in-Chief with the military leadership of our country in recent time was chosen for a reason. From the point of view of state security, the airfield near Luninets is a strategic point, located not far from the southern borders of Belarus, near which tension is only growing now. We need to cover them from the air. The militarisation of the western neighbours is also in full swing. Therefore, the formation of another air defence unit is on the agenda. In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko did not fail to warn the West against attempts to attack the Union State, **“We don’t want war, but if they don’t just constantly pull us, as they are doing now, but deploy armies against us, intimidate us and put us on the brink of survival with all sorts of sanctions, economic and non-economic ones, and threaten us even more, then we will hit hard. Don’t mess with us, we can’t be defeated.”**

By Dmitry Umpirovich,
Yevgeny Kononovich

So that we don’t get caught off guard

The programme of the presidential route includes a number of military facilities in the Luninets District. The Commander-in-Chief, in particular, was informed about the organisation and fulfilment of the tasks of combat duty in air defence. Belarusians see what is happening in the south and in general along the country. We know how to act today. It’s with regard to ‘as it is now’. However, the meeting on strengthening military security discussed the issue of how it will be.

“There is a wise saying: if you want peace, prepare for war,” noted Aleksandr Lukashenko. “It is cruel, but so masculine.

We must do everything to ensure that we cannot be taken by surprise, and that we can respond at the right moment.

I am absolutely convinced that you, people in uniform, know what needs to be done to protect our land.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko lamented that 10 years ago no one imagined that to protect the southern borders in Belarus, military units and even an entire association would have to be created. And that’s why, “With pain in our hearts, we are watching everything that is happening in Ukraine. Its current political leadership, being under external control, sometimes behaves unpredictably and inadequately. Therefore, in case of unpredictable, inadequate actions, and in case of, God forbid, mili-



Belarusian Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin

tary actions, we need to be decisive. Almost one and a half thousand kilometres of the southern border of Belarus and Ukraine is a considerable length.

Whatever it costs us, we need not only to see what will happen and is happening on this border, it must be reliably protected.

We can protect ourselves

Strengthening the Air Force and Air Defence Forces, holding a constitutional referendum and the lessons of Kazakhstani events. Details of the working trip of the President to the Luninets District.



BELTA

By the way, the Head of State will name more than one or two examples of unpredictable and inadequate behaviour of the Ukrainian authorities. The President stated with regret that everything that is possible is being torn out of the souls of Ukrainians. The memory of the Slavic peoples, common roots, language, cultural and ethnic code that binds peoples, “Everyone is trying to destroy the Ukrainians in the soul. We did not imagine that several decades after the end of the Great Patriotic War, thugs with a fascist swastika would march along the central streets of Kiev and other cities. This is unacceptable for us, because we will never forget everything that happened on our land. In the end, we remember Khatyn, we remember what happened. And not only what happened, but who did these atrocities there. This is also one of the reasons why we are forced today to respond here, in the south of our country, to the situation that is developing.”

We don’t want war!

For obvious reasons, the meeting with the security forces was mostly closed to the press. But, despite the piercing wind and heavy snow, the journalists patiently waited for the Commander-in-Chief to hear first-hand comments on the most pressing topics on the agenda. And, to be honest, they thoroughly froze, “Are you cold?” greeted us Aleksandr Lukashenko. “Just imagine what a war is... Therefore, God forbid we end up in the state of war. Especially after we ourselves are accustomed to living in warmth, with complete comfort. This is not the generation of the Great Patriotic War that lived... you know in what conditions. And we are already accustomed to a good life and very keenly feel what war is. Therefore, everything must be done to avoid it.”

“We don’t want war!” This phrase, answering the questions of journalists, the Head of State will repeat more than once. Moreover, he will speak not only as the President of Belarus and the Commander-in-Chief, but also as the Chairman of the Supreme State Council of the Union

of Belarus and Russia, “Not only because it is hard and bad. This is not just discomfort — it is terrible for a person, for people and not only for military personnel.

God forbid war, it will affect everyone. That’s why we don’t want to fight. We also don’t want to, because we remember what kind of war we had, which ended seven decades ago.

And one more very emotional nuance. The President draws attention to the fact that we have to build the most expensive security system to defend from close people! At the same time, he warns: there is no need to pull us.

“In spirit, we are such people that it is impossible to defeat us, and in terms of territory — from Brest to Vladivostok,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko. “Many have already tried the for the last 3-5 centuries. How did it end? It’s clear.”

And if someone considers Belarus an aggressor...

“We do not meddle into anyone’s affairs, we have enough land, God help us keep and develop it. Here are our goals.

But I repeat once again: if someone doesn’t understand all this, our response will be tough.

The whole world understood where is the truth and where is the lie

Especially stubborn foreign politicians and runaway ill-wishers are trying with all their might to accuse our country



BELTA

of aggression, almost of ‘air terrorism’, for strict adherence to all possible instructions and international norms. We are talking about the forced landing of a Ryanair plane in Minsk, which was on a flight from Athens to Vilnius. ICAO, after 9 months, has finally presented an absolutely neutral report. At the end of January, the council will consider the report and take appropriate action, and will also discuss the request of Belarus on the legality of the sanctions imposed on it.

“We would like to know your opinion about what to expect from this organisation? Are they ready to tell the truth or will they continue to sound the position of the collective West? Maybe they will apologise to us, open the sky to the West and for the West?” the journalists asked the President.

He replied that the best solution for the ICAO Council now would be to put the brakes on the situation. And he even called the members of this organisation ‘heroic people’, “With that pressure (this is a UN organisation, you know that we are not just in the minority there, we are alone there), they nevertheless had to admit that Lukashenko did not open fire on the plane, did not fire at it, that he did not raise the MiG to force the plane to land. Listen, they are heroes because they were able to say at least that.”

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, this fact alone is important for Belarus, nothing more is expected from the investigation, “If they are ready to prove otherwise, the facts are on the table. There are no facts, we also see it: now it has been sent to all ICAO member countries. You know who’s in charge there. The best thing for them is to put brakes on everything, not to go into it too deeply. Because the farther into the forest, the thicker the trees. Therefore, there is no need to go too deep: nothing good awaits them. And we shouldn’t expect them to



Commander of the Belarusian Air Force and Air Defence Forces Igor Golub

kneel before us or even stand up and apologise. I don’t expect it. The whole world understood where is the truth and where is the lie.”

Further steps are up to Belarus. Our country, the Head of State announced, will go to court to be compensated for the damage caused by sanctions against the aviation industry. Now experts are evaluating it. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted,

“Let them pay for the damage they have caused to the country. Not only Belavia, but the country as a whole. Let them pay.”



The referendum will be held on February 27th

On January 20th, the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko signed Decree No. 14 ‘On calling the nationwide referendum’. In accordance with the document, the republican referendum on the issue of introducing amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus is scheduled for February 27th, 2022. The decree defines the wording of the question submitted to the referendum, which is reproduced verbatim in the ballot paper: ‘Do you accept the amendments and additions to the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus?’

Taking into account the requirements established by the Electoral Code, the binding legal force of the decision adopted by the republican referendum is established. The procedure for the entry into force of such a decision is determined — ten days after its official publication. It is established that the decision adopted by the referendum is an integral part of the Constitution.

The Central Commission for Elections and Conducting Republican Referendums was instructed to organise the holding of a referendum, ensure the summing up of its results and exercise control over the implementation of legislation in the relevant area.

The campaign for public discussion of the draft Constitution has been successfully completed. More than 8.9 thousand opinions and proposals were received from Belarusians. The high activity of the citizens of Belarus has demonstrated their ardent desire to demonstrate their civic position and contribute to the development of the country.



Oksana Kugan, Head of the Nonwovens Shop at SvetlogorskKhimvolokno OJSC, is discussing draft amendments and additions to the Constitution with workers



Andrei Matelsky

All the necessary conditions were created in the country so that everyone could get acquainted with the amendments to the Constitution, as well as express their opinion. On December 27th, the draft amendments and additions to the Constitution in both state

languages were posted on the Internet Portal of the President of Belarus and the National Legal Internet Portal for public discussion. To ensure maximum accessibility, the document was published by the main republican and local newspapers, placed in print



and electronic form in city and district libraries. For persons with disabilities, the audio version of the draft is posted on the portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

Coordination of work on collecting feedback and proposals from citizens on the draft was carried out by the National Centre for Legal Information. Generalised information with proposals for the draft was regularly transferred to the President Administration for use by experts in finalising the draft.

Director of the National Centre for Legal Information Andrei Matelsky shared

the details with reporters, “For three and a half weeks of nationwide discussion, the text of the draft Constitution on the National Legal Internet Portal was viewed 227,044 times (of which 1,547 times were in Belarusian), downloaded for viewing on mobile devices 10,189 times (of which 217 were in Belarusian). The Centre processed 8,919 opinions and proposals on the content of the draft. According to the sources of providing information: 88.7% of opinions and proposals were received directly by the National Centre for Legal Information, 8.5% — from public associations, 2.8% — from state bodies. More than 20 letters from labour collectives were also sent.”

According to him, citizens preferred electronic communication as the main channel for sending their proposals, “90% of opinions and proposals were received through

filling out an electronic form on the National Legal Internet Portal and sending e-mails. By written correspondence — 10%. The high activity and opinions of our citizens expressed in the framework of the nationwide discussion confirmed the significance and relevance of the proposed approaches to modernising the Basic Law. There have been many personal initiatives of people to improve the text of the Constitution.

In general, out of 8,919 responses, 8,852 (99.25%) support the draft amendments and additions to the Constitution in its entirety or contain proposals for improving individual provisions and structural elements of the draft, without rejecting the basic, most significant innovations of the Constitution.

A small number of negative opinions on the developed project were received.



Deputy Education Minister Aleksandr Kadlubai:
The referendum on the issue of amendments and additions to the Constitution is a very important historical milestone in the further development of our young state. I am deeply convinced that it will become the starting point for creating a movement along a new trajectory of state building, based on popular trust and strong state power.

Participation in the republican referendum is the civic duty of every Belarusian. It is very important for us that Belarus remains a sovereign and independent state. The draft additions and amendments to the Constitution, as well as the large-scale work that unfolded during the nationwide discussion, allows us to conclude that the Basic Law of the country will be a combination of advanced legal practice, responses to the main challenges of our time, and proposals from representatives of all social strata of the population. In my opinion, it is very important that, along with maintaining a focus on the development of a strong welfare state, observing the interests of all age groups in the country, the special emphasis in the Constitution is placed on youth.

For example, only 13 proposals are aimed at preserving the current version of the Constitution (0.15%), 27 (0.3%) are against the proposed amendments to the Constitution.”

Andrei Matelsky clarified that the proposals are mainly aimed at clarifying the wording of the provisions of most articles of the Constitution (from the preamble to the transitional provisions),

“Such new constitutional provisions as the formation of the Belarusian People’s Congress, the requirements for a presidential candidate and the limitation of the powers of the Head of State to two terms, the transition from a nuclear-free zone and neutrality to the inadmissibility of military aggression from one’s territory against other states, the specification of the concept of marriage as the

union of a woman and a man, the preservation of historical truth and the memory of the feat of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War

In a number of cases, citizens proposed to exclude these innovations, but such responses are few, within 3% for each of them. The majority, on the contrary, noted the data and other provisions of the project as timely and important. The largest part of the proposals is devoted to Section II of the Constitution, since it is this section that mainly affects the personal rights and freedoms of people. Some of the most discussed were the new obligations of citizens to show social responsibility, make a feasible contribution to the development of the state and society (Article 21), take measures to preserve and strengthen their own health (Article 45). Many proposals

were aimed at a more detailed establishment in the Constitution of the measures of the ongoing social policy and the expansion of guarantees.”

The Director of the National Centre for Legal Information emphasised that, in general, within the framework of the nationwide discussion, meaningful material was obtained, which was used in the finalisation of the draft amendments and additions to the Constitution, and will also form the basis for improving many branches of domestic legislation.

Andrei Matelsky added that the activity of citizens was expected, but the final figures were a pleasant surprise, “We, when preparing for the discussion of the draft Constitution, thought that there would be 4-5 thousand proposals, but received about 9 thousand. This is really a

lot, because this is still a discussion of a draft legal act. It must be read, understood, then the legal proposal must be formulated. People specifically proposed fixing this or that in the Constitution, that is, they expressed legal initiatives. Seeing such activity of

our citizens in discussing the draft Constitution, I would very much like these people not only to send us proposals, but to come and cast their vote at the referendum.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus receives another batch of Chinese COVID-19 vaccine



On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and China on January 20th, another batch of the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Sinopharm Corporation (Vero Cell) was sent from Beijing to Minsk.

According to the Belarusian embassy in China, the cargo included 1.5 million doses of the Vero Cell vaccine and more than 1.5 million syringes, which the Chinese government provided to Belarus as part of humanitarian aid, as well as 1.5 million doses of a similar vaccine purchased by the Belarusian side as part of a commercial procurement. The cargo was delivered by a Belarusian air carrier.

An agreement to transfer 1.5 million doses of the vaccine to Belarus was reached during a telephone conversation between President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko and President of China Xi Jinping on January 10th, 2022.

Belarus exported agricultural products for a record amount last year

In January-November of last year, the export of Belarusian food and agricultural raw materials increased by 16%, goods worth more than \$6 billion were delivered



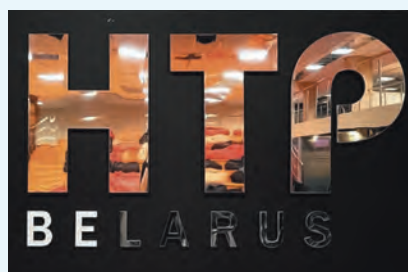
abroad. This is a record figure compared to the annual values of previous years.

Belarusian food was supplied to 106 countries of the world. The increase in foreign exchange earnings amounted to more than \$ 830 million. The increase in supplies was observed in almost all regions. Exports to the CIS countries increased by 12%, to Asia and Oceania — by almost 40%, to the EU — by 44%, to the countries of America and the Caribbean — by almost 60%, to China — by almost 40%.

It is assumed that the year will be closed with a total of almost \$6.5 billion, and by the end of the five-year plan, Belarusian food exports are planned to reach \$7 billion.

HTP residents are included in the ranking of the world’s best developers of mobile applications and games

Hi-Tech Park resident companies engaged in the development of mobile applications and games showed excellent results in 2021. This is evidenced by the data of the annual report on the state of the mobile market State of Mobile 2021, prepared by the American analytical agency App Annie.

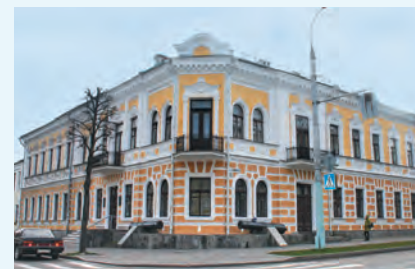


Among the best are Flo Health with a women’s health app (5th in global downloads and 6th in user spending), FreePlay with top games Join Clash 3D and Count Masters in terms of downloads in the world. The Belarusian SayGames was ranked 4th in the world among the companies with the largest number of installations.

These studies were obtained as a result of a comprehensive analysis of 17 different market segments in 30 countries.

The robot will conduct excursions in the Brest Regional Museum of Local Studies

On January 28th, the Brest Regional Museum of Local Studies launches a new project called *Cyber Museum*, which is being implemented together with the laboratory of industrial robotics of the Brest State Technical University. The museum will have a robot guide. By the way, this is a girl named Mirosha. It is programmed by Brest students. Initially, the new cyber employee will lead tours of the first three halls of the permanent exhibition. That is, it will acquaint visitors with the history of the primitive communal system, the Middle Ages and the life of the Berestye people as part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.



The authors of the project hope that over time Mirosha will learn more information and be able to tell about the entire exposition. In addition, the museum has plans to launch a virtual assistant.



Three pillars of our friendship



CONGRATULATIONS

On behalf of the people of the Republic of Belarus and himself, the President congratulated President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China.

"In a short period of time by historical standards, we have gone a long way from bilateral interaction to a trust-based comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation. We are on track to enter a new stage of 'iron brotherhood' and 'all-weather partnership,'" reads the congratulation. "These words embody our successes and achievements in politics, economy, humanitarian field, defence and security."

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Minsk and Beijing are consistently expanding interstate dialogue, coordinating goals and objectives on global and regional agendas, including within the framework of the UN, the SCO, the EAEU, implementing the Belt and Road Initiative, and in building a common fate of mankind, as well as in many other areas.

"Today we remember with gratitude all those who helped promote the bilateral relations at various stages and make them meaningful and impactful to serve the interests of the peoples of the two countries. I am convinced that the groundwork we have laid will become a solid foundation for future generations of Belarusians and Chinese, who, like us, will be good friends and will support each other at all times," reads the message.

Aleksandr Lukashenko wished Xi Jinping good health and the achievement of his goals, and peace and prosperity to the fraternal people of China.

The Belarusian President also received congratulations from his Chinese counterpart.

"On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Belarus, on behalf of the Chinese government and the Chinese people, as well as on my own behalf, I send you and the friendly nation of Belarus represented by you sincere congratulations and best regards," reads the message.

Xi Jinping stated that for 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Chinese-Belarusian relations have been steadily moving forward, and the traditional friendship between the two countries is becoming stronger every day.

"Under our joint leadership, China and Belarus have consistently built a comprehensive strategic partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation. The political trust between the two countries is unshakable, and bilateral cooperation in various fields has generated great results," said the President of the People's Republic of China. "Both sides absolutely support each other on issues related to the fundamental interests of the two countries, and also closely and effectively cooperate in international and regional affairs. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, both countries have provided mutual assistance and support to each other, overcoming difficulties hand in hand, demonstrating brotherhood with a common destiny."

The Chinese President emphasised that over the past years, the leaders of the two countries have maintained communication in various ways and reached important agreements on the development of Chinese-Belarusian relations in the new environment.

"As we mark the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, I would like to use this opportunity to assure you that I am ready to make every effort together with you to advance the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Belarus and the joint implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative to achieve even greater results for the benefit of the two countries and their peoples," stressed Xi Jinping. The Chinese leader wished Aleksandr Lukashenko success in his work and good health, prosperity to friendly Belarus, as well as happiness and well-being to its people.

According to the Press Service of the President



According to the statistics of the Chinese side:

◆ the volume of bilateral trade increased from \$60.8 million at the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations to \$3.82 billion in 2021, an increase of almost 62 times;

◆ From January to November 2021, the total trade turnover between China and Belarus reached \$3.45 billion, an increase of 27.8 percent compared to the same period of the previous year.

◆ Currently, 85 companies are registered as residents of Great Stone with declared investments in the amount of more than \$1.2 billion.

◆ In 2021, the Chinese government donated four batches of COVID-19 vaccines to the Belarusian side for a total of 1.4 million doses and will provide another 1.5 million doses in the near future.



January 20th marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and China, which is a significant milestone. At a conference held on the eve of this event at the Confucius Institute of Sinology of the Belarusian State University (RCIS), First Deputy Prime Minister, Ambassador of Belarus to China (2020) Nikolai Snopkov said that three themes will become the pillars of the Belarusian-Chinese relations for the next decades. The first is the joint upholding of the rights of sovereign states to choose their own path of development, socio-economic model, constitutional structure, and territorial integrity. The second is the formation and maintenance of the stability of China's strategic communications in the Eurasian region, ensuring the implementation of the economic strategy of 'double circulation', through increasing the economic presence of China in the key territories of the Belt and Road initiative. The third is to increase mutual understanding between our peoples through the intensive building up of cultural, scientific, informational and, most importantly, human ties."

Nikolai Snopkov, First Deputy Prime Minister:

In such a short period for the history of diplomatic relations as 30 years, Belarus and China have gone from zero to the highest point. It's very fast and very important to us. Bilateral relations are based on a single ideology for the development of society and the country. Two countries in the world prioritise the well-being of their citizens in their social and economic policy — Belarus and China.

Over 30 years, at least 25 projects in industry and the energy sector have been implemented for almost \$5 billion. Four projects worth about \$2.5 billion are under implementation. Over the past 10 years, a quarter of the GDP growth in Belarus has been achieved through the investment component of China. Over 30 years, China's accumulated investment is more than \$2 billion, of which more than \$1 billion is China's direct investment.

(January 10th, 2022, commenting on a telephone conversation between the leaders of Belarus and China.)

For 30 years, the Republic of Belarus and China have implemented:

◆ **AT LEAST 25** projects in industry and the energy sector for almost \$5 billion

◆ **4 PROJECTS** under implementation for **ABOUT \$2.5 BILLION**

◆ China has become the second trading partner of Belarus, the export of domestic products to this country is increasing every year at a rate of at **LEAST 20-25%**

◆ Online sales in China topped **\$800 BILLION** in 2021

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The works of the talented Olga Reut from Gorodok captivate at first sight. She turns the gold of the Belarusian fields — straws — into airy spiders, elegant headdresses and even ... shoes for Cinderella.

By Anna Naumova

50 shades of gold

Olga Reut is a member of the Belarusian Union of Folk Art Masters and one of the few who stood at the origins of the Gorodok Centre of Crafts and Folklore. According to Olga, she has been here for almost 30 years, “All this time I have been conducting lessons in a studio on straw weaving, a craft that I undertook by chance. After college, and I am a primary school and fine arts teacher by profession, I got a job as an artist designer in a library. One day, a nice headband made of straw was brought to us for sale. It was easier to open a wallet, but colleagues tried to motivate: ‘We have books about straw crafts, you have a suitable specialty. Try it and see if it works’.”

The first try, that is, the headband, turned out to be good. The girl was offered to take courses in straw weaving. Soon Olga was already teaching others how to work with light natural material. Of the advantages of straws — the result is visible literally from the first lesson. Even a beginner can use a guiding star-charm or a simple golden spider.

“Both kids and older people go to my studio,” smiles Olga. “The oldest participants are over 70, and they are still full of energy. Take at least my mother, who took the intricacies of the craft over from me. By the way, she received a church blessing and now, like me, she weaves frames for icons.”

There are still enough nuances in straw art. Let’s start with the materials, says Olga, “When the studio was just opening, we were lucky to make a strategic reserve. The owner of one of the village huts gave away several sheaves with which he changed his mind about covering the roof. We have worked on this material for several years. Of course, we have been harvesting straw ourselves for a long time, leaving the whole team on the field.”

No harvester — only old school, only sickles! It is important to collect the straw at the right time in the summer so that it is wax-ripe and has not been exposed to rain too much. This is exactly what we need for weaving. Later, after cutting, it will reach the condition under the sun. A couple of green sheaves will also be left — for the beauty of future products. Olga Reut is sure, “The more shades in the works, the more interesting they are. Nature is an inventor: our gold fields



Anton Stepanishchev

Straw masterpieces

Folk craftswoman Olga Reut creates solar miracles from straw

are not only the usual yellow, green, but also purple, pink, lilac and other colors.”

Spider for luck

The creative streak of Olga Reut is hereditary. Her mother is a real craftswoman, and her father was a word artist, editor-in-chief of a local newspaper. Our heroine recalls, “I have been drawing and embroidering since childhood. When I was little, while my mother was not at home, I secretly sat down at her sewing machine more than once. Later I learned to make stuffed toys, studied patchwork. The latter has an interesting history. Grandmother on my father’s side also knew this technique, which is proved by a pretty patchwork carpet in a family photo.”

With straws, Olga Reut did not have the love at first sight. At first, there was interest, a desire to see a spark, a perspective in the craft, she admits, “Many of my pupils are already bright masters themselves. For some, straw weaving has helped them find their life’s work, while others have become artisans and offer hand-made products for sale.”

Olga notes that personally she is closer not to the souvenir, but to the traditional direction. The Centre of Crafts and Folklore has just prepared a project for the preservation and development of authentic technologies of straw weaving and spiral weaving in the Gorodok District.

Among the works of Olga Reut and her students there are many dedicated to church and folk holidays.

“Look, a traditional spider,” the craftswoman picks up the golden beauty. “This straw charm is an attribute of Christmas among the Slavs. The whole family sat down and wove this together. It was put in the most honourable place of



the house — the red corner.

It was believed that in a year such a spider takes all the troubles and misfortunes into its straw nets in order to burn with them in a bright flame. The Kolyady week, which ended with Epiphany, had its own traditions and symbols. For example, walking with a ‘star’. Olga says, “Our eight-pointed straw star of Bethlehem is quite suitable for this. By the way, the Centre of Crafts and Folklore developed and conducted its own carolling ceremony.”

There were also the original carol masks of a she-goat and a goat! Usually they were made of leather, birch bark, wood, but the Gorodok craftswoman habitually took up the straw. Now her products are the highlight of any folklore programme and photo shoots.

Crown and shoes for ... Cinderella

With skill, perseverance and diligence, masterpieces are born from straw. From elegant paintings and tableware to intricate wicker boxes, flowers and decor. Olga Reut’s specialty is straw hats. It is for them that she invariably receives awards, including during the *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk*. The craftswoman can

do almost anything: caps, wimples, large-brimmed hats, even straw mitres of clergymen. The woman takes care of the first headdress she made, “This is a sunny straw hat, my gift to my father for his 60th birthday. Dad is gone, but the dress seems to keep his warmth...”

The original development of the craftswoman is the bride’s wedding wreath, also made of straw. It is based on an old original topped with wax flowers. Headdresses from Olga Reut can be admired in the courtyard of the City of Masters during the *Slavianski Bazaar*. Products of the Gorodok Centre of Crafts and Folklore do not go unnoticed.



“Stars also visit us,” continues Olga. “One of the most memorable visits is a meeting with Lyudmila Zykina, Nadezhda Babkina. My crown ‘for the princess’ was bought by festival guests from Italy. The girl thought hard before she decided to try on the ‘exotic’ item, but after putting it on, she beamed. Blonde curls, gold straws, well, she looked just like a queen!”

And once the craftswoman received an order for the princess’s shoes. A romantic buyer decided to please his beloved in an unusual way. They turned out to be not crystal, but straw shoes for Cinderella.



Logistic deadlock

Minsk's retaliatory steps hit Lithuanian carriers. Such damage cannot be called critical for the economy of the Baltic state, but if this problem is added to the existing ones, then 2022 will be very 'interesting' for Lithuanian companies, writes Baltnews.

Lithuania's unfriendly policy continues to bring bitter results to the business of the Baltic country. As if a consistent severing of economic ties with Russia was not enough, Vilnius over the past two years has done everything to make this happen in relation to Belarus.

As a result, the transit of goods and trade with its eastern neighbours are steadily falling in Lithuania. Not only large Lithuanian companies suffer, but also ordinary businesses engaged in cross-border trade. This month, the Lithuanian National Road Carriers' Association, Linava, said that due to Belarus' food embargo, carriers will lose about 100m Euros.

Thanks to its 'friendly and thoughtful'

foreign policy, Lithuania is gradually turning into a logistical dead end, where less and less goods and raw materials are being transported. De facto the Baltic state finds itself in isolation more and more.

The saddest thing is that European business, including Lithuanian, would like to develop relations with eastern partners. Entrepreneurs from the Baltic States, especially in the context of the post-pandemic crisis want to trade with Belarus. However, the transatlantic capital, where the Americans play the first fiddle, is interested in escalating the sanctions war of the Old World and Russia with its allies.

"The trade embargo hits the pockets of enterprises in Lithuania, but companies

still cannot do anything with bureaucrats both inside the Baltic States and in the EU supranational structures. Belarus has an alternative: closer co-operation with the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union and, first of all, reorientation to the Russian market," said Yuri Samonkin, Chairman of the Board of Centre for Research and Development of Eurasianism.

According to him, if the EU and the leaderships of the Baltic States don't offer Minsk anything, there will be no prerequisites for the restoration of cross-border trade between Lithuania and Belarus. "European business needs to put pressure on Brussels officials so that they finally start thinking about the well-being of the economy."

Donation from the Pope

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced Pope's emergency gesture

"The Holy Father has decided to send a contribution of 100,000 Euros to help migrant groups stranded between Poland and Belarus," the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development — a body of the Holy See in charge of refugees — said in a statement. The Vatican department said that Pope Francis had earmarked the funds for migrants living along the roughly 250-mile border separating Poland and Belarus.



The donation also aims to help the Catholic non-governmental organisation Caritas Poland 'deal with the migration emergency at the border between the two countries', the Vatican added.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development also announced that the Pope had given the same sum to victims of a devastating storm in the Philippines. The Pope's initiative, it stated, 'is intended to be an immediate expression of the Holy Father's sentiment of spiritual closeness and paternal encouragement towards the people and territories affected'.



Las Luminarias Festival

The Spanish Festival of Las Luminarias has been held for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

Hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the Luminarias Festival in San Bartolomé de Pinares, a town north-west of Madrid, after it was cancelled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The bonfires are called 'luminarias', and the Las Luminarias Festival is believed to be centuries-old. Some say it is related to ancient Catholic traditions of fighting disease through cleaning by smoke.

Revellers rode their horses through the narrow cobble-stoned streets, which according to tradition, purified the animals with the smoke and flames of the bonfires for the coming year. After an

hour of horses jumping over flames, revellers then took to dancing and drinking.

"This comes from thousands of years ago. So that animals did not get unwell, the old priests would bless them with fires so that they would jump and be purified," said Fermin Abad, 64, a resident taking part in the festivities.

It takes place every January on the eve of the annual remembrance of St. Anthony the Abbot, the patron saint of animals.

Ana Gómez, Mayor of San Bartolomé, said the festival celebrates animals and it is something that local residents love 'with intensity'.

Once-in-a-millennium event

The underwater Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption has already triggered a tsunami, a sonic boom and thousands of lightning bolts, and could now lead to acid rain

The massive explosion of Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano in Tonga was its most powerful eruption since 1100AD. The after-effects have been felt around the globe and the damage is still being assessed.

The volcano, located about 65km north of Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa, exploded with violent force. Satellite images show a mushroom cloud of ash billowing 30km high and later sweeping more than 3,000km west to Australia.

A sea level gauge at Nuku'alofa recorded a tsunami wave of 1.19m before it stopped recording, according to Hannah Power at the University of Newcastle in Australia. Videos posted to social media show waves crashing into houses in Tonga, and large waves also reached Japan, prompting evacuation orders, and Peru, where two people drowned at a beach. The extent of destruction in Tonga is still uncertain because the country's main undersea phone and Internet cable was damaged.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Castle that is no longer here

The splendour of the palace in Mosar can now only be seen in photographs

This area is rich in lakes and swamps. It is no coincidence that the town of Glubokoye got its name from the name of the lake. And the village of Mosar, located not far from the district centre, means 'swamp' in Finno-Ugric. By the way, one of the largest swamps in Europe, Yelnya, which is more than 9 thousand years old, is located in the Vitebsk Region!

By Oleg Usachev, Vladimir Likhodedov

But let's return to Mosar, which for 507 years (!!!) of its existence has turned from a 'swamp' into a Belarusian Versailles. This is proved not only by the Belarusians spoiled by the splendour of their native nature, but also by numerous tourists, including those from Europe. The town passed as a dowry for brides from one gentry family to another. Mosar was owned by the Vilna zemstvo clerk, the hunter of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Samogitia colonel, and the Trakai castellan. History tells us that in the 16th century, during the Livonian War, Stefan Batory stayed for the night in Mosar.

However, the greatest trace in the history of the village was left by the Brzostowski family, who ruled Mosar for almost 200 years. It was by order of Robert and Anna Brzostowski in 1775-1779 that a two-story palace designed by Italian architects was founded on the estate. A year later, the St. Anne's Church was erected, which has survived to this day. Surprisingly, the church did not cease to function even

one significant BUT. The French palace withstood the maelstrom of historical events, while the Belarusian, alas, could not survive the post-revolutionary dark times: on November 24th, 1918, the palace burned down. The fire destroyed all floors, decorations, fireplaces, parquet ... Aleksandr Khainovsky, a senior researcher at the Glubokoye Historical and Ethnographic Museum, says:

"Nothing remains of the once magnificent palace: no ruins, no foundation. Where it stood for almost 140 years, now there is the Mosar Flax Factory. The homestead buildings of the flax mill were used as warehouses for some time. The ruins were completely destroyed even before the start of the Great Patriotic War. When, after the signing of the Peace of Riga, Mosar became part of Poland, the building still existed, but partially: there were dilapidated walls, the roof was missing, the internal partitions were dismantled, furniture and interior elements were looted ..."

All that can now refer us to those times is the St. Anne's Church and two

photographer captured the luxurious decoration, which was in no way inferior to the palaces of Versailles. Even black and white images are able to convey all the grandeur and splendor of those times.

Splendour in everything

Note: despite the fact that the facade of the building was distinguished by classical modesty, the internal decoration was striking in splendour. The royal hall was decorated with a stylised family tree. Winter heating of these rooms was carried out by means of a huge stove, decorated in the form of a pyramid and a French fireplace with a bust of King Stanislaw August. In addition to the Royal Hall, the palace housed the Ballroom with a rich

Mosar today

Modern Mosar is part of the Glubokoye District of the Vitebsk Region. About 500 people live here. In summer, there are up to a thousand tourists a day. People are attracted here not only by the St. Anne's Church, but also by the magnificent cultural and dendrological complex with many sculptures and architectural monuments. A Catholic cross, the highest in Belarus, rises 23 metres above all this into the sky. It is visible from a distance of 25 kilometres.

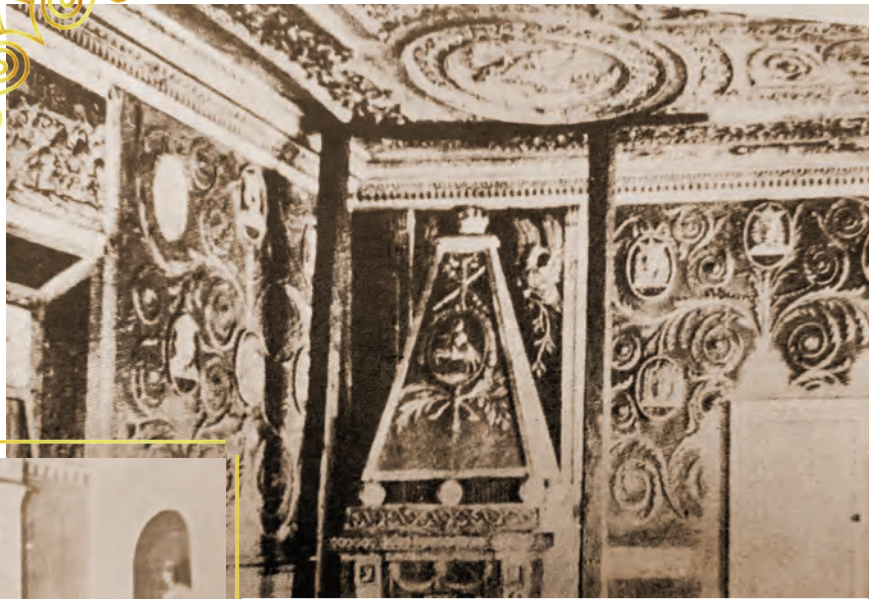
The cemetery is also notable in Mosar. It is unique in that both Catholics and Orthodox are buried here. There is no division into denominations. And this is an excellent example of the unity not only of those



Palace in Mosar. 1914



Hall with fireplace and stained glass. 1914



Mosar. Fireplace in the Royal Hall of the palace. 1914



Mosar. Catholic church. Beginning of the 20th century.

during the Great Patriotic War. In its entire long history, it has never been closed.

In the maelstrom of dark times

It can be assumed that Mosar is also called the Belarusian Versailles because the palace here was built a little more than 10 years after the Petit Trianon, one of the Versailles palaces. They even look similar: both are made in the style of elegant classicism. However, there is

oak trees near it, planted, as the legend says, at the time of laying the foundation. The giants continue to delight residents and tourists alike. The only material rarity of the former greatness was a miraculously preserved embedded tablet, informing that Stefan Batory stayed in the palace when he went to the Livonian War.

In addition, fortunately, rare photographs of the palace facade and interior rooms have survived to this day. The

black marble fireplace, which depicted ancient nymphs. The walls of the Hall of Mirrors were lined with mirrored panels. The fashionable trend of that time was the Chinese Room, where Confucius sat in the pose of a Buddhist monk, surrounded by his disciples. The guests were attracted by the philosophical inscription on the plinth of the fireplace: 'The wise man is the most severe critic for himself. He is himself a prosecutor, a witness and a judge.'

It is noteworthy that Lieutenant General Adam Ignatievich Tsvetsinsky, a hero of the Russian-Turkish War, was born in Mosar in 1826. His son Maximilian, who followed in the military footsteps, also became a general and took part in the First World War. These are the glorious sons of the boggy Mosar land.

In 1939, after the liberation campaign of the Red Army, Mosar was returned to its country.

who are no longer with us, but also of those who are now living. In the central part of the cemetery, there is a five-metre white statue of Christ the Saviour.

In addition, famous springs flow in Mosar, the water of which contains useful minerals and is considered healing.

You can talk endlessly about the village, but it is better, as you know, to see once for yourself. And feel the atmosphere of this amazing corner of Belarus with every cell of your body.

Route to Mosar

The distance from the capital to Mosar is 180 kilometres. You must go along the M-3 highway to Begoml and then turn onto the P-3 road to Glubokoye. From there it is 18 kilometres to Mosar, and any local will show you the right path.

Photo from the personal collection of Vladimir Likhodedov



Banquet in national style

Plans for the development of gastronomic tourism: delicious and undercooked offers

2022 looks set to be an important milestone for Belarusian gastronomic tourism. A specialised working group created on the basis of the interdepartmental expert and coordinating council for tourism, whose activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, has developed an appropriate roadmap. The state, of course, will help interesting initiatives, but in some places local authorities and businesses will have to tighten up.

By Aleksandr Nesterov

Incentive for development

Travelling around Belarus does not imply long acquaintances with regional cuisine: the scale is not that large. Furthermore, there is not enough experience of organising such tours. However, some groundwork was created in 2014 during the preparations for the Ice Hockey World Championship. Menus in a foreign language and a good range of Belarusian dishes in many cafes and restaurants still remind of those times. What's next? Un-

ment of this sector is now carried out mainly through the opening of fast food facilities, where dishes are prepared quickly, served on a first-come-first-served basis and are cheap. At the same time, some kind of hamburger or shawarma is by no means Belarusian cuisine and not a gourmet object of desire. It is precisely through the prism of the development of gastronomic tourism that the ministry would like to reverse this trend.

How exactly, says Mikhail Zhigalo, "We plan to stimulate the opening of fa-

document on amending this decree has already been prepared — at the current stage, similar benefits and preferences are offered for entities promoting Belarusian cuisine."

Stops on demand

According to MART data, as of December 1st, 2021, there were 62 tourist routes with a gastronomic component in Belarus. This means that a particular route consists of several locations (for example, a castle, a museum, a church, an agrostate or a honey/milk/cheese tasting), where only one of the points is tied to gastrocul-

Organising Tourism Activities of the Department of Tourism of the Ministry of Sports and Tourism, is not inclined to exaggerate, "Yes, getting to know the national cuisine during the tours as part of the lunch menu is a classic and currently the most common option. More widely, this can be reflected within the framework of specialised tours, for example, to ethnographic complexes. In addition, you can take part in tours to factories and plants specialising in the production of food. In Minsk, for example, these are Kommunnarka, Slodych, Alivaryia. If we talk about corporate holidays, then a popular service is a banquet in the national style."

According to Yekaterina Nikitina, each gastronomic tour is unique. As a rule, a company that offers such recreation options forms a package so that the tourist, upon arriving at the place, does not get bored for a minute. You can find such tours, but it is not yet possible to cover many interesting locations. For example, there is a lot of information on the Internet that you can visit the Upper Town in Minsk. But where can you find out, say, about a



fortunately for gourmets, gastronomic tourism is not yet considered as a separate area in our country — rather, as one of the components of rural, ethnic, nostalgic, industrial, cultural tourism. As Mikhail Zhigalo, Head of the Department for Organising Trade and Public Catering at the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade (MART), said in early December, the gastronomic component is supposed to be promoted in several directions, "The developed roadmap included a number of complex events aimed at developing and popularising the national Belarusian cuisine, drawing attention to domestic producers, including advertising and promoting the gastronomic potential of our country in the framework of international events, informing tourists about culinary events, gastronomic festivals, which are held in the territory of Belarus, etc."

MART is well aware that the situation in the Belarusian public catering has changed very dramatically over the past few years: the develop-



cilities that specialise in traditional Belarusian cuisine in 2022. Currently, Decree No. 345 of September 22nd, 2017 'On the development of trade, public catering and consumer services' provides for tax benefits and other preferences for individual entrepreneurs and certain categories of legal entities engaged in retail trade, public catering, consumer services to the population in rural areas and small towns. A draft



NOTE

In early December, 268 gastronomic tourism facilities functioned in Belarus, of which 166 are catering facilities for almost 15,000 places, specialising in the preparation of Belarusian cuisine.

small bakery that makes delicious bread, a unique cheese factory, or a small establishment of national cuisine where you can taste the medieval Belarusian menu?

The Ministry of Sports and Tourism sees the way out in the digitalisation of tourism and the promotion of online tourist services. Some work is already underway as part of the development of the National Tourism Agency's router, where you can select the type of trip, region, destinations, dates, and so on. But in order to book a service, you still need to contact either travel companies or a centralised resource (for example, the Vetliva resource, where more than 270 tours are already presented, including gastronomic ones).

"And in the capital, you can contact Minsk Information and Tourist Centre," adds the Director of this Centre Aleksei Rusakevich. "Our experts will help you find out which routes already exist and which company organises them. By the way, in the near future this information will appear on the official portal of the city."

ture. In most cases, this is either a master class or a dinner in a folk interior. But this is still not a gastro tour in the full sense of the word! In other farmsteads, by the way, they are ready to offer a much denser and longer acquaintance with local culinary traditions, many thanks to the owners for this. But that, as they say, is another story.

Nevertheless, Yekaterina Nikitina, consultant of the Department for Planning and

Aleksey Stoltyarov

Andrei Sazonov

planetabelarus.by

On the eve of the Winter Olympics



By Yuri Bakerenko

Mascot and logo

The official mascot of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics is a giant panda named Bing Dwen Dwen. Bing is Chinese for ice, but the word also means purity and strength. And 'Dwen Dwen' symbolises children. The mascot represents the strength of the body and will of the athletes and is designed to promote the Olympic spirit.

The emblem of the Olympics is based on the 'winter' hieroglyph and resembles a figure of a skater at the top and a silhouette of a skier at the bottom. In the middle are picturesque mountains, ski runs and ice rinks that will host the Games.

Sports facilities

Beijing will be the first city in the world to host both the Summer and Winter Games. And this, of course, will be reflected in the infrastructure that will be involved. According to the sustainable development plan created by the Organising Committee of the 24th Winter Olympics, several of the facilities, where the multisport forum took place in 2008, will be used as well. In particular, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games will once again be held at the Bird's Nest stadium. The Beijing National Aquatics Centre, which hosted swimming, diving and synchronised swimming competitions 14 years ago, has now been repurposed to accommodate curlers. Volleyball players competed in the capital's sports palace in 2008, and now short track and figure skating competitions will be held here. The Beijing National Indoor Stadium, which hosted gymnastics, trampoline and handball tournaments during the 2008 Olympics, will now host hockey players. They will also have the Ukesson

Sports Centre, where basketball players had a showdown at the Beijing Summer Olympics, at their disposal. And besides, we note that the National Speed Skating Oval was built for the 2022 Olympics on the site of the field hockey and archery fields used during the 2008 Games.

Furthermore, the competition will be held not only in the capital of China. The Olympic venues are divided into three clusters: Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou.



Bronze in the relay race was a good rehearsal for our athletes before the Olympics

Our hopes

At the meeting of the Executive Board of the NOC of Belarus last week, the composition of the sports delegation for the 24th Winter Olympics in Beijing was approved.

Qualification requirements for participation in the main competition of the four-year period were met by 28 Belarusian athletes in six sports.

The country will be represented by Ignat Golovatsiuk, Maryna Zuyeva, Ekaterina Sloeva, Anna Nifontova and

There is very little left before the start of the 24th Winter Olympic Games, which will be held from February 4th to 20th, and therefore you can slowly begin to prepare for a deep immersion in the world of winter sports

Yauheniya Varabyova in speed skating, by Anastasia Kirillova, Hanna Karaliouva, Aleksandr Voronov and Yahor Shpuntau in cross-country skiing, by Victoriia Safonova and Konstantin Milyukov in figure skating, and by Maria Shkanova in alpine skiing.

Dzinara Alimbekava, Hanna Sola, Iryna Leshchanka, Elena Kruchinkina, Alina Pilchuk, Anton Smolski, Maksim Varabei, Mikita Labastau, Dzmitry Lazouski, Raman Yaliothau will compete in biathlon. And Hanna Huskova, Hanna Dziaruha, Stanislau Hladchanka, Maksim Hustik, Pavel Dzik, Makar Mitrafanau will take part in the freestyle skiing competition. Perhaps, our hopes for medals are primarily connected with these two sports. Of the 18 winter Olympic medals that the Belarusian team won in sovereign history, 17 were brought to us by shooting skiers and ski acrobats. And that says a lot.

Aleksandr Gagiyeu, Director of the National Winter Olympic Training Centre Raubichi, has been confirmed as chief

number of Belarusian athletes at the 2022 Games has grown to 29.

Programme

In total, competitions at this Olympics will be held in 15 sports: biathlon, bobsleigh (including skeleton), curling, hockey, luge, figure skating, short track, speed skating, alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, freestyle skiing, Nordic combined, ski jumping and snowboarding. In total, 109 sets of awards will be played, which, by the way, is seven more than at the last Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. New disciplines are provided in bobsleigh, short track, freestyle skiing, ski jumping and snowboarding.

Of those sports in which we are not represented, hockey will, of course, arouse the greatest interest. And the fact that we still won't see players from the National Hockey League on the Olympic ice doesn't really change anything. The level of rivalry is still expected to be incredible.

Anti-COVID measures

The chances of getting to the medals are different for everyone, but what will unite all the participants of this Winter Olympics is the tough anti-COVID measures that the organisers will implement. At the Tokyo Olympics, which took place last summer, there were such strict measures that it seemed that there was no way to tighten them any further. However, Pierre Ducrey, the International Olympic Committee Operations Director, recently stressed that anti-COVID measures at the Beijing Olympics will be stricter than those at the Games in the Japanese capital. "Compared to the Tokyo Olympics, there are several important differences. First, to be admitted under the so-called 'closed-loop system' it is now necessary to be fully vaccinated. Secondly, each participant will undergo PCR testing here daily. As you remember, in Tokyo this rule only applied to athletes in the Olympic Village and people surrounding them, but not everyone," said Pierre Ducrey. In addition, an important difference will be that the 'closed-loop system' will be completely cut off from the outside world. And there will be special requirements for masks, only certain types of masks will be allowed.

Nevertheless, this, of course, will not spoil a big sports festival.

ARENA

Dzinara Alimbekava climbed to 2nd place in the overall ratings of the World Cup

At the final pre-Olympic stage in Antholz, Italy, Dzinara Alimbekava won silver in the mass start. Until the very end of the distance of 12.5 km, the Belarusian was winning, but in the end she lost 3.7 seconds to the winner Dorothea Wierer from Italy. Now Dzinara Alimbekava has 589 points. Her result is sec-



ond only to that of the Norwegian biathlete Marte Røiseland, who has 651 points. The Swedish athlete Elvira Öberg closes the top three with 563 points.

Belarusian Hanna Sola is in

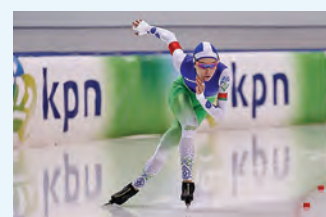
eighth position (420 points), Iryna Leshchanka is 48th (67), Elena Kruchinkina is in 54th place (53), and Alina Pilchuk is 87th (1). In the standings of the Nations Cup, the women's team of Belarus ranks fifth with 4,498 points.

The best of the Belarusian male biathletes Anton Smolski takes 10th place (405). Dzmitry Lazouski is in 37th position (113), Maksim Varabei is in 58th place (50), Mikita Labastau is in 69th position (33), a

line below is Raman Yaliothau (32), Sergei Bocharnikov is in 86th place (8). In the standings of the Nations Cup, the biathletes of the Belarusian national team are in fifth place (4,208).

Belarusian speed skaters on the podium

Belarusian speed skaters won three golds and one silver on the first day of the final stage of the Junior World Cup, which was held in Austrian Innsbruck.



Yahor Damaratsky (3,000 m), Viktor Rudenko (1,000 m) and Anna Kovaleva (3,000 m) climbed to the highest step of the podium. In the men's team sprint, the Belarusian team won the silver medal.



BELTA

Photo of the week

Epiphany bathing in the territory of the Church of All Saints in Minsk

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

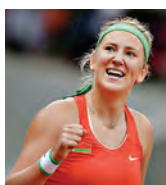


January 27th, 1944 is the Day of the Complete Liberation of Leningrad from the Nazi Blockade. More than 2.5 million residents were cut off from the world in the blocked city. The famine, compounded by bombing, heating problems and transport paralysis, has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths among residents. On January 27th, 1944, as a result of a major offensive operation, Soviet troops completely lifted the Nazi blockade of the city that had lasted for 872 days.

January 27th is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly resolution of November



1st, 2005 at a special meeting timed to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the liberation of prisoners of the largest Nazi mass extermination camp — Auschwitz — by the Soviet troops on January 27th, 1945. During the existence of Auschwitz, from 1.5 to 4 million people died there.



On January 28th, 2012, Victoria Azarenka became world No. 1 by defeating Maria Sharapova in the Australian Open final, after which she moved to the top of the WTA rankings.



On January 28th, 1577, the city of Mozyr, by the privilege of King Stefan Batory, was granted self-government rights under Magdeburg law and given a coat of arms. The city received a seal in the form of a single-headed black eagle. Later, the letter 'S' appeared on the small shield on the chest of the eagle — the monogram of Stefan Batory.

January 28th is the International Lego Day. The LEGO Group was founded by Danish carpenter Ole Kirk Christiansen in 1932. On January 28th, 1958, the company patented the modern LEGO brick. The central office of the company was the city of Billund in Denmark. It is still located here, together with the world's largest Legoland — a recreation and entertainment park built entirely from LEGO elements.



January 29th, 1886 is the birthday of the automobile, Carl Benz received a patent for his first automobile. It was a three-wheeled two-seat carriage weighing 250 kg on high spoked wheels. Benz built his new 0.9 hp four-stroke water-cooled gasoline engine into it. The car developed a ridiculous speed by our standards — 16 km/h, but at that time it was a very progressive design. The crew was solemnly named Motorwagen.



January 30th is the Belarusian Science Day. Currently, more than 25 thousand specialists are engaged in scientific research in Belarus. The results of the work of Belarusian scientists meet the highest international requirements, make a significant contribution to the innovative development of the state.

January 31st, 1892 is the birthday of Ales Gurlo (the real name is Aleksandr Kondratievich), Belarusian poet. He participated in the publication of handwritten magazines *Zarya*, *Golos Niza* (*Voice from the Bottom*), *Volnaya Dumka* (*Free Thought*), was a correspondent for the Pravda newspaper. In the 1920s he worked at Inbelkult and the Institute of Language of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. He is the author of poetry collections *Barvinok* (*Periwinkle*), *Vstrechi* (*Meetings*), *Zvyosdnaya Rossyp* (*Star Speckling*), stories, the poetic drama *Love Conquers Everything*, etc. He acted as a translator. Died in 1938.



January 31st is the International Jeweller's Day. The date was chosen due to the fact that it is in January

that jewellers register their hallmarks. The profession of a jeweller is one of the most ancient, because people have always loved to adorn themselves. Ancient Greece is considered the birthplace of this art. Here, for the first time, stone carving was made, jewellery made of precious metals with gems appeared.

February 1st is the International Dessert Day. Desserts are present in almost all cuisines of the world. Tiramisu, roast, pudding, chak-chak, cheesecake, eclair, marzipan, charlotte, strudel, ice cream are all varieties of popular desserts — dishes served after the main meal to create a pleasant taste experience. This holiday allows you to see the diversity of creative ideas of confectioners and cooks.



February 2nd is the Day of Military Glory, the Day of the Defeat of the Nazi Troops by the Soviet Troops in the Battle of Stalingrad (1943). The Battle of Stalingrad was the largest land battle during the Second World War and one of the turning points in the course of hostilities, after which the German troops finally lost the strategic initiative.