



**Defence Minister:
‘Our main task
is to prevent
aggression
and war
in Belarus’**

6



**Relax in the outback:
what fascinates
tourists is the old
noble estate
in the agrotown
of Krasny Bereg**

10

INTERNATIONAL

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Rescuers of the Emergencies Ministry returned from Türkiye after completing the task of extinguishing fires. In the photo: pilot Nikolai Silivonchik.

They extended a helping hand

On December 1st, two Mi-8 helicopters landed at the Lipki airfield with rescuers on board, who returned from firefighting missions in the highlands of the Republic of Türkiye. Also, the aviators of the Emergencies Ministry helped fight massive forest fires in the vicinity of the cities of Izmir, Antalya, Alanya, Seferihisar, Marmaris, and Kas. People and equipment worked to the limit. These seasonal conditions were interrupted by winter.

Since the start of their mission, the Belarusian aviators have flown a total of 255 missions spending 436 hours in the air. In the framework of international co-operation, aviators of the Emergencies Ministry of Belarus have helped other countries deal with emergencies in the most difficult conditions for nearly 15 years already. Our aviation has been used to fight forest fires in Greece, Russia, Latvia, and Georgia and provided assistance to people affected by floods in Serbia.



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Learn from other conflicts

The military-political situation around Belarus and measures for further response to it became the main topic of the meeting of the Commander-in-Chief, the President of the Republic of Belarus, with representatives of the country's power bloc. The event was dedicated to the defence of Belarus and was planned beforehand. It is symbolic that it coincided with the beginning of a new training year in the Armed Forces.

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to the need to take into account the experience of modern military conflicts. The President emphasised,

"We must constantly monitor, see and by no means miss the signs that would indicate the direct preparation for aggression against our country. Today we need to take a look at what has already been done to protect the state, and to identify the direction in which we need to move further. I have always repeated, and I would like to say it again: lessons, lessons, and lessons. Our most important task is to draw lessons from what is happening along the perimeter of Belarus."

According to the President, all law enforcement agencies have noted an increase in the number of provocations near our state border, "Ukraine is using any pretext to draw the troops of the NATO member states into the conflict. The recent missile incident in Poland testifies to the fact."

The West is openly demonstrating its aggressive intentions today. This is also used by some representatives of the self-exiled opposition, who openly call for the seizure of power by force and the commission of terrorist attacks on the territory of Belarus. Aleksandr Lukashenko speaks directly about them, "Some of them are not just traitors, but extremists. There is no other name for them. They do not hesitate to call for strikes targeting the infrastructure of our country. They have even forgotten that their relatives live in Belarus."

Amid these circumstances, Western states continue to build up the military potential of their armed forces, modernise infrastructure in the neighbouring countries, and increase the intensity of

operational and combat training activities, the President said.

"All this leads to the aggravation of the already complicated military and political situation around our country and in the region in general. So far we have managed to restrain the possible enemy from using military force against Belarus. Nevertheless, we must constantly monitor, see and by no means miss the signs that would indicate the direct preparation for aggression against our country," emphasised Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin noted during his report: in accordance with the instructions of the President, the ministry has identified, planned and implemented priority measures to prepare for repelling aggression. Since



March, the country has been implementing measures aimed at increasing the readiness of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus to respond to challenges and threats to military security.

In addition, the Head of State approved refined approaches to the development of the Armed Forces in seven main areas for the next five years in May, taking into account the current situation and an assessment of the experi-

ence of military operations in Ukraine. During the event, it was considered what has already been done to protect the state, in which direction to move further, what additional decisions are needed at the level of the President. Given the particular importance of answering these questions, the meeting was then held behind closed doors.

In an interview with journalists at the end of the event, Viktor Khrenin highlighted how much attention the President pays to the military security of the state amidst the developments around the country. Defence Minister noted that the situation around Belarus is escalating. At the same time, Viktor Khrenin specified, "I don't want anyone to think that a war would start tomorrow. And the President emphasised that there

are no direct preparations for a war. Seeing what our neighbours are doing, we, naturally, are obliged to respond to what is happening and prepare our Armed Forces, our state for defence, first of all. We are not going to threaten or attack anyone. We want to live independently on our territory, make decisions, respect our sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity."

Defence Minister also said that they

discussed the implementation of previously adopted decisions and analysed the accumulated experience at the meeting, "We have presented a detailed report on what is being done. We have looked at it again in order to make sure that we have not made any mistakes. Indeed, we are well aware that if we now join an arms race, as some states are doing, we can create problems for our economy and cause some social problems. Therefore, the principle of reasonable sufficiency should be at the core of our efforts. And the Head of State emphasised that this should be the only criteria. There should not be any extravagance or overspending in any case. In this situation we must primarily rely on our own resources, on our capabilities to defend our country on our own."

The journalists asked the head of the defence department how NATO and the EU countries consider Ukraine's attempts to draw alliance members into the conflict.

"There is only one beneficiary in this story around our country and in world politics, and we are already seeing this. It's only the United States. It is trying to weaken Russia, it is absorbing the European Union and already brought the Ukrainian economy to its knees. This is the main beneficiary today," Viktor Khrenin noted.

As for provocations near the Belarusian border, the minister also sees them as an attempt to draw the country into the conflict, "We understand this and, of course, we will respond to these provocations. We reserve the right to respond to them in the way we see fit... We are making significant changes to the plans and programmes of combat training of our servicemen."

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The guilty will be held accountable

The President of Belarus received a report from Chairman of the Investigative Committee Dmitry Gora

"Let's skip self-evaluation reports and jump right into the main thing," Aleksandr Lukashenko said at the beginning of the meeting.

The Belarusian leader first pointed the topic of countering extremism, "We had a lot of criminal cases related to extremism. There was even a backlog of such cases, figuratively speaking. Back then we agreed that we should promptly handle criminal cases related to extremism. Where are we now?"

Aleksandr Lukashenko also mentioned the creation of a cybercrime unit within the Investigative Committee.

"I come across an increasing number of media reports saying that this is a very important area of work as cybercrimes are not decreasing, unfortunately. That is why this unit was created. What is the situation in this field, how is this unit handling its tasks?" the Belarusian leader asked.

Another topic discussed at the meeting of the President with Chairman of the Investigative Committee dealt with the state of affairs in the committee itself, work with the staff. The Head of State recalled that earlier, before the appointment of Dmitry Gora, there were certain alarming signals about the Investigative Committee, "Therefore, the senior officials of the committee had to be brought to their senses. You took charge of the Investigative Committee. What has changed since you were appointed? How do the committee and its employees work?"

According to Dmitry Gora, one of the priorities of the Investigative Committee is to fulfil the instruction 'to reduce the number of pending criminal cases related to extremism', as well as to identify and investigate new crimes of this type together with operational services, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB.

As Dmitry Gora later told reporters, during the report, special emphasis was placed on issues of countering extremism, "This refers to the instruction of the Head of State, which was given at the be-

ginning of this year, to reduce the balance in the extremist criminal cases. This is the establishment of criminals, bringing them to justice established by law. It was reported that the KGB, together with the internal affairs bodies, is working very hard, and quite effectively in this direction. A quarter of all criminal cases that were initiated on an extremist orientation were sent to courts in 10 months of this year. That is, we have a positive trend in this direction."



In general, with regard to the work of investigators, the persons who have committed more than 69 percent of the crimes registered this year have been identified.

In addition, issues of special procedure were reported. This is the prosecution of persons hiding abroad.

"I reported on criminal cases that have already been transferred by the Investigative Committee to the prosecutor's office for referral to court. Currently, lawyers appointed in criminal cases are getting acquainted with the materials of the case against Tikhanovskaya, Latushko and other members... I won't even name this organisation... Who imagined themselves to be the leaders of our country. This case will also be

forwarded shortly," Dmitry Gora told.

With regard to economic crimes, Dmitry Gora emphasised, "The position was agreed with the Head of State on sending to court in special proceedings and criminal cases not of an extremist nature, but against people who committed economic crimes, causing enormous damage to both citizens and state organisations. And they have quite large assets left here that will make it possible to compensate for this damage. We will also work in this direction."

Answering whether there are any alarming trends that are visible in the work of investigators, Dmitry Gora confirmed that there are such, "A year or two ago, we were concerned about the growth of cybercrimes, or crimes in the field of information and communication technologies. Now there is a huge increase in scams also using the Internet, the so-called traffic accident scams, when they call citizens, usually the elderly. They say that a relative got into an accident and urgently needs to transfer the money either to the investigator so that he somehow investigates this case correctly, or to the doctor so that he treats their relative appropriately. That is, people blindly believe and lose a lot of

money. There is a huge rise in this area." The Investigative Committee is also concerned about the increase in the number of recorded crimes against sexual integrity and sexual freedom, especially those involving minors.

"Here we also note growth. We will analyse this situation. I think we have increased visibility. But all the same, all subjects of prevention will need to make efforts in order to rectify the situation in this area," noted Dmitry Gora.

Based on the results of the report, instructions were given in the field of personnel work, improvement of work in all areas. It was instructed to focus efforts on completing the investigation of extremist criminal cases.

"We should not lose sight of those cases that, due to certain circumstances, we cannot complete at the present time. This applies more to crimes committed on the Internet. These are insults, threats and so on. It was instructed to accumulate a database, record all illegal acts, so that in the future it would be possible to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to criminal responsibility," Dmitry Gora explained.



Dmitry Pinevich

tem, and come to hospitals with unexpected inspections.

At the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko also asked about the current situation, "Recently we have discussed security issues of our country. Everyone is involved, including healthcare. From medical kits to the readjustment of medical facilities. We start working with military medics, and the military with us. There should be a very intensive exchange."

As for the salaries of medical workers, a number of steps have already been taken in this direction on behalf of the President. However, we cannot stop there: we must financially support those who work in this area.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Defenders of the Union State could repel any aggression

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, met with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on December 3rd



Sergei Shoigu

Both our and your officers train Belarusian and Russian soldiers, so that, if necessary, our defenders of the Union State could repel any aggression.

Here I am talking about everything we need including medical kits, uniforms and weapons. There are no any divisions: we are a single group of forces, a single army. We are getting ready today. Everybody knows about it. We are not hiding it. In today's world it is impossible to hide such things... In short, everything is done the way we agreed with the President of Russia. You are not just fully aware of it. You are implementing it with our Defence Ministry. We are fulfilling the plans we have agreed upon."

The Head of State stressed that he was not going to scare anyone and opined on the op-

ponents' readiness to resolve the situation, "I am not going to scare anyone here. Neither are you. Everybody is already overscared today. If they want our region to live peacefully, without looking at those over the ocean, both Russia and Belarus are ready for this. If they want to fight to either the last Ukrainian, or the last Pole, or the last mercenary, well, this is their right to do so. However, neither I nor our special services see that they are ready for full-fledged negotiations and for any reasonable agreement. In our view they want to continue the war. Well, then the special operation will not stop. You probably know it better than me. We have met today to exchange opinions. Belarusians will do everything they must according to our agreement. No doubt about it."

According to the Head of

State, we are not hiding in the shadows here,

"We have been open in terms of our position. Neither you nor we wanted war or want war. The then President Poroshenko [former Ukrainian President Piotr Poroshenko] made a statement recently (you probably saw it) as to why he needed the Minsk accords, the negotiations in 2014 and so on. It turns out he was preparing for war. Why do they accuse us then... Well, he was preparing for war, and today they are facing the consequences."

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that the day before he had a telephone conversation with the President of Russia Vladimir Putin, "He called me yesterday. It was a long conversation. We discussed the situation around

Belarus and Russia. He said you were going to visit here and that we would continue the discussion. We will develop a common position in terms of our further actions to protect our territorial integrity."

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu thanked Belarus for hospitality, primarily with regard to the military who are in Belarus as part of the joint regional task force.

"They really feel at home here. The people are hospitable, and the military are doing everything to achieve greater cohesion, greater combat coordination. Therefore, I thank you, Aleksandr Grigorievich. I have come with best wishes from our President," said the Russian Minister.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

President: medical care should always be of high quality

The epidemiological situation in Belarus, the level of medical care, the training of military doctors, salaries — these and other important issues were in the spotlight during a report to the President by Healthcare Minister Dmitry Pinevich

The Head of State noted that the country's healthcare system performed well amid COVID-19 pandemic,

"My gratitude to the healthcare system and doctors is not for treating people, but for learning how to treat patients with COVID-19. Today we can say that Belarus tackled the issue better than anyone in the world. It is not just because our healthcare system adjusted on time. We all know that very well. It once again shows that the healthcare system works well under close control."

However, Aleksandr Lukashenko told a story about a woman who got in a hospital in Shklov District and was dying. Thanks to the intervention of the President, she was saved, and she is out of danger now.

"When she was in the Shklov hospital, I practically pulled her out of the morgue. Now she is disconnected from the mechanical ventilator. Her recovery is on track, God forbid that it continues like this. The question arises, Dmitry Leonidovich: are you going to treat people the way I have always demanded of you? Certain things ring the alarm bell to me. People in high places receive good treatment, but what about ordinary people, patients in district hospitals?" noted the Head of State.

Aleksandr Lukashenko shared the details of the story with this woman. The story came to his attention when the President was working in his home village. A man ran towards him, who handed over a letter with a request to save the woman: "She's about to die". "Naturally, I couldn't but inter-

vene. I sent my doctor to the hospital who later came back saying that her chances to survive were close to zero. I ordered to deal with this case. The woman was transferred to Mogilev. I got updates on her condition almost every evening. Although she is a troubled person, she is still a human being, at least I treated her this way. She had a bunch of diseases, including bilateral pneumonia, and something else. She was treated, but she had not recovered completely when they took her back home. Furthermore, she drank the wrong vodka, and she was taken to intensive care in critical condition," said the Head of State.

In this regard, the President noted that high-quality medical care in Belarus should be provided to everyone, "I want to warn you all that there will be no mercy for you. Many countries are watching us. Millions of people will hear

this. And please draw the appropriate conclusions. Hiding behind someone's back or, as I often say, lying low will not work.

People are a priority in our country. So people need to be treated properly. We have everything in place for that. We are well-equipped to provide good-quality healthcare services. And the COVID-19 pandemic showed that we have good doctors and good medical education. If medical students fail to learn something at university, they can make up for it at work, because we have a good system of mentoring."

The country's healthcare system will be inspected in the near future. On the President's instructions, a mobile group will be set up to include independent specialists, who will check the healthcare sys-

2023 budget: social focus

What was discussed during the zero reading of the bill ‘On the National Budget for 2023’

The amount of family capital next year will increase by Br4,341 (about \$1,785) and will amount to Br30,336 (about \$12,471). All social obligations of the state will be fulfilled in full, and even the refusal of the World Bank to finance a number of projects in Belarusian education will not affect the work and development of this field. This and many other issues were discussed in the Oval Hall of the House of Government during the meeting of deputies and senators with the Prime Minister and members of the government — the so-called zero reading of the bill ‘On the National Budget for 2023’.



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“In accordance with the principles of justice, responsibility and care, a wide package of social measures and guarantees is being implemented in Belarus. These are free education and health care, pensions, support for vulnerable categories of the population, benefits for giving birth and raising children. Belarus is among the top 50 countries in terms of the effectiveness of national health systems, ahead of the United States and Russia. It is among the top 25 countries in the ranking of comfortable conditions for motherhood.”

During the Address of the President to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly on January 28th, 2022



BELTA

By Maksim Osipov, Vladislav Sychevich

On the course of recovery growth

Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko,

“Since July of this year, the monthly dynamics of GDP has been improving. In January-October this figure improved by 0.5 percent as against January-July and amounted to 95.3 percent. The economy is on a trajectory of recovery growth. Foreign trade is balanced. Effective measures to redirect and support exports pave the way for a record foreign trade balance of \$4 billion for three quarters. It increased by \$1.2 billion year-on-year.”

The government, together with the National Bank, has carried out work to stabilise the situation in the domestic foreign exchange market. The situation in the foreign exchange and financial markets is completely stable. There is no rush demand for foreign currency. Since the beginning of the year, the population has sold \$145 million on a net basis. Fixed-term retail deposits in Belarusian rubles are on the rise. Their increase amounted to more than Br1.1 billion (over \$452 million), or 22 percent. Since the beginning of the year, the Belarusian ruble has strengthened against the euro by 13.3 percent, against the U.S. dollar — by 5 percent. The Belarusian ruble is an attractive currency for savings. The currency obligations of the state have been fulfilled in full. On November 1st the volume of gold and foreign exchange reserves was \$7.6 billion while the target was at least \$7 billion.

There is deflation in the country — this happened for the first time since 1991

According to Roman Golovchenko, thanks to the decisions taken, the inflation has been slowing down for the third month in a row in annual terms. Moreover, “Deflation at the level of 1 percent was registered in October, for the first time since 1991. Belarus preserves a stable and manageable situation on its labour market. In January-October 2022, the number of people employed in the country’s economy remained almost at last year’s level. The total unemployment rate is less than 4 percent.”

The Prime Minister informed the parliamentarians, “The production of trucks increased by 86 percent, rock haulers — by 22 percent, tractors — by 7 percent, buses — by 5 percent, elevators — by 43 percent, electric engines and generators — by 8.3 percent, chemical fibres — by 11 percent and cellulose — by 22 percent.”

Roman Golovchenko emphasised that the financial results of enterprises are improving. In January-September, revenue surged by 10.6 percent year-on-year, overpacing the increase in production costs, “Profit from sales increased by 22.8 percent, net profit — by 12.2 percent. Net profit amounted to Br14 billion (about \$6 billion). Return on sales — 8.9 percent. These are the best indicators over the past seven years. In addition, the debt burden of enterprises has been reduced. The ratio of total debt to revenue today is 48.1 percent. The share of unprofitable organisations decreased to a minimum of 13.2 percent.”

On November 28th, Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko signed Decree No. 411, which approved the most important parameters of the forecast for the socio-economic development of Belarus for 2023.

• In particular, the growth rate of the gross domestic product is expected to reach 103.8 percent as against 2022. The growth rate of the real disposable income of the population is expected at 104.1 percent, fixed-capital investments — 122.3 percent, export of merchandise and services — 105.5 percent.

• In order to hit the social and economic development targets, the government will adopt a plan for 2023. It will concentrate all the measures and resources needed for the uninterrupted and effective operation of organisations amid sanctions. The measures will also be aimed at raising living standards of the population.

Increased investment in fixed assets will be the main source of economic growth next year. Investment is planned in three main areas:

• As much as Br7.7 billion (about \$3.2 billion) will be invested in building housing and the appropriate infrastructure. There are plans to build 4.3 million square metres of housing, including 1.3 million square metres of housing with state support.

• As much as Br7.9 billion (about \$3.3 billion) will be invested in the creation and development of infrastructure in the regions. (There are plans to build 17 preschool institutions for kids, 9 secondary education institutions, 22 physical

education and recreation complexes, 7 swimming pools, 21 sport facilities, 46 healthcare institutions, 22 bridges and overpasses on major motorways and 30 bridges and overpasses on municipal roads).

• As much as Br31.2 billion (about \$12.8 billion) will be used to invest in projects and retooling. (There are plans to realise 129 investment projects, 14 integration projects, and 51 import-substitution manufacturing projects).

EDUCATION

In education, additional funds are provided for equipping and modernising educational laboratories of higher education institutions, the financing of which was planned to be carried out at the expense of World Bank loans. As well as the equipment of resource centres of institutions of secondary specialised education. It is also planned to centrally purchase school buses at the expense of the national budget for a total of Br24.8 million (about \$10.2 million) with their transfer to the regions. In order to instil a patriotic position among young people, Br1.7 million (about \$600,000) will be allocated next year to finance patriotic clubs.



EXPORT

• \$47.7 billion with a growth rate of 105.5 percent — these are the parameters of the planned export in 2023.

• The government intends to compensate for the loss of export to Western countries and Ukraine by stepping up presence on the markets of Russia, China, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. There are plans to increase shipments to Russia by 6.5 percent, to China by 15 percent, to Africa by 10 percent.

• As a result, foreign trade surplus is expected to reach \$1.6 billion. It will ensure the balanced state of the balance of payments and will have a positive effect on maintaining the country’s economic security at a proper level.

HEALTHCARE

In addition to a significant increase in the cost of salaries for employees in the healthcare and education sectors, it is additionally envisaged:

• in health care — to increase the national budget expenditures by more than 20 percent for the purchase of medicines and centralised purchases of medical equipment. The amount of funding for these expenses next year will be Br1.3 billion (about \$535 million). These expenses include Br240 million (almost \$100 million) for the purchase of at least 4 million doses of domestically produced Sputnik-V vaccine.



BUDGET EXPENDITURES

More than a third of all expenses — 38.6 percent — will be the cost of wages, with accruals and pensions of military personnel. For these purposes, in 2023, it is planned to allocate a total of Br23.5 billion (about \$9.7 billion) (an increase by Br3.8 billion compared to the current year) (about \$1.6 billion).

In relation to GDP, the most budget-intensive expenditures of the consolidated budget are for healthcare (4.4 percent or Br10.4 billion) and education (4.3 percent or Br10.3 billion (about \$4.3 billion)). The budget guarantees the availability of basic social services in the field of health and education for the population.

WAGES

In general, the nominal accrued average monthly wage in the economy will amount Br1,938 (about \$800), in the public sector — Br1,454 (about \$600).



SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Br429 million (about \$176 million) are provided for these purposes. According to estimates, more than 13,800 families will benefit from the payments, while the amount of family capital increases by Br4,341 (about \$1,785) and will amount to Br30,336 (about \$12,471).



A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step



The trend to increase demand for import-substituting industries: the top manager of the Great Stone tells about the progress of the construction of the park

By Ilya Kryzhevich

We are working on a new project, however, the old one remains on the agenda, too

— Could you please tell us about the work on the project of a new multimodal transport and logistics centre of Beltamozhservice? And since this is the second project of this level in the Great Stone, let me clarify how things are going with Eurasian Railway Gateway, which was also supposed to build a bimodal railway terminal?

— To be clear, let's start with the second question. Initially, it was planned to build a bimodal railway terminal on the territory of the industrial park. Our resident, Eurasian Railway Gateway, is a project in which the German, Belarusian and Chinese parties participated. But at the moment, Duisburger Hafen JSC is forced to leave the project in Belarus due to sanctions. At the moment, there is a procedure for its exit from the shareholders. At the same time, the project of a bimodal transport and logistics centre is by no means cancelled. Now there is a change of shareholders, development teams. We, in turn, are looking for a replacement — we are negotiating. Furthermore, we already have at least two candidates for this position.

In order not to waste time and not go beyond the planned schedule for the construction of logistics infrastructure, we were looking for potential partners who would be interested in a similar project in Great Stone. This company was Beltamozhservice. The enterprise will build a transport and logistics centre in the park. The company was recently accepted as a resident. The Beltamozhservice office is already operating here, and a number of services are provided on the basis of China Merchants Group warehouses. For this enterprise today there is a need for further capacity building, so they were also interested in the issue of building a multimodal terminal in the park. First of all, the new project will focus on the handling of rail cargo, both container and general, but there will also be an option to handle air and road cargo. At the same time, the final strategy can still be changed and expanded by the company.

We are considering the possibility of placing two terminals in the neighbourhood, and we believe that

international logistics has experienced many shocks in the past two years, but until the beginning of 2022, it worked according to clear rules. So far, Western countries have not introduced a number of restrictions. Due to the many changes, businesses and carriers have had to rebuild. Many succeeded, but today, frankly speaking, the market of international cargo transportation remains unpredictable, long and expensive. At the same time, large projects continue to look for windows of opportunity. Work has begun on a new transport and logistics centre at the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park, which is being built as the largest international hub between East and West. The complex will be built by Beltamozhservice, which has recently registered as a resident of the park. First Deputy Director General of SZAO Industrial Park Development Company Kirill Koroteyev shared details about this project, as well as about the construction of the Great Stone and attracting residents from foreign countries.

this will provide a certain synergy. For example, a customs clearance point will work for two terminals, which means a larger flow of cargo, a turnover of trains. At this stage, together with Beltamozhservice, we are deciding the technical parameters, and design will begin in the near future.

An access freight railway line will be built to the terminal. On the road to the terminal, the design documentation has been developed, we are working with funding sources. As soon as the construction of one of the terminals starts, we will start building the road infrastructure.

Focus on production buildings

— How are things going with the construction of the Great Stone at this stage?

— We have created the infrastructure for the first stage of development of the park of 8.5 square kilometres. We are finishing the final touches on closing contracts with our general contractor. Now we are waiting for the start of construction of the second stage along with the terminals. We are ready and everything will depend on the current situation.

At the same time, we will definitely continue to develop the construction of production buildings. We have a great interest in ready-made production facilities. Almost all of our buildings, primarily three-storey buildings, will find tenants before the end of this year. Over the past two months, we have seen a trend towards an increase in demand for import-substituting industries. We will start building at least one of them next year. And also we will start designing a new type of buildings with a larger area.

In terms of residential infrastructure, it is expected that the new hotel will be introduced in May next year. The administrative building of the Torch project will also

THE STONE IS ON THE RISE

In January-September 2022, the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park was replenished with 17 new enterprises. Thus, the number of registered residents increased to 99 companies, and the declared investment volume — up to \$1.3 billion.

According to the results of the first nine months of 2022, the park's companies demonstrate good results. Production volumes increased by 1.5 times, proceeds from the sale of products by 1.8 times, export of goods and investments in fixed capital increased by 1.2 times. As a result, a net profit of Br56.1 million was received and a 2.1-fold increase in the volume of taxes, fees and payments paid to the budget and extra-budgetary funds was ensured.



be filled in May next year. As part of the project, a management team has been formed and the search for future tenants and projects with an R&D bias is already beginning. As for housing, we are counting on China's help in this matter. There are expectations that the construction of residential buildings will begin next year.

New opportunities for residents

— If we talk about attracting new residents during international events, what is the interest in the industrial park today amid various restrictions?

— The magnetism of the park on foreign markets remains high despite the sanctions. The day before, we took part in investment forums in Turkey and the UAE as part of national expositions. There is interest from foreign investors in terms of new opportunities for working under sanctions. After all, windows of opportunity appear in sanctions, because the market of past years has already seriously changed. New niches are also emerging. For example, Turkey today is conditionally an intermediary between Western manufacturers and Russian companies. We have plenty to talk about from the point of view of the possibility of localisations under Turkish brands. And this interest needs to be developed. We will continue this trend. Soon we will participate in a business forum in Kazakhstan and also demonstrate our capabilities.



In the interests of national security

Ivan Yartanovich



Defence Minister:
‘Our main task is to prevent aggression and war in Belarus’

How only did the West not show its hypocritical grin. How only did they not rattle weapons at our borders. Having declared their ‘crusade to the East’, they hoped to swallow Belarus as well. But they choked. What and why is happening now at our borders, what is the general military-political situation and what conclusions we have drawn — read in an exclusive interview with the Defence Minister Lieutenant General Viktor Khrenin.

Interviewed by Lyudmila Gladkaya

Security is the main thing for Belarusians

— These meetings, when the heads of law enforcement agencies told people about the military-political situation in the country and at our borders, are very important. Especially for those living on the border. What interests the citizens, what questions did they ask you?

— The decision on this form of informing the population was made by the Head of State after the reports of the heads of law enforcement agencies on the current situation. The Commander-in-Chief said that these data must be conveyed to our people. Which is what was done. Moreover, we did not correct our report: the citizens heard the same thing as the President.

Belarusians are primarily interested in security, which means stability and understanding of how to live on. They asked what is being done for this and whether everything has been done, how to behave in this or that situation... There were many questions, and we answered them honestly and openly.

— Well, people can see very well that there is military equipment, a build-up of military forces near the western borders, they see the provocations of the southern neighbour.

— Belarusians are smart people, they see what’s going on. They compare facts, analyse and draw conclusions. Therefore, it is important to provide people with reliable, operational information about the emerging military-political situation, to provide them with specific facts and figures. Tell them about what is happening near our borders and what measures are being taken by the country’s power bloc.

The military department must have operational data in order to prevent an armed invasion, aggression against us. Therefore, we monitor the situation with our neighbours, in the same Ukraine, the Baltic countries... Which, by the way, are still called neighbours, although they perceive us as enemy, for example, during their exercises. However, this is not the position of citizens of these states, they just see and understand everything. Their leadership is hostile, it was they who launched the so-called ‘crusade to the East’.

We draw conclusions from the events of both 2020 and 1941. Today we see something similar with what happened at our

borders before the Great Patriotic War. Let’s remember what we were promised after the collapse of the Soviet Union? That there will be no advancement of NATO to the East. Fine. But what do we see now? NATO troops near Belarus. They call our country an aggressor, although they cannot give a single fact to confirm it... In general, we see a true hypocrisy and a blatant lie.

— The President has repeatedly said: ‘We are a peaceful state. We do not want to fight, but we are ready to defend our Motherland.’ The question is: have we done everything in this direction, are the measures taken enough to ensure security?

— The Commander-in-Chief has repeatedly said that Belarus is a peace-loving and benevolent country. And these are not just words, this is a fact, proven in practice. We do not threaten anyone and still want to live peacefully, quietly in our own home, in co-operation and on good terms with all our neighbours.

The Armed Forces are not an instrument for waging war, but an instrument for preventing it. And we, people in uniform, are ready to do everything to maintain peace and security on Belarusian land. Based on the current situation, we are implementing a set of preventive measures to counter challenges and threats. We do it professionally, we cope with the tasks.

They are again trying to accuse us of co-operation with Russia. And this despite the fact that our countries are connected by a centuries-old history, friendship, and often family kinship. Our peoples have always helped each other in difficult times, together we defended freedom and independence, fought against external enemies, worked hand in hand. So those who use this kind of accusatory rhetoric should just look around. Today, no state alone can provide security. Look at our northwestern neighbours who are hosting military bases, US and NATO military formations both on a permanent and rotating basis, improving military infrastructure, and so on.

Indeed, foremost we rely on ourselves. However, we understand that if help is needed, we have a reliable ally. Therefore, we will continue to take joint measures to prevent military threats to the Union State. At the same time, I want to recall the words of the Commander-in-Chief: ‘We will fight, struggle and die on our land’.

You asked me if we’ve done everything? If I say ‘everyone was done’, it is kind of

complacency. Of course, there is still a lot to be done, and we are working on it. The most important thing is that we see problems, solve them and move forward.

They don’t want peace, they seek war

— The West has long made no secret of its preparations for the conduct of hostilities. What does it look like now? How are Poland and the Baltic countries arming themselves?

— The situation around Belarus remains difficult. This is facilitated by the provocative policy and actions of the United States and NATO supervised by them, which actually translate the world military-political situation into an ultimatum dialogue from a position of strength. A direct consequence of this trend is the increased militarisation of the territories near our border, as well as in Europe as a whole.

In particular, the unprecedented build-up of the presence of American and NATO military formations in the Eastern European region, including on the territory of states adjacent to our country, under the pseudo-slogan of protection against the ‘threat from the East’ continues. Already, more than 60,000 US troops are permanently stationed in Europe, as well as about 36,000 as part of ongoing operations in Eastern Europe, of which more than 22,000 are concentrated in Poland and the Baltic countries. In addition to the ground grouping, an aviation group has been created in the Eurozone, which already now has over 2,200 combat aircraft (including about 140 in neighbouring countries).

Neighbouring states concentrated their main efforts on increasing defence spending, increasing the size of their national armed forces, intensifying the supply of modern strike weapons to the troops, and improving military infrastructure.

For example, Poland plans to increase funding for the defence sector to 3 percent of GDP as early as 2023 (this year — 2.2 percent), increase the number of national armed forces to 300,000 military personnel (up to 250,000 professional military personnel (now — 115,500) and up to 50,000 assigned members of the territorial defence forces (now — about 27,000)).

One of the important directions in the defence construction of the Eastern European states is the improvement of the military infrastructure, primarily in the interests of expanding the possibilities for receiving and deploying foreign military contingents. At

the same time, the main content of the activities of our western neighbours in this direction is the modernisation of airfields, naval bases and ports, the creation of advanced bases for the early placement and storage of equipment, weapons and materiel (primarily in the interests of the US Armed Forces), the reconstruction of training centres and training grounds to support the activities of NATO Allied Forces military contingents.

The modernisation of most of the airfields in Poland and the Baltic countries (Malbork, Poznan-Krzesiny, Miroslavets, Minsk-Mazowiecki, Lask (Poland), Lielvarde (Latvia) has already been completed, which together ensures the basing of up to 200 combat aircraft on them. Measures are ongoing to improve other facilities (airfields in Powidz, Krakow-Balice, Deblin, Swidwin (Poland), Zokniai (Lithuania), Amari (Estonia). Naval bases and ports are being actively modernised, which increases the ability to receive military cargo, landing and attack ships of the alliance.

In Poland, a forward bridgehead is being created for the storage of equipment and supplies of the US Armed Forces (Powidz). Training centres and training grounds are being upgraded to support the activities of NATO military contingents (Drawsko, Ozhysh, Zagan, Demba, Wandzin (Poland), Pabrade, Gaiziunai (Lithuania), Adazi (Latvia).

Under these conditions, the scale and intensity of operational and combat training activities on the territory of countries adjacent to Belarus are constantly expanding, with a simultaneous increase in the number of forces and means involved (2021 — more than 230 exercises, over 320,000 people and about 20,000 armaments and military and special purpose equipment were involved; 2022 — about 280 exercises, more than 500,000 people and 27,000 units of military equipment).

The analysis demonstrated that the West is working out issues of an offensive nature, and Belarus and Russia are already directly considered as an adversary.

Reconnaissance is underway. There is a high intensity of reconnaissance aviation flights of the United States and its allies, including those near the borders of Belarus, using the entire available arsenal — from strategic reconnaissance aircraft to tactical aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles.

The intensity of reconnaissance against our country has increased from 30 sorties per week in 2021 to 65-70 in 2022.



Yury Mozolevsky

If we summarise these facts, considering a set of military measures by the US and NATO to contain the so-called threat from the East, we can state that preparations are underway for conducting military operations in the eastern direction. We see this and draw appropriate conclusions. The 'colour revolution' in Belarus failed, but the issue has not been removed from the agenda, and the hypocritical struggle against us and Russia continues.

— **The conflict in Ukraine provoked by the West poses a threat to the security of our state. How would you characterise the current situation in this area and what conclusions have we drawn from the Russian special operation?**

— *The conflict near our southern borders cannot but affect the country's military security. It is a hotbed of tension throughout the region and is an external manifestation of the global confrontation between West and East.*

An analysis of the course of the special operation in Ukraine shows the direct interest of Western countries: firstly, in protracting the military conflict in order to weaken Russia, and secondly, in the readiness to fight at the hands of Ukrainians up to the 'last soldier'.

This is confirmed by the unprecedented support of the United States and the collective West of Ukraine in almost all areas, incessant financial injections, pumping up the Ukrainian army with modern weapons and equipment.

Also, Western countries are updating weapons through the disposal of obsolete samples supplied as part of the provision of military-technical assistance, and also use the territory of Ukraine as a testing ground. In addition, the West is training nationalist military formations in Ukraine such as the Kalinowski Regiment and the Pagonya Regiment, which gain experience in actual combat operations there and can be used against our country in order to seize power in Belarus by force.

The involvement of additional forces by Ukraine to serve on the border, the involvement of units of the national armed forces, formations of territorial troops near the borders of our state create risks of provocations that can develop into border armed incidents.

Taking into account these factors, the Defence Ministry specified certain issues of the construction and development of the Armed Forces, the content of their training. Together with Russian colleagues, a set of measures is being implemented to ensure the military security of the Union State.

On the regional grouping of troops, mobilisation and people's militia

— **What tasks are now facing the regional grouping of troops?**

— *What is a regional grouping of troops? This is a complex organisation with many components, with controls, forces, troops and logistics. We have already conducted various exercises, including with live firing and launches of anti-aircraft guided missiles, as well as special tactical exercises to work out issues of engineering equipment for regions and borders, organisation of communications, security, and so on. Various options for countering possible challenges and threats were worked out, as well as various approaches to the use of a regional grouping of troops. It can be deployed in stages or all at once. Now we are doing it step by step. This is an adequate response to NATO's actions in the region and a demonstration of our determination to defend our land, the Union State. The tasks of the regional grouping themselves did not change. As before, they remain defensive in nature.*

— **What conclusions have been drawn by our military department based on the experience of partial mobilisation in Russia?**

— *Of course, we are analysing the experience of our neighbours in conducting mobilisation activities. Firstly, these are issues related to the military registration of citizens in the reserve, including the determination of the quantitative and qualitative composition of available resources. This is necessary for understanding the situation and a rational approach to ensuring defence and military security.*

I will not disclose military secrets, recalling that the task of the Armed Forces is to ensure combat and mobilisation readiness. We have been holding mobilisation assemblies for many years in a row. Mobilisation is very important for our country, at least from the point of view that we do not maintain an army on the scale that is needed to repel aggression. The country's economy will not survive. Therefore, we decided on the number that is optimal, taking into account the mobilisation resource, the training of the population.

Checking the status of those liable for military service in the country is systematic and planned. Yes, in connection with the instruction of the Commander-in-Chief, work in this direction has been intensified. Citizens are called to the personnel authorities at the place of work and study, to the military commissariats, their separate divisions and local authorities, where the necessary data is specified in the conversation. Thus, there is no cause for concern.

We plan to complete the main work on checking the data of those liable for military service by the end of this year. However, I can already say that more than a million people liable for military service have been checked. Citizens react absolutely calmly to this, they come to the commissariats and check their data.



By the way, we also see an increased interest from women in obtaining elementary skills in military training. They say they want. They are welcome. The country has both a system of initial military training and pre-conscription training centres. And we do not stop there, since there is a request.

In addition, taking into account our experience and the experience of our Russian colleagues, we will correct some points in the legislative plan. Active work is underway to prepare proposals for amending a number of legislative acts. Soon they will be submitted for consideration by parliamentarians and public discussion.

— **What are the tasks of the territorial troops? And at what stage is the formation of the people's militia now?**

— *The troops of the territorial defence of our state are a highly organised and trained organisation, equipped with weapons and trained personnel. Depending on the current situation, they are able to solve a wide range of tasks — from the protection and defence of civilian infrastructure and the implementation of measures to ensure martial law to*

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,
“The collective West has a desire to get even with Belarus. For quite some time already: the policy we pursue has been getting in their way for a quarter of a century. This is why a 35,000-strong NATO force remains in Europe. Most of it — about 25,000 people — is located in the countries Belarus borders with... “We should not expect tensions to ease in the near future. On the contrary, Russia will increase efforts in its special military operation. The West will seek to arm Ukraine even more.”
During a meeting on military security issues on October 4th, 2022

participation in measures to strengthen the protection of sections of the state border.

As for the second question: now, together with interested government agencies, work is underway to determine the legal foundations of the people's militia, the procedure for recruiting and training it. Detachments will be formed in wartime from citizens who voluntarily expressed a desire to serve in the militia. These can be not only citizens who are subject to conscription for military service for mobilisation, but also not registered in the military.

Belarusian folk wisdom: not to rattle the sabre, but to negotiate

— **Politicians from the US and the EU rant about nuclear war almost daily. It was reported that organisations in Ukraine have instructions to create the so-called 'dirty bomb'. What is the point of a nuclear strategy that is dragging the world to the abyss?**

— *What is nuclear strategy? In theory, this is part of the state's national security strategy, reflecting the views of its military-political leadership on the creation, development and use of nuclear weapons. It is logical that nuclear strategies have a limited number of states possessing such weapons.*

States is a state that has twice used nuclear weapons. Some Western politicians need to turn more often to the epitaphs carved on the monument in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park: ‘Rest in peace, for the error shall not be repeated’.

— **Describing the military policy of Belarus, you said that it would be expedient not to rattle the sabre, but to sit down at the negotiating table. With whom are we ready to talk and are there those in the West who are capable of this?**

— *Belarus has been working on the reputation of a peaceful and negotiable state since the first days of its independence. We have always pursued a multi-vector and transparent foreign policy and adhered to the fundamental principles of international law.*

The need to sit down at the negotiating table in the context of the escalation of the military-political situation in Europe is obvious. Negotiations will begin in any case, this is a natural outcome of any conflict. However, every day of delay costs human lives, not to mention the destruction of infrastructure, the growth of hatred between entire nations.

Negative trends in bilateral and multilateral relations with individual states have been growing over the years, culminating in recent times. Despite the fact that extremely incorrect formulations regarding the top political and military leadership of Belarus, as well as our country as a whole, have become the norm for Western and Ukrainian politicians, we remain ready for a dialogue on the military line even today.

We also receive signals of readiness for negotiations from our Western colleagues, as well as return to a constructive dialogue on security issues in the region. Unfortunately, the opinion of the military in the West is practically not taken into account. Fateful decisions for entire peoples are made by political forces seeking to redistribute the world by proxy, and by corporations that directly benefit from the next round of the arms race.

The Belarusian people, unlike many others, remember well what it means to live in conditions of war and rebuild the country from the ruins after it ends. Therefore, I can repeat once again: we are ready for negotiations and hope that they will begin as soon as possible. We proceed from the fact that there are still political forces in the West capable of adequately assessing the military-political processes taking place in the world. And we are still counting on their early positive response to our appeals.

— *Back in 2020, I saw in you a person who will do everything to make everyone in our country feel safe. I saw a leader who has a plan of action. What is the plan now?*

— *The action plan is the same, it is based on our state. Indeed, we, the heads of departments, have a responsibility. The main thing for me is to preserve sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and the constitutional order. I personally will do everything for this. And I am sure that I have an excellent team that will also do everything to ensure that neither 2020 nor 1941 is repeated. So that we can continue to live and work in peace on our beautiful land. So we continue to work and fulfil the tasks set. That is my plan.*

In the context of the aggravation of the military-political situation in Europe, some Western politicians deliberately increase the degree of nuclear rhetoric, and the media, unfortunately, pick it up and amplify it even more.

At the same time, in my opinion, the military-political leadership of all nuclear powers still has an understanding that there will be no winners in a modern nuclear war. Therefore, there is no need to raise the degree of tension on this issue. We need to calm down and sit down at the negotiating table. Let me also remind you that today, of the nuclear powers, only the United



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Cops protest in Brussels

More than 5,000 police officers and union representatives took to the streets of Brussels to call for more security resources

The demonstration came two weeks after the death of police officer Thomas Monjoie, who was stabbed to death in Brussels while on duty.

Police officers came to the rally in civilian clothes, 'armed' with placards, union symbols and whistles. Security was provided by dozens of uniformed police officers.

Police officers expressed their frustration at feeling unheard by political authorities, although they are often the target of unexpected attacks. They called for more logistical materials, more human resources for security services and on the ground, as well as refinancing of the police.

Vincent Houssin, Vice President of the Police Union VSOA, said that politicians have ignored the issue for too long. "For more than twenty years we have been addressing violence against the police, for more than ten years we have been working on an action plan. It is about time that the government finally effectively worked on zero tolerance," he said.

At the same time, previously, the media, as well as politicians and activists, on the contrary, accused the Belgian police of being too tough on citizens, especially young people participating in protests.



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Europe paying the highest price

For Europe as a whole, deaths caused by energy-price increases will surpass the number of soldiers thought to have died in Ukraine, according to research by the British weekly newspaper *The Economist*

Europe, accustomed to energy abundance, began to forget that the cold kills people. Now European countries are experiencing an energy crisis. The rise in energy prices after the start of the special operation in Ukraine played its role. But the main reason for the energy crisis was the 'environmental' policy pursued by political elites in Europe for two decades. As a result, hundreds of millions of Europeans will be forced to save on electricity and heating.

The Economist modeled the effect of the unprecedented hike in gas and electricity bills this winter and concluded

that the current cost of energy will likely lead to an extra 147,000 deaths if it is a typical winter.

Should Europe experience a particularly harsh winter, which is something likely when considering the growing effects of climate change that number could rise to 185,000. That is a rise of 6.0 percent. It also reports that a harsh winter could cost a total of 335,000 extra lives.

The statistical model includes all 27 EU member countries along with the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Norway. It is anticipated that governments across Western Europe would be

alarmed and concerned by these shocking figures published by the study.

Meanwhile, it remains to be seen what measures these governments will take to prevent so many extra fatalities in their own countries because of the energy shortage.

As it is being hurt the most, Europe could take serious efforts to push Kiev and Moscow to the negotiating table and hold peace talks that would bring an end to the war. That would ease a lot of problems facing the world from energy shortages to the global food supply chain disrupted by the conflict.



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Hawaii's volcanos erupt

Two of Hawaii's largest volcanoes are erupting simultaneously

Mauna Loa, the world's largest active volcano, has erupted for the first time in nearly four decades, and civil defence officials warned residents on Hawaii's Big Island to stay alert even though there doesn't appear to be any immediate danger. Kilauea is also erupting — both on the archipelago's Big Island. Dual eruptions haven't been seen since 1984.

"This is a rare time where we have two eruptions happening simultaneously. To the people of Hawaii, this is a very sacred event that we are watching" Jessica Ferracane, a spokesperson for Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, noted. The Kilauea volcano, which is smaller and more active than Mauna Loa, had been erupting since 1983, and in 2018, its lava flows destroyed hundreds of homes on the island. Recently, its eruption activity has been confined to the crater, according

to the US Geological Survey.

Scientists say two new lava flows formed on Mauna Loa, which last erupted in 1984. The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (EMA) said that there is 'still no immediate threat to populated areas' from the Mauna Loa eruption. According to the EMA, the lava was about 3.5 miles from Saddle Road, which connects the east and west sides of the island. Ken Hon, scientist-in-charge at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, said experts are monitoring the lava's movement. "It could just as easily shift and start another flow as well and we'll just watch it very, very carefully. We are thinking very much about advances," Hon said.

The Hawaii Volcanoes National Park remains open but visitors are urged to check the park website for closure updates, safety alerts, and air quality.

Scientists have identified new coronavirus in Chinese bats

Researchers identify five viruses 'likely to be pathogenic to humans or livestock' — including one closely related to Sars-Cov-2 and Sars

A new COVID-like virus with the potential to jump to humans and livestock has been identified in bats in southern China, according to new research.

Chinese and Australian scientists took samples from 149 bats across Yunnan Province and identified five viruses 'likely to be pathogenic to humans or livestock'.

"This means that Sars-Cov-2-like viruses are still circulating in Chinese bats and continue to pose an emergence risk," said Prof Eddie Holmes, an evolutionary biologist and virologist at the University of Sydney and co-author of the report.

"The main take-home message is that individual bats can harbour a plethora

of different virus species, occasionally playing host to them at the same time," said Professor Jonathan Ball, a virologist at the University of Nottingham who was not involved in the research.

"Such co-infections, especially with related viruses like coronavirus, give the virus opportunity to swap critical pieces of genetic information, naturally giving rise to new variants," he added.

Professor Stuart Neil, Head of the Department of Infectious Diseases at King's College London, added, "This study gives us a very important snapshot into the evolution and ecology of [coronaviruses], the scope for them to recombine and skip into new species regularly."



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Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

The old chronic ailments of Europe are exacerbating amid a common disease called 'inflationary fever'. Previously smouldering political conflicts are slowly but surely gaining momentum.

By Svetlana Isaenok

When you know better

From February 2022, Northern Ireland cannot form a government. The fact is that the parties are unable to agree on the candidacy of the First Minister. The stumbling block was the Northern Ireland Protocol, adopted by the UK after Brexit. According to this document, the border between the two countries reappeared. Thus, Northern Ireland lost its status as a full member of the United Kingdom. Supporters of the union with Great Britain categorically disagree with this state of affairs.

The conflict became very acute and required the intervention of Great Britain, which in such a case should call new elections. Elections were scheduled, held, but this did not solve the problem. The government again failed to form. The UK is back in business. However, the rhetoric of responsible officials has already changed.

Thus, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Chris Heaton-Harris decided to further delay the elections. Now, as you know, not up to the problems of the neighbouring country,

"I urge the Northern Ireland parties to use this extended time to come together and deliver for the interests of all people in Northern Ireland, particularly in this time of rising costs."

Analysts believe that this situation may force Northern Ireland to decide on a referendum on joining Ireland, thus becoming a member of the EU. Apparently, membership in the United Kingdom, which promised endless possibilities for many years, no longer seems so, especially given the financial state of the UK itself.

Scotland has been looking in the same direction for many years. First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon has proposed holding a second referendum on Scottish independence on October 19th next year. By the way, the first such referendum took place in Scotland 8 years ago. Since then, neither Theresa May nor Boris Johnson have given the go-ahead for a second such civil will.

Some experts are inclined to believe that the British authorities were forced to increase the amount of appropriations for Scotland again and again, thereby overwriting the issue of independence.

However, such a strategy for Scotland is unlikely to work today, with Rishi Sunak on a course to cut public spending. In this case, it will have no

choice but to switch to self-sufficiency through self-determination.

Auto punctuation marks

Europe intervened in the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo. As if to reconcile the parties. But it turned out as always — they only made it worse.

The head of EU diplomacy Josep

plates in Kosovo is nothing but an attempt to put pressure on the Serbian leader, who did not agree to impose sanctions on Russia. By the way, Vučić himself spoke about this earlier, "If tomorrow Serbia impose sanctions against Russia, then they will pat us on the back for five or six days and that's it. Today it serves them to hit us like a stick and a hammer in all forums."

The complexity of the situation lies also in the fact that the United States has already decided the fate of Kosovo for itself. At the same time,

700,000 Catalans go to a rally demanding independence. And now — an official message from the Catalan government appeared.

The leaders of Catalonia headed for a direct confrontation with the Spanish authorities. They have a lot of stumbling blocks, starting with the matter of the organisers of the last referendum illegally arrested, according to the Catalan government, and ending with issues of public security.

Radical sentiments are not limited to politicians. Citizens of Catalonia are extremely dissatisfied with the level of security in their cities. And they support politicians who oppose this lawlessness in every possible way. Candidates for elected positions in the municipality use this very actively. For example,

Xavier García Albiol, a Spanish politician and member of the People's Party, a candidate for mayor of

Badalona, every other

day publishes on

his social networks

footage of burning

streets of a Spanish

city, robberies of

supermarkets operating

under Spanish

franchises,

commenting on the

incident with the

words that this

happens

almost

every day.

"In 2023,

safety will again

be my top priority,"

a new mayor promises

his voters.

Fighting for inde-

pendence, the inhabit-

ants of Catalonia, obvi-

ously, choose a safe and quiet

life. So, despite the fact that a

recently officially published opinion

poll by the Catalan public opinion centre

showed only 40 percent support for

the idea of secession from Spain and

inclusion as an independent member

of the EU, analysts suggest that with

the deterioration of the economic situation,

this percentage will only gain

momentum.

The Spaniard Albert Santin says,

"People do not understand how it is

possible that Spanish citizens sleep

on the street, while all Ukrainian im-

migrants have a roof and food. They

don't understand rising cost of living

and inflation. The people timidly begin

to unite against NATO and its imper-

alist threats."

At the same time, he emphasises

that the vast majority of Spaniards

are passionate about Western television

propaganda, which talks about the

urgent need for sanctions. The young

man himself opposes them, because he

is sure that in the end they affect the

interests of all Europeans, because, al-

though they seek to isolate Russia and

Belarus, they are also Europe.

"This path is not easy, so more and

more people are getting tired of the

liberal and capitalist regimes in the

EU," the Spaniard notes.

European somersault

How and why the situation with self-determination of individual countries is escalating

without taking into account the opinion of Belgrade. Not so long ago, the media reported that the Americans supported the Franco-German plan for Kosovo, which, according to Aleksandar Vučić, provides for Serbia's consent to Kosovo's membership in the UN without its formal recognition by Belgrade.

Obviously, such unilateral decisions will not be able to strengthen peace and harmony in the region.

Spanish autonomy

Catalonia intends to hold a referendum on independence from Spain. This was loudly and boldly stated by the President of the Government of Catalonia Pere Aragonès. He is sure that Catalonia should be recognised by the official Madrid and the international community. These claims are particularly interesting given the fact that Catalonia's 2017 independence referendum, in which more than 90 percent voted in favour of secession from Spain, was declared illegal by Supreme Court of Spain.

And here is a new twist. First,

Borrell recently held a new round of high-level talks between Belgrade and Pristina amid the aggravation of the situation in Kosovo in Brussels. Following the meetings, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić said that the negotiations had not yielded results and that 'a difficult period ahead' was expected. The situation was heating up. The very next day, the Serbian leader told the press that the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo had sent special forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the north of the region, and commented on this as follows, "If someone thinks that they can expel the Serbian people, kill and hurt our people, it is my job to remind them the same thing I have said many times with all seriousness and determination. And when I say this, unlike some others, I know what it means — we will be with our Serbian people and will not leave them in trouble."

Experts are sure that the whole story with the ban on Serbian license



Relax in the outback: what fascinates tourists is the old noble estate in the agrotown of Krasny Bereg

One need to move away from the city in order to take a break from the hustle and bustle, to feel all the delights of rural life. The agrotown of Krasny Bereg in the Zhlobin District invites one to plunge into a real fairy tale of an old estate, the history of which goes back five centuries. The building has survived to our time almost in its original form, despite the wars and hard times.

By Marina Kuzmich

Grand reception

It's not so easy to reach the Koziell-Poklewski estate for tourists. Only one who longs for a meeting with the beautiful is able to find the way to it. Krasny Bereg State Agrarian College is the main landmark. There is an amazing heritage site on the territory adjacent to the educational institution.

At the entrance, a textured fence made of bright red brick immediately catches the eye, which gives the fence a special flavour. We pass through the big gate. Fifty metres — and in front of us is not a house, not a mansion, but a real palace in miniature! White-pink shades of the walls immediately give rise to associations with a confectioner's house made of icing on top of a Christmas cake. It seems that now its former owners will come out onto the porch and say: 'Welcome to the fairy tale!'

A truly magical atmosphere, both mysterious and mystical, reigns in the magnificent halls. The figures of chimeras alone on the facade of the building are



worth something! Apparently, the former owners thus wanted to drive away evil spirits from the snow-white walls of the two-story palace.

Centuries ago, many noble people owned Krasny Bereg. But the heyday began in these places, when a military engineer, Lieutenant General Mikhail Gatovsky, decided to build a chic manor house. To implement the idea, he invited the professor of architecture of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts Viktor Schröter. According to his project, a huge mansion was built.

After the death of the owner, the rights to the house passed to his daughter Maria. Having mar-



Darya Titova

After the 1917 revolution, the estate housed an agricultural school. During the Great Patriotic War, the estate building itself was not destroyed and was used as a hospital, so the palace and its interior decoration were well preserved.



ried, she actually transferred ownership of the estate to her husband, a prominent Russian nobleman, philanthropist and public figure Koziell-Poklewski. Their family in Krasny Bereg served as a dacha where the owners liked to relax with their children and friends.

We go into the first room. Mannequins in beautiful puffy dresses, miniature shoes, a hat, lace on bedspreads and pillows create the atmosphere of a dollhouse.

"The dress is genuine, it was really worn by beauties in the 19th century. It is noteworthy that if today the female model parameters

are 90-60-90, then here the waist circumference is only 50 centimetres! This outfit was presented to the museum by the collector Igor Sukmachevsky," says senior researcher at the museum-estate Maria Tkacheva.

Mystery of the big closet

We pass along the corridor — we find ourselves in the boudoir of the hostess in the style of classicism. In the room for her solitude, Maria Mikhailovna could sit at a table, write a letter to relatives, read a women's newspaper. By the way, entering the hostess's room, one can see a genuine newspaper of 1901, which was brought to the museum from Europe by one of the visitors.

The central place in the boudoir is occupied by a large closet — a true piece of art. Made in the marquetry style, it is a kind of inlay, surface finishing by gluing decorative veneer elements onto a wooden base. The hostess at-



tached great importance to the interior decoration of the cabinet: velvet inserts, a massive lock, floral decor.

We pass into one of the living rooms. Here the whole family gathered at a large table by the fireplace. Today in the room one can see portraits of the former owners of the house and the architect who created the magical beauty. Every detail emphasises the wealth and status of the owners. Interior items, even the sofa and armchairs, are decorated with porcelain medallions.

The tea set made of porcelain by the first manufactory in Europe, Meissen, founded in 1710, is particularly impressive. Chic candlesticks, tureens, spice sets, and a huge mirror in a massive wooden frame — all this creates the atmosphere of a royal palace.

Authenticity as it is

What catches the eye in most halls and living rooms is the chic ceilings, even trimmed with gold leaf. The decor in the form of twisting vine branches is mesmerising. It is amazing how this beauty has retained its bright colours over the centuries.

One of the highlights of the estate is a high degree of authenticity. Here, not only the facades of that time, but also the interior decoration were miraculously preserved: stucco, forged products, fireplaces, paintings, carvings. Thanks to the collector, who provided interior items of that time for the exhibition, the halls 'spoke' in the language of the 19th century.

Here is the owner's office. There, expensive writing sets, clocks, and a library are set up in a serious way. The owner's original books have not been preserved. Instead, visitors can see rare publications from the collections of

the National Library of Belarus. A unique exhibit is a real album for photographs of the early 20th century, donated to the museum by Galina Levina, daughter of Leonid Levin, the architect of the Krasny Bereg memorial in memory of the child victims of the Great Patriotic War.

Style collection

One can literally bathe in luxury in the rococo hall. Fabulous decor, paintings by Richard Tuccat in gilded frames, walls with figurines of flowers and grapes, birds and dragonflies give a feeling of celebration and solemnity. By the way, the palace originally had 36 rooms. And each has its own style — Gothic, Romanesque, Classicism, Empire and Art Nouveau, Baroque, Rococo and Mannerism. The owners collected them all. Today one can see the only museum hall in Belarus in the rare Arabic Alhambra style. Vincent Koziell-Poklewski loved travel and the exotic. Dark-skinned mannequins, African amulets and even camel figures — all this was necessary for the owner in order to impress frequent guests.

The peculiarity of the Gothic hall is a lot of amulets encrypted in the decor elements. Above the fireplaces are oak leaves, doors bordered by figurines of fluttering butterflies. We notice the symbol of Christianity — a branch of grapes, shamrocks — symbols of the Holy Trinity. It turns out that religious hosts thus created a feeling for the guests: when they come to the house, they fall under the spell of the Lord.

In the winter garden, located right in the building of the mansion, there is a special atmosphere of love and warmth. And next to it is a music hall, where real balls in retro style are held these days.

Remember to believe and appreciate

The new star of the Paralympic team of Belarus Valiantsina Shyts: about native village of Boroviki, skis and cow Milka

She smiles and laughs, and cheerful twinkles spark in her eyes. Valiantsina Shyts has just completed her daily training 20 kilometres on the ski run in Vesnyanka, but she doesn't look tired at all. The start of the next Paralympic season is coming soon, and it promises to be full of tournaments of various levels — both in vast Russia and in native Belarus despite all the intrigues of Western cynics, for whom nothing seems to be sacred. In March of this year, Valiantsina laid high expectations on the Beijing 2022 Paralympics, but sports politics did not allow our athletes to perform there, shamelessly and brazenly driving the Belarusian and Russian delegations out of the Olympic village less than a day before the opening ceremony.

By Sergei Kanashits

Valiantsina still remembers that day with pain and bitterness, *“I must confess, I cried. From resentment. As well as misunderstandings. I was very depressed. What is our fault? What about sport? Everyone who managed to get to the Games has come a long way and literally suffered the right to perform at these competitions. Fate beat us more than once, we know how to take a hit. But this vile act of people who declare their high morality and concern for physically challenged athletes is impossible to understand.”*

remarked and supported in this difficult situation.

Paralympic athletes don't have easy lives, and Valiantsina is no exception.

Her life is a ready-made drama script with a happy ending, where there is a place for deep feelings, despair, love and self-sacrifice, self-confidence and, of course, kind people. Valiantsina was born in 1994 in the village of Boroviki, Svetlogorsk District, in an ordinary working family, where her mother worked as a seller, and her father worked at the Belvtorchermet enterprise. She is the third child, but was born with a trauma. The doctors did everything possible,

made this strong-willed decision through tears, literally leaving their own daughter with watery eyes and a heavy heart.

“It was hard for all of us then. In Boroviki I was surrounded by completely healthy people, I never felt flawed or sick. I was home-schooled until the sixth year of school, and then went to Osipovich. Honestly, it was very scary! I could not even imagine such a variety of people with all kinds of



Valiantsina Shyts, member of the national Paralympic team of Belarus

gested that the girl try skiing in a wheelchair. Yury Buranov recalls, “She was not very fast, but I noticed her shoulders — they are very athletic. Since then, we have been working together. Already 12 years. We always set the maximum plans and goals: first or second place, no lower. Our bar is raised high.”

The road to the pedestal was not strewn with roses, she had to go through a lot.

“In general, I wanted to quit sports and go to Mogilev to study as a seamstress after graduating from the boarding school. Together with my friends. But the coach and parents convinced me. They said that such a chance is rare and not for everyone,” the champion laughs out loud.

However, it's fun to remember this fact now, but five years ago the sky did not seem to be in diamonds. It is not easy even for a healthy person to navigate in a big city, coming from the outback, but how can a girl in a wheelchair cope with everything? The Paralympic Committee helped with the training camp, but this is only a small part of the training programme until she got into the national team. Where to get strength, and most importantly, funds? The solution was found. And it's an amazing story! Mom and dad sold their nurse — the cow Milka, in order to get money for their daughter.

“They believed in me so much and wanted their youngest daughter to succeed in life that they decided to take this desperate step. I am incredibly grateful to them. And I hope I didn't let my parents down,” sportswoman remembers.

A couple of years before the Paralympics in Beijing, Valiantsina Shyts and Yury Buranov went to Finland, where they were going to run in the season. In Suomi, on the way to the ski base, they got into ice, the car spun on a slippery road and, as if by someone's invisible, but strong hand, was thrown right under an oncoming truck. The blow was terrible. Fortunately, it hit the back of the car — the trunk and things lying there were damaged, including a brand new Valiantsina's wheelchair, which turned into a pile of scrap metal. The coach and the athlete were taken to the hospital in an

ambulance, but they were soon released: the coach escaped with bruises, and Valiantsina with a slight shock. God saved, deciding, apparently, that she had already experienced a lot test in her life.

Since then, her results became even better: winter gold at the European Cup in Finland, two silver and bronze at the World Championship in Norway... Then there should have been the same Beijing 2022 and the title of champion. But it didn't happen. Alas.

“I speak on behalf of all Paralympic athletes of the Republic of Belarus. I want to convey to you our pain and misunderstanding of the decision of the Executive Committee of the International Paralympic Committee to refuse the entire Belarusian team to compete at the 2022 Winter Paralympic Games in Beijing”, with this text — Valiantsina Shyts made a call for justice in June at the 15th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The only question is: did these words reach the hearts and souls of officials? Or, as usual, they went in one ear and out the other?”

“People are different, maybe someone heard. Time passes, but this whole situation still leaves a bitter aftertaste. I have a feeling of injustice. Thank you for not abandoning the country, for supporting and helping us. We all feel it and are very grateful,” Valiantsina believes in the best.

Today, Valiantsina Shyts is known not only in the village of Boroviki, Svetlogorsk District, she is now a well-known personality — Belarus is proud of her! True, since she began to win, and people started talking about her, she did not manage to get out to her native village. Valiantsina knows that they are waiting for her there with impatience, the phone of her mother is literally blowing up because of her friends: where is our champion?

“I will definitely come after the season, in April. Then we will celebrate all the medals. Those that I already have, and those that will definitely be. You'll see!” she promises.



Valiantsina with her coach Yury Buranov

Fortunately, by joint efforts Russia and Belarus organised and held alternative ‘We are together. Sport’ Paralympic Winter Games in Khanty-Mansiysk, where Valiantsina Shyts became the main star, returning as a three-time champion in cross-country skiing. According to the decree signed by the President, the winners and prize-winners of these competitions were paid Br64,000 (a little more than \$26,000) for gold, Br38,400 (about \$16,000) for silver and Br25,600 (about \$10,500) — for bronze. Along with this, remuneration was provided for personal trainers, mentors who provided sports training for medallists at the early stages, as well as other specialists of the national team. In a word, everyone got what they deserved, was

but soon announced a terrible diagnosis: the girl would never be able to stand on her own feet.

“As a child, I had a dream. When it snowed, it was problematic to move around the street in a wheelchair. The maximum that I could count on was to go down from the porch and stand there. I looked into the snowy white distance and imagined how I was rushing forward towards the burning frosty wind on skis. I was looking for some sticks to push off, and I tried to push towards these dreams of my own along the narrow path that was cleaned,” Valiantsina explains.

Valiantsina realised that there is a sport for the disabled only in a special boarding school in Osipovich, where she studied at the age of 13. Her parents

injuries and diagnoses, because it seemed to me that I was the only one. I was terribly scared. Furthermore, I cried every day and called my mother all the time: “Take me, I want to go home!” My mother's heart was breaking, I can't imagine how she survived! But as it turned out later, this was the very first step from which the road to big-time sports began,” Valiantsina says with a smile.

In September, wheelchair races were held between boarding schools in Staiki. The lively Valiantsina was immediately noticed and brought to defend the honour of the institution. And she just won despite everything. And here's another sign of fate: Yury Buranov, the current coach of Shyts, was the main official at one of the competitions. He sug-

SPORT

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2022

11



BELTA

Photo of the week

Young wood carver Mikhail Timoschenya at the wood carving class in the Palace of Culture of the agrotown of Semencha, Gomel Region

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



December 9th, 1968, is computer mouse birthday. It was on this day that the American inventor Douglas Engelbart of the

Stanford Research Institute demonstrated the world's first computer mouse at a conference on computing technology in San Francisco.

On December 9th, 1922, Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum



was opened in the building of the former vice-governor's house, later transferred to one of the buildings of the Old Castle, where it is currently located. It has 23 exposition halls and 2 exhibition halls. The materials of archaeological excavations on the Castle Hill in Grodno, finds from the Volkovysk, Indura and Turey settlements of the 11th-12th centuries are exhibited here. As well as collections of coins of the 16th-17th centuries, weapons of the 11th-20th centuries, Belarusian national musical instruments, ethnographic material of the 17th-20th centuries and objects of arts and crafts, etc.

On December 10th, 1992, the Golubitskaya Pushcha State Landscape Hydrological Reserve with a total area of 6734 hectares was formed in the floodplain of the Berezina River in the Glubokoe and Dokshitsy Districts.



December 10th is Human Rights Day. On this day in 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights — a document that proclaimed the inalienable rights inherent in every person, regardless of race, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, class or other status.

December 11th is International Mountain Day. It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on December 20th, 2002. Mountains are vulnerable ecosystems of global importance as a source of most of the world's fresh water, a habitat for unique biological diversity and a rich cultural heritage, a popular place for recreation and tourism.



On December 12th, 1952, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a decree on the organisation of an aircraft repair base in Minsk, which later became the Minsk Aircraft Repair Plant (now — Minsk Civil Aviation Plant No. 407).



December 12th is International Day of Neutrality. In the system of international law, neutrality means a policy of non-participation in war and refusal to participate in military blocs in peacetime. Adhering to the policy of neutrality, states in various periods of history sought to protect themselves and their citizens from the devastating consequences of wars that took place in neighbouring territories.

On December 14th, 1911, Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole. His crew chose a time-tested transportation method — dog sleds. Amundsen reached his goal and hoisted the Norwegian flag over the endless snowy plain. He was ahead of the English expedition of Robert Scott by a whole month...



On December 14th, 1893, the grand opening of Upper Trading Rows took place on Red Square in Moscow — a large shopping complex in the centre of Moscow. More than a

thousand stores were located in a giant three-story building, consisting of three longitudinal passages with deep cellars. In 1952–1953, the building was restored and turned into the State Department Store (the abbreviated name is GUM).

On December 15th, 1832, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel was born (1832-1923), a French engineer, builder of bridges, viaducts and other structures.



The steel lattice tower (Eiffel Tower) 300 metres high, built according to his project for the Exposition Universelle in 1889 in Paris and gained world fame as a symbol of the technical achievements of the 19th century.

December 15th is International Tea Day — celebration of one of the oldest and healthiest drinks on Earth. It is believed that tea as a drink was discovered by the second emperor of China, Shen Nung, around 2737 BC, when the emperor dipped tea tree leaves into a cup of hot water. The purpose of the holiday is to draw the attention of governments and citizens to the problems of the relationship between tea sales and the situation of tea workers, small producers and consumers, as well as to popularise this drink.

