

Search for a new and respectful attitude towards traditions



9

Unusual corner of Belarus created in the Athletes' Village for the 2nd European Games participants



10

INTERNATIONAL

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During open-air celebrations

Traditional holiday from the depth of centuries

Maslenitsa (Pancake Week) is an ancient Slavonic holiday similar to a carnival. There's no fixed date for it in the folk calendar, with the festival starting exactly eight weeks before Easter and lasting for a whole week. This year, the last day of Maslenitsa was celebrated on March 10th.



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Symbols — worthy of deep respect

President of Belarus bestows state awards on mothers with many children, honoured figures in various spheres, as well as on high-ranking military officers, with a solemn ceremony held in the Independence Palace

By Vladimir Velikhov

“We recently celebrated men as we marked the Fatherland Defenders Day, today we’re anticipating the women’s holiday — March 8th. We put the two occasions together to celebrate brave men, military and law enforcement officers, alongside our valued women,



Participants of solemn awards ceremony at Independence Palace

outstanding professionals and mothers who have dedicated their lives to the great purpose of motherhood. We have brought them together to honour them with state awards,” said Alexander Lukashenko.

The President noted that people who safeguard peace and stability in the country, who glorify the Motherland with labour achievements, and who create families fulfil an important mission. “You’re strength-

ening the political, economic, social and spiritual foundations of our state,” he said. He went on to say that all who serve the Fatherland, continuing the glorious traditions of a generation of victors, are the mainstay of the country’s sovereignty and defenders of the people. “Strong, reliable, courageous... You are an important example for the young.”

He drew attention to the fact that the strength of the Be-

larusian nation and therefore the state, lies in such people — motivated and dedicated — devoted to the Motherland, family and their profession. “Officers and general’s insignia are a symbol of manliness, courage and dedication to duty. The Order of Motherhood is a symbol of femininity and preservation of the family. Recognition of professional achievements rewards talent and diligence,” he said.

Mr. Lukashenko congratulated the participants on their awards and handed out orders and medals, honorary certificates and insignia to senior officers. “May love, comfort and warmth reign in your homes and may the sky above our dear Belarus will always be peaceful,” he said.

Once again addressing women, the Head of State said, “We men in uniform will protect your lives and the lives of your children. We rely on your support in this respect. I’ve already said that we shared the recent men’s celebration with you, because a woman in uniform isn’t unusual and we are all defenders of our country.”

After the awards ceremony, the honorary guests at the Independence Place took part in a gala-reception given by the Head of State, with the President chatting to guests in an informal atmosphere. Another traditional gift for those invited, was a trip through the Palace. Guests learnt about its interior and main halls while also visiting an exhibition by the Belarusian painter Margarita Manis, dedicated to spring and Women’s Day.

Privileges for those who have taken their compulsory military or reserve service

The recent President’s session comprehensively tackled the problems of recruiting armed personnel for military units and considered a package of proposals on how to motivate citizens to complete their compulsory military service and enhance the prestige of army service in the country



By Oleg Bogomazov

At present, there are 47 different postponements to compulsory military service in Belarus. According to the military, the number could be reduced. At the same time, Belarus’ Defence Minister, Andrei Ravkov, said there are plans to introduce privileges for citizens who have completed compulsory military service or reserve service.

“We will offer those who have completed compulsory military service or reserve service to take, free of charge from budgetary funds, preparatory courses to enter higher educational establishments, priority enrolment in a higher educational establishment with equivalent points earned, priority in receiving housing in hostels, job assignment and other advantages suggested at the session,” added Mr. Ravkov.

The measures tackled at the meeting will be implemented in two stages. At first, it plans to bring order to all levels: from lessons in pre-service training in schools and the work of medical commissions in military commissariats to the army service in general. This is one of the President’s key requirements. At the same time, tough measures will be developed to counter those evading service. This is to be finished by autumn and the results submitted to the Head of State.

During the second stage, the rules for compulsory military service conscription will be revised and the existing postponements will be analysed; it is expected that some of these will be removed. They will also think about how to encourage citizens to fulfil their military duty. At present, various measures are being discussed but there are no plans to action them simultaneously. It was emphasised at the session that there shouldn’t be a radical overhaul, as forward momentum is vital in these processes.

Parliamentarians intend to share a single position



Belarusian and Russian parliamentarians will be detailing agreed positions on acute issues at international parliamentary venues. A corresponding decision has

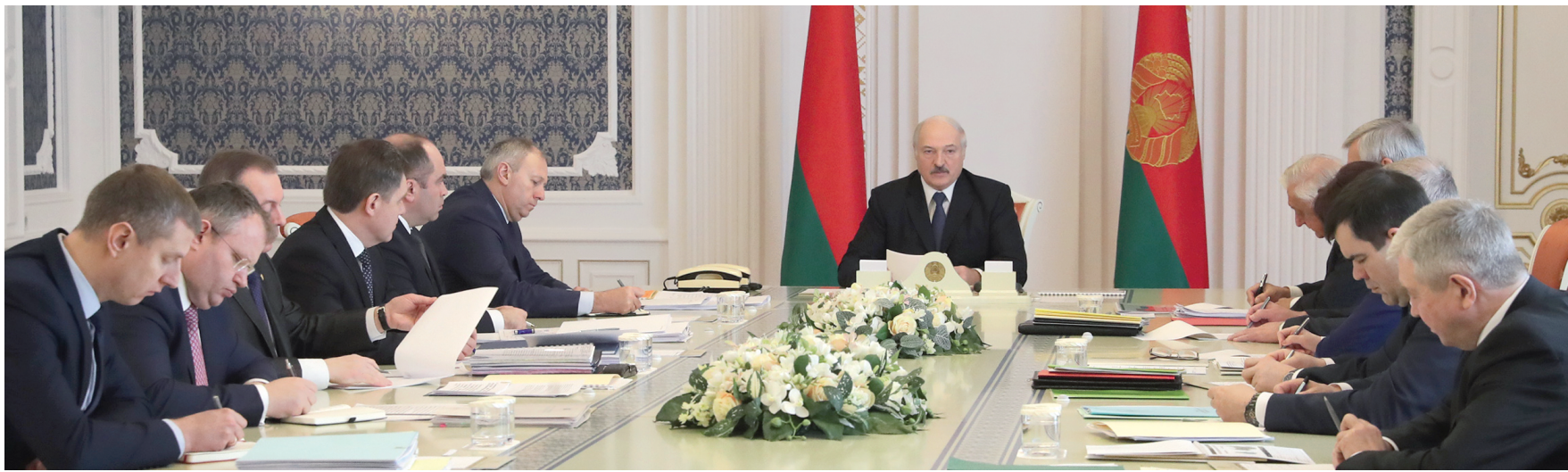
been adopted at the session of the Foreign Policy Commission of the Belarus-Russia Union State’s Parliamentary Assembly.

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

The deputies were presented with information about progress in the implementation of the programme of concerted action in foreign policy of the member states of the Union State Treaty for 2018-2019. The MPs emphasised the important role of the programme in promoting the Russian-Belarusian alliance. To strengthen the position of the Union State in the international arena, the deputies adopted a decision to focus on agreeing positions between the parliamentary delegations of Belarus and Russia during international parliamentary events on acute issues of the agenda.

The meeting also discussed preparations for the participation in the 140th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the 35th session of the Assembly of the Latin American Parliament.

The deputies suggested discussing jointly with the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly the role of parliamentary diplomacy in resolving pressing issues of the international agenda at the parliamentary hearings. Members of the Parliamentary Assembly’s Commission on Foreign Policy decided to ask the Council of the Parliamentary Assembly to hold the parliamentary hearings in St. Petersburg in June 2019.



A flexible approach is needed in order to move forward

By Vasily Kharitonov

President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, conducted a session with the Government leadership and top state agencies, tackling Belarus' participation in integration structures and co-operation with European organisations

Opening the session, Alexander Lukashenko noted that the State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly is usually preceded by various open and closed sessions, alongside meetings and consultations to discuss important matters. "They will be the basis of some of the statements to be made on behalf of the President," he explained.

Mr. Lukashenko said that matters currently under discussion are of strategic importance to the state. "At present, no country, not even superpowers like the United States of America, China, India and Russia, can maintain sustainable development on their own, separate from each other and the entire world."

The President remarked that there are many associations in the world that are designed to facilitate economic growth, maintain security and good living standards. "We are part of some of them and co-operate with others. How can the Belarusian people benefit from this? How efficiently do we use these instruments to defend our interests?" he asked.

On building a Union State

Speaking of relations with Russia, the President reminded listeners that the Russian Government has put forward an initiative to revise approaches towards integration. "We're prepared for this," he said, adding that at government level we've created groups to prepare proposals regarding the further development of integration processes between the two states. However, nothing is known about the results of this work yet. On March 4th, Belarus' Economy Minister, Dmitry Krutoy, told journalists that Belarus hadn't yet received any official information on the work of the joint group on integration from its Russian colleagues. "I'd like to stress once again that Belarus remains com-

mitted to the idea of building the Union State. I want both our allies and opponents in the Russian Federation to hear this, and the main principle behind the project is the creation of equal conditions for our citizens and businesses," said Mr. Lukashenko. "The principle of equal conditions must be strictly adhered to. The idea of sovereignty also remains unshakeable for Belarus."

At the same time, the President believes that many politicians in Russia don't want deep integration with Belarus, as there have been various leaks of information and suggestions from them which are unacceptable to Belarus.

Mr. Lukashenko also refuted fake news which appeared in the Russian media after his recent meeting with representatives of the public and experts, as well as Belarusian and foreign journalists. One of the issues implied that the Head of State had given consent for a single currency with Russia. The President explained that these were simply his thoughts on the Russian's suggestion. No such proposals have been made, therefore there's nothing to agree. However, he believes that, even if we were to introduce a single currency, it should be the simple 'Rouble' — not the Russian or Belarusian Rouble. Moreover, both countries should have equal access to the emission centre.

On Eurasian integration

It's no secret that many economic issues were transferred from the Union State agenda to the EAEU. The President is disappointed that the 'process of Eurasian integration is going backwards, meaning that we must once again deal with barriers, exemptions and restrictions'.

Next year, Belarus is taking the presidency in the Eurasian Economic Union. During the 'Big Conversation with the President' Alexander Lukashenko was asked which topics Belarus plans to devote attention to during this time and he responded that, "I don't have high hopes of the Eurasian Economic Union. There are too many scandals and disagreements, which is completely unacceptable, and the economic union is becoming more and more political."

On the economic dimension of the CIS

The CIS region is even wider than the EAEU. Though it is rarely described as an economic organisation, it's a key and principal market for Belarus where its produce is well-known and highly appreciated "Therefore, the economic dimension is a priority for the government. The CIS is the only uniting link and the only possibility to build relations for many post-Soviet countries," said Mr. Lukashenko.

The multi-lateral zone of free trade in the CIS has become a central element of its economic configuration. Last year, Belarusian exports to the CIS states (excluding Russia) grew by 25 percent and reached \$5.8bn, with the biggest growth registered for Ukraine.

ACCENT

Belarus and the EU are currently negotiating on partnership priorities to 2020. Talks on signing the agreements for re-admission and the simplification of visa procedures are in the final stage. The Head of State said the signing of these documents is the next task.

On the situation in the CSTO

Another important organisation of a military-political nature within the Eurasian space is the CSTO. Mr. Lukashenko noted that, in view of current world tendencies, it's clearly relevant. "Today this is the most important area where we should focus our efforts because of the politico-military trends in the world, especially after the two major nuclear powers withdrew from the INF Treaty," he said.

The prolonged process of the appointment of the CSTO General Assembly has been ongoing for more than three months but a consensus hasn't yet been found.

On co-operation with the EU

In recent years, Belarus has been successfully establishing dialogue with its second largest

partner — the European Union. Investments are growing and a positive trade balance has also increased from \$1.2bn in 2017 to \$3bn in 2018. Furthermore, contacts are also developing in various industries, with several bilateral visits taking place at top level, while the *Eastern Partnership* is acquiring a pragmatic character.

Last year was record-breaking both in the volume of co-operation with the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, whose leadership the President recently met.

"This collaboration with the West causes some irritability and occasional hysteria by individuals representing our main partner, the Russian Federation. The reasons for this are puzzling in the light of their restriction of market access for our products, those who call us parasites and squeeze us out wherever possible. What else should we do? Go away and keep quiet? If you close the door in our face, we must start searching for other options so that our state can live a normal life," said Mr. Lukashenko.

He emphasised that no one can blame us for going somewhere else. "We are now in such a situation that we need to be always on the move. However, frosty relations with the European Union have not completely melted," admitted Mr. Lukashenko. "Brussels has extended its restrictive measures, even though they are only symbolic. So far there is no clear legal framework of interaction."

Belarus and the EU are currently negotiating on partnership priorities to 2020. Talks on signing the agreements for re-admission and the simplification of visa procedures are in the final stage. The Head of State said the signing of these documents is the next task. "The Europeans must understand that any ideas alien to our people and changes to the detriment of our national interests will be inadmissible for us," he warned

On relations with NATO

"Three states bordering Belarus are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Moreover, Ukraine is extreme-

ly keen to join it," noted Mr. Lukashenko. He believes the situation is challenging and a breeding ground for confrontation, especially amid plans to strengthen the military presence there.

"I'm confident that neither us nor our neighbours need dividing lines. Therefore, it's necessary to establish mutually respectful relations with NATO which would eventually enhance the security of our country. We must talk to them and not look on them as enemies. In general, we need to actively overcome block opposition by promoting the idea of the 'integration of integrations'."

On entering the World Trade Organisation

Belarus boasts a unique geopolitical location — at the crossroads of the EAEU and the EU. The President emphasised that this should bring benefits to the country. "The western and eastern vectors of the Belarusian foreign policy should balance each other," he said. "We'll reach a balance only when the EU market becomes a real alternative to the Russian market, not just on paper but in practice."

In his words, the same can be said about the Belarus' accession to the World Trade Organisation. "We won't join the WTO just for the sake of it. I will not sign any document on Belarus' accession to the WTO unless I have clear evidence that this will bring tangible benefits."

The session of the WTO working party on Belarus' joining the organisation was renewed in Geneva in 2017. Experts have already shifted from a summary report to the working party's draft report — the final document which reflects the commitments of Belarus, i.e. the negotiations have moved into the final stage.

By the end of the year, the WTO Headquarters will have hosted two more sessions of the working party. Belarus has completed bilateral negotiations for access to markets with twenty WTO member states, while meetings with six more WTO participants continue: the USA, the EU, Australia, Brazil, Canada and Ukraine.

Investments grow, as do the dynamics of co-operation



European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development

Belarus will always be a reliable partner for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, asserted Alexander Lukashenko, as he met the President of the EBRD, Suma Chakrabarti

By Alexey Fedosov

The Head of State stressed that Belarus will always honour its commitments to the Bank. Mr. Lukashenko thanked the EBRD management for their interest in the country. The co-operation between our country and the Bank intensified considerably last year, and EBRD investments doubled.

Mr. Lukashenko praised the EBRD's role in implementing vital projects that have an impact on the quality of life. "I would like to particularly mention projects that have to do with housing and utilities, the quality of drinking water, road construction and repair of bridges, which is a burning issue in many of our villages. These projects are vitally important for our state," he said.

The Head of State assured that the EBRD recommendations, and assistance in privatisation processes are of great importance, as is the support for SMEs from the Bank. "The state did not have an opportunity to provide this kind of support. You came to Belarus and assisted our entrepreneurs. This is a great contribution to the future of our country," he noted.

The President suggested holding the Annual Meeting of the EBRD Board of Governors in Belarus in 2022 and pledged to organise the event at the highest level.

In turn, the EBRD President, Suma Chakrabarti, noted that there are multiple ways to assess progress in collaboration between Belarus and the Bank. "Naturally, the volume of investment is one of them. You were right in saying that last year, investment skyrocketed to reach nearly \$400 million. It's a great figure. At present, Belarus is among our top 10 partners. However, the goal is to make it into the top 5 in the next few years," he said.

Among the EBRD's key promising projects in Belarus, is the pilot project to upgrade residential buildings to improve their energy efficiency. Together with the Belarusian Government, the Bank is working on new approaches to corporate governance in the public sector. Last year, the EBRD conducted approximately 2/3 of its operations in the private sector, and the remainder in the public sector. The Bank is set to stick to this ratio in the next five years, prioritising the development of the private sector.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development launched a *Green City* action plan for Minsk to identify the activities and areas for investment to address priority environmental problems. The Belarusian Government and



Suma Chakrabarti

FACT

In 2018, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development financed 21 projects in Belarus worth more than 360 million Euros — the best result since they have been involved in projects in the country.

the EBRD signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the pre-privatisation support for Krinitsa Brewery in 2018-2020.

The EBRD is an international bank, which facilitates the development of the private sector and entrepreneurship initiatives in 38 economies on three continents. EBRD shareholders include 67 countries, as well as the European Union and the European Investment Bank. Since the EBRD began working in Belarus in 1992, it has invested over 2.4bn Euros in 115 projects in various branches of the country's national economy.

The President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Suma Chakrabarti, confirmed its inten-

tion to join the statutory capital of Belinvestbank JSC, he told journalists after his meeting with the Head of State, Alexander Lukashenko.

"Undoubtedly, we've discussed the matter. In my opinion, over the past three to four years, we've made significant progress in this area. First, Belinvestbank has reported considerable profits for the first time in many years. As a next step, we plan to acquire a stake in the bank within a framework of co-operation between the Belarusian Government and the EBRD," explained Mr. Chakrabarti.

According to him, a concrete sum of money has not been discussed yet. "This process will rely on a commercial basis to make it more attractive for foreign investors. This will allow us to reduce interest rates when Belinvestbank goes international. In my opinion, the process will be successful," added the EBRD President.

"The assessment has been done. We're waiting for a formal proposal from the EBRD," Belarus' Economy Minister Dmitry Krutoy told journalists, responding to questions regarding the prospects for the EBRD acquiring a stake in the Belarusian bank. He also confirmed that the EBRD has not yet decided on the amount, which could reach 20-25 percent at the most. It may be a smaller package of shares. "If there is a formal proposal from the Bank, then we are set to complete all the procedures by the end of the year," the Minister added.

This January, the Head of the EBRD representative office in Belarus, Alexander Pivovarsky, told the media that the EBRD expects to complete the stake purchase transaction in H1 2019. The main task of the transaction is to support the bank to attract a strategic investor in the future.



In accordance with smart city concept

By Olga Korneeva

New resident company will set up a large data processing centre at Great Stone Park

The Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park has registered a new resident company — International Technology Company Xinlian (China).

The company intends to set up a centre to store and process large amounts of data. The project is expected to be implemented in the next two years, with a total volume of investments close to \$2.5m. It envisages the creation of infrastructure solutions in line with a smart city concept to plan transport routes, find parking spaces

and handle digital clinic patient records.

According to Igor Leshchenok, the First Deputy Head of the Great Stone Industrial Park Administration, the Park is a platform for the innovations and technologies in which the new resident company specialises, and which may be in demand all over Belarus in the future.

In turn, the Deputy Director General of the Industrial Park Development Company, Ren Fei, stressed the considerable accomplishments achieved last year in the Park's development. He hopes that more and more high-technology companies will be registered as resident companies in the Great Stone Industrial Park.

Forex market continues to grow

By Alexander Pimenov

In 2018, the Forex market in Belarus showed good dynamics and is expected to continue growth this year

The opinion was expressed by the Chairman of the Financial Market Development Association of Belarus, Alexey Sidorov, at the conference, entitled *Regulated Forex Market of the Republic of Belarus: The Results of 2018 and Development Prospects for 2019*.

"We're expecting growth in the market, as it demonstrates good dynamics and prospects," noted Alexey Sidorov. "We see enhanced interest from investors, especially large international companies. Some of them are ready to enter the market. We believe that there will be at least four new companies this year, maybe more."

The National Bank believes that in 2019, the Forex market in Belarus may at least double. In particular, the share of clients who are non-residents will continue to rise; last year alone, their number increased



by almost 70 percent. This will be facilitated by the decision, adopted at the end of 2018, to loosen norms regarding security capital for non-resident clients, explains Dmitry Nabzdorov, Head of the National Bank's Main Department for Non-Bank Operation Regulations. "We believe it's one of the measures that allows the share of non-resident clients on the market to constantly grow, unless it reaches a figure close to the statutory fund of direct foreign investments in this area," he concluded.

Experts believe that other changes in legislation, made in 2018, will promote the further development of the Forex over-the-counter market in Belarus.

Furthermore, according to Mr. Nabzdorov, the number of clients on the Forex market in Belarus in 2018 almost quadrupled. "As of late 2018, there were more than 11,500 clients — 3.5 times more than in 2017. Non-resident new and active clients account for 68.4 percent."

Currency stull remains the most popular tool on the market. "Curiously, citizens and non-residents have also begun to actively use such tools as futures for oil," he added.

Speaking about the prospects of Forex market development, Mr. Nabzdorov stressed that, "There are grounds to believe that it will at least double in 2019."

Credit appetites should be brought under control

By Svetlana Mikhovich

In recent years, the Republic has faced a real credit boom. The National Bank admits that the situation in the retail credit market arouses 'some concern'. The statistics are impressive. The volume of credit for consumer needs increased by 75 percent in 2017 and, last year — by 46 percent. Slightly lower rates are registered in the mortgage market, but the figure is also not insignificant, at about 20 percent. What could be the outcome of this overstimulation of the market?

The National Bank sees trends. The Deputy Chairman of the National Bank's Board — Dmitry Kalechits — reminded in his recent report, that an indicator of the debt burden is in force in the country for several months: this macroprudential measure should limit risks. The ratio of the monthly payment to the average monthly income should not exceed 40 percent.

"Such a limit corresponds to international practice on limits for similar indicators. During the period of this measure being in force, some slowdown in the dynamics of consumer credit has been registered. At the same time, the growth rate of consumer credit remains high," he noted.

Nevertheless, the demand for credit resources by the population remains.



"This is influenced by a noticeable decrease in interest rates: they fell in 2017 and 2018. Perhaps there is still delayed demand: loans have been expensive for a long time, so Belarusians could not afford them. Now the rates have fallen, and the real incomes of the population have grown," says financial consultant Zhanna Kulakova.

In her opinion, the high debt burden suggests that the financial market may face risks of non-payment. However, if we study the statistics, it is obvious that the problem of non-payments in the country is mainly related to non-payment by legal entities. "The share of

overdue debts of individuals is small, and it has always been so. This shows that Belarusians are serious about lending and are responsible borrowers. They diligently fulfil their obligations regardless of what is happening in the financial market. The risk of non-payment is insignificant. Another thing is that credit resources lead to inflating domestic demand: it can spur inflation, as well as affect the growth of imported goods. As a result, it can provoke imbalances in foreign and domestic trade," she adds.

However, there is another side to the coin as domestic demand is a good driver of economic growth.



Portrait of a borrower

Belarusians are actively using borrowed funds. On average, out of a hundred customers applying to banks for a loan, only eight do not have a credit history.

A few years ago, borrowers in Belarus began to be assessed: from A1 (the highest score) to E3 (with this assessment, the probability of getting a loan is minimal). Most Belarusian borrowers get B1. The Head of the Credit Register Department of the National Bank — Victor Plenkin — explains that this score is high for average figures.

"It's virtually impossible to get A; it is an ideal. Actually, A and B are groups with a credit probability of almost one hundred percent. Such a high average score suggests that Belarusians pay their loans in good faith," he says.

Last year, an interesting study was conducted by a Belarusian bank which prepared an average portrait of the borrower. It appeared that credit is mostly applied for by employed middle-aged women who live in the city. Men mostly borrow money for buying a car. Young people prefer small loans to make purchases and the elderly do their best to avoid credit — preferring instalments.

Interestingly, any Belarusian can now independently check their credit history on the website of the Credit Register. This is provided free of charge once a year; payment is needed for all other requests.



Potential which surely needs to be realised

Belarusian and Chinese partners are currently negotiating joint manufacture of electric vehicles

By Olga Korneeva

Belarus' Industry Minister, Pavel Utyupin, noted at Ministry board meeting, "We are currently conducting negotiations with our Chinese partners on electric vehicles. The car assembly plant BelGee can do welding, assembly and paint work, which allows us to realise the future automobile engineering potential."

In addition, ways for Belarusian Industry Ministry enterprises to penetrate the

African market will be considered in 2019. The Industry Minister specified that joint production may be established if economically advisable, it is possible it will be more profitable to ship ready made vehicles and machines to some countries. Plans have been made to start making MTZ tractors in Sudan by the end of the year.

Last year, export by enterprises accountable to the Belarusian Industry Ministry exceeded \$4.6bn, with

the growth rate at 111 percent compared to 2017. The foreign trade surplus was as much as \$2 billion. Non-CIS export supplies grew by 22.8 percent from 2017, while exports to the European Union went up by 34.3 percent to \$948m.

According to Mr. Utyupin, overall, in 2018, exports were shipped to 117 places across the globe, including 19 countries which did not buy products from Industry Ministry enterprises in 2017.

Moving away from dependence on one market

Belarus plans to certify enterprises to supply potatoes to the EU

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

"We're currently working to get Belarusian potatoes certified for compliance with EU requirements. The European Commission is considering our proposal, and we will continue to work on this issue," noted Alexey Bogdanov, who heads the Central Office for Foreign Economic Activities of the Belarusian Agriculture and Food Ministry.

In 2018, Belarus' potato exports totalled \$50m — down by 28 percent. This is because we focused more on the rapidly growing Russian market. "Potato production has been on the rise in the EAEU countries. Therefore, geographic diversification is a pressing issue. We need to move away from dependence on one market, build up exports, improve the quality of products and implement modern digital technology," explained Mr. Bogdanov.

The 3rd *Agriculture in Belarus* international forum has been recently held in Minsk. The mission of the forum was to



help Belarusian agricultural industry advance technologically, find new markets, product niches, partners and customers. The event brought together representatives of agribusiness from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and other countries. Leading domestic and foreign experts in feed production, rapeseed processing, potato growing and horticulture, representatives of science and financial institutions were set to discuss the principles of precision farming, husbandry, innovative horticulture, agricultural chemistry, the organisation of manufacturing processes, management, digitalisation and means of monitoring and navigation.

Issues on which no one can be left indifferent



By Alexander Pimenov

Belarus plans to organise a round of discussions on Chernobyl problems in the UN Headquarters

The issue was under discussion at the meeting between Andrei Dapkiunas, Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms. Mami Mizutori. The two sides tackled the status and prospects for co-operation between Belarus and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and preparations for the 6th session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction which will be held in Geneva this May.

Special attention was paid to the practical side of interaction between Belarus and the UN in implementing the General Assembly's resolution on the Persistent Legacy of the Chernobyl Disaster. This year Belarus intends to organise a round of discussions at the UN Headquarters involving members of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl. The discussions will be themed around ways to maintain international focus on the problems of development and rehabilitation of the territories affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, and the search for practical assistance for the implementation of specific projects to promote their socio-economic development.

Online diagnostics

By Svetlana Savelieva

Ambulance crew in Grodno equipped with tablets with special software for prompt exchange of information with hospital doctors

The pilot project aiming to improve assistance to heart patients was implemented by representatives of private business together with the Main Health Department of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee. Its aim is to improve communication between ambulance doctors and the hospital that will be accepting the patient, and accelerate delivery time of the patient to the clinic.

Crew that attend patients are equipped with tablets with pre-installed programmes, developed by specialists from the Regional Cardiology Centre.

"The project is aimed at heart patients living in Grodno and Grodno District. Wherever they are, the ambulance doctor can immediately enter and send all the necessary data about the patient to the hospital, including a working diagnosis, information on emergency tests and cardi-



ograms. The feedback tells the doctor where it's best to take the patient. The hospital will be prepared to accept them and promptly take them to surgery, while documents will be completed in parallel," explains head doctor of Grodno Regional Clinical Cardiology Centre, Andrey Yanushko. He emphasised that an acceleration of delivery time and better exchange of information will primarily enable them to significantly reduce the number of adverse outcomes in cases of heart attack, stroke and other emergencies.

The programme will be patented and in future its function is to be expanded for other diseases and traumas. If the project is recognised as a success, similar practice will spread to other re-

gions of the country.

"Representatives of business have supported an important initiative aiming to preserve the health of the region's residents. It's another step towards the launch of new technologies, enabling us to make medical assistance prompt and more efficient," noted Natalia Antonovich, the First Deputy Head of the Main Health Department of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee.

"It's a real example of socially responsible business and the importance of public private partnership. We intend to continue to render assistance for publicly important projects," stressed Conte Spa Director, Andrey Mashkov, during the donation of the equipment.

No discomfort for animals at all

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

New method tested in Belovezhskaya Pushcha to select bio-probes for auroch genetic research

To be more precise, a method of taking bio-probes for auroch genetic research (without restraining them) has been tested for the first time in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Consultant assistance was provided to Belarusian specialists by their colleagues from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences. "An immobilising rifle is used to inject the probes. A special syringe is inserted into it

which silently plunges into the animal from up to 70m away and the device then falls to the ground. Several milligrams of animal tissue remain in the needle. This small piece is enough for conducting genetic research," say the National Park.

The results of the experiment showed that aurochs don't feel any significant discomfort during selection, as they do for example, during restraint.

Specialists note that an opportunity to take bio-probes using a distance method is restricted by season. In winter, for instance, this is possible in places where animals are concentrated at feeding platforms and open-air cages.

INSIDE

ADVICE FROM DR. ZHUKOVA

Even in March, it's better to look after of a cold

Doctor, please, tell us how to treat acute respiratory viral infections at home?
P. Matveichik, Polotsk

When you feel the beginning of a cold — such as a general tiredness, cough, runny nose, sometimes a slight temperature — spend a couple of days at home resting. It will be good for your body to be warm and save energy, which can be better spent fighting the virus.

Monitor your temperature. If it does not go above 38 degrees and if you look normal, then do not take antipyretic drugs: fever kills viruses and germs. Do resort to antipyretic drugs for the treatment of a cold, only in cases when the temperature is above 38°C.

Drink more liquid: hot tea, rosehip infusion, cranberry juice, warm milk. Together with the liquid, viruses and their toxins will be 'washed out' of the body. To cope with chills, wear cotton underwear, with warm layers. Multi-layered clothing retains heat better and secondly, the clothes can be easily varied depending on body temperature.

Before going to bed with a cold and a runny nose, put an additional pillow under your head: this will help you to breathe more easily and stop a build-up of mucus. You could also raise the head of the bed.

Inhaling with essential oils is recom-



mended for the treatment and seasonal prevention of colds and flu. It is proved that essential oils have anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties, helping to prevent the development of acute respiratory infections. These oils include juniper, eucalyptus, clove oil and mint. Experts recommend combining them to achieve the maximum preventive effect. An increasing number of drugs are now being sold with essential oils.

If during a cold you lose your appetite, do not force yourself to eat. Foods such as kefir, curdled milk and fermented baked milk are ideal for the treatment of colds.

Bacteria contained in lactic acid products help fight colds. Use immunomodulators such as garlic, onion, fresh lard. Roasted onions — unlike raw — can be eaten in any quantity.

In the treatment of colds, it is a bad idea to suppress a cough with drugs: coughing helps the lungs and bronchi to be cleared of mucus and microbes. Expectorants are recommended: mukaltin, licorice root, plantain.

Acupressure is recommended to treat colds. When your nose starts running, you should press the points next to the nostrils, under the nose, between the

eyes and in the centre of the chin. To reduce chills, press the point directly below the elbow joint. If you have a headache, massage the area between the thumb and index finger.

If the cold lasts more than a week, medicines can be beneficial. These should be taken as advised by the doctor.

Treatment of severe and moderate cases of acute respiratory viral infection is aimed both at preventing primary viral pneumonia, which is usually severe and causes respiratory failure, and preventing the addition of secondary bacterial infection which also often causes pneumonia. If this is suspected, the doctor will prescribe antibiotics.

Urgent treatment in medical institutions (emergency call) is necessary for signs of severe respiratory failure, brain activity disorders and concerns of the cardiovascular system: shortness of breath, lack of breath, cyanosis (blue skin), fainting, coloured sputum, low blood pressure and chest pain. Mandatory medical treatment is necessary in cases of a high temperature which continues for four days and the pronounced deterioration of health after a temporary improvement.

By Tatiana Zhukova,
doctor of the highest category,
Candidate of Medical Sciences

Philosophy of good roads

By Svetlana Isaenok

From now on, a systematic approach will be used for road safety, with the *Good Road* programme being launched in Belarus which, according to experts, will help save 11,000 lives from 2019-2025

The project was implemented in 2011 in Minsk, and since that time, the city has outstripped many European capitals in terms of reducing accident risk. This figure is also falling countrywide, but not in the rates as they are in the capital. “We’ve seen a pause in the reduction of accidents,” notes Alexander Tsegelnik, Acting Head of the State Traffic Police Department at the Belarusian Interior Ministry. This has driven us to take new measures.

Dmitry Navoi, who heads the Department of Traffic Organisation and Road Inspection at the State Traffic Police Department of the Interior Ministry, said that today, due to the applied methods of the *Good Road* project, Minsk is currently on par with Riga, Prague and Warsaw in terms of road safety. On December 19th, a decision was made at the Council of Ministers session to roll the programme out across the whole of Belarus.

The essence of the system is a range of measures aimed at solving one is-



Minsk is a good example in the level of road safety

sue — to reduce accident risk. “The programme began in January. We compile annual plans of events aimed at road safety,” said Mr. Navoi, saying that the information campaign is currently in full swing. At first, heads of local road traffic departments listened to lectures about the philosophy of the *Good Road* initia-

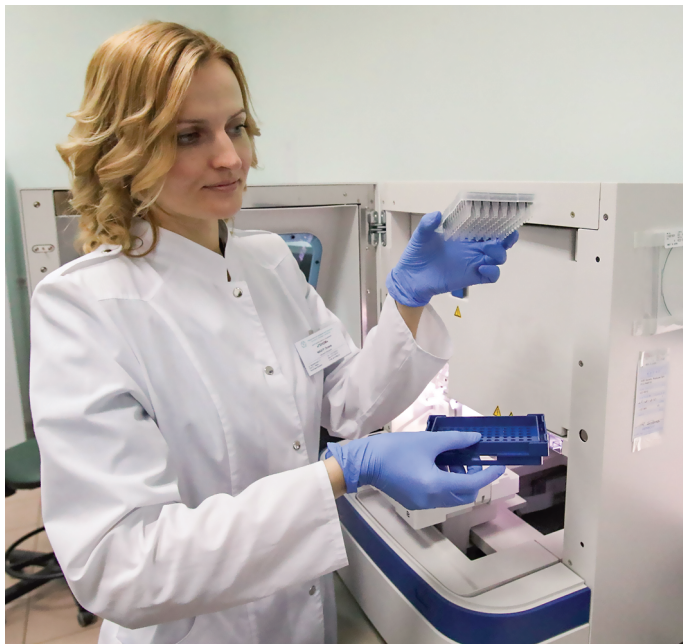
tive. At the same time, an expert group at the Council of Ministers is discussing variants to improve the existing norms and rules, enabling these principles to be launched, for example, by engineers during reconstruction or construction of new highways. Remarkably, in line with the concept of the new programme,

road traffic inspectors, as well as organisations servicing the roads and local authorities are currently responsible for safety. “Any housing and utility sector can influence the accident risk and at the end of the year present concrete figures dealing with its reduction,” say the State Traffic Police.

Genes reveal the truth



Our life has changed with the mapping of the human genome. At present, many hereditary diseases can be diagnosed in advance and predispositions towards them assessed, while it will soon be possible to compile a detailed portrait of a person, according to appearance, character and preferences. The number of those wishing to look inside themselves increases with each year and, since 2010, more than 13,500 Belarusians have already acquired genetic passports.



In the human genetics laboratory

By Olga Savitskaya

Young parents may also wish to take care of their own health and that of potential offspring, with around 4,000 people taking DNA-diagnostics annually at the Mother and Child

Republican Scientific and Practical Centre. Recently, researchers have made a step forward thanks to a scientific-research programme on DNA-identification, with new methods to be used by scientists, doctors and criminologists.

“Human personality is by approximately 75 percent determined by genes — responsible for appearance, character, abilities and health,” says Irma Mosse, who heads the human genetics laboratory at the Institute of Genetics and Cytology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. “Education, upbringing and way of life account for only 25 percent, so much can be revealed if you know the genotype.”

According to the Deputy Head of the Main Department for Medico-Legal Assessments at the Central Office of the State Forensic Examination Committee, Sergey Borovko, technological programmes of DNA-identification will help acquire data about a suspect which can be used to compile a photo likeness and determine genetic markers and predispositions towards chronic diseases. The programme is still gaining momentum and three years of hard work lie ahead.

Coffee cooked by barista robot

Coffee shops with Belarusian barista robots to open at Minsk National Airport and in Kiev



Coffee suggested by the robot

By Oleg Bogomazov

The coffee shops are designed around a collaborative robot of Belarusian production. “We sell nine out of every ten robots to industrial enterprises in Belarus and Russia. We’ve decided to launch a parallel project with unusual applications for our products,” noted Rozum Robotics Director, Victor Khamenok. Instead of making a robot based on automatic coffee machines, the company decided to team up with a Ukrainian chain of coffee shops to make a genuine barista robot, which will operate professional equipment.

The barista robot will make coffee by using a servo arm to grind the coffee beans and pack into a coffee pod using optimal pressure. This is then placed into a special portafilter. Pressurised water at the required temperature is then injected. As well as Caffè Espresso or Caffè Americano, the robot can make foam out of milk and prepare Cappuccino, Latte, and Flat White.

The first robotised coffee shops will open in Kiev. There are plans to open at least 100 similar shops in Ukraine, initially. Plans have also been made to open a robot coffee shop in Minsk National Airport.



Food supply is under threat due to decline in biodiversity

The plants, animals, and micro-organisms that are the bedrock of food production are nowadays in decline

If these critical species are lost, the UN report says, it 'places the future of our food system under severe threat'.

The study says that land-use changes, pollution, and climate change are all causing biodiversity loss. While species friendly policies are increasing, they are not growing quickly enough, the scientists add.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), who've put the report together using data gathered in 91 countries, say it is the first such study of its kind.

What exactly is biodiversity for food and agriculture? This is essentially the diversity of plants, animals, and other organisms, both wild and domesticated, that provide us with food, fuel and fibre.

And it includes those organisms that provide essential services, such as bees and other pollinators, and worms, mangroves, sea grasses and fungi which work to keep soils fertile and purify the air and water.

The report, called the *State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*, highlights two key messages.

The first is that the world is relying on an ever smaller number of foodstuffs to feed a growing population that's expected to rise to around 10 billion people by 2050.

The second key point is that many of these species that support food and agriculture are under threat or declining. Around a thousand wild food species, mainly plants, fish and mammals are decreasing in abundance.

"Biodiversity is critical for safeguarding global food security, underpinning healthy and nutritious diets, improving rural livelihoods, and enhancing the resilience of people and communities," said FAO's Director-General José Graziano da Silva. "We need to use biodiversity in a sustainable way, so that we can better respond to rising climate change challenges and produce food in a way that doesn't harm our environment." The lack of biodiversity can leave food production much more vulnerable to shocks, such as outbreaks of disease and pests.

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to defer output policy decision

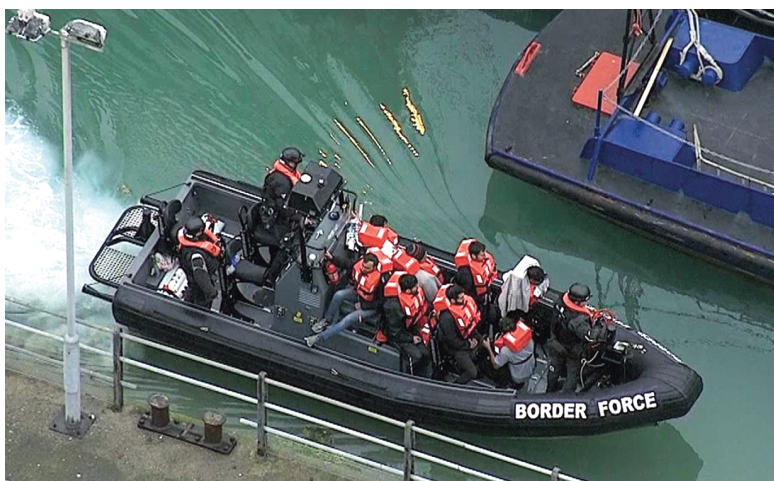
OPEC and its partners are unlikely to decide on their output policy in April as it would be too early to get a clear picture of the impact of their supply cuts on the market by then, three OPEC sources said

The sources said the production policy by the so-called OPEC+ alliance is expected to be agreed on in June with an extension of the pact the likely scenario so far, but much depends on the extent of US sanctions on both OPEC members Iran and Venezuela.

"So far the likely decision is to extend the agreement in June. Nothing much is planned for April, just to discuss the OPEC and non-OPEC (co-operation pact)," one OPEC source said.

OPEC and its allies meet next in Vienna on April 17th-18th. Another OPEC source said the most likely outcome of the June meeting was 'a rollover' of the current oil supply cuts. "But production by the exempt countries is already more than 700,000 bpd below the October level. Maybe there will be some adjustment," the second source said. On January 1st, the OPEC and its allies began new production cuts to avoid a supply glut that could soften prices. OPEC, Russia and other non-members — the OPEC+ alliance — agreed to reduce supply by 1.2 million barrel per day for six months.

Dozens of migrants try to board cross-Channel ferry to Dover



Dozens of migrants were detained in the French port of Calais, trying to board a cross-Channel ferry bound for Dover

French police arrested more than 40 people after they scrambled aboard a ferry docked at the port overnight. Twelve people are due to appear in court; the others were released with a warning.

The migrants broke into a highly protected area and used ladders to climb onto the ship. Cross-Channel traffic was delayed as police launched a 12-hour search for migrants hiding aboard.

Migrants are trying to get

to the UK before March 29th, when Britain is set to leave the European Union.

Reports of what a no-deal Brexit could mean for security checks in the port area have had an impact on the plans these people make. They say they are very worried about not being able to reach the UK so several of them are trying to hasten that plan, trying to get to the UK as soon as possible.

Authorities say they don't know if the incident was organised or spontaneous but it has raised concerns about port security in the run-up to Britain's exit from the EU.

"We must reinforce our po-

lice forces on the eve of Brexit which people smugglers exploit in a bid to promote their trafficking," Xavier Bertrand, president of the Hauts-de-France region that encompasses Calais, said on Twitter.

French and British authorities have already boosted coastal security, but migrants and smugglers have found new ways of trying to cross the Channel.

Many hide in trucks headed to French ports, but recently others have attempted to cross the Channel in dinghies and lifeboats stolen from local harbours or acquired by traffickers.

Recently, a French court jailed two Iraqis and an Iranian for organising illegal migrant boat trips to Britain.

A 30-year-old Iranian, considered the group leader, received an 18-month sentence, while his two accomplices, aged 39 and 32, were each jailed for a year.

Last year saw a huge spike in migrants attempting the often dangerous sea-crossing. Around five hundred people tried to make the journey, compared to just 13 known attempts in 2017.



Amazon plans new grocery-store business

Amazon.com Inc. plans to open dozens of grocery stores across the United States as it looks to expand in the food business

Amazon is also exploring a strategy of strengthening its new supermarket brand by purchasing regional grocery chains that operate at least a dozen stores.

Shares of grocers such as Walmart were down 0.99 percent while Costco traded up 0.21 percent up. Kroger traded down over 4 percent. Amazon was up 1.68 percent.

Amazon, which bought the upscale Whole Foods chain for \$13.7bn in 2017, is now in talks to open grocery stores in shopping centres in San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

The online retail giant plans to open its first store in Los Angeles as early as the end of the

year, and has already signed leases for at least two other grocery locations with openings planned for early next year.

"We're not surprised," said David Bujnicki, in charge of investor relations at Kimco Realty Corp., an owner or manager of 437 mostly grocery-anchored shopping centres.

Amazon is slow but deliberate when rolling out new brick and mortar concepts, he said. He added that a new grocer would validate the need for physical stores, a business that has been hit hard by e-commerce, whose surge Amazon has led.

Amazon rival Walmart, the largest grocer in the country, has not been caught off guard as it has been preparing for competition to heat up for nearly two years.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



Search for a new and respectful attitude towards traditions

Continuing the National Art Museum's exhibitions dedicated to works of famous Belarusian artists, the *Primavera* exhibition — celebrating the 70th anniversary of Yuri Gerasimenko-Zhiznevsky — opens to the public



By Veniamin Mikheev

For the first time, visitors to the National Art Museum have an opportunity to see works by Yuri Gerasimenko-Zhiznevsky — a stellar representative of the national school of drawing, virtuoso of graphic art, author of a series of drawings and illustrations for poetry and prose of the classics of Belarusian literature. Characters of Belarusian folk tales come to life in the artist's calm and cheerful works, abundant with details and interesting storylines.

The artist has also created portraits and thematic compositions using lithography, etching, linocut, watercolour and pastel techniques. Searching for his own new path in art, the master united the traditions of the Belarusian art school with those of the Renaissance and moved from impressionis-



The exhibition — rich in its diversity

tic 'A la prima' pastels to the purely abstract visualisation of his philosophical 'Neomag-netism'.

According to the art critics, Mr. Gerasimenko-Zhiznevsky was an artist endowed by nature with an extraordinary gift for creating beautiful, noble, pure and sublime images of universal value. "As a student, he proved himself to be a capable and promising artist with great creative potential. He justified the hopes of his teachers and became one of the most active members of the Belarusian Union of Artists," wrote his mentor — People's Artist of

Belarus, Professor Vasily Sharan-govich.

His works often appeared after his numerous travels and meetings with scientists and artists and his collaborative work with writers and poets. Fortunately, his talent was noticed and recognised by his contemporaries. Mr. Gerasim-enko-Zhiznevsky represented our country at international and all-Union art contests, constantly participating in Repub-lican exhibitions and receiving multiple awards.

Series of the master's illus-trations are distinguished by their visual and expressive pre-

cision. His design of *Silence of the Grass* by Vasily Zuenok was awarded a 1st degree diploma at the Republican Book Contest in 1980. Moreover, he was awarded the Francysk Skaryna Diploma for his illustration of Yakub Kolas' book from the *Selected Writings* two-volume work of Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas, in 1981. In 1984, his works were again recognised as the best in the Republic: for the series of illustrations to Bykov's *Sign of Misfortune* and Vasily Vitka's *Fairy Tales and Flow-ers* he was also awarded the 1st degree diploma.

Mr. Gerasimenko-Zhiz-

nevsky is a representative of the second generation of a creative dynasty which, for a century, has been creating highly artistic works — carefully preserving respect for national traditions. His children continue his search for new artistic paths and today work in the field of arts and crafts and sculpture.

At the exhibition, viewers can see the most famous works of the master from the collec-tions of the National Art Muse-um of the Republic of Belarus, the Yakub Kolas State Liter-ary-Memorial Museum and the State Museum of History of Belarusian Literature. The exposition features over twenty graphic and pictorial works, over sixty book illustrations created during Yuri's three cre-ative decades.

The exposition is supple-mented with 12 books illus-trated by the master, as well as awards, documents and photo-graphs from the collections of the National Library of Bela-rus, the Presidential Library of the Republic of Belarus, the Belarusian State Museum-Ar-chive of Literature and Art and the family's collection. A documentary shot by Alexan-der Domoratsky — from the *Light of a Distant Star* series — is screened for visitors; it features Yuri Gerasimen-ko-Zhiznevsky's relatives and friends who share fond memo-ries of him.

From arena — to pottery wheel

Unusual corner of Belarus created in the Athletes' Village for the 2nd European Games participants



Weaving is a craft which is passed from generation to generation

By Irina Zavadskaya

Participants of the 2nd European Games, to take place in summer in Minsk, will take home not only medals, but also memorable gifts. Between the competitions and training sessions they will learn to work on a pottery wheel, weave protective belts (serving as talismans), master Belarusian cuisine and learn probably more about the country than the fans.

The National History Museum considered the intensity of the Games' programme and decided to create a unique corner of Belarus for athletes directly in the Village where they will be accommodated.

"We realise that our Belarusian cultural centre in the Athletes' Village will be for many, the only opportunity to learn about our country,

since the schedule of competitions and preparation is extremely intensive," says the Director of the National History Museum, Pavel Sapotsko. "We've had everything planned out, enabling guests to take an interest in, and feel the uniqueness of our history, as well as Belarusian hospitality."

The Belarusian cultural centre is a project consisting of three parts. This is not only an exhibition from the museum's collection, demonstrating traditional straw weaving, embroidery, ceramics and costume making (the artefacts are unique, and may surprise even our neighbours, the Russians). The interactive part envisages that within a short period of time any of the guests will be able to master several folk crafts and create a souvenir from Belarus with their own hands, while also learning the ancient history of the souvenir. Employees of the National History Museum will be working in the Belarusian cultural centre as skilled craftsmen, alongside museum teachers, who are able to conduct excursions and support a simple conversation in the language — convenient for the guests. Guests will be welcomed at any time thanks

to the volunteers from the Chair of Intercultural Communications of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts and the BSU's Faculty of International Relations.

The National History Museum also plans to present several multimedia projects in the Belarusian cultural centre, e.g., innovative exposition complex *Treasures of the National History Museum of the Republic of Belarus*, which displays an interactive book gathering under a single

compared by their own music, and by turning the pages, the guests will listen to ancient melodies from the historical 'Polotsk Notebook', as well as works by modern Belarusian composers. Furthermore, by the summer, the National History Museum plans to add Kredo Castle to its multimedia exhibition of ancient monuments, which is currently being restored in the Grodno Region. The 2nd European Games participants will be the first to take a virtual excursion into the past of this magnificent building.

Moreover, in co-operation with the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts and the Belarusian Union of Artists, the National History Museum is preparing for all athletes and fans a large presentation of Belarusian art, starting from items of ethnography from its collections, to depictions of the world by outstanding Belarusian painters. The branches of the National History Museum are also preparing for the event, for instance, the Museum of Belarusian Cinema History, in co-operation with the National Film Studio are developing tourist routes through the sites of famous Soviet films many of which have been shot at Belarusfilm Studio.



'cover' its most precious treasures: from the famous Vytautas' Belt to other relics found in the Belarusian archives. Each of them will be ac-



By Svetlana Yevgenieva

There was a full house at the Brest Academic Drama Theatre. According to the organisers, people from all around Belarus wanted to buy tickets to the concert. The musician kissed his gui-

tar, greeted the audience with the words 'thank you very much' and 'wonderful' and began to surprise the audience with his art.

Over more than 60 minutes, the virtuoso guitarist performed more than a dozen pieces: his own composi-

Tom Sinatra and his grateful audience

World famous musician from Italy — Tom Sinatra — performs in Brest

tions and world hits. Those were mainly sentimental works in the flamenco, Latin and Italian style. Tom Sinatra extracted sounds from the instrument not only with his hands but also with his mouth and even when throwing the guitar behind his head.

He performed the tune of the rousing Greek Sirtaki dance for an encore, while a song from his favourite

movie — *The Godfather* — was not only played but also sung. "I'm a Sicilian," he said with a smile.

The nephew of the American singer and showman, Tom Sinatra has never enjoyed the glory of his legendary uncle. He says they have an historical connection: their grandfathers were relatives and lived in Palermo. The 53-year-old musician

has played the guitar since he was five years old. Up to now, he has travelled all over the world, giving more than 200 concerts and releasing seven CDs. "I'm in so many places. Belarus is fantastic! You are an amazing audience! I won't forget this night," said the guitarist. He thanked the audience and organisers of the festival, promising to return to Brest again.



By Yevgeny Svetlov

Singer Ruslan Alekhno joins Star Ambassadors of 2nd European Games

Ruslan Alekhno is a Belarusian pop singer and composer, winner of the TV contest *People's Artist* in 2004, Belarus'

entrant at the *Eurovision-2008* Song Contest, winner of the 2015 *One to One* TV show, holder of the Order 'For the Contribution to the Development of the Culture of Russia', and Francysk Skaryna Medal.

The *Star Ambassadors of the 2nd European Games 2019*

New blood recently joined the team of Star Ambassadors

information project aims to promote the upcoming multisport forum in Belarus and abroad and attract attention to its ideas while also stimulating interest of Belarusians and the international community and popularising sports included in the European Games programme.

The *Star Ambassadors* include outstanding personalities in sport, art and culture of Belarus, as well as foreign countries. The title was first awarded to the Hero of Belarus, Darya Domracheva, the four-time

Olympic champion in biathlon. The team of the *Star Ambassadors* also comprises of famous circus animal tamers and People's Artists of Russia, Askold and Edgard Zapashnys; the Olympic canoe sprint champion of 2008 and member of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, Alexander Bogdanovich; track-and-field athlete and 2018 European marathon winner, Olga Mazurenok; three-time Olympic freestyle wrestling champion, Alexander Medved; blogger

and TV host Anna Bond; and Belarus' pianist and conductor, Rostislav Krimer.

One more certificate was also granted to the UNICEF Representative in Belarus, Dr. Rashed Mustafa Sarwar who performs this role on behalf of the international organisation. Ukrainian singer Ani Lorak also joined the list, as did Olympic fencing champion, Alexander Romankov and Maria Vasilevich, who won the *Miss Belarus-2018* Pageant and the *Miss World Europe* title.

A ticket for the large sporting event will be surely enough

Russia has ratified visa-free agreement with Belarus for 2nd European Games fans

By Olga Korneeva

The Russians have completed ratification procedures on the Belarusian-Russian inter-governmental agreement relating to the entry of foreign citizens and stateless persons to international sporting events. A corresponding document signed by the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, has been already published on the Russian official legal information portal.

The agreement was signed in Minsk on May 29th, 2018. It regulates the entry of foreign nationals and stateless persons traveling to attend international events. The document has been temporarily applied since June 1st, 2018, including during the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

In accordance with the agreement, foreign citizens and stateless persons traveling to attend international sporting events in one of the two states can enter, exit, stay and transit through the



territory of the other state without visas using ID and a document showing their intention to attend an international sporting event. The agreement will be valid to July 10th, 2019.

In line with the agreement, the visa-free regime expires on July 10th, 2019. The 2nd European Games will take place in Minsk on June 21st-30th.

Struggle for integrity of sport

By Alexander Pimenov

During preparation for the 2nd European Games Belarusian athletes are constantly under strict control of anti-doping services

Director of the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), Denis Muzhzhukhin, described how not only future participants of the Games but also potential candidates for national teams are checked during training and competitions. He said one case of violation has been already found, fortunately, long before the major starts of the season. He said that athletes regularly receive all the necessary information on the latest requirements of the international anti-doping services to allow them to approach the 2nd European Games fully prepared.

Mr. Muzhzhukhin said that the organisers of the forthcoming competitions will make



every effort to protect athletes from ill-wishers. It's known that sometimes illegal methods such as putting prohibited substances into meals or drinks are used to eliminate competitors. In order to avoid such incidents, athletes should be very careful and drink only from containers which they unseal themselves and do not leave their food unattended. Special precautions will be undertaken to protect athletes. Video cameras will be installed in arenas, places of residence, canteens and sample collection sites. No one without special accreditation will be allowed into the secure zones. We can only hope that clean athletes will be safe and able to show their best at the competitions, explained the NADA Director.



Setting a national record

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

Anastasia Shkurdaï sets new record for Belarus in the 100m backstroke at the 2019 Swimming LEN Latvian Open Championships in Riga

The Belarusian swimmer covered the 50m distance in 1 minute 62 seconds and improved on the 2011 achievement of Alexandra Gerasimena (1 minute 68 seconds). Another national record was established by the Belarusian Alina Zmushko in the 60m breaststroke at 31.25 seconds, improving the previous

result of 31.29 seconds by Inna Kapishina, established in 2009. The Belarusian national team took part in the 2019 Swimming LEN Latvian Open Championships after the training camp in Tenerife and won 61 medals. The tournament was a qualifier for the 2019 FINA World Aquatics Championships in Gwangju (South Korea), scheduled for July 12th-28th and the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. Belarusian athletes also qualified for the 2019 Summer Universiade in Naples: Ilya Shimanovich (50m and 100m breaststroke) and Alina Zmushko (50m breaststroke).

Reaching the finals

By Svetlana Savelieva

Belarusian athletes earn four medals at the international wrestling tournament in memory of Dan Kolov and Nikola Petrov, held in Bulgaria

Silver went to Ali Shabanov, who performed in the most represented 86kg category. The former world champion reached the final, defeating Finn Ville Heino — 2:0 — and French wrestler, Akhmed Aibuev — 6:1 as well as Nickolas Heflin of the USA — 10:0. In the semi-finals, Ali Shabanov faced Fatih Erdin, but because of his rival's injury, qualified for the finals without a struggle. In the fight for gold, Ali lost to the Olympic champion from Iran, Hassan Yazdani — 5:16 — taking the silver. Among the Belarusians, Nyurgun Skryabin (under 65kg category) also claimed bronze in Ruse, as did Vanessa Kolodinskaya (53kg) and Irina Kurochkina (57kg).

Claiming two awards



By Svetlana Savelieva

Belarusian athletes earn gold and silver at the 2nd Riga Ladies Boxing Cup international tournament

In the under 90kg weight category, Alla Yaroshevich beat Lithuania's Ana Starovaitova to take gold, while Olga Lushchik (51kg) lost to Russia's Lyubov Sharapova to claim silver. Their

coach, the famous domestic expert Sergey Pytalev, was pleased with the quality of his trainees and satisfied with their performance against the background of such high-quality opponents from Europe.

One hundred and fifty female athletes from twenty countries were competing for medals at the international tournament in Riga.

Contest of the week



ZENA will represent Belarus at Eurovision-2019 Song Contest, following the results of the national selection round finals, broadcast live on March 7th

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS

20 Lenin Street
Until 17th March. *Discovery of the Genuine*
Until 28th April. *Tkachev Brothers. Beginning of the Path*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 18th March. *Sacral Culture of Belarusian Roman Catholic Churches*
Until 30th May. Exhibition of party dresses: *Invitation to the Ball*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 15th March. *Manifest of Republic*
Until 1st April. *Who Am I?*
Until 7th April. *Fantasy Land*

GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY MUSEUM

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 31st March. *Echo of Fiery Mountains: Afghanistan*

LOSHITSA ESTATE

8-2 Chizhevskikh Lane
Until 17th March. *Beauty of Southern Kurzeme*
Until 31st March. *Circle of Time*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

47 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 31st March. *Jazz! Cats! Spring!*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street
Until 23rd March. *Marco Antonio Lillo. Glad to Meet You*
Until 30th March. *Native Corner*

MAXIM BOGDANOVICH LITERARY MUSEUM

7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 30th April. *Travel to Land of Childhood: Yanka Mavr and Literature for Children*
Until 31st May. *Vladimir Korotkevich: Awakened Memory*

VILNIUS GALLERY

55 Kalinovsky Street
Until 14th April. Photo exhibition of Mikhail Linnik: *Shapes of Homeland*
Until 10th August. *Yakub Kolas and Vilno*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 24th March. Exhibition of Oleg and Yuri Krupenkovs: *Tandem*
Until 31st March. *Sacral Abstraction*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
14.03. The Flying Dutchman
15.03. Firebird / Carmen Suite
16.03. La Bohemia / Past-Present
17 and 20.03. The Swan Lake
19.03. Turandot
20.03. Ticket to Grand Opera
21.03. Carmen

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
14.03. Woe Works Wit
15.03. Lady for a Day
16.03. The Twelfth Night
17.03. Red Hot Mamas
19.03. Zoika's Flat
20.03. Private Lives
21.03. How to Become Rich

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
14.03. Man from Podolsk / Tectonics of Feelings
15.03. Sanya, Vanya and Rimas
16.03. New Affair of My Husband
17.03. Bigamist
19.03. Zhmurik / Male, Singular
20.03. Double Double / Man from Podolsk
21.03. Invented Not By Us

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue
14.03. Pygmalion
15 and 16.03. Night of Anton Chekhov's Miniatures
17.03. Robbery at Midnight
18.03. Fro
19 and 20.03. Nobody Ever Said Life Would Be Easy
21.03. Who Laughs Last

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
14.03. Harvest / School of Taxpayers
15.03. ART / Love as Militarism
16.03. Radio Homeland
16 and 17.03. The Black Lady of Nesvizh
17.03. Harvest / Tolerance
19 and 20.03. Callers
19.03. Jeweller's Jubilee
21.03. Weltmeister-Accordion

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
14.03. Pelican
15.03. When There's No Tomorrow
16.03. Wisdom Measurer
17.03. Three Giselles
19.03. Grandfather
20.03. Portrait
21.03. Belarus. Didactics