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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 37 (1043) ● THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024 ● WWW.SB.BY



Every third quarry dump truck in the world is manufactured at BELAZ — it is the pride and symbol of Belarus, one of the world's largest manufacturers of quarry equipment and the only one in the CIS

Brand renowned worldwide

The last Sunday of September traditionally marks Machine Builders Day in Belarus. This sector is the backbone of the entire industrial complex of the country. Belarus boasts about 250 machine-building enterprises that produce a wide range of products — from microcircuits, complex devices, optics, elevators, household appliances, electronics, and machine tools to vehicles, car components, agricultural machinery and the world's largest dump trucks. More than 80 percent of domestically manufactured machine-building products are supplied to the markets of 136 countries worldwide. For the first time, a large-scale collective exposition was unveiled in Minsk for the 30th anniversary of the Industry Ministry and Machine Builders Day, where all major enterprises of the industry showcased their latest achievements. After all, even in difficult geo-economic conditions, machine builders continue demonstrating decent results, developing new sales markets and carrying out modernisation. It is for good reason that foreign partners appreciate products of the Belarusian machine-building industry, which has already become a brand with a worldwide reputation.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has congratulated current and retired employees of the Industry Ministry and Belarus' machine-building complex on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Industry Ministry and a professional holiday.



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Yelizaveta Kobetskaya

Open and frank conversation



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has visited the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics (BSUIR) in Minsk — this event continued the Head of State's communication with students in the *Open Microphone with the President* format

Prior to the meeting, an exhibition of scientific and innovative achievements from the technical universities of Minsk was demonstrated to Aleksandr Lukashenko. BSUIR, in particular, collaborates with the defence sector of the Belarusian economy. The President enquired whether the university could assist in developing a high-precision and interference-resistant missile.

Discussing another development by the university's scientists, Aleksandr Lukashenko highlighted the need not to fall behind in the field of unmanned transport technologies. The conversation then shifted to the students of engineering and technical universities of Minsk at the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics. The Head of State admitted that, as President, he is primarily concerned about the accessibility of higher education.

Aleksandr Lukashenko revealed the reason for his meeting with students,

"I want to speak openly and honestly with you about the topics that concern you, because you are the future of our country, however cliché that may sound. This has always been the case — youth represents the future of our nation, and it is crucial to understand your mindset and what you think about the future."

You have come here to ask your questions to the President, and I am here to meet you, understand you, form my own opinion, and find an answer to the most pressing question for me today: who will continue our contemporary history, the history of sovereign Belarus?"

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that present-day politicians, representing the constructive majority

of the world, echo the same narrative: the world is on the brink of a new global war.

"I often say: Belarus is a patch of land. This is not a definition of the territorial scale of our country. It is about the vastness of the world, where no one needs us but us. Trust my experience. However, if we look at it through the lens of the geopolitical interests of other countries, we will see a different picture," the Head of State underscored.

The President pointed out that one Belarus in terms of area is equivalent to six territories of Belgium, five territories of the Netherlands, or more than two and a half territories of Austria or the Czech Republic. "We have both forests and marshes — the lungs of Europe, a source of oxygen. Belarus is rich in cultivated fields and water — the resources that will be worth their weight in gold in the future, because not every European country possesses such reserves, nor do they all preserve them as we do," stated the Belarusian leader.

The Head of State reminded the attendees that during the First World War, German forces shamelessly plundered Belarusian territories, and following the partition of Belarus in 1921, Poland did the same. "They blatantly exported peat, timber, and food from our land via narrow-gauge railways, while Belarusians were starving," the President added. "The main thing, however, is that we stand on the way to Russia which is considered by Western countries to be unprecedentedly and unjustly rich in these and other resources. We do not have to talk further about the political and sanction-laden onslaught from the collective West directed at us and Russians. Resources are the number one issue.

Red line — state border

When communicating with the students, the Head of State touched upon acute geopolitical issues, making it clear that an attack on Belarus or Russia would mark the beginning of a third world war. This assertion was confirmed by Russian President Vladimir Putin while commenting on changes to the nuclear doctrine, as emphasised by the Belarusian leader, "In case of an attack on Russia and Belarus, we [Russia] will use nuclear weapons. He confirmed my words. This was the essence of my statement. As soon as they attack us — NATO is NATO: Americans and Poles have already lined up along the border, especially the Polish one, and we know that the Polish leadership is rubbing its hands — we will use nuclear weapons. Russia will step in for us."

Aleksandr Lukashenko is confident that such escalation would provoke a global conflict, a world war that no one needs. In this aspect, the President reminded the West that the red line is Belarus' state border. "If they step on it, the response will be instantaneous. I will be frank — we are preparing for this."

Today, the situation is such that the West possesses cutting-edge technologies that neither Russia nor Belarus have in certain areas. Technologies exist, but they require resources to manufacture finished products, including unmanned aerial vehicles, artificial intelligence-based products, and so on. Resources are essential, particularly sources of rare earth metals. Where are they concentrated? Primarily in the Russian Federation."

larus from its path to a new economic structure. Sanctions and the fight in the information realm for our values, traditions, and historical memory require a considerable amount of strength and resources. This is true. Yet, it is also true that we are building our own economy, including — as it is fashionable to say today — a digital economy, integrating elements of the 6th and 7th technological paradigms into our lives. Among such elements are smart cities, smart transport, artificial intelligence, unmanned

but to choose what is needed and essential, and to systematise it. You must analyse; without analysis, nothing will come off."

Valeria Filipchik, a fourth-year student from the Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Management at the Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University, asked the President about his most extreme foreign trip.

According to the Belarusian leader, all his trips can be considered extreme in a way, as protocol events often harbour tense negoti-



The Head of State observed that history repeats itself every century, yet always at a higher level.

Speaking of sanctions, the President noted that the West imposed them not against him personally but against the entire country and all Belarusians, including students, their parents, and close ones.

Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded everyone that Belarus is an export-oriented country with an open economy.

"That is why they are choking our country with sanctions, forcing us to seek new markets for sale and for supply of those components that we have not mastered yet. We succeed in finding them. We know that all difficulties are temporary for us. This is a time of opportunity," the President remarked.

The Belarusian leader emphasised that in the global world, it is impossible to close off the transfer of technologies or products.

Addressing the attendees, the Head of State stressed, "Geopolitical competitors are doing everything they can to derail Be-

aerial vehicles, and innovative production. This is the future that the younger generation will continue to build, becoming qualified specialists. We are currently considering creating high-tech incubators — centres of progressive thinking — based on specialised universities." According to the President, this project should be implemented by BSUIR while the state will provide the necessary support.

The participants of the event asked their questions to the Head of State. Nikita Prokofiev, a third-year student from BSUIR, wanted to know whether the President uses special programmes or AI to systematise information.

The Belarusian leader admitted that the most important thing is experience and information systematisation, "It is like a library shelf where knowledge and all information is neatly arranged, and when needed, you take the information, the experience — which is very important — from the shelf to make the appropriate decision. I was taught at university not so much to accumulate information

ations. However, the President described his trip to the United Arab Emirates, China, and several African countries in December 2023 as the most extreme. Aleksandr Lukashenko shared his impressions, "I think it took more than a week. It was indeed an extreme trip, especially since those are hot countries. I am a northern person. I cannot stand the heat." The Belarusian leader added that he finds it difficult to be away from Belarus for more than 2-3 days. The President mentioned that throughout his presidential years, he had never truly been on vacation, "It is only at home that I can rest, although it is hard to call it a vacation. I love my country and its nature. It is a unique place where we live."

Students enquired if the President considered his visit to Yugoslavia in 1999, when the country was under constant bombing, to be extreme. Aleksandr Lukashenko recounted some details from that visit when NATO did not ensure flight safety and was conducting airstrikes, and agreed, "That was an extreme trip, indeed. Serbs appreciated that and still do."

Unity and discipline. Belarus has created a system of state defence

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has visited the 230th Obuz-Lesnovsky Combined Arms Training Range during his working trip to Brest Region. The Head of State was briefed on development prospects of unmanned aircraft of the Armed Forces taking into account today's armed conflicts. The discussion also focused on the development of electronic warfare to counter unmanned aircraft.

According to the Head of State, modern warfare is a war of drones. "We can all see now that drones have ushered in a new era of warfare. Drones can already chase down individual soldiers," the President said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko added that drone drills should replicate real combat situations, "Everything should be close to real-life scenarios. There should be no showing off. I do not need it."

The Head of State emphasised the need to focus on domestic components in the production of drones. "We should

make our own products. We need to have everything domestically made," the President pointed out.

"We need to decide what we should produce first and where we should supply it," the Belarusian leader remarked.

More than 30 domestically produced military products were showcased by 13 organisations of the State Authority for Military Industry of Belarus and six enterprises of the country's defence sector. The major focus of the display was on domestic unmanned aerial systems.



LUKASHENKO: WE NEED TO PREPARE FOR WAR — GOD GRANT THIS WAR DOES NOT HAPPEN

"There is a well-known formula: if you want peace, prepare for war. I want to reiterate — although we do not have to justify ourselves to anyone — that we are not going to fight and we do not want to fight. All this has already been said. They are listening to this, but our opponents, our rivals, those who are preparing to fight against us, are still doing their job. Therefore, we need to prepare for war — and God grant that this war does not happen," the Head of State noted.

At the same time, Aleksandr Lukashenko explained that no matter how acute the situation around Belarus is, there is still no tendency to unleash a war against us. However, having seen the examples of modern armed conflicts, including in Ukraine, we have already modernised our Armed Forces four times and are now carrying out the fifth modernisation. The Head of State pointed out the main directions in which it is being conducted.

First of all, this is unmanned aircraft. During the practical demonstration, the thesis was voiced that UAVs are a new and important element of modern warfare, but this does not negate the thesis that a territory belongs to the side whose soldiers are standing on it. In this regard drones are extremely important as an element of defence or offensive, infantry support.

"We have always believed and believe that the current war is impossible without drones. Therefore, drones are a serious innovation. Probably, the use of UAVs will not turn back the war — if it suddenly happens — but this technology will significantly affect the course of military operations. Drones are a serious issue. According to the military, this is very effective and profitable from the point of view of war. The

warring parties do not spare drones in order to hunt down a person, because it is cheaper than training a soldier," the Commander-in-Chief stressed.

Along with that, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that in case of war, our troops will also be attacked by drones, so it is necessary to build effective protection against them by developing electronic warfare systems.

"We have known this for a long time. We are good in this issue, and during the times of the USSR we also stayed ahead [in the development of electronic warfare systems]. It is very useful now. Therefore, we must and can create the most modern suppression systems for UAVs and not only them. A lot has been done, but more still needs to be done," the President stressed.

Counter-battery warfare is the third most important element of modern combat.

"We, the military, have a new term and not only this. A new process has appeared: counter-battery warfare. For example, you are attacked by artillery, you must immediately indicate the co-ordinates from where you were attacked, and respond. It must be done quickly, but for this it is necessary to have the appropriate systems," the Head of State clarified.

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, a number of other aspects are also important, which must be taken into account when improving the army. Summarising this task, the Commander-in-Chief noted that it was necessary to develop new types of weapons and systems to counter them yesterday, "We have something. You have shown it. We have enough for today — for peacetime — in order to train people. Yet, we are preparing in case of war, and in wartime ten times more than what we have seen today is required."

DETAILS

The practical event began with a demonstration of the use of standard domestic high-explosive fragmentation ammunition weighing from 500g to 2kg both by being dropped from UAVs and delivered to the target by FPV drones. The practical work on the conditional goals of the domestically produced unmanned aviation complexes Kvadro-M, Chekan V, Mirotvorets and Lovchy continued the show. All of them successfully completed the tasks in full accordance with their tactical and technical characteristics.

During the practical episode dealing with the integrated combat use of counter-drone weapons, the Head of State had a chance to see the Zvonok and Fumigator products at work. These enabled the military personnel to timely identify and prevent attacks by enemy UAVs on an assault group and an ambulance. Additionally, viewers could observe the suppression of the control channel of a spy plane by the electronic warfare station R-936 (Aero).

The practical demonstration continued with a tactical episode aiming to repel an armed breakthrough through the state border. To organise an ambush in the direction of a possible exit of the sabotage and reconnaissance group, a platoon was sent on the V2 armoured personnel carrier equipped with a remotely controlled combat module ADUNOK-BM30.2, developed by the Display Design Office JSC. The module's main armament is a 30mm 2A42 automatic cannon and a 7.62mm Kalashnikov tank-mounted machine gun (PKT) paired with it. A distinctive feature of this module — compared to the previous version of the ADUNOK-BM30 — is the presence of an additional type of weapon in the form of the KONKURS-RB anti-tank missile system with guides for two anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) of type 9M113 and 9M113M. This module is also equipped with a 902B smoke-screen laying system.

After the sabotage and reconnaissance group was identified, it was defeated from the armament of the V2 armoured personnel carrier and Belarus-made Sapphire grenade launcher complex, developed by the Belpetsvneshtekhnika enterprise. The peculiarities of the complex include two modes of operation: 'contact' and 'trajectory' (undermining the warhead on the flight path of the product at a set range), as well as the ability to fire a cluster of up to four products to increase the density of fire. The practical work of the BM-21-B Belgrad-2 MLRS rocket artillery battery, developed by the 2566 Radioelectronic Armament Repair Plant JSC, which was adjusted using the Berkut unmanned aviation complex, completed the show.



NEW MILITARY UNIT OF CONTRACT ENLISTEES TO BE CREATED

It has been decided to create a new military unit in Belarus, which will be composed of citizens who have already served in the army and are now ready to join it on a contractual basis, as stated by President Aleksandr Lukashenko during his visit to the 230th Obuz-Lesnovsky Combined Arms Training Range. The Head of State, in particular, noted, "Looking for good specialists, we have decided to create one more division. It will comprise smart, intelligent, experienced and strong men who have once served in the army or in some units and who are now ready to join on a contractual basis."

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Aleksandr Kulevsky

Bright, spectacular and on a large scale

Unity Marathon national campaign will cover all of Belarus, Molodechno being the first location

On National Unity Day — September 17th — the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, when speaking at a solemn event in Minsk, announced the launch of the national socio-cultural campaign *Unity Marathon*, which will take place across the country and unite various formats of events. “It will be a marathon of the trinity of traditions — national culture, which we cherish and develop, the talents of our people, for which the Belarusian land is renowned, and the beauty of the Slavic soul, which fills the world around us with harmony and mutual understanding,” emphasised the Head of State. The organisers intend to make the campaign truly grand and cover a wide age range of audiences. All the details have been shared at a press conference at the National Press Centre.

By Yelena Basikirskaya, Anastasia Tselyuk

‘The President was impressed.’ How the idea of *Unity Marathon* was born

The upcoming campaign *Unity Marathon* is the culmination of significant and creative work that has unfolded across the country since the beginning of this year, as noted by **Natalya Eismont**, the press secretary of the President of Belarus. She recalled that earlier, at the initiative of the Head of State, a national festival *Belarus — My Song* had taken place in the country. The idea was to provide one of the best venues — the Palace of the Republic — for regional music bands to perform. This was a boost and motivation for them to show their talents on a national scale. “I have heard a lot of feedback about those concerts. Those were very positive reviews. Each concert had a lot of good features. They were all unique,” remarked Natalya Eismont.

The President also watched those concerts that were broadcast on the *Belarus 3* channel. The regional music bands managed to showcase their talents, and the press secretary mentioned the feedback from Aleksandr Lukashenko.

After viewing the concerts, the President was impressed and highlighted specific performances, and the overall high standard of those concerts.

“This is how the idea was born to compile the best of those concerts into one large creative project,” shared Natalya Eismont. “Both the Head of State and all of us, the organisers, have a tremendous desire for this concert — albeit in a transformed, adapted format

— to be seen by the entire country. The President frequently emphasises how we should work and how vital each of us is in our role, here and now, today. However, in our lives, there is room not only for work but also for celebration. Therefore, we want upcoming *Unity Marathon* to reach every region of our country, so that as many people as possible could enjoy it.”

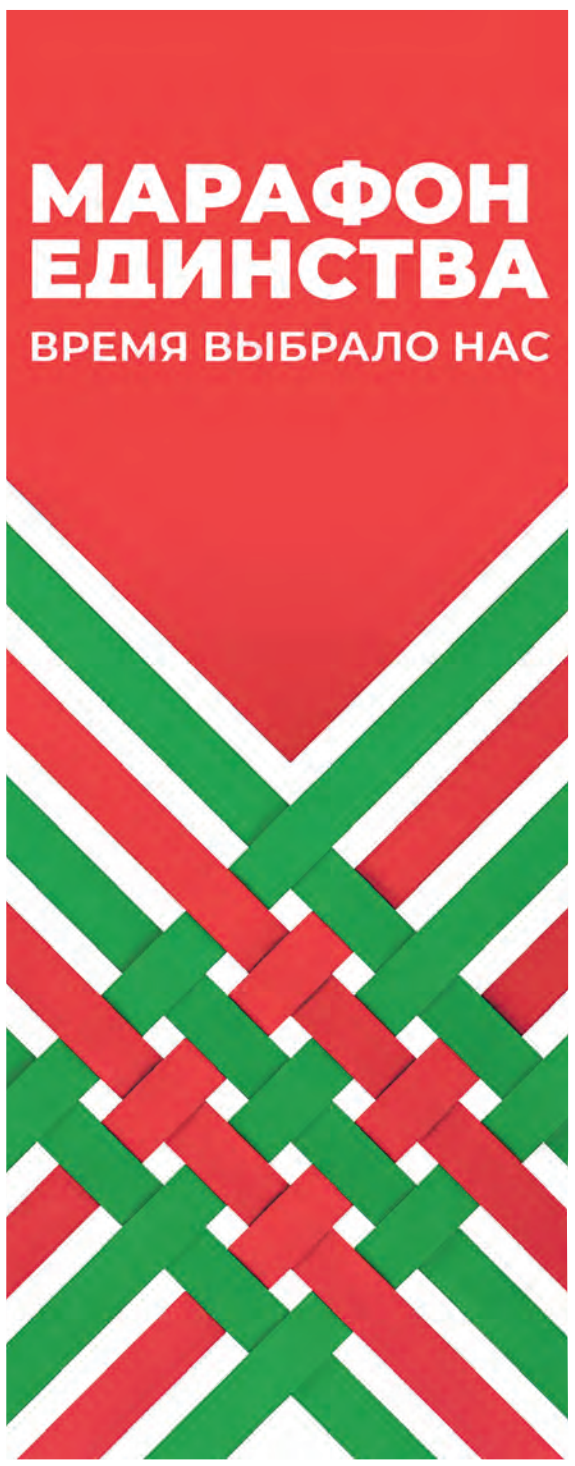
Which regions will *Unity Marathon* visit?

Preparation for the *Unity Marathon* initiative began on the President’s instructions long before it was officially announced, as clarified by **Anna Lukashenko**, the head of the working group for the event’s preparation, “For several months, specialists from various sectors contributed their suggestions, and we have been forming the marathon programme. Understanding that unity is a multi-layered concept, we filled the campaign

with events that would unite people through culture, education, and common activities. To date, we have finalised the programme of events that will take place at both the national and local levels. A schedule for the campaign has been developed, according to which *Unity Marathon* in the form of concerts and local events will visit every region of our country.”

According to Anna Lukashenko, a varying number of towns will be covered depending on the region. As a rule, this is going to be a two-day programme involving not only bands from the capital city but also performers from other regions of the country,

TO THE POINT
The *Unity Marathon* programme includes not only unique concerts reflecting the distinctiveness of the Belarusian national culture. Various events are planned, including an open drawing competition for primary school students titled *We Are Together*, a national essay competition on the theme *What is Unity*, a national project competition *My Contribution to the Future of the Country*, a series of events in vocational colleges titled *NOT Boring, NOT a Lecture*, a series of events called *Landmark Meeting*, the creation of murals, urban quests *This is All My Native Place*, and more.



“Unity Marathon will cover 13 towns, although this list may be expanded. Molodechno will be the first location. The first events will be held there as early as on October 11th. A lively and large-scale concert will mark the culmination of the campaign.”

All events as part of the campaign will be free, as specified by the head of the working group, “There is not a single event for which ticket sales will take place or where any kind of entry fee will be required. This is a manifestation of care by the state and all government bodies for the people, their leisure, and involvement in the life of the country.”

Connecting different forms

Vadim Gigin, General Director of Belarus’ National Library and Chairman of the Board of the national public association Belarusian Society *Knowledge*, stated, “During the marathon, we want to highlight the main idea — Belarus is a country of opportunities where each person, starting from a young age, can realise their potential. This idea will be reflected through specific stories of people who were born in Belarus, live here, and have achieved significant results in different areas — be it space, literature, or the arts...”

Moreover, these individuals are not only well-known in their regions but also have made a name for themselves at the national level. Thus, regions boast bloggers with a million followers, excellent teachers, actors, and artists.”

Vadim Gigin recalled that over the past few years, separate fragments of such a marathon had taken place in our country, such as the *Belarus United* campaign. As a result, the country became acquainted with lecturers and speakers whom people trust. After all, different forms — musical, theatrical, and lecture formats — can be combined to convey the necessary information. This is what *Unity Marathon* aims to achieve.

Culture Minister **Anatoly Markevich** is confident, “We will be able to surprise, because there are many interesting ideas that have not yet been used. The flair of each region will be highlighted during the planned events. We want to involve our renowned compatriots from various regions or localities. Their participation will be vibrant and significant.”

Equal dialogue meets common interests

On importance of restarting Belarusian-Lithuanian relations



Maksim Ryzhenkov

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,
“We will restore relations with Lithuania, and the same is true about Poland — it is inescapable. The basic principle is that neighbours cannot live badly. I always repeat: neighbours are God-given, they are not chosen. Disagreements and quarrels happen, but they are passing. The time will come when we will live with them in the way it was before, in Soviet times...”

During the working trip to Ostrovets District of Grodno Region on November 3rd, 2023

By Belarus' Foreign Minister Maksim Ryzhenkov

We have nothing to quarrel over

Belarusians and Lithuanians have nothing to quarrel over in their common history. Starting from the times when they lived in the same state at different stages of historical development and up to modern days when Belarusians went shopping to the well-known Akropolis mall while Lithuanians used a visa-free regime to come to Belarus, our people have always found common ground, made friends, created families, played sports together, and traded profitably. According to some estimates, Belarusian goods provided up to 30 percent of the load of the Lithuanian logistics infrastructure.

True, at the end of the 20th century, the foreign policy priorities of our countries drifted apart. However, that did not prevent us from building relations based on the principles of respect for the right of each state to join international political, economic and defensive alliances, without violating the achieved atmosphere of good neighbourliness and trust.

Today as ever, Belarus continues to consistently adhere to this vector in our bilateral relations. Yet, the politicians in power in Vilnius — on their own or following a hint from the outside — have chosen a different path, the purpose of which is to change the political course in Belarus. Obviously, this goal is absolutely unattainable since it lacks the key component — the Belarusian people's support. In doing so, Lithuania itself bears enormous costs of this senseless confrontation.

The annual direct losses of the Lithuanian economy caused by the severance of ties with Belarus are estimated at almost \$1bn, and this is not the limit. Among the most significant consequences are a catastrophically negative impact on the Lithuanian transit industry, the operation of the Klaipeda Port and Lithuanian Railways, a reduction in Lithuanian exports, a sharp deterioration in the economic situation of enterprises working in co-operation with Belarusian partners in various industries, as well as the loss of tourism business.

Eloquent numbers

Since 2020, the volume of freight transportation by rail in Lithuania has more than halved, and the rolling stock of freight trains has decreased twice as well. About 2,000 employees of Lithuanian Railways have lost their jobs. In 2023, the volume of cargo transshipment at the Klaipeda Port decreased by nine percent, 11 percent less cargo was transported by sea than in 2022.

In H1 2024, Lithuanian exports dropped by eight percent, and imports fell by 10 percent. According to the European Commission, a further increase in the Lithua-



Visa-free travel is valid until December 31st, inclusively

Source: according to Belarus' State Border Committee as of September 23rd, 2024

nian state budget deficit is projected for 2024 and 2025. In 2023, it made 0.8 percent of GDP; it is expected to reach 1.8 percent in 2024, and 2.2 percent in 2025. Unemployment has grown by nearly two percentage points this year, and experts predict its further growth in 2025.

Restoring human contacts

Can the supplies of fuel pellets, firewood, fertilisers, petroleum products, food, and medicines at reasonable prices — that Lithuanians need so much, especially outside large cities — hurt them? It is no secret that many residents of Lithuania, including those who are not so well off, have found a good help in the visa-free regime since it enables them to go shopping to the border regions of Belarus. Maybe this fact, as well as the truth about our country, has become the main motive for the Lithuanian authorities to make so much effort to close border crossings and reduce bus services.

Lithuanian businessmen, who received significant revenues from the distribution of Belarusian goods, have already lost plenty of opportunities, and many more will be lost in the future. Many companies are closing, with people left without money and prospects. Businessmen who implemented profitable projects with Lithuanian investments in Belarus suffer now as well.

To our sincere regret, Belarusian-Lithuanian relations are currently going through the worst period in the entire history of bilateral co-operation. By betting on a coup in our country in 2020, official Vilnius unleashed a short-sighted hybrid war against the Belarusian state and the people, with whom Lithuanians have lived in friendship and mutual understanding for centuries.

Rekindling co-operation

The current situation is absolutely abnormal. The paradox is that the residents of Lithuania — many of whom actively use the visa-free regime to visit Belarus — also sincerely do not understand what is happening and why the Lithuanian leadership needs this situation.

In the current conditions, we are not sitting idly by. Belarus has been forced to diversify its economic ties, and the process is successfully developing. In turn, the Lithuanian economy, being focused on the service sector, may suffer sustained long-term losses, and these will accumulate. Furthermore, compensation payments to the affected sectors of the Lithuanian economy will end sooner or later, and it will be difficult to hide the consequences.

Despite the senseless and completely unjustified pressure, Belarus is still interested in rekindling a normal equal dialogue with its Lithuanian neighbour — in the interests of the peoples of the two countries.

Saying a weighty word

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly address the residents of Lithuania. I urge ordinary Lithuanians as true bearers of their country's sovereignty to calmly and rationally sort out the situation and weigh in on the defence of civilised communication with their neighbours, if you still have the opportunity to openly express your opinion. Your weighty word will make it possible to neutralise in the near future all the negative aspects brought to our peoples by the ridiculous confrontation with Belarusians imposed by your politicians.

Among the priority measures, we could jointly outline ways to resolve the issues of normalisation of the migration situation at the border, deescalation of military tension, interaction between law enforcement agencies, resumption of transfer of pensions and allowances, medical rehabilitation, including for people with chronic diseases and children with disabilities. It is in our common interests to restore normal passenger and freight traffic and mobility, transit of goods, including such important humanitarian items as food, medicines, and fertilisers.

The agenda could also include such areas as the resumption of educational and cultural exchanges, joint scientific programmes, the continuation of the reconstruction of checkpoints, the implementation of environmental projects, co-operation in the energy sector, the creation of joint ventures and, most importantly, normal human communication between Belarusians and Lithuanians.

We look forward to the response from the Lithuanian side to these proposals and concrete steps by the Lithuanian political elite, based primarily on the interests of their own people.

POPULARITY OF VISA-FREE TRAVEL

Belarus launched the new visa-free entry procedure for citizens of **35** European states in July this year. As reported by the State Border Committee, **5,961** Europeans have benefited from the new rules and visited Belarus within two months. Since the beginning of the year, **67,032** people have arrived in Belarus from Lithuania, **32,418** from Poland, and **14,633** from Latvia. In total, **967,439** European residents have visited Belarus since April 15th, 2022.

The Minsk Times project is dedicated to people awarded the highest Hero of Belarus title

Legend of BELAZ

On the last Sunday of September, Belarus celebrated Machine Builders Day. The current issue of *The MT* project is dedicated to Pavel Mariyev — the Hero of Belarus, Doctor of Technical Sciences, Honoured Worker of Industry, and recipient of the state prize in science and technology. This remarkable person once breathed new life into Belarus' automotive giant BELAZ, whose dump trucks have become a symbol of independent Belarus.

Pavel Mariyev is an engineer, director, scientist — Doctor of Technical Sciences, the author and co-author of 30 research papers, and the holder of 13 patents and copyright certificates in Belarus. His name is inextricably linked to the history of BELAZ, where he started as a technician technologist and left as the general director, having dedicated almost half a century to the work at the enterprise. He managed to demonstrate his talents both as a gifted engineer and as a remarkable manager with outstanding organisational skills, thus becoming the locomotive that pulled and strengthened the plant's position during the challenging for the industry years of the 1990s.

Step by step

Pavel Mariyev began his career at the Ural Automobile Plant, where he received thorough training. "The word 'automobile' has been etched into my life since childhood. After finishing seven years of school, I chose to study automobile engineering at college. The Ural Automobile Plant was my first plant, where I went through a serious training regimen, joining just as they were preparing to produce the updated model of Ural-355M truck. I started at BELAZ in 1959. Almost before my eyes and with my involvement, all models were brought into production, starting from the 27-tonne vehicle to the 320-tonne dump truck," recounted Pavel Mariyev.

At BELAZ, he worked in the positions of Deputy Chief Technologist, Deputy Chief Engineer, Chief Engineer, and from 1991 to 2007 — General Director.

We did not let the country down!

In the troubled 1990s, when hundreds of plants and factories were falling into decline, taking the helm of an automotive enterprise was no easy feat, to put it mildly. According to Pavel Mariyev, it was a time when a transition from

AWARDS

- By Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 360 dated June 29th, 2001, Pavel Mariyev was awarded the Hero of Belarus title for his selfless work and exceptional contribution to the development of domestic automobile manufacturing
- Badge of Honour Order
- Order of Friendship of Peoples
- Order of the Fatherland 3rd class
- Belarus' Honoured Worker of Industry
- In 2002, Pavel Mariyev became an honorary citizen of Zhodino, and in 2008, he was named an honorary citizen of Minsk Region



Pavel Mariyev

award *For Technology and Quality*, and many other awards. The load capacity of the dump trucks produced at BELAZ has increased. The holding company retains a third of the global market for the production and sale of heavy-duty dump trucks. The enterprise has created more than 450 models of quarry dump trucks, which successfully operate on almost all continents. Currently, BELAZ produces 450-tonne vehicles — the most powerful dump trucks in the world, the concept of which was developed back in the years when Mariyev was at the helm of the enterprise. The Hero of Belarus, with his inherent modesty, noted that the diamond stars

were not a means to an end, "We were all captivated by the vibrant work. People began to take pride in being at the forefront. They gained confidence — solid ground beneath their feet, and felt needed and recognised. As for awards... Each one represents a new

level of responsibility, an internal drive to solve yet another task, to create another more advanced machine... Otherwise, the award dulls instantly."

Last year, the Hero of Belarus celebrated his 85th anniversary. Despite his age, his heart and soul remain with the enterprise. Mariyev is a member of the supervisory board of the holding company, monitors the changes taking place at the plant, and rejoices in its successes, "Today, the enterprise demonstrates high technical and scientific levels. It rapidly adapts to the complex conditions, taking into account the whims of the West, which has stopped supplying very important components and engines to BELAZ. However, the team of engineers at BELAZ has managed, within a short time, to find alternative solutions, which are now successfully implemented. The plant continues to ramp up its production volume. It is encouraging that the enterprise has developed a solid research technical and human resource potential capable of addressing such challenges."

Moreover, the Hero of Belarus is pleased that BELAZ remains, in essence and spirit, an enterprise that has managed to preserve the continuity of generations — several family dynasties work at the enterprise. Pavel Mariyev believes it is a good thing when a beloved profession is in the capable and reliable hands of new generations.

Based on materials of sb.by, belta.by and *Heroes of Belarus* by Nikolai Machekin



New BELAZ-7513E electric dump truck and world's first 130-tonne BELAZ-7513R truck with gas engine

a socialist economy to a market economy was required since a multitude of issues had to be resolved — two incompatible systems collided and there were no ready-made solutions, "At a time when no one had any money, we decided to develop production. For the first time, we acquired an international bank loan backed by government guarantees. As a result, we successfully carried out a reconstruction that breathed new life into the enterprise, and repaid the loan on time. We worked meticulously, calculating every step, developing schemes for settling accounts with suppliers and customers. We did not live extravagantly, saved every penny, and did not let the government or the country down!"

Behind these words are years of intense and precise work on new vehicles. The implementation of a large investment project from 1998 to 2001 allowed for the introduction of computer technologies in the design and production of a new series of mining dump trucks. Following the technical re-equipment, several dump trucks appeared at the enterprise — with carrying capacities of 55, 130, and 220 tonnes, and later a 320-tonne dump truck. The



Belarus-made mining dump trucks are known all over the world

first three models facilitated the exit from the crisis. It is no surprise that the enterprise and its active leader caught the attention of the President of Belarus who planned the state visit to the successfully developing automobile plant. By that time, the enterprise had already gained recognition — by 2001, BELAZ products were selling well. Aleksandr Lukashenko held a meeting attended by almost half of the Government. Everyone was unanimous — the work carried out at the plant and its results could be assessed as positive. A week later, on Independence Day of the Republic of Belarus, Pavel Mariyev was honoured with the Star of the Hero of Belarus.

The hero himself was humble when speaking of the honorary title, referring to it as an 'advance award', "At the ceremony, I said that this was an 'advance award' that I would definitely work off. I wanted to direct my efforts towards the further development of the enterprise, the international recognition of its products, and the enhancement of social benefits for the team. I was engaged in all of this until I retired."

At the forefront

This was followed by the victorious march of the enterprise, which gradually became a giant and a global leader in the production of large-scale automotive machinery. This did not go unnoticed beyond the country's borders — BELAZ received international *Diamond Star of Quality*, the international



Plant tours to BELAZ leave unforgettable impressions

Checked by space



Marina Vasilevskaya — the first cosmonaut of sovereign Belarus

'Space serum' on Earth and in the sky — let's find out scientists' plans for developing unique nutrition lines

Probiotics are microorganisms that have a beneficial effect on human health. But how do they behave in the conditions of space flight, experiencing impacts such as microgravity or radiation? To answer these questions, scientists from the Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry state unitary enterprise (SUE) in collaboration with the Institute of Biomedical Problems under the Russian Academy of Sciences are implementing a targeted project called *Proxibiotic*. Some of its results formed the basis for the project *Checked by Space*, which has recently become one of the winners in the *100 Innovations by Young Scientists* competition. Notably, the institute's team has received awards in this competition for three consecutive years.

By Vera Arteaga

Thanks to scientists, Belarusian polar explorers have a rich diet

Recalling how the project began, Associate Professor Gordei Gusakov, Candidate of Economic Sciences, Director of the Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry SUE, noted, "Since one of the institute's areas of activity is research in biotechnology, we were interested in the possibility of incorporating our project into the scientific programme of the Belarusian cosmonaut working on the International Space Station (ISS). Together with representatives from the Russian Academy of Sciences, specifically the Institute of Biomedical Problems, a multifaceted comprehensive study was formed to research strains of starter cultures. The issue of composing diets for cosmonauts, and possibly the first colonies on other planets, presents both scientific and practical interest. To this end, it is necessary to study the changes in the properties of microorganisms, which may be used to prepare food products directly in orbit."

As Gordei Gusakov explained, the institute's scientists are in a way familiar with the nutrition line for researchers working in extreme living conditions. "We have been working with representatives of the Belarusian Antarctic Expedition for several years now. They use our fermentation starters to prepare a variety of fermented dairy products, such as cottage cheese, yoghurt, and bioproducts," shared the director of the institute.

Incidentally, while communicating with the Belarusian polar explorers, the scientists discovered that currently, Belarusians have the most diverse fermented dairy diet among all those exploring Antarctica. Much of the credit for this, without a doubt, goes to the Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry SUE.

On board the International Space Station, Marina Vasilevskaya conducted a series of scientific studies. Sixteen microorganisms that were in space are now being studied by scientists under terrestrial conditions to assess their state after the flight. This work is not yet complete.

Another experiment on the ISS involved the production of fermented dairy products, and the result was deemed successful. "We are discussing the possibility of creating a line of so-called space food in the future," revealed Gordei Gusakov. "The institute will continue further research in this direction."

The team that carried out the *Proxibiotic* studies on Earth included both established scientists and the younger generation, which ensured a kind of symbiosis

of experience and youthful enthusiasm. In a sense, this is the culmination of 20 years of scientific research by the institute, based on the unique properties of the cultures from the national collection of industrial strains of starter cultures and their bacteriophages, which have the status of national heritage of Belarus. "In



Gordei Gusakov, Director

the future, we plan to create a terrestrial product line as well as to continue research for the needs of space. After all, it is evident — what is beneficial for cosmonauts is also beneficial for all of us," emphasised the director of the institute.

Space is what attracts young people

The project of young scientists *Checked by Space* is the first step towards creating an industrial technology for production — not for space, rather for Earth, for the widespread consumption of the product, as clarified by Associate Professor Natalya Zhabanos, Candidate of Technical Sciences, Head of Biotechnology Department at the Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry SUE, who leads the *Proxibiotic* project. "The work *Checked by Space* encompasses a fairly large complex of cultures, 15 strains. Yes, the cultures that were included in this experiment have been collected since the 1990s, but the created combination is absolutely new," assured the scientist. "A lot of meticulous work has been done to ensure that such a composition of microorganisms, which have different characteristics and beneficial properties, became successful in the new bioproduct. By the way, such a comprehensive result has been achieved for the first time in Belarus. As a rule, it involves one or two probiotic lactic and bifidobacteria that are used as the basis for fermented dairy products. The current project, in contrast, features six types of lacto- and three types of bifidobacteria, which remain in full species composition for more than ten days."

Yelizaveta Dvoyezhenova, a junior researcher in the applied biotechnology

and child nutrition laboratory of Biotechnology Department and one of the authors of the *Checked by Space* project, admitted that working on it was exciting and responsible. She emphasised that the work was carried out by efforts of a large and strong team; therefore, there were no doubts about success.

Given the interest in the results of the joint project implemented on the ISS from the Russian scientific community, there are plans to develop a joint research programme for space in the future. According to Gordei Gusakov, the institute intends to participate in it.

From quantity to quality

In addition to the space segment, the Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry SUE is working on a whole range of crucial areas. Among them are personalised product lines. "We say that our country has ensured food security. Now we need to work on its qualitative enhancement, so that each person could create a specific diet or personalised nutrition for them-



"Thus, we are currently working on nutrition for athletes. These are products with a high protein content based on our previous developments," Gordei Gusakov unveiled. "Overall, we strive to systematise and offer our country a line of sports nutrition products, which will likely be produced directly within the institute. Isotonic drinks could be a sought-after and distinctly Belarusian product. Belarus is a country rich in whey, which contains all the necessary substances for us to create such



Yelizaveta Dvoyezhenova — junior researcher in the applied biotechnology and child nutrition laboratory of Biotechnology Department — is a winner of the *100 Innovations by Young Scientists* competition

selfes," highlighted the director of the institute. "In this regard, the role of science is very high — fundamental and applied research is being conducted in the field of processing meat and dairy raw materials, technological production processes are being improved, and technologies for producing new types of products are being developed and created."

The institute proudly states that it collaborates, to varying degrees, with all dairy and meat enterprises in Belarus. This includes testing raw materials and finished products for quality and safety indicators, training industry specialists, providing scientific support for the introduction of new product types into production and refining technological processes, and, of course, conducting research tailored to the specific needs of enterprises.

products. Negotiations are currently underway with one of the Belarusian enterprises regarding the production and further promotion of these drinks."

"Among the latest developments, we can also mention the creation of a line of lactose-free dairy products for people with lactose intolerance; a range of iodine-containing dairy products aimed at preventing iodine deficiency; and meat products for preschool and school-aged children with a high body mass index (BMI)," added Associate Professor Natalya Furik, Candidate of Technical Sciences, First Deputy Director of the Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry SUE. "Moreover, both meat and dairy products with traditional flavours but with reduced salt and sugar content will find their consumers."



Bank of France Governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau said in an interview with France 2 TV channel that the country is now 'sick', because it 'has been accumulating too much deficit and therefore too much debt for too long'

France is now 'sick'

The French government is under pressure to find quick solutions to the country's fiscal challenges and must present a budget bill for 2025 to parliament in the coming weeks. PM Michel Barnier indicated that he will make the country's biggest companies and wealthiest individuals pay more tax in an effort to tackle the massive budget deficit — an approach Villeroy has backed.

"When a family is living beyond its means, which is France's case, you can cut spending or raise revenues," Villeroy said. "Today, we need to do a both — we need a well-proportioned cocktail."

"For 40 years, we've been saying it isn't the moment and that we mustn't break growth — the result is that public

debt is getting out of hand," Villeroy said. He added that France will soon be the only country in Europe unable to bring its deficit within the European Union ceiling of 3 percent of economic output.

"In recent days, international lenders, those who lend to France, are also telling us we must now react," he said on France 2 television. "Before June, we had an interest-rate spread with Germany of around 0.5 percentage points, and now we are close to 0.8, so we really must deal with this sickness."

Statistics agency Insee said earlier this month that France's economic growth will be modest on average in the second half of the year as consumer demand picks up only slightly and businesses rattled by

political uncertainty continue to hold back on investment.

France's newly appointed Finance Minister Antoine Armand admitted that the country now has 'one of the worst deficits' in its modern history, confirming new taxes on the wealthy and big businesses are on the table to get finances back in order.

The deficit is expected to reach 5.6 percent or more of national output this year — almost double the European Union limit.

"Apart from one or two one-off crisis years in the past 50 [years], we have one of the worst deficits in our history," Armand told broadcaster France Inter. "On that level, the situation is grave."

Coffee is the new black gold

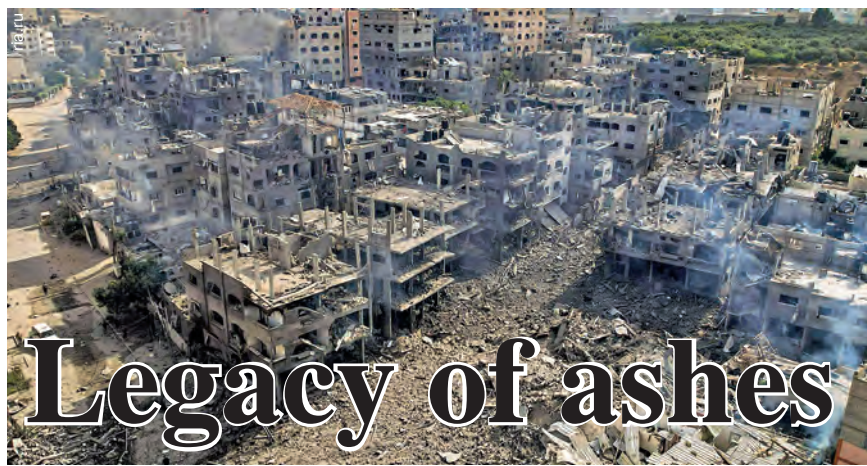
Coffee prices hit multi-year highs, reacting to a worrisome outlook for global production due to unfavourable weather conditions

Droughts in Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, and severe typhoons in Vietnam, the second-largest, have significantly disrupted global coffee supply chains, driving up production costs that are bubbling their way through to consumers.

As one of the world's largest coffee-drinking regions, Europe's coffee lovers will find price hikes particularly hard to swallow. Europeans consume approximately 3.2 million metric tonnes of coffee a year, accounting for almost 33 percent of the world's total coffee consumption, according to German consumer data company Statista.

Brazil, responsible for around 40 percent of the world's coffee production, has been grappling with one of its worst droughts in decades. The dry conditions have severely affected its Arabica coffee-growing regions and reduced yields.

While Brazil dominates the Arabica market, Vietnam is the world's leading producer of the cheaper Robusta bean — used in instant coffee. Earlier this month, the country's key coffee-growing regions were decimated by Typhoon Yagi, which killed at least 60 people and left hundreds injured. Early assessments suggest thousands of hectares of coffee plantations were affected, with significant losses to both the current harvest and future production potential.



Legacy of ashes

The result of Joe Biden's activities as President of the United States are wars that have no clear end in sight — as reported by ABC News TV channel

US President Joe Biden tried to use his final address at the UN General Assembly last week to defend democracy, the value of alliance and collective security as his legacies, according to the *South China Morning Post* newspaper.

In truth, his presidency has weakened every one of them, thus he is leaving office in a world much more dangerous than when he entered it. That's saying a lot when his predecessor was the supposedly much more unreliable and unstable Donald Trump.

"Even though Biden came into office with decades of foreign policy experience, he leaves behind a mixed record," the TV channel noted.

ABC News pointed out that Biden's presidency is winding down as the conflict in Ukraine continues to rage and the risk

of an all-out war between Israel and Lebanon increases. Moreover, negotiations to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip have stalled, despite the fact that the American leader stated that a top priority before the end of his administration is to end Israel's war against Hamas.

As *The Wall Street Journal* wrote earlier, Biden leaves his successor a world of disorder. According to the publication, Biden's policy has led to the biggest decline in American influence since the 1930s.

"It is a far more dangerous world than the one Biden inherited, and far less favourable to US interests, human freedom and democracy. The latter is a tragic irony, as the president has made the global struggle between democracy and authoritarianism a recurring theme," the article reads.

First death using suicide pod

Swiss police have arrested several people after a controversial futuristic-looking capsule designed to allow its occupant to kill themselves was used for the first time, authorities said

Police in the northern canton of Schaffhausen bordering Germany said the so-called 'Sarco' capsule had been deployed in a wood in the municipality of Merishausen. Prosecutors in Schaffhausen have opened criminal proceedings against several people for 'inducing and aiding and abetting suicide', a police statement said, adding that several people were detained, without giving details about them or the deceased.

A spokesperson for the group behind the capsule, The Last Resort, said the deceased was a 64-year-old American wom-

an who had been suffering from a severely compromised immune system, adding that she had passed psychiatric evaluations prior to ending her life.

Cast along sleek, aerodynamic lines, the 'Sarco' causes death when its occupant releases nitrogen gas inside, lowering the amount of oxygen to lethal levels. It is the brainchild of Philip Nitschke, an Australian physician famous for his work on assisted suicide since the 1990s.

Switzerland has been a magnet for advocates of assisted suicide due to laws that make it legal there.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

American-style competition:
beat your own people to make
the whole world feel scared



**The President
of Belarus,
Aleksandr
Lukashenko,**

“Today, European nations are dragged into a reckless arms race, mired in economic stagnation and moral depression. They are being drawn into a conflict with Russia, into a confrontation with China. And look, they are even afraid to disagree! Do you think they wanted to deliver Leopards there [to Ukraine]? Especially the Germans, who were forced to ramp up their production and send them there. Did they want it? No. Still, they supply everything there. They were ordered by the Washington regional committee — and they did it. Here is the discipline!”

From the Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, on March 31st, 2023

forcing Kiev to abandon any attempts at peaceful negotiations, Americans, firstly, cut off the European Union from cheap Russian energy resources that had previously been transported through Ukraine. Secondly, they compelled European leaders to adopt self-destructive sanctions related to the voluntary refusal to purchase relatively inexpensive Russian energy carriers and raw materials. Finally, thirdly, the fighting in Ukraine became a cover for the explosion of the gas pipelines that supply the European economy with cheap Russian gas.

Thus, the operation of German, French, and other European manufacturing enterprises has come into question. In full accordance with the main market principle of ‘push the falling one’, the USA has immediately introduced serious preferences for companies relocating their production to the United States resulting in a great exodus of industry from the EU. The remaining industrial enterprises in the European Union are forced to cut production.

Doing the opposite

According to data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), from 2018 to 2023, industrial production in Germany decreased by 10.2 percent, in France by 4.8 percent, in Italy by 4.4 percent, in Spain by 0.7 percent, and in the Netherlands

by five percent. By the way, the total GDP of the listed countries accounts for two-thirds of the EU’s overall gross output. Today, the European Union, with a GDP that is a third less than that of the USA, is no longer competitive with Americans.

Fortunately, Belarus has chosen its own path. Aleksandr Lukashenko once articulated one of the principles for economic management, “When I

did not know how to proceed, I listened to the West and did the opposite. I knew we are competitors and they will not offer us anything good.”

As a result, we managed to avoid privatisation — and consequently destruction — of our country’s industrial giants. These giants are, in fact, the backbone and true locomotives of the entire Belarusian economy today. Their products, branded as BELAZ, MAZ, MTZ (Belarus), Integral, Atlant, Gefest, Belaruskali, Belshina, and more, are Belarus’ calling cards around the world.

Emergency braking

The countries of the collective West today resemble a pack of predators. They display enviable unity during the hunt — for instance, when the NATO pack collectively tore to pieces Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria. However, when it comes to intraspecific dominance, they start fighting with each other. This is precisely what the USA is currently demonstrating towards the European Union, where deindustrialisation is gaining momentum, with more and more European enterprises announcing the closure of their production facilities. What does this mean?

By Valery Bainev, Doctor of Economics

Major weapon

The USA and their European accomplices constantly confuse the world with pseudo-scientific myths about post-industrial society, the exceptional significance of the service sector, the miraculous power of free market economy, and so on. Today, however, many have become aware of the ultimate goal of this myth-making — the deindustrialisation of competitors and the destruction of their production potential.

The fact is that the true driver of the modern economy is its industrial sector. To understand this, it is enough to simply look around.

Everything that nourishes us, warms and transports us, creates comfort for us, and protects us is produced by industrial enterprises. A country devoid of such a sector becomes not only completely dependent on the benevolence of those who produce goods but also utterly defenceless against any aggression.

Incidentally, the current anti-market sanctions policy of the West has proven that reliance on a free market economy is tantamount to suicide. Especially now, when Washington, Brussels, and London have shifted their competitive struggle with the Union State of Belarus and Russia into a high-tech armed confrontation, using long-suffering Ukraine as a kamikaze country and testing ground for this purpose.

Any means to an end

Not long ago, the European Union significantly surpassed the USA in terms of economy. Thus, in 2008, their GDPs were \$16.2 and \$14.7 trillion, respectively. Despite the fact that the EU is the main accomplice in all reckless schemes initiated by the United States, the world hegemon could not tolerate such humiliation. Therefore, it has taken extraordinary measures in order to slow down the development of its ‘partner in crime’. The most effective weapon — the deindustrialisation of Europe — has

been employed in the competitive struggle to this end.

In order to destroy the industries of Germany, France, and other leaders of the European Union, American tricksters have leveraged a whole arsenal of methods and means. Thus, Europe and many others are being imposed with a cunning green agenda that demands a sharp reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, implying that it is primarily industry and traditional energy that leave a higher carbon footprint.

On the one hand, the transition to more expensive alternative energy sources considerably increases industrial costs, which in turn drives up the cost price of its products. On the other hand, decarbonisation itself requires additional expenses, which again leads to a rise in prices of goods. Since the European Union has thoughtlessly plunged headlong into this ‘green abyss’, its production potential has predictably become less competitive.

A knockout blow was also dealt by the hostilities provoked by the United States in Ukraine. By

VOLKSWAGEN CLOSES ITS DOORS

The German company Volkswagen may close several plants in Germany and lay off its employees due to the desire to cut costs. In this regard, the company management has decided to terminate its job security agreement that has been in force since 1994. It has also been announced that the company will not fulfil its promise not to reduce its workforce until 2030. “The European automotive industry is in a very demanding and serious situation,” said Oliver Blume, Volkswagen Group CEO. He referred to the emergence of new players entering the European market.

Above all, Volkswagen faces rapidly growing competition from Chinese manufacturers of inexpensive yet high-quality electric vehicles.

TO THE POINT

The deindustrialisation of competitors, including even their closest accomplices, is the cherished dream of the USA dreaming of the global dominance. It is largely for the purpose of achieving this dream that Americans are persistently disseminating the myth of a post-industrial society, where industry is seen as an anachronism and the service sector is proclaimed as the main driver of growth. The post-industrial theory suggests simply waving goodbye to ‘archaic’ industry and focusing on ‘incredibly progressive’ trading, intermediary, information, consulting, consumer, and similar services. However, the post-industrial theory conveniently omits the question of where to source the necessary furniture, clothing, transport, computers, communication devices, household appliances, and other industrial products for the notorious service economy.

Beloved women of sculptor Zhbanov

Who inspired *Lady on the Bench* and *Girl with an Umbrella*

It has been 12 years since the king of urban park sculpture left us, yet his art continues to enchant both residents and visitors of Minsk, and becomes surrounded by legends. Did you know that if a lonely man sits next to the beautiful sculpture of *Unknown Woman* — aka *Lady on the Bench*, or *Proud Lady*, or *Minsk Woman* — in Mikhailovsky Park and takes her hand, he will soon find a partner for life? Judging by the polished bronze knee that has been touched by many, the magic is also attributed to other parts of the elegant lady's body. The backstories behind the creation of Vladimir Zhbanov's unique bronze figures are even more intriguing. Together with the master's daughter, Darya, we strolled through the memorable places and discovered who inspired him, how, and when.

By Yelena Kozlovskaya

Family life and sacrifice to art

Darya Zhbanova — a television director by profession — bears a striking resemblance to her father, with the same facial features, the same smile, and a charming dimple on her chin just like his. “Perhaps because my father passed away so unexpectedly, I have no sense of his absence at all,” Darya confessed. “It feels as though he has just stepped out for a moment and will return. I walk past his sculptures, and each one instantly evokes entire narratives of memories.”

We waited for the selfie lovers to finish their photo session with *Lady on the Bench* before sitting down beside it. This is the first and perhaps the most famous park sculpture by Vladimir Ivanovich [Zhbanov]. In 2001, it received a medal and the first prize in the *Best Avant-Garde Solution* nomination at the Hi-Tech International Exhibition in Saint Petersburg.

In the image of the bronze city woman, Darya Zhbanova sees the traits of her mother. “The same royal posture, modesty and pride all at once, in a word — nobility,” she observed with a smile.

The young wife, Zhanna, was both muse and inspiration for Vladimir Zhbanov. Yet, she was not the one who just posed for hours in beautiful outfits while receiving exquisite compliments. “My mother devoted herself entirely to my father and his creative work,” Darya revealed. “Work was always his top priority, and she accepted it as a given. As far as I can remember, my dad was always in the workshop, sculpting his next piece. There were always a lot of artists, actors, and architects around him. Our family, home, and housekeeping were completely dependent on my mother. My father was never even asked to fix a shelf or repair anything as he absolutely detested repairs.”

The sculptor's spouse Zhanna was not just a homemaker and mother — she became her husband's personal driver and assisted him in the workshop. She worked on the wax moulds, created mock-up models on the computer, and handled the sculptor's documentation.

“She lived by dad's successes and ideas, completely melting into her husband,” Darya characterised her mother's image. “A telling example of her devotion was the sale of the house where she was born. She spent all the proceeds on giving my father prosthetic hip joints to improve his deteriorating health.

‘I will do everything in my power,’ she said then. She never reproached him for his unreliable income and asked for nothing during the hungry years of the 1990s when he was out of work. She believed in his talent and always supported him. I understand very well why he once poignantly told her, ‘Without you, I would have surely been lost...’”



Darya Zhbanova

Sisters under an umbrella

Another significant bronze figure — *Girl with an Umbrella* in Mikhailovsky Park — was sculpted by Zhbanov using both of his daughters as models. “Both I and Masha posed for him,” shared Darya. “The sculpture's face and figure resemble my sister. Yet, my father used imagination to enhance our features, ultimately creating a composite image of a slender, defenceless teenage girl. It was his artistic response to the tragedy that occurred at Nemiga.”

One of the memorable moments during her studies at the Academy of Arts was a visit of the Head of State.

“I remember sitting in the third row in the hall and hearing how Aleksandr Grigorievich [Lukashenko] cited my father as an example to the students, future cultural workers,” Darya recounted. “He said something like, ‘Zhbanov first creates and proposes, and only then thinks about how much he will be paid.’ That was absolutely true. I was happy and proud that my perception of my father completely aligned with the President's vision.”



Not for regalia or honours

Responding to the question when the family realised that their father had become a famous person, Darya Zhbanova recalled, “Once we were walking near the city hall, where his *Governor's Carriage* is situated. A friend of his was accompanying us. Tourists from Moscow were just getting into the carriage to take photos, and a long queue was formed. A woman pushed my dad aside, saying, ‘Sir, you are in our way!’ My father's friend remarked, ‘He is actually the author of this composition,’ to which the woman responded, skeptically joking, ‘Nah, that does not seem likely.’ Dad smiled and stepped aside. He never felt famous, and because of that, we — his children — did not, either.”

According to Darya Zhbanova, her father never sought privileges for his work nor did he use his name to pave the way for his children. He remained an exceedingly simple and humble person until the end. He conversed with the press, authorities, and colleagues with equal pleasure. He served art and the people — this is, perhaps, the main reason why everyone can see themselves in his folk sculptures.



Vladimir Zhbanov

Image was born before it was needed

Vladimir Zhbanov always remained true to his creative calling. His elder daughter sees one of the reasons for the popularity of his sculptures among the people in this dedication, “He loved life, communication, noticed interesting people, details, and images around him, and created without waiting for commissions, inclusion in state programmes, or guarantees of funding. He always had numerous drafts, sketches, and miniature sculptures in development. When circumstances aligned or word of mouth indicated a need or interest, he would showcase what he had.”

This is how his sculptures in Mikhailovsky Park came about. In the early 2000s, as the country and the capital city gradually began to emerge from a deep economic crisis, the city authorities contemplated how to beautifully decorate the green spaces near the train station, and Zhbanov had options for park sculptures, which were still lacking in Belarus at the time.

We stopped by the sculpture titled *Getting a Light* that features a man — we saw a cigarette in the hand, provided by yet another passerby. The cheerful squint of the bronze man seems to beckon one to respond to its invitation for feedback!

“My father's personality, his energy is felt in each of his works,” Darya noted. “They embody humour and playfulness. After all, he got into each character at first and would become for some time the man lighting a cigarette, or a lady, a horse, or a goose.”

“Dad could tolerate physical pain. He could sculpt for hours standing on a ladder, even when his joints were excruciatingly twisted, until he completed the task. However, emotional pain would destroy him and drain his strength. When the wave of criticism hit him after the installation of the fountain sculpture *The Golden Trefoil* in Molodechno for its nudity, he was literally wilting before our eyes. Each time he would come home with high blood pressure, asking, ‘I do not understand, why are they treating me like this?’”



Aliaksei and Ilya had never played together before, even at the youth level, since there is a five-year age difference between them, so their story turned out to be quite extraordinary and attracted attention not only in Belarus but also across the NHL. The club's website referred to this moment as a 'family event'. Both brothers found themselves in the spotlight of local journalists before the game against the Boston Bruins, and they had to sweat answering questions just as much as they would on the ice. "It is something we could not even dream of," smiled Aliaksei, who is already a veteran in Washington — this will be his fourth season in the NHL. "Being on the same team [with my brother] is going to be something special. Ilya was waiting for this chance. For sure, you want to play your first game. It is going to be fun."

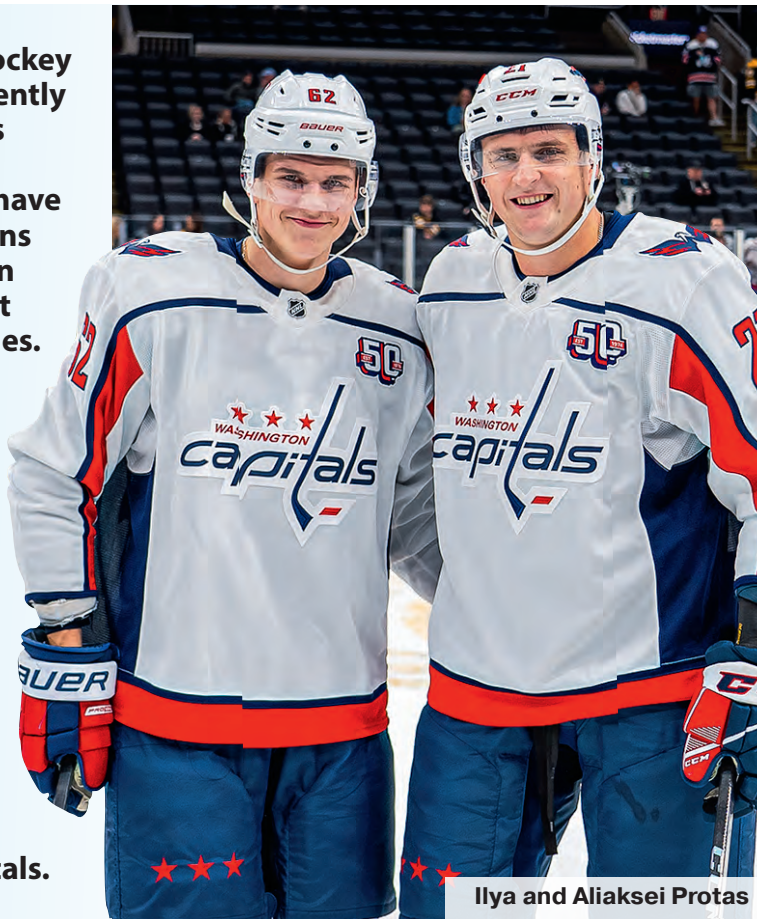
With two Protases in the team, the Caps have resorted to nicknames to differentiate the pair: Little Pro and Big Pro. Ilya, who stands 195cm tall, does not mind being the 'little one', but offered the alternative name of 'Hammer' — a nickname coined by the Capitals Strength and Conditioning Coach, Zack Leddon. The 18-year-old debut maker has admitted that having Aliaksei around helps him a lot, but he still could not completely shake off the serious pre-match nerves. After the game against the Boston Bruins, Protas Jr. shared, "The NHL is a tough league. Everything is going very fast. It was tough for a couple of shifts, but then I started to adapt for the speed, for the game, and got more comfortable."

Prior to this, Ilya had spent only one season in the USA. He played in the USHL junior league, where he gained 51 points (14+37) in 61 matches, and is likely to spend this year in another youth league — the OHL,

Big Pro+Little Pro

Belarusian hockey players conquer the NHL

All attention of hockey fans has been recently focused on events across the ocean, where NHL clubs have begun preparations for the new season and held their first pre-season matches. Among the key players are quite a few Belarusian guys, and the main heroes of last week were the graduates of the Vitebsk hockey school — brothers Aliaksei and Ilya Protas — who took to the ice together as part of the Washington Capitals.



Ilya and Aliaksei Protas



Yegor Sharangovich

where he has a contract with the Windsor Spitfires. Aliaksei gave his younger brother simple advice, "Just enjoy it," he told Ilya. "Work hard and enjoy it. This is really a special moment for us." The Caps lost to Boston — 2:4. Ilya Protas had a 'very solid night' as the youngest player in Washington's lineup, as reported by local newspapers. Little Pro skated 13:12 of ice time and was close to registering an assist, after which Big Pro launched a powerful shot that hit the crossbar late in the second period. It was a great debut, and there is no doubt that this is just the beginning: Aliaksei and Ilya Protas, like Andrei and Sergei Kostitsyn, will surely play many more NHL matches together, scoring goals thanks to each other's assists.

Another trainee of the Vitebsk hockey school, forward Yegor Sidorov, is trying to establish himself in the Anaheim Ducks. The Belarusian guy has already played two pre-season matches for the Ducks and scored in both. Dmitry Kuzmin is working at the Winnipeg's training camp, while Nikita Tolopilo and Danila Klimovich stay in the Vancouver Canucks team.

Meanwhile, Artyom Levshunov, who was selected second overall by Chicago in the summer draft, remains sidelined due to a right foot injury. The condition of the Belarusian defenceman was reported by the Chicago Blackhawks' general manager, Kyle Davidson, "If everything goes well, he can start skating soon. I think Artyom will be looking forward to that. He is around the facility. We even have to kick him out most days. He is super eager to go and is pretty disappointed with the situation. However, he is able to do a lot of other training, so it is not like he is sitting around, sedentary, doing nothing." It is currently difficult to talk about Levshunov's prospects in the NHL this season, whereas the chances of Vladislav Kolyachonok becoming one of the leaders in the Utah seem quite high: in the first pre-season match, his team defeated the St. Louis Blues (5:3), and the Belarusian hockey player took to the ice in the first defensive pair. We also keep in mind Ilya Solovyov and Yegor Sharangovich from the Calgary Flames. We expect the former to secure his place in the main lineup, and the latter to establish new scoring records. This year, there can be more Belarusians in the NHL than ever before.

Race with a twist

Mogilev International Marathon is expanding its programme and waiting for thousands of runners at the start line

By Tatiana Pastushenko

On October 6th, Mogilev is getting ready to host the international marathon for the fifth time. More than five thousand runners are expected to participate! In addition to the traditional distances — 3, 10, and 42.195 kilometres — and family races, the competition will include a marathon relay called ekiden.

In fact, this is by no means a new concept. Dmitry Sivov, the chief judge of Mogilev International Marathon, explained, "Ekiden, which originated in Japan, has a rich history. In loose translation, it means 'relay of postal carriers'. They used to run from one city to another, passing bags with letters. Nowadays, ekiden is very popular in China and Japan, with world championships for this sport held in the past. There were also National Ekiden Championships in Belarus, traditionally held in Kopyl on a track with interesting descents and serious climbs. Participants still remember this celebration of running."

The organisers of Mogilev International Marathon seriously considered bringing ekiden back to Belarusian tracks last year. Now, the idea will become a reality. During the ekiden race, athletes will need to complete six stag-

es: 5km, 10km, 5km, 10km, 5km, and 7.195km. Both men's and women's teams, as well as mixed teams consisting of three men and three women, are invited to participate in the relay. Notably, instead of a relay baton, participants will need to pass a ribbon, which will have a chip attached to it. The chip will record the completion of the track.

The big running festival kicks off at 10am sharp. The first participants to set off will be those in the most popular mass race for 3km. At 11am, the starting gun will fire for marathon runners competing in the 10km race and the ekiden relay. *The Family Race*, in which the youngest running enthusiasts will cover a distance of 500 metres, will begin at 12:30.

Organisers are also expecting quite a few renowned athletes. Thus, in the men's marathon, we will keep an eye on Vladislav Pryamov, a multiple winner of Mogilev International Marathon and Minsk Half Marathon, as well as a participant in the Olympic Games. Additionally, we will see Yuri Kapterov, who has also won in Mogilev, Nikita Chakhouski, a marathon prizewin-



Vladislav Pryamov became the winner of International Mogilev Marathon 2023

ner, and Stsiapan Rahautsou, a participant in two Olympics.

In the women's marathon, the main star will be Maryna Damantsevich, the winner of both Mogilev International Marathon and Minsk Half Marathon. On the 10km distance, we are looking forward to seeing another experienced Belarusian runner — Volha Nema-hai.

Apart from various races, Mogilev International Marathon will feature plenty of other captivating activities. A cultural and entertainment programme will be organised in the parking area of the H2O Sports Complex: participants and guests of the event will be treated to soldier's porridge, and runners who have paid the entry fee will have the chance to take part in a lottery with valuable prizes, which is going to be a novelty at the marathon. Speaking of prizes — in addition to monetary rewards for winners and runners-up, all participants in the 10km, 42.195km, and ekiden races will receive T-shirts specially produced for the event, and medals. Awards will also be given to the first thousand runners completing the 3km distance.

Yelizaveta Kobetskaya



Photo of the week

War veteran Vladimir Borodin from Minsk — awarded three Orders of the Patriotic War 2nd class, the Order of the Red Star, medals For the Liberation of Warsaw, For the Capture of Berlin, and more — was congratulated on his 100th birthday

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On October 3rd, 1906, at the Berlin Radiotelegraphic Conference, SOS was chosen as the universal distress signal for ships

at sea. According to Morse code, this signal looks the same in all languages — three dots, three dashes, three dots. Thus, it was chosen for purely technical reasons. Phrases that are often associated with it, such as *Save Our Ship, Save Our Souls, Save Our Spirits, Swim or Sink, or Stop Other Signals*, appeared after the signal had been adopted.

On October 4th, 1582, Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar in order to reform the Julian calendar that existed at that time. It was referred to as the New Style calendar, while the Julian calendar was called the Old Style calendar. The Gregorian calendar was introduced in different countries at different times. Now it is internationally the most widely used calendar system.



October 4th, 1830 marks the archaeological discovery of the Kul-Oba mound in Crimea — the first Scythian royal mound excavated in the modern era. A stone grave with

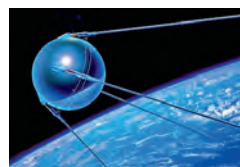


precious artifacts was discovered there. Of particular interest are the fancy granular earrings with a Nike figurine, which are now housed in the Hermitage. The tomb was built from about 400 to 350 BC.

On October 4th, 1883, *The Orient Express* passenger luxury train of the private company Orient-Express Hotels set off



on its maiden journey. The idea of the train belongs to Belgian entrepreneur Georges Nagelmackers. *The Orient Express* was called 'the king of trains, train of kings'. At various times, Franz Joseph, Elizabeth II, Charles de Gaulle, Agatha Christie and other celebrities travelled on it. The train is described in the novels by Agatha Christie *Murder on the Orient Express*, by Graham Greene *Stamboul Train*, by Veronica Henry *A Night on the Orient Express*, etc.



On October 4th, 1957, the world's first artificial Earth satellite was launched, ushering in a space era in human history. The device was delivered into orbit by the R-7 carrier rocket from the 5th Research Test Site of the USSR Ministry of Defence, which was later named the Baikonur Cosmodrome.

The PS-1 spacecraft was a 58cm-diameter sphere and was equipped with four antennas. The PS-1 satellite flew for 92 days and made 1,440 revolutions around the Earth.

October 5th is World Teachers' Day. It is a professional holiday for all teachers and education workers, a day that celebrates the role and merits of teachers in the process of quality education at all levels, as well as their invaluable contribution to the development of society. Teachers carry out a special civic mission — education of the younger generation. In Belarus, teachers are congratulated on their professional holiday on the first Sunday of October.



October 6th is World Habitat Protection Day — an international holiday aimed to draw the attention of mankind to the problem of preserving the habitat of the fauna of the planet Earth. Uncontrolled human interference in the laws and territories of nature has led to the irreversible disappearance of hundreds of species of animals and plants.



On October 6th, Belarus celebrates Archivist's Day, established in honour of the anniversary of the first centralised state archive on the territory of present-day Republic of Belarus — the Vitebsk Central Archive of Ancient Register Books, which began its operation in 1863. Nowadays, there are more than 12 million documents in the country's archival repositories. Descendants should see Belarus' documentary wealth in full, and archivists are making every effort to ensure this.



October 9th, 1943 marks the defeat of Nazi German troops by Soviet forces in the Battle for the Caucasus, which lasted from July 25th, 1942

to October 9th, 1943. It became one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the Great Patriotic War. The main outcome of the battle was the expulsion of Nazi German troops from the Caucasus and, consequently, the elimination of the threat of losing the largest base of energy and food resources, as well as the prevention of Türkiye's possible entry into the war on the side of Nazi Germany.