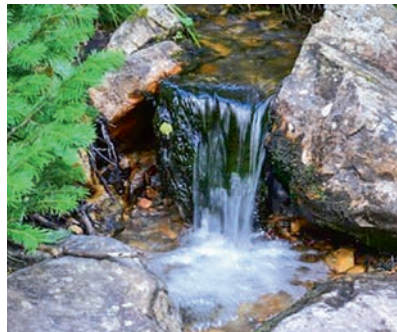




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INTERNATIONAL

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Belarus is the country of the future!

‘Unity. Development. Independence’ slogan united about 2,700 participants of the 6th Belarusian People’s Congress → **2-3**



Belarus is the country of the future!

‘Unity. Development. Independence’ slogan united about 2,700 participants of the 6th Belarusian People’s Congress.

President Aleksandr Lukashenko gave a report, outlining the key goals of the socio-economic development of Belarusian society for the next five years, whilst also answering many topical questions.

Testing stress

“Our calm political life, our sovereignty and stability were seriously tested. Having dealt with it, we must clearly realise that we have prevented a catastrophe. You must remember the consequences of the so-called colour revolutions, which weren’t even riots, in the post-Soviet space. They resulted in permanent, chronic instability and impoverishment,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The Head of State emphasised that it’s only a strong state such as ours that is capable of protecting and ensuring our interests, “I’m saying ‘a strong state’ since we have always been a monolith; this is our strength. However, some still entertain the idea that people from abroad will help us. Our state has held out despite political tensions, artificially generated by foreign powers.”

On globalism

“We can openly and honestly say that the world has gone crazy. Last year was a difficult year for mankind. However, we saw small and big countries alike departing from global development ideas in favour of national survival strategies in the blink of an eye,” the President said. He added that, it’s not very long ago that large countries like the USA and EU countries were trying to impose globalism ideas on Belarus.

“In the face of the pandemic all of them tested themselves and closed themselves off from each other. They couldn’t care less about their friends and neighbours. All countries closed their borders. So, where is that globalist mindset?” the Head of State asked. “Therefore, don’t trust what they are saying about democracy, globalism and other things. This is how they’re brainwashing people all over the world. A few countries are doing this to try to dominate the world. And as soon as the situation changes a little bit, they will change their policies. So it happened,” he added.

On a strategic ally

The President stressed that Belarusians are not slackers, and Belarus is not a satellite



country, which begs for subsidies and loans in exchange for abandoning its own opinion and sound senses.

“Relations with the European Union are important for us too. We have the longest stretch of border in the EU. The degree of interdependence in the economic, social, cultural and political fields is quite high. No less significant for our diplomacy are the countries of the so-called distant arc, with China, a close country to us, despite being distant geographically, playing an important role. At the same time, Russia will continue to be our main economic partner and strategic ally,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The Head of State noted that he sees no good reason to abandon such a multi-vector policy. “This is an objective reality for any sensible politician who will ever lead Belarus,” he added.

Responding to the remarks that Russia constantly helps Belarus in giving loans, the President noted that Russia helps itself in this respect too. After all, the finishing industries for many sectors of the Russian economy are concentrated in Belarus. The co-operation brings work to millions of Russians, and Russian loans are not a charity, as Belarus pays considerable interest on them, the Head of State noted.

On new START III Treaty prospects

“The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty has

been terminated. The prospects for the Open Skies Treaty are extremely bleak but there is some hope that this spiral and military and political tension will be halted, given the last-minute agreement between Russia and the United States to extend the Strategic Offensive Arms Treaty. However, the new President of the United States may once again cancel it. Belarus, of course, supports the positive consequences of this agreement, but the prospects for START III are completely vague,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

According to him, NATO has been building a permanent presence in the region, including on territories adjacent to Belarus, under the guise of the principle of rotation. As a result, the level of foreign military presence in the area is not transparent at all. The withdrawal of US troops from Europe has been suspended. “What’s next? A new arms race? A third world war?” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

On co-operation with China

It’s important to encourage more Chinese corporations and banks to expand their presence in Belarus, the President believes.

“Belarus and China have a special relationship. Our foreign policy strategy views this great state as a faraway country, however, de facto, responsible partnership has made them one of our closest neighbours, despite the dis-

stance. Our strategic co-operation with China was one of the reasons for the West’s attack on Belarus at the end of last year, but this should not stop us. They told me to my face: ‘You should abandon co-operation with China; China shouldn’t be at the centre of Europe’. I replied: ‘When the European Union and the United States attacked us and our economy with large-scale sanctions 5-6 years ago, China unconditionally supported us, it opened its doors for us, and we entered. So, are we now supposed to close the only gateway to Europe for China,

this opportunity opened by Belarus? We cannot do it, because we are grateful people and remember what happened back then’. That was the answer I gave to the US officials and other stakeholders,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

On a renewed national security concept

“Following the events that have been taking place here in the country and across the globe, it is probably time to update our concept of national security. This is true especially since our NATO neighbours have already upgraded their strategic documents to take into account threats from digital technologies. The necessary infrastructure, including cyber troops and a network of NATO cyber centres, has been developed in the immediate vicinity of our borders,” the President said.

He expressed confidence that, with all the risks to national security, information security has become the main pressure point. “Without belittling the benefits, opportunities and prospects that the information world has opened to us, we must pay attention to its downsides. Artificial intelligence has given the green light to manipulation, deception, and crime,” he emphasised.

FORUM DELEGATES: WHO ARE THEY?

The Belarusian People’s Congress is a good cross-section of society — as evidenced by the professional composition of its participants



A DELEGATE’S PORTRAIT

Almost **2,400** delegates*:

Women — **36,4%**
Men — **63,6%**

Age:

Under 30 — 6,3%
31-40-olds — 17,3%
41-50-olds — 35,9%
51-60-olds — 29,7%
Over 60 — 10,8%

*Excluding invitees

On the 'Many Children for Belarus' programme

The President proposed the development of the 'Many Children for Belarus' programme with many new innovations. Firstly, it is planned to expand the boundaries of the use of family capital. Secondly, a mother with three children doesn't simply become a housewife: a mother's work should be paid for in the same way as any other. As Aleksandr Lukashenko said, a mother of four children will have earned her future work pension. Furthermore, if a fourth child is born, a woman should get the right to receive a work pension, even if she has no work experience.

On the 'Healthy Nation' project

As the President noted, the project will cover the following projects: 'Mobile Medicine', 'Medical Care within Walking Distance', 'Health Day', 'Caring Polyclinic', 'Relaxation for Health', and 'High-Tech Medicine in the Regions'. Regarding the latter, the President noted that 12 interregional centres are in the works; these will be equipped with everything necessary, in line with Minsk's

standards, to provide specialised medical care. They are already being formed to bring quality medicine closer to the people. Every possible avenue will also be used to enable a person (for example, in Molochno) to immediately be consulted by a professor from Minsk, where the best doctors work under the modern conditions of global digitalisation. When discussing the 'Relaxation for Health' section, the President stressed the importance of the personal interest of everyone in preserving their own health.

On the new Constitution project

The President pointed out that constitutional changes are not a new topic on the agenda. "More than two years ago, I asked for the preparation of new drafts of the Constitution. In my latest address to the nation and Parliament, I said that I had already received two drafts of the new Constitution," he said. Work is underway on the third.

"The new Constitution draft will be discussed with the entire nation over the course of the year. We will hold a referendum early next year at the latest," he noted.

He cited the results of the recent sociological survey, which showed that 60 percent of respondents were adamantly opposed to constitutional changes. "I disagree. We should amend the Constitution, because the degree of power that the Head of State holds is massive," Aleksandr Lukashenko said. Furthermore, who knows, how would a person who seized this position by force, for example, use these unlimited powers?



RESULTS OF THE WORK OF THE BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S CONGRESS

The 6th Belarusian People's Congress decided to approve the main provisions of the programme of socio-economic development for 2021-2025 and support its main goal — to ensure stability and growth in the well-being of citizens by modernising the economy and building up social capital while creating comfortable conditions for life, work and self-realisation.

The 6th Belarusian People's Congress also decided to recognise the Belarusian People's Congress as the highest form of people's representation with legislative consolidation of its special legal status, the establishment of a Constitutional Commission, which will include representatives of state bodies, the legal community, various sectors of the economy and social sphere. In 2021, the Commission will develop proposals for amending the Constitution for their subsequent submission to public discussion and a Republican referendum, redistribution of powers between state bodies, including local government and self-government bodies, and strengthening the role of political parties in the life of the country.

President's new website goes online

An updated version of the President's official website — president.gov.by — has been launched. To develop it, domestic IT specialists used modern international experience, the best Belarusian developments and technical solutions in the field of web design. What has changed on the portal and what distinguishes it now?

The general impressions come to the fore. The structure of the website has been fundamentally redesigned: it now features new pages and sections. Navigation through the renewed website is convenient and clear. The search engine has also been improved and greatly expanded for the convenience of website users. As for the content, it is traditionally based on information about the current activities of the President. His weekly schedule is available on the main page: the information is accurate and up to date. Of course, as before, the website will contain the most important regulatory legal acts adopted by the Belarusian leader.

A special emphasis is placed on the multimedia component. It is photos and video, as the analysis of requests from the Internet audience shows, that are of the highest interest.

In particular, as the President's press secretary, Natalia Eismont, told journalists, *a unique archive of photo and video materials* has been collected on the website, "It includes the most important events since 1994. There are also photos and videos that will certainly have a resonance and enjoy popularity among our users — being also useful to journalists in their work. This unique archive is being presented in this format for the first time."

According to Ms. Eismont, another feature of the new portal is its *'President Without a Tie'* section. She believes it will arouse great interest among users. "The section features many photos — including those related to the family. The President's photos with his sons



and grandchildren are present — both from modern times and shot in the past. Sports and hobbies of the Head of State can also be found — featuring numerous sports that he was engaged in and currently enjoys. His work on the farm is also captured in photos: there are pictures showing him harvesting potatoes, watermelons and more.

The multimedia content on the website of the Belarusian President is actually available now in bigger volumes and, most importantly, in good quality. For example, media representatives will be able to download high resolution photos and the official portrait of the Head of State, as well as photos from the most important events in the special new section *'Photo for the Press'*. These may be used without the consent

of the President's press service.

Another highlight of the website is *a virtual tour of the Palace of Independence*. "It seems to me that this is the material that visitors of the President's website have been waiting for a long time," Ms. Eismont said. "At least, we witness a huge interest now in visiting the Palace of Independence, in the excursions that take place here. We are now providing our users with a truly unique opportunity: to visit the Palace of Independence without leaving their homes."

The *'Belarus'* section has also become much more comprehensive. It aims primarily at foreign users and contains up-to-date information on social, economic and regional development, science, tourism, the current

year's issues and much more.

The *'Letter to the President'* section, through which everyone can send their appeals and suggestions to the Head of State, will retain its position on the website as a feedback to the citizens.

The *'President for Children'* is another page which is likely to undergo changes in the coming future.

It should be noted that the work over the website was carried out at the expense of the Hi-Tech Park. Ms. Eismont assured that the new website will be constantly updated and improved. It was originally planned to be a live and constantly perfecting resource.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

‘Social Thinking’: strategic results

First results of large-scale Republican social research announced

High level

The two-stage study was preceded by a pilot telephone survey. The latter made it possible to prepare the necessary tools and build tactics for collecting primary sociological information. The Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre, Sergei Musienko, announced the first results from the study, “The level of confidence in the President in this survey was 66.5 percent. In the telephone survey that preceded this, it stood at 74.2 percent.”

Belarusians also trust the army, 69.2 percent, the church, 66.8 percent, the Government, 57 percent, and law enforcement agencies, 51.9 percent.

The expert also drew attention to an important point. As a rule, after a major political campaign (elections), confidence indicators decrease slightly.

At the same time, 63.4 percent of respondents don’t trust the Belarusian opposition, against 17.2 percent of those who do. “When open questions are given: ‘Name the leader of the opposition’, a few people named those who had led the opposition in the past. These 20-25 years of their struggle against the ‘regime’ have resulted in the fact that, out of 10,000 responses, 3-4 people name someone whom they consider to be a permanent fixture in the news. New people have come in; whose names are recognised, but people are often confused,” the sociologist added.

Global economic trends

Respondents’ answers to the economic questions reflected the state of the global economy and the consequences of the financial crisis caused by the pandemic. Belarusians have also experienced it. Accordingly, the majority of respondents, 64.9 percent, believe that the economic situation in the country has deteriorated. The deterioration of their own financial situation was stated by 50.6 percent of respondents, while another 29.2 percent indicated that their financial situation has not changed.

“Only 6.5 percent of Belarusians believe the decrease in their welfare is caused by the Government’s actions, and 4.5 percent think it’s due to the President. 16.9 percent of respondents say the reason is the people themselves,” Mr. Musienko said.

On the eve of the 6th Belarusian People’s Congress, the organisers of a large-scale sociological study presented the first results of surveys at BelTA’s press centre, also describing the relevance of the research and aspects of its conduct



Sergei Mitskevich

The ‘Social Thinking’ survey was commissioned on BelTA’s order from January 12th to February 8th, 2021 by the EcooM Analytical Centre with the involvement of the Ukrainian Politics Foundation and in co-operation with the sociological centres accredited in Belarus. Using paper questionnaires and tablets, 9,896 respondents were interviewed in 108 localities countrywide, in compliance with the principle of representation for Belarus’ population of over 18 years of age by gender, age, level of education, type of locality and region of residence of respondents. The statistical error of the sample doesn’t exceed 2.5 percent.

In the event of deterioration of the economic situation, 63.5 percent of respondents intend to look independently for another way to improve their lives, and only 6 percent state that, once in such a situation, they will join ‘organisations seeking a change of power in the country in various ways’.

A Doctor of Philosophy, Professor Svetlana Vinokurova, shared her opinion on this issue, “When economic problems come to the forefront, as they were before, there was no time for questions of trust in the authorities, or health services; there was the question of daily life which was about the bare essentials. Today we have a different situation. Why is everyone not happy with the current economic situa-

tion? People’s needs have changed... So, when the economic issues have been settled, other problems arise.”

People are tired of street campaigns

The majority of respondents, 72.4 percent, don’t support the demonstrations taking place in the country. At the same time, 75.9 percent of those asked admit that such actions have a negative impact on the quality of life of people.

According to Mr. Musienko, this was especially felt in major cities. “This is objective and understandable. On autumn weekends, people tried not to take their children out or relax themselves. In large cities, at least in Minsk, this pressure was certainly felt,” he said.

One of the survey question groups was related to constitutional reform. 57.8 percent of respondents agreed that the current Constitution meets the needs of society and the state, while 27.3 percent answered negatively. At the same time, the telephone survey data is somewhat different: 60.1 percent of respondents believe that the current Basic Laws meet public needs. Mr. Musienko commented, “In principle, I also agree, this is my opinion. As it turned out, it’s shared by the majority of the country’s residents.”

Correctness and reliability

According to a Ukrainian political scientist, historian, sociologist and the Chairman of the Board of the Ukrainian Politics Foundation, Konstantin Bondarenko, the format of the social survey made it possible to obtain mainly correct data on public sentiments in Belarus. “This data can be used on a scientific basis and be taken seriously, as a solid and reliable source of information. The methodology was applied in a complex, mixed way, which makes it possible to use different mechanisms and tools in sociological surveys. Initially, it was a telephone survey, then ‘face-to-face’ and followed by the integration of the survey methodology directly in the workplace. All this together helps us take into account the maximum number of different opinions. At the initial stage, a mechanism such as online surveys was also proposed but they give an extremely high percentage of error and low reliability. Accordingly, a decision was made to put them to one side,” he said.

The Ukrainian expert concluded, “In general, I believe that this study has a fairly high level of correctness which can be appealed to. These figures can be used as an argument in the discussions and when writing texts for the media. There are a number of tools for the subsequent verification of any sociological research: the Gaussian curve, a special computer system. The fact that the study has an extremely low level of error, 2.475 percent, indicates the absolute reliability and correctness of the data obtained.”



Record indicators

Infant and maternal mortality rates in Belarus hit historic lows in 2020

The infant mortality rate was 2.6 per 1,000 live births (in 2015 — 3), taking into account infants born with extremely low body weight while maternal mortality stood at 1.1 per 100,000, respectively. This information has been posted on the website of the Healthcare Ministry.

“The level of infant mortality in the Republic corresponds to the average level of the other EU states. This figure is one of the leading indicators of the standard of living, as well as the quality of the healthcare system”, the message says.

In terms of infant mortality, Belarus is ahead of all CIS coun-

tries and many of the developed countries of the world, including Great Britain, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, and the USA.

The survival rate of children with extremely low body weight in the first year of life exceeds 80 percent. The primary disability rate among this category of children does not exceed 17-18 percent.

Belarus has one of the lowest infant mortality rates for children under 5. According to this indicator, Belarus is ranked 4th in the world, together with Austria, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Portugal,

Montenegro and Switzerland.

The Republic of Belarus became the first country in Europe and the third in the world (along with Cuba and Thailand) to reduce mother-to-child trans-

mission of HIV and congenital syphilis to a level that does not pose a threat to public health.

Back in 2013, the United Nations stated that Belarus had achieved the Millennium Development Goals to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

A multilevel system of maternal and paediatric healthcare has been successfully functioning in Be-

larus for over twenty years. The legislatively enshrined priority of providing medical care to mothers and children, a well-structured system of assistance, significant measures in social support for mothers and families with children made it possible to achieve some of the best results.

The Republic of Belarus occupies 25th position in the ranking of the best countries for motherhood and is included in the 50 best countries in the world for pregnancy management and childbirth.

Based on materials of belta.by and sb.by



Success to be planned



Innovations often act as a driver of the economy and the President has repeatedly emphasised the need to further develop them. "The future of our economy in all areas relies on science and the latest technologies. The economy of knowledge is the only thing that can save us as an independent and sovereign state, while increasing our wealth."

At the final meeting of the board of the State Committee for Science and Technology, results of the last 5-year period were summed up. More than 70 new production facilities and over 11,000 jobs were created for projects in the 2016-2020 state programme of Belarus' innovative development.

By Igor Platonov

"Under state programme projects, 74 new production facilities were put into operation, including 13 in 2020. Among them are the production of high-precision, high-strength cast iron in a branch of the Minsk Motor Plant in Stolbtsy, optoelectronic equipment based on thermal imaging and laser systems in MMW named after S.I. Vavilov, the Management Company of BelOMO Holding, and metal sheet and tinplate in Miory, as well as oral antitumor drugs," said Aleksandr Shumilin, the Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology.

Among the significant projects in the state programme, he mentioned the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant, the organisation of passenger car production by BelGee, the manufacturing of optical components and laser systems with a new generation diode pumping by the National Academy of Sciences' Physics Institute and the creation of a high-tech innovative-industrial cluster at ADANI.

The state programme resulted in the creation of over 11,000 new high-performance jobs (against the 10,000 which were planned). In January-November 2020, the share of exports of high-tech



ADANI is a high-tech enterprise, with a full innovation cycle

and science-driven products exceeded 38 percent (against the goal of 33 percent). According to the Committee, it is also predicted that the share of innovatively active organisations will reach 26 percent.

In addition, in 2020, more than 540 actions were performed as part of the scientific and technical programmes. Scientists and specialists developed and brought 1,157 innovations to the stage of practical application (an increase of 35 percent against figures from 2019). Innovations included 57 types of machine, equipment, devices, tools, 27 new materials, substances, food and 67 technological processes. Last year, 30 protection documents for the results of scientific and technical activities were received for the completed developments; 40 applications for patenting inventions were filed and two license agreements were concluded.

Among the most promising developments, Mr. Shumilin named a new-generation urban low-floor bus, a self-propelled combine harvester with a rotary threshing and separation scheme and a more powerful engine, a method for diagnosing stomach cancer that will increase the detection of early cases by 30 percent, software for the intelligent prediction of the risks of relapsing bone sarcomas in children and adults, as well as a method

for treating patients with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.

The number of innovative infrastructure entities increased 1.9 times over the past five years, while residents of Belarusian techno-parks increased their output 6-fold, ensuring a growth rate of innovative products comparable to HTP residents.



In BelGee's car welding workshop

"Over the past five years, many innovations were made in the scientific and technical sphere. Our country has achieved significant success and is confidently moving along the path of innovative development. This is not only our own assessment, but also that of international experts. For example, over the past two years, Belarus is 22 places up in the Global International Innovation Index, to be placed 64th," Mr. Shumilin noted.

In the next five years, systematic work will be carried out to increase the contribution of science to the innovative development of our economy. "We have set ambitious goals for this period. The new

2021-2026 state programme for Belarus' innovative development is aimed at solving the tasks set by the Head of State: to reach the same level of the leading Eastern European countries by 2025 in terms of innovative development. We intend to make significant progress in areas such as innovative healthcare, biotechnology, national electric transport and smart cities. Traditional industries, mechanical engineering, the chemical industry, transport and, of course, agriculture are also in focus. In the next five years, we'll conduct systematic work to increase the contribution of science to the innovative

development of our economy," Mr. Shumilin emphasised.

According to him, the share of innovative products in the total volume of shipments from manufacturing organisations is expected to reach almost 20 percent, while the share of

innovatively active organisations of the processing industry should increase to 27.5 percent. The share of high-tech and science-driven products in the total volume of Belarusian exports will be 33.5 percent. In addition, special attention will be paid to their quality. Accordingly, the share of new products for the domestic or global market should be increased from 45 percent in 2021 to 54 percent in 2025. The share of organisations that perform process innovations [the introduction of new or improved production methods] is planned to increase from 26.5 percent in 2021 to 35 percent in 2025.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minsk and Vatican reaffirm mutual desire to strengthen interfaith dialogue

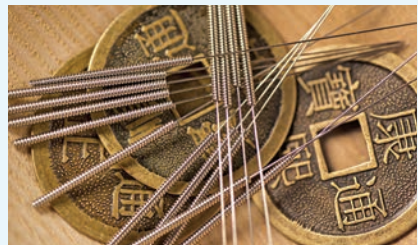


Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to the Holy See concurrently Sergei Aleinik, paid a visit to the Vatican.

He took part in the annual New Year's audience with Pope Francis for the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See. On the fringes of the event, the Pontiff held a short conversation with the Ambassador. During the visit, the Ambassador also met with the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Kurt Koch. As a result of the discussions, the mutual desire to intensify Belarusian-Vatican co-operation was confirmed in order to promote positive dynamics in bilateral interaction and strengthen the interfaith dialogue.

A project in the field of Chinese traditional medicine is planned to be implemented in the Great Stone Park

An agreement of intent for co-operation on the development of a project in the field of Chinese traditional medicine was signed by the future founders of the No-



voera joint biotechnology company, the Park's administration and the Industrial Park Development Company.

The Novoera enterprise will be established in the Great Stone with the participation of the Jintai Institute of Culture and Economics, the Beijing Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine and one of the Beijing-based pharmaceutical technology companies. The project involves the creation of a Eurasian exchange centre for the culture of traditional medicine, a centre for the diagnostics and treatment of traditional Chinese medicine, as well as a plant for the production of medicines against a new type of coronavirus infection.

Rehabilitation after COVID pneumonia can be taken in 75 Belarusian health resorts

The Republican Centre for Health Improvement and Sanatorium Treatment of the Population has published a list of organisations in the Republic that have treatment and rehabilitation programmes for citizens who have suffered pneumonia associated with COVID-19 infection. The list includes 75 organisations specialising in diseases of the respiratory system. Most of these are located in the Minsk Region,



and in Minsk itself there are 24. Rehabilitation programmes have been introduced here in the Republican Centre for Medical Rehabilitation and Balneotherapy, alongside sanatoriums Zhuravushka, Belorusochka, Sosny, Praleska, Berezina, Volma, Zeleny Bor, etc. There are 13 organisations in the Brest Region, 12 in the Vitebsk Region, 10 are situated in the Gomel Region, while the Grodno and Mogilev regions have 8 each.

In 2020, foreign investors injected \$8.7bn into Belarusian economy

The main investors in the Republic's organisations were business entities of the Russian Federation (41.4 percent of all incoming investments), Cyprus (9.4 percent), Austria (7.4 percent), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (6.8 percent). The inflow of foreign direct investment amounted to \$6bn, or 69.2 percent of all incoming foreign investment.

Last year, organisations of the Republic (except for banks) sent abroad investments to the amount of \$4.9bn. Significant volumes of investments were sent to business entities of the Russian Federation (66 percent of all directed



investments), Ukraine (9 percent), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (8 percent), and Ireland (6.1 percent). Direct investments accounted for 88.7 percent of all direct capital injections abroad.

News from industrial giants

BelAZ to ship 29 haulage trucks to Russia's major coal companies

In line with the long-term strategic partnership agreement, BelAZ will supply 29 haulage trucks to mining companies in the Kuzbassrazrezugol Coal Company in the next few months

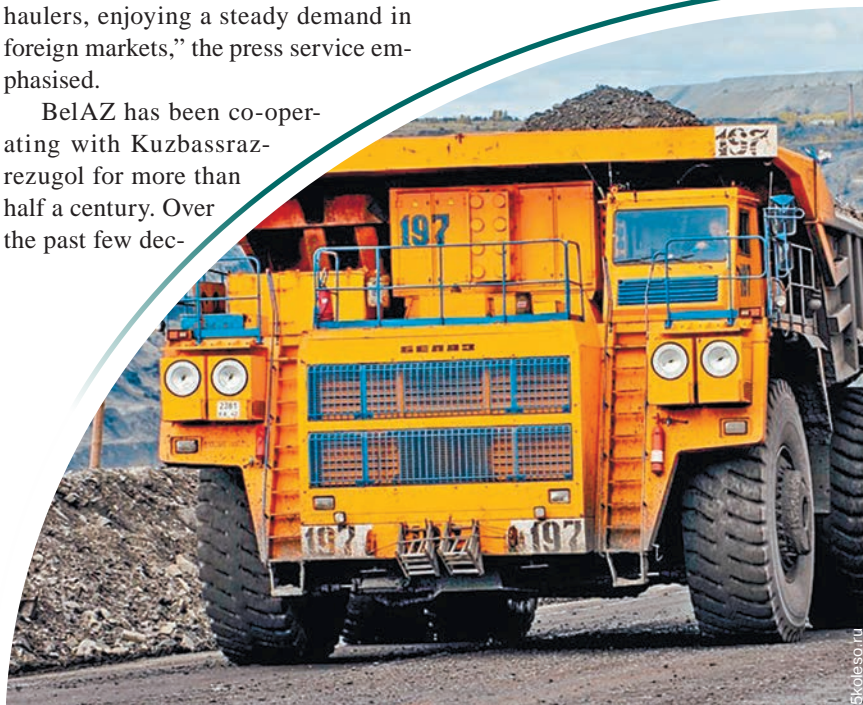
The Belarusian company shipped three 220-tonne BelAZ-75306 trucks to the Kedrovsky coal mine, a Kuzbassrazrezugol production facility, in late January. In February-April, 26 more BelAZ trucks will be sent to one of Russia's major coal companies.

"Relying on long-standing traditions in design, the modern, reliable and productive 220-tonne BelAZ-75306 giants are among the most popular rock haulers, enjoying a steady demand in foreign markets," the press service emphasised.

BelAZ has been co-operating with Kuzbassrazrezugol for more than half a century. Over the past few dec-

ades, the companies have developed a close and fruitful partnership. Belarusian trucks dominate the fleet of mining equipment used by Kuzbassrazrezugol (amounting to more than 500 units).

In addition, the flagship coal companies of the Kemerovo Region employ both BelAZ trucks for mining and transport and also special-purpose vehicles (water machines, tow trucks, loaders and bulldozers).



MAZ presents transfer bus at Moscow show

Minsk Automobile Plant (MAZ) has presented its MAZ 271 transfer bus to transport passengers in airports at the 8th National Aviation Infrastructure Show NAIS 2021

"The new 'bus with Belarus' symbol of blue cornflowers on board has attracted much attention from participants and guests at the forum. Russia's Transport Minister, Vitaly Savelyev, visited the MAZ stand to commend MAZ 271 on its well-designed technical solutions and the updated layout of the bus cabin. This is a joint development between MAZ designers and specialists from the Joint Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus," the press service said.

MAZ is the only manufacturer of apron 'transfer' buses in the CIS and its MAZ 271 vehicle (second generation) meets the international re-

quirements laid out in the IATA Airport Handling Manual. It's much cheaper than its European counterparts. The bus is powered by a 7.2-litre Euro-5 Mercedes-Benz OM 926 LA diesel engine and an automatic six-speed Allison T270 transmission.

A MAZ 271 has better passenger safety standards and is equipped with LED 'light lines'. Thanks to the air conditioning units integrated into the bus heating system and placed above each door, the cabin keeps warm in cold weather, and cool in the heat.

Instead of rear-view mirrors, a MAZ 271 is equipped with rear view cameras and a modern video surveillance system. The driver's cabin features displays showing everything around the bus as well as inside it. The modern design of a MAZ 271 with floor-to-roof glazing deserves special attention.

Attending the annual forum that marks Civil Aviation Day were more than 4,000 professionals from 66 Russian regions and 30 countries. These were representatives of airports, airlines, design and research institutes, aircraft manufacturers.



MMP joins major Russian concern for project

The company is implementing a promising new project together with Russia's largest engineering and industrial group, Concern Tractor Plants (CTP), to equip an Agromash-85TK tractor with a Belarusian engine

CTP has invited the Minsk Motor Plant (MMP) to team up to develop an engine for an Agromash-85TK tractor which will start production soon. Previously, the tractor was equipped with diesel engines from Vladimir's Motor Tractor Plant. The customer made some specific requirements for the engine. Accordingly, the Minsk manufacturer needed to design a new, modified, engine.

A D-245S3AM engine has been selected as the base model. Comprehensive work has been undertaken to adapt the engine to the specific technical parameters, which required the designing new parts: fuel pump, injectors and many others. The work was carried out over a short period and required much innovation and novel design solutions.

The work on the new modification of the engine has entered the home stretch. The customer has been sent a 3D model of the engine and consultations between the two companies are in progress.

This year, CTP plans to buy two prototypes of the new engine for trials. In the future, CTP plans to gradually increase the acquisition of MMP engines to reach 2,500 engines by 2025.

The Russian concern unites over 20 industrial, engineering, trading and service enterprises. CTP production activities include industrial, utility, agricultural and railway machine building, as well as the production of spare parts and components. Its products are in demand in the mining industry, road and infrastructure construction, the oil and gas sector, railway industry and agriculture.



MTZ increases share of innovative products

Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ) increased the share of innovative products to 54.3 percent of the total production in 2020

"The share of innovative products is the most important indicator for a modern business. It means that every second tractor produced at the plant is from a new line, or an upgrade. A year ago, the share of innovative products stood at 42.1 percent," said Dmitry Morozov, the Deputy General Director for Financial and Economic Affairs at MTZ.

According to him, the plant produced goods worth almost Br1.7bn (\$0.7bn in equivalent) in 2020. The production growth rate in current prices was 112.5 percent. The official also highlighted the

increase in sales profitability: from 10.4 percent in 2019 to 15.5 percent in 2020. The profit from sales was more than Br290m (more than \$119m), up 62.7 percent from 2019. In turn, the profit from current activities exceeded Br235m (around \$95.5m) and the net profit stood at Br6.9m (over \$2.8m).

"The head of the company set targets to reduce the production costs of products, works, and services. At the end of the year, resource savings amounted to 7.5 percent, and still there are some in reserve," Mr. Morozov said.

Remember the source when you drink the water



If you ask anyone in the Mogilev Region, whether springs have been recently improved, you will immediately be given multiple examples. On visiting the site, you'll be pleased to see that water in these springs is of the best quality. There are so many famous springs in the region that an idea was born to create a tourist cluster: 'The Land of Life-Giving Springs'. It's a unanimous declaration of love for the small homeland of all who have not forgotten the path to a village spring and decided to save it for future generations.

By Yelena Kuchinskaya

Ancestral legacy

The Trofim's spring near the agro-town of Aleksandria, in the Shklov District, is always full of people. Some come from afar, as shown by their registration plates. On weekends, there is barely enough room to move and, at the Epiphany celebrations, several thousand people come to visit. People drink water by the handful, wash their faces, or take bottles home and those who are most courageous even sometimes take the plunge into the font. Just imagine the endless fields which surround it, while an oasis with gazebos, bridges and a roofed font is situated in the centre. Locals say that the spring has gained more popularity recently, after an area for outdoor recreation was created here. This was done following the President's orders.

In 2018, the Year of Small Homeland was established. The Head of State and his three sons worked on the improvement of Trofim's spring in his small homeland on the day of the Republican subbotnik [working Saturday]. Trofim, who once built a well over the spring, was Aleksandr Lukashenko's grandfather. The inscription engraved on the plate over the spring reads: 'Remember the source when you drink the water'.

Natalia Milto, a doctor at Aleksandria's Out-patient Clinic, says local residents come to the spring not only for the healing water, but simply to relax mentally, "Young people have

dates on the local Isle of Love. I often come here by bike to listen to the silence. We have several springs in Aleksandria, but this one's water is the most delicious. It is very useful to wash your face with it: the water is better than any cream."

Zinaida Rybakova is over 80. She remembers that, in her youth, people from the neighbouring villages came to Trofim's spring for church holidays. However, over the course of time, the site with its healing water became abandoned. "Some remembered the way, but the bushes were thick, and it was simply impossible to get through. Look, how springs and churches are being restored now. A holy place will always attract people," she noted.

In our modern days, the Head of the Transfiguration Church, Fa-



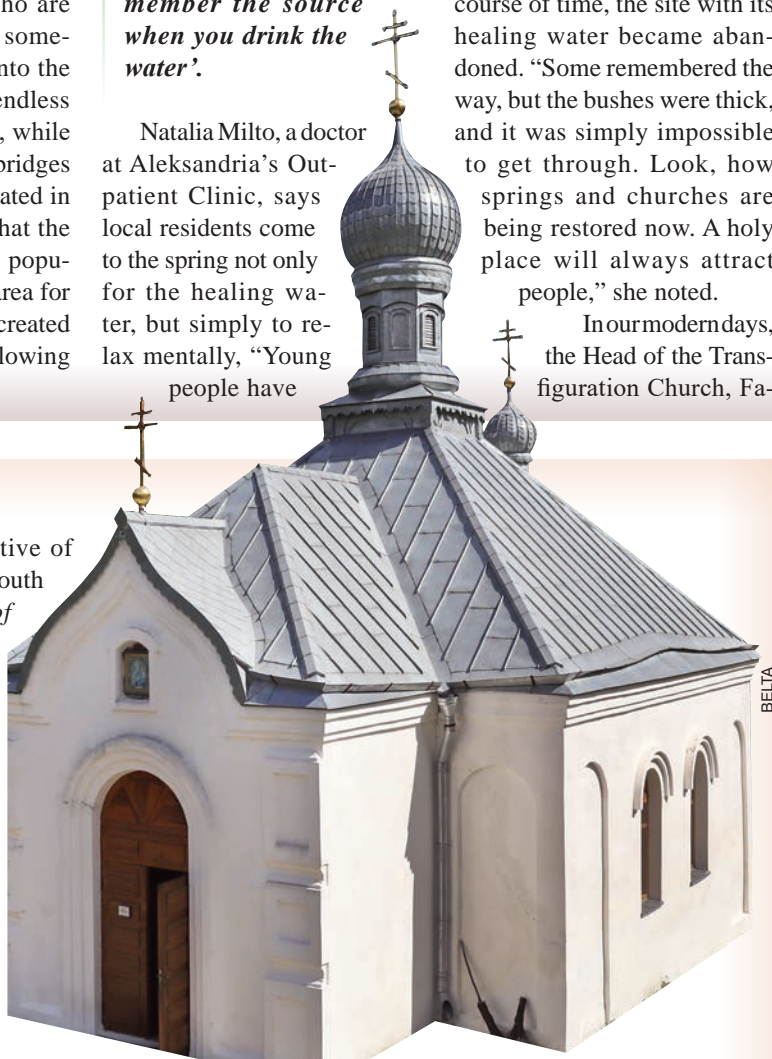
Trofim's spring

ther Andrei, performs the rite of consecration on the water at Trofim's spring. "According to an ancient church tradition, the springs were always consecrated. Water, as the source of all life on earth, was the centre of life, not only physical but also spiritual. This year has been declared the Year of National

Unity in Belarus. Why have our people always been invincible? Because they shared a common spiritual core. Those who supposedly advocate unity should go not to protests but unite in other ways. If we unite, the Lord will grant us a united and prosperous Belarus," he says.

From the spring to church revival

It was on the initiative of the Mogilev Region's youth that the *Restoration of Shrines and Springs of Belarus* campaign was promoted during the Year of Small Homeland. It started in Pustynki of the Mstislavl District, where the Holy Dormition Monastery is located. The monastery was founded in the 14th century and, according to legend, after washing his face with the spring water, Prince Simeon regained his sight. In gratitude he built a monastery next to the miraculous spring which comes directly under the building. Thousands of pilgrims come here for



Pustynki Holy Dormition Monastery

spiritual healing, not only from all over Belarus, but also from neighbouring Russia.

When the revival of the monastery began almost 20 years ago and the first monks settled there, a miracle appeared on the wall: the image of the famous shroud of Turin became visible through the plaster. Believers explained this was a sign from above that the good work should continue.

Last May, the Intercession Church was opened and consecrated on the territory of the monastery. The reconstruction took almost 10 years at the expense of the Republican and regional budgets. In turn, the Holy Trinity Church in Mstislavl, the Kagalny well at the foot of the Zamkovaya Hill, and a spring in the agricultural town of Mazolovo were restored by district organisations and local residents.



A spring in the village of Pustynki, Mstislavl District

Good deed relay race

The desire to improve a forgotten spring near Prosoly (not far from Shklov) resonated throughout the county. As a result, the beautiful object catches the eye straight from the highway. The well is paved with stone and a staircase leads up to it. A font, cut into the ice, is at the bottom of the river and a bench and a swing are nearby. In the gazebo, it's possible to see the work of a

us. Our grandmothers told us long ago that it was common for villagers to bathe babies in this water. Near this stone, our countrymen swore an oath to return alive when they were leaving for the front. In turn, the wooden sculpture of Grigory Aladyev was made based on a photo: immediately after the war, he revamped the spring. That's the memory he left behind him. In this gazebo around the campfire,



The rite of consecration of water on the Epiphany religious holiday in Golubaya spring, Mogilev Region

wood sculptor: a guitar is artfully carved in the log-bench. Nearby, a stone fish emerges from the well. This place, which is now a favourite location for villagers, was created by four local artists. Among them is Nikolai Panchenko. The man lives with his family in Shklov now but has never forgotten his small homeland.

The artist explains, "The locals were willing to help

especially in the summer, villagers like to gather, we sing songs and read our poems. Those who once moved to Russia and Ukraine also come. They always admit that it's great we can meet up in peace. We are now thinking of other ways we can depict the ongoing Year of National Unity. What is the best symbol to come up with? Come and see everything soon!"



Heavy snow in Europe

Storm Darcy caused disruption across swathes of Western Europe

People rushed outdoors to enjoy sledding and playing in the snow in Dutch and German cities despite the bitterly cold conditions with temperatures as low as minus 5 degrees Celsius.

The Netherlands and parts of Germany are blanketed by heavy snow that disrupted planes and trains and put some coronavirus testing on hold.

Britain is also bracing for heavy snow from what Dutch meteorologists have called Storm Darcy, which is packing winds of up to 90 kilometres an hour.

But Dutch authorities declared a rare 'code red' emergency for the entire country as it was hit by its first proper

snowstorm in more than a decade.

Dozens of flights were delayed or cancelled at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport while Eindhoven airport in the south of the country scrapped all services. All trains were cancelled in the Netherlands, including international services to Germany. Trams were halted in Amsterdam, while a tram derailed in the snow in The Hague. Motorists were advised to avoid travelling and more than 80 cars were reported to have skidded off the road.

Storm Darcy has also been dubbed as the 'Beast from the East part 2' in the UK. It has left much of the east of Eng-

land blanketed in snow. The storm has been caused by cold air making its way across from Russia and Eastern Europe, resembling conditions last seen three years ago. There's been disruption to travel and dangerous road conditions, forcing some UK vaccination centres to close unexpectedly.

Hundreds of residents living near rivers in France have had to be evacuated from their homes amid ongoing levels of high alert. In Paris, the River Seine continues to rise. The Zouave Statue at the Pont de l'Alma, a popular but imprecise indicator for flooding, is partially submerged.

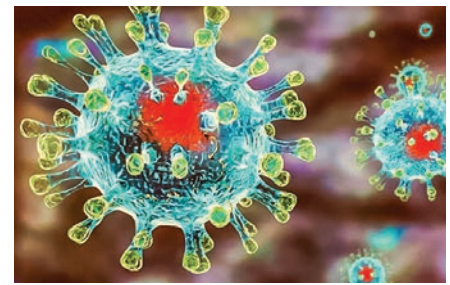
'Don't rely too much on US intel'

The World Health Organisation mission in Wuhan ended without finding the source of the coronavirus, prompting criticism from Washington. But experts have found new lines of inquiry, including some proposed by China.

A team member who was part of the World Health Organisation mission to China hit out at the United States, amid Washington's criticism of the probe.

Zoologist Peter Daszak was part of the special WHO mission sent to the city of Wuhan to investigate the source of the coronavirus pandemic. In remarks posted to Twitter, Daszak said US President Joe Biden 'has to look tough on China'. He added, "Please don't rely too much on US intel: increasingly disengaged under Trump and frankly wrong on many aspects."

Daszak's commented on Twitter linked to an article on US State Department comments that cast doubt over the transparency of China's co-operation with the WHO mission.



Former US President Donald Trump frequently laid the blame on China for the virus. He repeated a controversial theory that the virus may have escaped from a laboratory in Wuhan. Questions over the handling of the initial outbreak in central China have sparked an intense diplomatic row between Washington and Beijing.



Highlighting concerns

Confrontation between China and the United States would be a disaster and the two sides should re-establish the means to avoid misjudgments, Chinese President Xi Jinping told his US counterpart Joe Biden in their first telephone call as leaders

The call was the first since Biden took office and comes as Beijing and Washington clash over issues from trade, Hong Kong, the South China Sea, Taiwan and reports of human rights crimes against Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Region.

"Co-operation is the only correct choice for the two nations. Co-operation can help the two nations and the world to accomplish big things, while confrontation is definitely a disaster," stressed Xi Jinping.

Xi said a resumption of dialogue was needed to avoid misjudgments and to differentiate those disputes which could be

contained. He called on Washington to be cautious in its handling of issues related to China's sovereignty.

"China and the US have different views on various issues, but the key is mutual respect, equal treatment and properly managing and handling them in a constructive manner," he said.

"Our foreign ministries can have in-depth communication on a wide range of bilateral, international and regional issues, and the two sides' economic, financial, law enforcement and military departments can also increase their exchanges."

Winners of the 2021 Underwater Photographer of the Year contest

Underwater world has never looked so magical and mesmerising

The photos show just how awe-inspiring Mother Nature can be in aquatic mode — and how fragile it is. And they also underscore the sheer skill and determination of the world's finest underwater snappers, who brave underwater caves and shark-infested reefs to bring us unforgettable pictures, some of which took years to plan.

The overall winner is Renee Cappozzola from California, whose picture of blacktip reef sharks cruising beneath gulls at sunset in French Poly-

nesia left the judges' jaws on the floor. She triumphed over 4,500 underwater pictures entered by photographers in 68 countries.

Meanwhile, the third place went to the UK photographer Kirsty Andrews' picture of a grey seal swimming out of a gully, who noted, "Grey seals are wonderful to photograph, but I particularly like this shot because of the background. My buddy showed me this pretty gully. I waited there for a little while, hoping a seal would turn up."



'Grey Seal Gully'. Third place, British Waters Wide Angle

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

With a peasant's perspective on life

The 100th anniversary of writer Ivan Melezh

Recently, the 100th anniversary of the birth of the People's Writer of Belarus, Ivan Melezh, was celebrated. A classic of Belarusian and Soviet literature, he was born into an ordinary family of Polesie peasants in the village of Glinishchi, Khoyniki District, Gomel Region, this is where the roots of his family and his creativity are. We'll tell you more about the details of the life of this famous writer, which are little known to his readers.



Ivan Melezh

By Irina Ovsepyan

Rhyming couplets

In literature, this is all too common: famous prose writers often begin their journey with attempts at poetic creativity. This is exactly what happened with Ivan Melezh: the writer's mother loved to sing, and it was no great leap from Polesie songs to a love of poetry. As a schoolboy, Melezh wrote out his favourite works by Russian and Belarusian classical writers in a notebook: Pushkin, Nekrasov, Yanka Kupala, Pavlyuk Trus... The desire to become a writer himself came in the elementary stage of his ten-year school education, but the new poet hid his first attempts from everyone. This was until a literature teacher from the school in Khoyniki, where he studied, learned about his efforts. Who knows if the name of Ivan Melezh would have appeared on the spines of books if it hadn't been for the talented and caring teacher Mikhail Pokrovsky? He convinced the boy not to give up on his poetic experiments and to take his work seriously. It was after a conversation with his teacher that young Ivan Melezh decided to send his poems to various publishers.

The first publication was in 1939: his *Motherland* poem was published in the newspaper *Chyrvonaya Zmena*. The author was 18 years old at the time. Then his works began to appear in the pages of the newspapers *Litaratura i Mastatstva* and *Balshavik Palessya*. A literary circle at the newspaper *Gomel'skaya Pravda* also came into his life; in those years, associations like these existed at every editorial office. This circle is remembered by the Belarusian Soviet poet Dmitry Kovalev, the would-be editor of the Molodaya Gvardiya Publishing House and a friend of Melezh: 'It was led by Filip Yevmenov, who once wrote himself and then became a journalist, a man selflessly devoted to poetry. Many poets and writers, now known across the country and abroad, began their creative path in this circle: Ivan Shamyakin, Kastus Kireyenko, Lenya Gavrilov, who was burned in a tank, and Mikola Surnachov, who fell near Berlin and entered great literature after his death. Other well-known

and little-known poets and prose writers were also members of this group. Poems by Ivan Melezh had already appeared not only in local, but also in national newspapers. The group followed these publications, and even the regional newspapers didn't escape our attention. But I can't say that these first poetic attempts won us over. They were interesting because they were written by our peer, our fellow countryman. It's likely that the author himself soon felt that a different poetry, more detailed and factual, substantial and every day, which could not be expressed otherwise, as in prose, was urgently calling him...'

A frontline path...

In 1940, Melezh was drafted into the army, and the young poet took part in the campaigns against Bessarabia and Bukovina, liberating the lands occupied by Romania. Then the Great Patriotic War broke out, the beginning of which saw him in the Carpathians. It was on the frontline that the prose writer awoke in Ivan Melezh, and despite the rules, he kept a diary until 1943.

'Even now I still can't read these scarce, hasty words, as they hide so much unexpressed. I can't read them calmly because I see what's not being said and I remember the circumstances in which everything was written:

when each entry could have been the last. Therefore, I would like to remind those who will be reading these words: many entries of mine have been written along the exhausted roads of retreat, accompanied by sharp 1941-1942 winter winds, so they are so scarce and contain so much bitterness', Melezh wrote.

The Melezh unit was surrounded by the Nazis three times and broke out three times. In 1942, near Rostov-on-Don, Melezh was seriously wounded on his right shoulder (he was hit by shrapnel) and was sent to a hospital in Tbilisi. He was threatened with gangrene and the amputa-

tion of a limb, the young man might have been left without his right hand if it were not for the talented surgeon Antonov, who managed to save it. After all the upheavals and injuries at the front, Melezh received a disability and the doctors' prognosis: it would be a miracle if he lived to be forty. The writer, who had been seriously ill all his life, held out until 1976 and managed to celebrate his 55th birthday.

The chronicle of Polesie

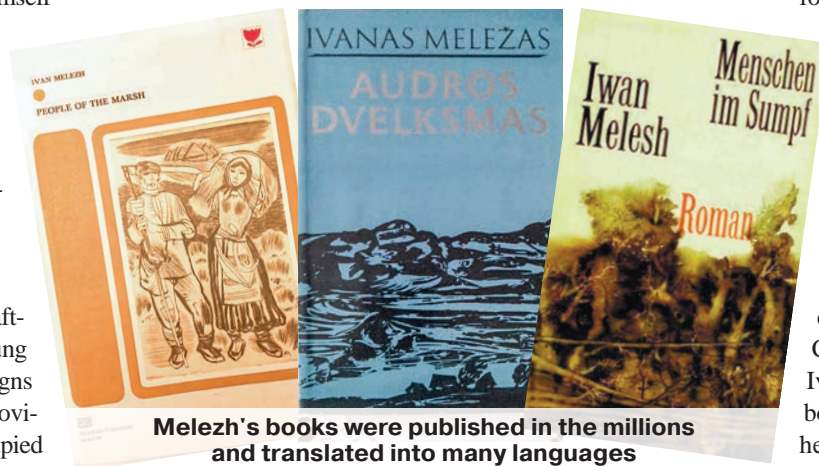
The Polesie Chronicle by Ivan Melezh is rightfully considered to be a national epic and one of the most important works in Belarusian 20th century literature. In the trilogy, which in-

volves *People of the Marsh*, *The Storm's Breath* and *Snowstorm in December*, the writer describes in detail his small homeland: a village, nestling on an island of land between the Polesie bogs, and the life of the peasants during the collectivisation period of the 1920s and 1930s. All the characters are based on real people and are taken from the memory of the writer; these are images of fellow countrymen who lived in

his native village of Glinishchi. Melezh began working on his first book, *People of the Marsh*, in 1956 while in 1962, the novel was published and was awarded the Yakub Kolas Prize. It's worth noting that Natalia Poplavskaya, a future famous Belarusian painter, was the illustrator for the book: the graphics illustrating Melezh's work, two years after publication of the book, became the subject of her thesis. By what miracle did a young student manage to get such a prized commission from a publishing house? Fate itself intervened. Nevertheless, the fact remains: *People of the Marsh* came to Ms. Poplavskaya in the form of a manuscript, and the illustrations she created were used many times in the novel's subsequent publications and translations, into other languages of the USSR. Today, they are considered to be classic examples of book illustration.

Few people except the specialists know that 'The Polesie Chronicle' was conceived by Ivan Melezh as a five-volume book. Despite a serious illness, he planned to write two more novels, completing the story of Vasil Dyatlik and Ganna.

For the books not yet written, the writer even managed to come up with titles: *A Shore Behind Sedgy* and *The Truth of Spring*. There is a fragment in Melezh's drafts talking about Vasil's military life and how he returns to his native village of Kureni to see it burnt to the ground, but despite everything, he says: 'Still, we will live. We cannot be destroyed! Because we are the people!'



Melezh's books were published in the millions and translated into many languages

In the writer's homeland

By Olga Valchenko

The village of Glinische of the Khoyniki District is located in a picturesque corner of the Belarusian Polesie. It was here, among the endless swamps that later became an integral part of his books, that the future People's Writer of the BSSR, Ivan Melezh, was born. Thanks to him the whole world learnt about the hardworking, sincere people of the village and his fellow countrymen still honour his memory.

Today, there are no large swamps in Glinishchi, but you can admire the wild pear tree under which Ganna and Vasil stood and see Melezh's unique possessions and documents that are kept in the museum at his house.

The hut where the writer was born no longer exists, it burned down in 1942. Ivan, together with his father built a new house in its place, but in 1970 it was sold.

A small exhibition dedicated to Melezh was opened at the local school, which now

bears his name. However, there were too many people who wanted to visit the writer's homeland, so the question was posed about a fully-fledged museum, which was opened in 1983.

'The exhibits were collected by the whole world: neighbours donated exhibits, the furniture set was brought from the writer's apartment in the capital and the family presented the museum with a typewriter on which he wrote. Memorable items are still being brought from all over the country,' said Lyubov Ruban, a junior researcher at the museum house.

The museum contains rare photos, translations of the *People of the Marsh* into Ukrainian, Czech, German and Hungarian among other languages, alongside unique documents, e.g. the register of those born in 1921. Number 27 reads: 'Glinishchi, Melezh Ivan Pavlovich, February 6th'. Surprisingly, in all other documents and personal records, the 8th is recorded as his



birthday. Why the birth was recorded two days earlier remains a mystery.

'I remember his warm smile and eyes with a squint,' recalls Ivan Melezh's niece, Lilia Kravchenko. 'This is an example of real sensitivity and kindness. Only he could love his homeland and his countrymen in such a way! And we must not forget what he did for us, to glorify this wonderful little corner of Belarus. Our task is to preserve the national heritage. Let the Melezh land be the richest, most generous, most joyful and beautiful.'



A Belarusian from Lemeshevichi, Pinsk District (early 20th century)

His majesty the fur coat

Winter clothes of Belarusians in photographs and postcards of the late 19th — early 20th centuries



A Belarusian from near Pinsk (early 20th century)

It is easy for a modern person to protect themselves from the cold, since it is not difficult to find a down jacket or a light padded polyester coat. However, our ancestors had to go to a lot of effort to protect themselves from the frost in winter. Manufacturing fur coats took a lot of physical effort and time. Families who didn't practice such crafts had to pay much money to craftsmen who were called 'kushners'.

We asked Valentina Belyavina, a senior researcher at the Centre for Studies of Belarusian Culture, Language and Literature at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, what and how our ancestors wore during the winter months.

By Marina Kuzmich

The collar is more expensive than the fur coat itself

In the 19th century, the winter clothing of peasants or simple city dwellers was a fur coat, sheepskin or fur-lined, 'kazachina', or a short sheepskin coat. Valentina Belyavina says that, in the east of the Mogilev and Vitebsk provinces, the word 'fur-lined coat' was often used while, in the Mogilev Province, the word 'sheepskin coat' was used to describe winter clothes. In the south of the Mogilev and Minsk provinces, as well as in the Minsk District, the name 'kazachina' was widely spread.

"An interesting detail is that the name 'sheepskin coat' in different places is either associated with the length of the clothes, or with its cut, or with belonging to a certain person," says Ms. Belyavina. "For example, in the Kalinkovich District of the Gomel Region, 'sheepskin coat' was the name for a winter coat covered with cloth, in the Petrikov and Lechitsy districts, a short fur coat, and in the Baranovich, Zhabinka and Malorita districts of the Brest Region, only men's sheepskin coats were called this. In the Vitebsk Province, a long double-breasted straight cut jacket with a large collar and wedges on the sides was called a 'sheepskin coat'.

As a general rule, fur coats were sewn from seven to eight sheepskins put together. They were painted brown, burgundy-brown, ochre red, black or left white. Initially, fur coats had a straight, robe-like cut.

The collar was given special attention, as is reflected in the saying: 'The collar is more expensive than the fur coat itself'. The collar was made from the finest sheepskin with long and thick wool. Fur coats were decorated with embroidery, leather or woollen stripes on sleeves, pockets, and collars. The fur coats were fastened with leather, wood, and fabric-trimmed buttons.



Belarusians of Mogilev District (early 20th century)

On the road or while working in the forests and the fields, woollen clothes were worn over the fur coat: a 'svitka' (an old-fashioned name for men's and women's long outerwear made of a homespun cloth), a coarse heavy cloth, a drab peasant's overcoat, a 'burka' (a sleeveless felt coat) and a 'burnos' (Belarusian women's outerwear). This combination was called 'znizyk', 'sunizak', 'nosov'. Later they learned to tan skins, enabling their coats to keep moisture out and become stronger. It was no longer necessary to cover them with cloth, but in some regions, people continued to wear fur coats in the old-fashioned way. In the eastern part of Belarus, belts were also tied over the fur coats.

"In the Dokshitsy District of the Vitebsk Region, a fur coat flared downwards and covered with cloth or half-cloth, was in fashion. It was called 'serochechek'," explains Valentina. "Fur coats were covered with cloth in Zhitkovichi, Narovlya, Mozyr, Stolbtsy and Nesvizh districts."

The sheepskin fur coat also had a sacred meaning. During the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom were invited to sit on the inside of the coat. This was considered to be a guarantee of future happiness and family well-being.

Put it on and get on the stove

The fur coat protected from the cold in the most severe frosts. It was warmer than wadded clothing, as was shown by the saying: 'A man in cotton wool shakes but laughs in the fur coat'.

In some villages of the Zhitkovichi District, the back of the fur coat was not straight, but cut to the figure. A pattern was embroidered on the sleeve above the cuff called 'tsatska'. Winter fur coats in the Brest Region had similar patterns, for example, in the town of Motol.

Manufacturing fur coats was not easy. The craftsman had to be physically strong. The process went like this: they took a sheepskin and soaked it in water. Then



A grandfather and grandson from Ostashino, Novogrudok District (early 20th century)

they scraped the inside of the skin until it was completely clean. A special dye solution was then prepared, and a sheepskin, folded in several layers, was lowered into the container. After it was dried, it was then soaked again and kneaded. The ready-made fur coat was decorated with silk thread embroidery. The edges and the back of the fur coat were trimmed with stitching. Mittens were also made of leather and men wore them attached to their belts.

In winter, they walked in bast shoes. For insulation, the sole was lined with a layer of hay. The legs were wrapped in rags. People also used 'sukonki' which were made from an old woollen skirt called 'andarak'. More prosperous people wore boots in the cold. Until the middle of the 19th century, they were sewn 'on a straight

shoe': without distinguishing between right and left legs.

At the end of the 19th century, with the penetration of urban culture into peasant life, new forms of clothing with common European origins appeared: a sleeveless felt coat and a frock coat amongst others. They were sewn in the urban manner or made their way to the villages in the form of ready-made samples. Changes in clothing were also associated with the use of factory fabrics and the spread of new technologies.

"After WWI, greatcoats, service jackets, tunics and other attributes from military clothing appeared in men's outerwear, which formed the basis of the so-called paramilitary suit," continues Ms. Belyavina. "Among the Komsomol and party workers, leather jackets and coats were widely spread, which, in the 1920s-1930s, performed a symbolic function, as invariable attributes of the new power structures. Among the intelligentsia, various coats, jackets and fur coats were popular, which were sewn both with fur inside and on the trim."

The expansion of the range and number of items from clothing factories in the 1930s-1940s gradually replaced traditional clothes from the everyday life of the peasantry. They were widely used until the 1940s. After the Great Patriotic

War, the Belarusians returned to subsistence farming and wore old clothes while sewing new clothes themselves at home.

In the post-war period, the sweatshirt became widespread. Over time, this type of clothing appeared in factory production. Sweatshirts were worn not only by villagers, but also by factory workers. The villagers used them until the end of the 20th century. Later, the sweatshirt was replaced by the jacket while the fur coat and sheepskin coat have passed almost unchanged into the 21st century.

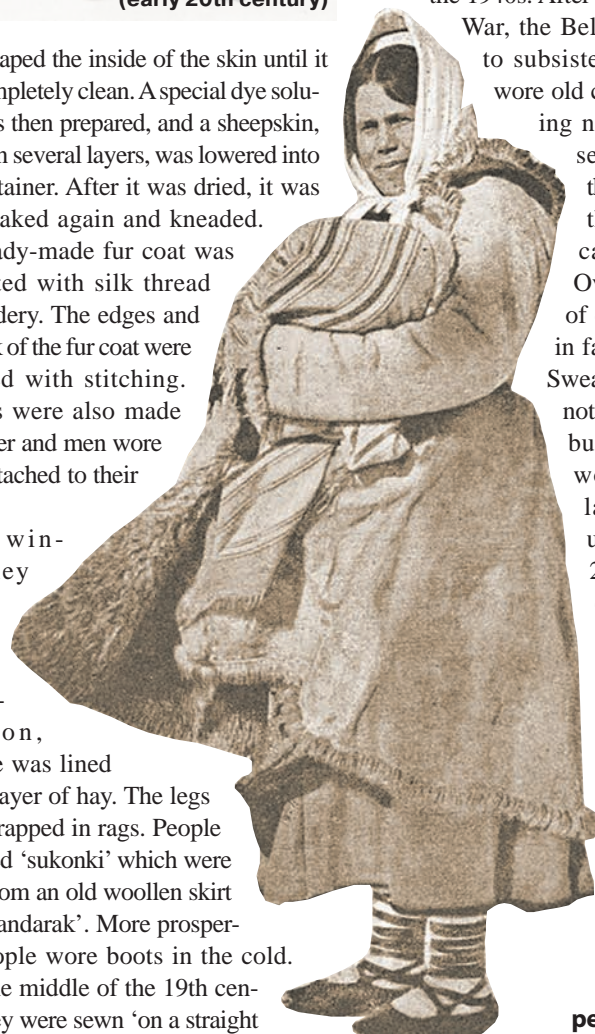


Photo from Vladimir Likhodedov's personal collection

Almost professional

Snow Sniper Republican competitions held in Raubichi Sports Complex

The Biathlon World Championship continues in Pokljuka, Slovenia. The Belarusian national team has already opened with a score that has won them medals, with Anna Sola winning bronze in the sprint. While elite shooting skiers competed at the global championship, amateur schoolchildren from all over the country held their biathlon championship in Raubichi. The *Snow Sniper* Republican competition saw nearly 200 children gather in a sports complex near Minsk.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

None of them have practiced biathlon in the youth sports schools and sections, but on their way to the final stage, all had to pass a rigorous selection process: first, at school competitions and then at district-wide and regional competitions. As a result, out of 31,980 schoolchildren who took part in the first stages, only 196 of the strongest were selected for the final. They competed in four age categories: boys and girls aged 11-12, 13-14, 15-16 and children born in 2004. Since the final stage wasn't held last year due to unfavourable weather and epidemiological conditions, the organisers gave pupils of this age group the opportunity to compete this year.

One of the students waiting for this chance was Maria Gnedchik from Minsk. She has already participated in the *Snow Sniper* many times: the first time she left the competition without medals, but in the following years she invariably became a medallist and champion. Having won the sprint this time, Masha admitted that she would miss the *Snow Sniper*, because every year the tournament has given her indescribable feelings. However, she noted, in the future, she plans to make the final stage of the competition to cheer for her younger brother Akim, who is also participating in the *Snow Sniper* and is often successful: this year, he claimed bronze in the mixed relay.

In reality, one could say there are



Maria Sashurina, Maria Gnedchik and Yana Kuzmich, from Minsk — with medals and winners' cups

dynasties in this tournament. In the past, Anastasia, a daughter of the famous biathlete, winner and medallist of the Olympic Games, Aleksandr Popov, performed in the *Snow Sniper*. This year, her sisters Anna and Nadezhda tried to make the final stage. Previously, there were five Shtunder brothers among the participants of the competition, and now the youngest of them, Anatoly, has taken up the baton. Furthermore, Maria Sashurina, a daughter of the multiple biathlon world champion Vadim Sashurin, also made her debut in the competition. She is already involved in athletics as a middle-distance runner. This year she decided to take up her skis and a rifle and on her first attempt she earned

gold in the sprint and mixed relay.

Vadim Sashurin didn't hide his pride in his daughter, "Of course, I'm very happy! The fact that Masha has won is not my doing, only hers. In general, I think it's great that competitions like these are held. In the current situation, I would

this tournament. She's a serious person, but whenever I look at her photographs from the *Snow Sniper*, she's always smiling, and this is the most important thing."

The coaches talked a lot about how important the event is for both children and the biathlon in general. "It's a holiday for the children," biathlon state coach Yuri Albers said. "Conditions have been created at the *Snow Sniper*, almost like those at the world championships: with accreditation, training, exit procedures, awards ceremonies — everything for the children to see the incentives to get involved in biathlon. For us coaches, this tournament is another opportunity to find our reserve. When we created the experimental group at the Novopolotsk state school of the Olympic reserve, we analysed, among other things, the data from *Snow Sniper*. We selected students from the participants of this tournament and formed a group: with Ilya Avseenko, Aleksandr Koshin among others. There are already examples where children, having participated in these competitions, then entered the Olympic reserve schools.



Aleksey Stolyarov



Vitaly Pivovarchik

like to see as many of these events occur as possible. Where else, except in sports, can you experience such emotions? In my childhood, there were also massive competitions. Even if they weren't at such a high level and didn't have prizes like the *Snow Sniper*, I always remembered them. The first competitions in my life were in cross-country skiing in Petrozavodsk. I still remember, on December 31st, I was 9 years old, and for my victory I was presented with a 'Fairy Tale' cake ... I look at Masha and think that she'll also remember

The *Snow Sniper* event has already become a solid tradition. From year to year, these competitions are a real holiday for children, enabling them to try out a new sport. Now, for the two days of the competition, schoolchildren determined the best in sprints and mixed relay races, but each of the participants in the Republican final became the winner and each received prizes: cups, medals and vouchers. All participants were presented with souvenirs and sportswear necessary for training.

ARENA

● Claiming bronze

Belarusian biathlete Anna Sola won the sprint bronze at the World Cup in Pokljuka, Slovenia. She finished the 7.5km distance with two firing lines 14.4 seconds slower than the winner from Norway, Tiril Eckhoff, without making any mistakes in the shooting.



Anna Sola

The Scandinavian athlete, who became the world champion in this discipline, finished in 21 minutes 18.7 seconds at the finish line, also shooting without errors, like the Belarusian

biathlete. Silver was won by Anaïs Chevalier-Boucher from France (12.0 seconds behind, 1 miss).

● FC Dinamo Brest won Winter Cup 2021

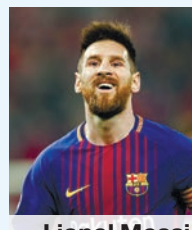
The Winter Cup 2021 traditional international winter football tournament was held at Brest Football Arena, bringing together teams from Belarus, Ukraine, Nigeria and the Cote d'Ivoire.

In the fight for first place, Dinamo Brest confidently defeated Slaviya Mozyr, 2:0. The double goal was by Aleksandr Shestyuk, who was the best forward in the tournament. Our southern neighbours from Ukraine, FC Volyn, took bronze home with them,

having outplayed the players from Dinamo-Brest-1960 (Malorita), 3:0. Fifth and sixth places were taken by teams from the African continent.

● Best again

The International Federation of Football History and Statistics has recognised Lionel Messi as the best footballer of the decade for 2010-2020. According to the poll, which covered representatives from 150 countries, the Argentine striker from Barcelona is significantly ahead of his competitors. Second place was taken by Cristiano



Lionel Messi

Ronaldo, followed by Andres Iniesta. The top-ten includes Neymar, Sergio Ramos, Manuel Neuer, Robert Lewandowski, Gianluigi Buffon, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Luka Modric.

● Health is a priority

At the Tokyo Olympics, athletes will be tested for coronavirus at least once every four days, a measure introduced by the International Olympic Committee to ensure the safety of participants. It's planned that the checks will be carried out in a specialised laboratory at the Olympic or Paralympic villages, and it will be possible to track the results of the study through a special smartphone application.

Photo of the week



Alexsey Stolyarov

Winter motocross competitions held at DOSAAF Republican Sports and Technical Centre in the village of Prilesie, Minsk Region

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On February 18th, 2016, the Uruchie Palace of Sports for the Armed Forces of

Belarus was opened. The renovated palace provides an opportunity to practice handball, badminton, table tennis, bowling and many other sports. The modern building includes three main areas: the main arena, seating 3,000 people, as well as two more training grounds.

On February 19th, 1861,

Emperor Alexander II signed the Manifesto proclaiming the emancipation of the serfs and the Regulations of February 19th on the peasants who emerged from serfdom, which consisted of 17 legislative acts. On the basis of these documents, peasants received personal freedom and the right to dispose of their property.



February 19th is World Marine Mammal Protection Day or Whale Day. On February 19th, 1986, the



International Whaling Commission declared a moratorium on whaling. The Day of Whales was created to draw the attention of the public, government officials and everyone else to the protection of these unique animals and in general all marine mammals, of which only 119 species have survived on the planet.

On February 20th, 1921, Galina Dokutovich, a participant of the Great Patriotic War, was born in Gomel. In 1938, she graduated from the Gomel flying club and studied at the Moscow Aviation Institute. In 1941, she volunteered on the frontline. She was a navigator on the aircraft of the 46th Taman Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment, a junior lieutenant. She performed 136 combat missions and died during a combat mission at the Krymskaya station of the Krasnodar Krai in 1943.



On February 20th, 1981, the Polotsk Picture Gallery, a branch of the National Polotsk Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve, was opened, being located in one of the buildings of the former Jesuit



Collegium. The gallery's permanent exhibition consists of 3 sections. The gallery hosts exhibitions by Belarusian graphic artists, painters, sculptors and international exhibition projects, alongside showcasing works of foreign fine art.

On February 20th, 1986,

the base unit of the Soviet manned complex Mir was launched into orbit, operating in the near-Earth space until March 23rd, 2001. During the service of the space station, more than 23,000 experiments were carried out on it and two records of the duration of stay in space were set by Valery Polyakov and Shannon Lucid. The station was visited by 104 cosmonauts from 12 countries as part of 28 expeditions.



February 21st is International Mother Language Day, proclaimed at the 30th General Conference of UNESCO in November 1999 with the aim of promoting linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The initiative aims to recognise and encourage the use of native languages, especially the languages of national minorities.



February 21st is the Day of Workers of Land Management and Cartographic-Geodetic Service in the Republic of Belarus. Geologists, military, and tourists cannot do without maps, topographic, physical or political, so the painstaking work of people who present our countries and the world to us at a glance is especially valuable.



On February 23rd, 1976, the Belarusian Automobile Works in Zhodino produced a serial 75-tonne heavy-duty dump truck. The serial production of mining dump trucks with a carrying capacity of 75 tonnes (BelAZ-549) and more was made possible by the commissioning of a workshop for the production of large-scale equipment.

February 23rd is the Fatherland Defender and Armed Forces Day of the Republic of Belarus. On this day, congratulations are given to those who in different years defended our Homeland and continue to defend it now, who have proved their boundless loyalty to the Fatherland, courage in battle, discipline in the performance of service.

