



New lifeguard combat clothing to arrive in the Ministry for Emergency Situations' divisions this year



Belarus has shot the first documentary about wildlife suitable in format for screening in a movie theatre



INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 12 (826) ● THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2020 ● WWW.SB.BY



The traditional rite of the first furrow conducted before the start of sowing in the Grodno Region's Svisloch agricultural production co-operative

## You reap as you sow

The sowing campaign is proceeding at an intensive pace in all regions of Belarus. Prepared equipment, high-quality seeds, and the extensive experience of agrarians should allow the campaign to be carried out as soon as possible. The biggest role is played by the weather conditions. As President Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, the situation is perfect so far, "There is enough moisture and the temperature is normal." The task was set to sow early grains faster and, in general, to conduct spring field work throughout the country in an organised manner.



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# Government tasked to be able to work with everyone

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has held a meeting to discuss the country's social and economic development in 2019 and achievements in 2016-2020. The traditional event at the Palace of Independence was attended by representatives of the Parliament and Belarus' President Administration, as well as governors. The President explained that the goal of the meeting was to look for ways to avoid previous mistakes using the accumulated experience to ensure that 'a sovereign and independent country could exist'.

## Pros and cons

"2020 is the last year in this five year period. Therefore, apart from reports, I would like to discuss the results of the five year period as a whole. However, there is not much we can boast about," the Head of State said.

In his words, on the one hand, real disposable income of the population, including salaries, pensions, increased by 6 percent, inflation in the country in general stood at the level of 4.7 percent. In complicated conditions the gold and foreign exchange reserves were increased, gross external debt was reduced. On the other hand, four out of seven crucial indicators used to assess the efficiency of the Government and the National Bank were not fulfilled. This pertains to boosting export, the inflow of foreign investments, higher labour productivity and a bigger gross domestic product. "A 1.2 percent increase is, to put it mildly, a very modest result. The results of work of the economic staff (I also mean the regions) in these areas could be more positive. These are basic issues which have an impact on our sustainable development in the long run," Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked.

He said that the plans for 2019 had been prepared by the current composition of the Government. In spite of alternative opinions, he supported the proposals which had been submitted to him for consideration. "Therefore, at the meeting I want you to make fundamental assessments of your work and to share your vision of mid-2020 and late 2020," the President added.

## Exports as a priority

According to the President, the key issues that hold back the possibilities of the Belarusian economy are being addressed too slowly.

In his words, the Government pays too much attention to the price and amount of oil the country is going to buy, to the exchange rate in the countries — trading partners, to the restrictions introduced for Belarus. "We are responding to any insig-

nificant detail. It is not supposed to be like that. We are a small country with an open economy. We need to be able to flexibly adapt to objective conditions in which the world around us lives and be able to work with everyone," the President stressed.

This is the most difficult task that the state system faces but no tangible results have been achieved in the current five year plan. "The traditional sectors of the economy did not yield the same results as last year. The share of all types of production in the gross domestic product is six times



Vitaliy Pivovarchik

higher than that of the IT and communications companies. Their contribution to the overall growth of the economy, however, is almost equal," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The topic of foreign markets is a time-worn issue too. "I will not be talking about exports failing in 2019, imports being on the rise and the gross domestic product growing only thanks to domestic demand. While exports are a priority of the five year plan, we are not even exploring new markets, we are losing our traditional ones. I would like the Prime Minister to report on the reasons for this and what is being done to remedy the situation. Today it is a matter of our survival. This is where everything comes from: oil prices, domestic prices and the Belarusian Rouble exchange rate," the Head of State stressed.

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, the financial state of real sector organisations requires special attention. However, possible solutions should not affect the budget, the head of state added. In his words, performance, primarily in the public sector, has not become more efficient. "This is a significant part of the economy, and decisive measures are needed to be its driver, not a heavy burden. The overwhelming majority of regions should have higher development rates so that our society does not have dividing lines in terms

of income and quality of life," he added.

Aleksandr Lukashenko did not agree with the Government's proposals on the main directions of Belarus' social and economic development programme through to 2025. "I will tell you frankly: I did not see any measures for accelerated development and achievement in gross domestic product, as we defined it at about \$100bn. Everything that was proposed should have been done five years ago. We will hold a separate meeting on this issue. This is not the subject of today's in-depth analysis," the President said.

## Wages are rising, while inflation is at a minimum

As Prime Minister Sergei Rumas reported at the meeting, last year, the Government managed to maintain the most impor-

tant macroeconomic proportions and ensure balanced development. He mentioned that when the new Government was appointed by the President, the main task was to ensure the growth of citizens' incomes.

"The result was a steady increase in the welfare of the population. Wages in the country since March last year have been steadily above Br1,000: in late 2019, they stood at Br1,240 (about \$590 in equivalent)," Mr. Rumas said, adding, "In the public sector, as promised, we reached a ratio of 80 percent with an average salary of Br993 (about \$470). The task of increasing salaries for teaching staff and doctors is being carried out. Pensions have been increased by 20 percent, and adjusted for inflation by 13.4 percent. This is the highest rate in the last 5 years."

According to the Prime Minister, the quality indicators of development have significantly improved over the past year. He stated, "Inflation is at a minimum level. The optimal foreign trade balance was obtained with another record for the export of services, and stability was ensured in the currency, credit, deposit and financial markets. The state's currency obligations were fulfilled in a timely manner, while its gold and foreign exchange reserves reached a record level of \$9.4bn."

Sergei Rumas believes that the budget for the past year was executed better than planned. "This has enabled us not only to ensure the solutions for a whole range of key tasks in the social block, but also to allocate a certain amount of funds to the reserve for the formation of the so-called safety cushion. Most of the security indicators in the economic and monetary spheres have been improved. For the first time in many years, the situation here is viewed as stable," the Prime Minister stressed.

At the same time, he outlined a number of existing problems, including the lack of planned economic growth which, unfortunately, is below the global average.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

# Belarusian proposals accepted

By Polina Konoga

## Oil supplies, the return of Belarusian tourists and the fight against fake news about coronavirus: issues discussed at the President's Saturday meeting

The Russian side fully supported the proposals of Belarus on oil supplies. This was stated by Aleksandr Lukashenko last Saturday, working on his schedule. A working group gathered for the report in full force under the leadership of the Head of Belarus' President Administration, Igor Sergeyenko. There were already results announced at the very beginning of the meeting

by the President, "I ordered that we consider the new proposals of the Russian Federation for the supply of hydrocarbons. As I understand it, the Russians completely agreed with our proposals for the supply of oil?"

Igor Sergeyenko confirmed this.

The working group, which includes members of the Government, leaders of the State Security Committee, State Control Committee, Foreign Ministry, the Security Council and the Council of the Republic, meets weekly. It monitors the situation and is actively working on issues related to the loading of our oil refineries and promptly reports to the Head

of State. Last Saturday, a whole range of issues was considered: from the purchase of raw materials to meeting domestic demand for oil products and exports.

After the meeting, the Chairman of Belneftekhim Concern — Andrei Rybakov — did not disclose all the details to the media. However, he said that oil refineries will be working efficiently.

On Saturday evening, it became known about the telephone conversation between Prime Minister Sergei Rumas and his Russian counterpart Mikhail Mishustin. The parties noted the achievement of principle agreements on the parameters of co-operation in the oil sector.

The meeting also had a tough assignment to deal with; those who produce fake news and inflame the situation regarding coronavirus. Over the past couple of weeks, some information resources and TV channels have already 'buried' four Belarusians who died allegedly from COVID-19. Not only is the Health Ministry forced to regularly refute such claims, but people start to panic.

"Why are they poisoning people? God preserve us that we are still going through this difficult time, when the peak of acute respiratory diseases is around, we are keeping everything under control."

The high-quality and professional work of doctors is no reason to relax. Yes, in just one day last week, they conducted about a thousand tests for coronavirus and all of them were negative. But vigilance cannot be lost. The Head of State instructed the Chair of the Council of the Republic, Natalia Kochanova, to take special control of work with the main risk group — the elderly, "I emphasise once again: this is not the case with coronavirus. The point is in our general decency and discipline. You just have to guard people. It is necessary to motivate children so that they help the elderly. The main thing now is to protect the elderly."

# Supremacy of high-quality technology

**Over 85 percent of products are exported: the President paid a visit to the ADANI scientific-production private company that manufactures healthcare equipment and security systems**

ADANI stands for ADvanced ANalytical Instruments. Founded in 1991, the enterprise initially designed nuclear instruments for application purposes. It is now a high-tech enterprise of a complete innovation cycle focused on technologies of medical X-ray image, X-ray inspection systems and non-destructive testing.

The President was very pleased with what he saw. He was positive about the computer tomographs manufactured at ADANI and instructed them to continue equipping the country's medical institutions with these devices.

## Success seen through

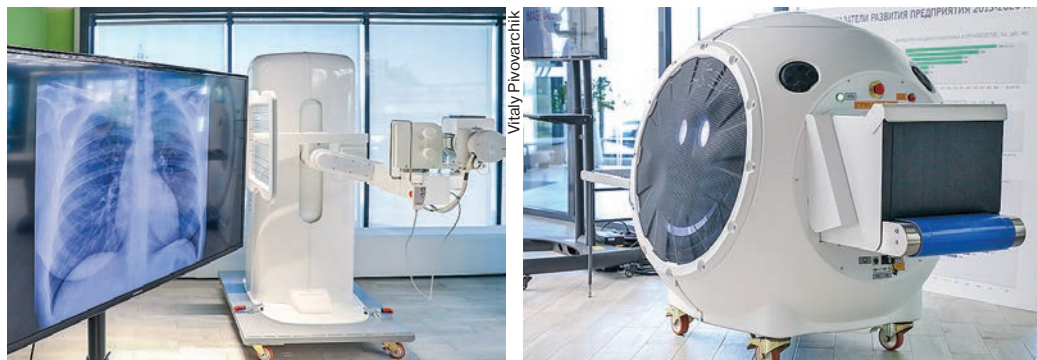
Aleksandr Lukashenko learnt about the organisation of work at the enterprise and the specifics of production. He visited the research centre, laboratories, pilot production and the assembly workshop.

Vladimir Linev, the founder and CEO of ADANI, told the Head of State what areas the company is developing, as well as about the model range of equipment. According to him, more than 85 percent of products are exported. The President also asked about the dynamics of financial indica-

tors and was informed that the figures continue growing.

Since 2010, the company has created 545 jobs and invested \$38.6m in development, including \$25.6m in fixed assets. The company supplies products to 86 countries. These are scientific analytical devices, medical x-ray diagnostic equipment, x-ray inspection equipment, full-length human scanners, baggage and transport scanners. Last year, almost \$40m of products were sold abroad.

In 2019, the company — following the Health Ministry's order — delivered seven computer tomographs to different regions of the country,



winning the tender: it offered a price half that of other foreign manufacturers.

"I like this company. This is our future — not only because the company produces it well and uses brains. It is involved in exports — working all over the world and bringing currency to the country. This is very important. Moreover, it's high-tech production which raises us to a higher level of development," the President concluded.



## The contribution may be larger

Since 2010, ADANI has been a resident of the Minsk free economic zone and, unsurprisingly, the Head of State took a detailed interest in the working conditions of residents of free economic zones and the preferences they have.

At the moment, FEZ residents are exempt from paying income tax in the event of products being exported or sold to

other FEZ residents. Over the past year, they paid \$1.3bn to the budget, forming 3.5 percent of its revenue.

The Head of State is convinced that the contribution of FEZ to the country's welfare could be greater and there are plans to carefully analyse the Tax Code from this point of view.

The President insisted on getting the maximum benefit for the state from FEZ residents. "The key is to ensure

foreign currency is received. It's desirable that it is spent here," he stressed.

## Analysis of the situation

During his visit to the company, Aleksandr Lukashenko also spoke to journalists, noting that it's still unclear how the financial and economic situation will be developing in the world. At the moment, Belarus is analysing it.

"I do not want to utter platitudes. I will just share my opinion. As for the financial and economic crisis, we already have one foot in it. And now, given high volatility and fluctuations, we are trying to pull it back," the President said, adding that countries may still have a chance to return to the previous level of development. "We need to analyse things, and we are currently doing this. The President's Address to the Belarusian People and Parliament will convene soon. Hopefully the situation will allow us to draw some unambiguous conclusions," he noted.

Journalists asked how the abnormally warm winter and climate change in general will affect agriculture and whether the country is ready for climate disasters. In this regard, the Head of State stressed that the agricultural sector of the economy is ready for climate change, and the current situation is perfect for sowing.

**Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by**

# A sound approach in everything

**People can suffer more from panic than from coronavirus itself: the President held a meeting on the epidemiological situation**

A substantive and deep discussion took place at the Independence Palace, featuring senior officials, as well as specialists — virologists and epidemiologists. As always, it is important for Aleksandr Lukashenko to listen to all opinions. This is necessary in order to objectively assess the situation and determine the tactics and strategy for further actions. At the same time, Mr. Lukashenko frankly noted what he was most concerned about the situation with coronavirus, "I'm absolutely convinced that this is another psychosis that will benefit some and harm others. However, we live in a specific situation and, of course, must proceed from the situation that is developing not only in our country, but also outside it. I'm completely sure that we can suffer more from panic than from the virus itself. This is what worries me the most."

The Head of State complained that the civilised world had gone mad while politicians had already begun to use the situation for their own interests. For us, this is a good reason to 'shake up' the Belarusian healthcare system, espe-

cially virologists and epidemiologists. Fortunately, Belarus has maintained a powerful sanitary-epidemiological service, technology, school and staff.

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that China was the first to encounter this virus, followed by the Asian region. Moreover, the Chinese managed to quickly cope with the scourge, and today they are ready to share their successful experiences.

"At least there are no questions that they would not give us the answer to," noted Mr. Lukashenko. "On the contrary, maybe we are somewhat inactive. But I have signals from the Chinese side that they are ready to help Belarusians in everything."

Many states have closed to foreigners, including Belarus' five neighbours. "This is absolute and utter stupidity, and this is already being confirmed. This does not protect Russia in any way. Especially as they close selectively. But that is their business. People will appreciate everything that happens with the closure of our borders," noted the President. "Now the world has artificially created a situation where a person cannot get home. We need to make every

effort so that our citizens can return in the very near future. They must be at home, in safety."

Aleksandr Lukashenko also instructed help for Russians stuck in Poland to return to their homeland.



At Minsk airport

"We take control of everyone who travels from abroad. The slightest suspicion, coughing or sneezing and we immediately test them. If it is laboratory confirmed, we immediately begin to find and isolate all contacts,"

Mr. Lukashenko noted. "I've analysed all these facts: where we began to gather people in quarantine, not a single person was sick. Everyone was healthy. And that's why the Chinese are telling us we don't

need to quarantine too much, because it does not produce results. Our experience also confirms this: three thousand people were watched and three thousand were healthy."

At the same time, the President stressed that Belarus will

not simplify approaches to the fight against coronavirus. There is no need to close the borders, Mr. Lukashenko is convinced. But he underlined that controls on them should not weaken.

**Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by**

## IN ADDITION

During the meeting, the President noted that the country has enough protective suits, masks and disinfectants. However, the production of respirators has not been established. Health Minister Vladimir Karanik brought a solution to the meeting and showed it to Aleksandr Lukashenko. The Head of State, in turn, demanded to transfer the sample to the Government and instructed them to establish respirator production in the country within a week.

"Within a week the Government should make a decision where it will produce. It's not a problem to purchase a machine," asserted the President. "It is not good that they are not in Belarus. They will always be useful to us."

# Ways of waste

In three years, Belarus will build the first incinerator plant

So far, only a fifth of our waste is recycled in Belarus. Experts note that garbage has changed over the past decades and packaging made of harmful synthetic materials accounts for the lion's share. The most problematic waste is plastic. Batteries and lamps are also dangerous.

The Centre for Environmental Solutions has developed a chatbot that will help figure out what to do with household garbage to ensure maximum waste recycling. The environmental robot will indicate where to put the coffee cups and where to put milk cartons.

"The key is to ensure that people understand that recycling does not solve the problem globally. We need to move away from a one-use lifestyle," Yevgeny Lobanov, the Director of Belarus' Centre for Environmental Solutions, explains. "Therefore, our bot suggests not only reasonable ways to get rid of garbage, but also alternatives to disposable goods."

Waste storage facilities should fall in number. "Instead of mini-dumps, we are creating more than thirty regional landfills. A dozen will be ready by 2025, another seventeen by 2030," says the Dep-

uty Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Aleksandr Korbut. "The global level of recovery of secondary material resources is no more than 25 percent, we will soon reach this. Another 50-55 percent will be burned. It is planned to build new eco-friendly incineration plants. By 2023, we will build the first near Minsk, with a capacity of up to 500,000 tonnes per year."

Belarusians are also expected to turn to the old Soviet system of returning an empty bottle and getting back the cost. "We suggest that this rule applies to plastic, tin and glass containers with a capacity of up to three litres," the Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus, Vladimir Kukharev, notes. "This will double the collection."

It will take about two years for the initiative to be implemented. Shopping centres will be equipped with special containers. The scheme is simple: throw a bottle into a special hole and press the button. Then the device recognises the form or reads the barcode on the label and issues a receipt which can be shown in the store — you will then be refunded the deposit or receive a discount.

"In Germany, thanks to this system, the return of plastic containers has reached 99.5 percent," comments the Director of the Secondary Material Resources Operator, Natalia Grintsevich. "The measure will not only simplify but also reduce the cost of processing."

## With a string bag on the podium

In summer, a fashion show was organised at a waste landfill near Minsk. The site was decorated with pressed plastic bottles, cardboard boxes and aluminium cans. TV presenter Olga Ryzhikova, a world gymnastics champion — Melitina Stanyuta — and other famous Belarusians appeared on the 'catwalk' — all dressed in clothes of local designers and holding string bags in their hands. The organisers stressed that shopping with such bags is both eco-friendly and fashionable.

"This solution will cut waste: on average, a Belarusian throws out up to four hundred plastic bags a year!" says Natalia Grintsevich. "It is necessary to change our consumer habits and to introduce a fashionable reduction in excess plastic."



By Kristina Khilko

Clean streets are our country's brand but this does not mean that the garbage problem has bypassed Belarus. The country accumulates about three million tonnes of waste annually and the idea has finally got through to people that throwing trash in landfills is in the past. It's better to turn waste into income.



The EBRD Board of Directors authorised the allocation of emergency aid to the tune of 1bn Euros to the countries the bank works in. The bank stands ready to do more if and when needed.

"Our *Solidarity Package* demonstrates readiness to do the same amount of business and to promptly and decisively respond to possible changes of

the existing situation. To achieve these goals, the bank will rely on its considerable charter capital and recent successful operating results. The EBRD has all the tools and resources at its disposal to help clients and countries across its regions," the EBRD press service noted.

"Yes, we will support clients in Belarus. Only clients because systemic as-

## EBRD to help clients in Belarus

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will help clients in countries the bank operates in deal with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, including companies in Belarus.

sistance to the state is a prerogative of other organisations. Taking into account the volume of projects in the public sector, we will also consider proposals relating to them," the bank said.

Asked about short-term and long-term economic consequences of the coronavirus situation, the EBRD noted that it is very difficult to make final conclusions judging from the dynamics of events. "Macroeconomic parameters of the EBRD's regions of operations will be revised but as opposed to the financial crisis of 2008 it will be possible to talk about further economic

growth only once the threat of the virus recedes," the EBRD believes.

The EBRD is a multilateral bank fostering the development of the private sector and entrepreneurship initiatives in 38 economies on three continents. The bank's shareholders are 69 countries as well as the European Union and the European Investment Bank. Since the EBRD began working in Belarus in 1992, the bank has invested nearly 2.9bn Euros in 130 projects in various branches of the national economy.

Based on materials of belta.by

## Harvesters head for Zimbabwe

By Natalia Yemelianova

**The Belarusian manufacturer of agricultural machines Gomselmash starts shipping 20 grain harvesters KZS-812 to Zimbabwe**

According to the Deputy Director for Production Issues at the Sales and Service Centre, Yevgeny Mezheny, the machinery is being shipped in several stages, over two weeks. Ten harvesters were sent last week and the remaining ten are planned to be delivered next week.

Two ports will be used for the shipment: Lithuanian Klaipeda and Russian Saint Petersburg with the reload in Germany. The Belarusian harvesters will reach Zimbabwe within three to four weeks.

The Belarusian holding company Gomselmash is one of the largest manufacturers of agricultural machines. It is one of the leaders on the world market of harvesters and other sophisticated agricultural machines. The company uses the 'Palesse' trademark to market the lineups of grain and forage harvesters, ear corn harvesters, potato harvesters, mowers, and other agricultural machines. 'Palesse' harvesters are used in fields of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Czechia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Argentina, Brazil, China, South Korea, the Baltic States, and other countries. Gomselmash operates an extensive distribution chain, joint ventures, and assembly enterprises.



# Not notes and coins... but still money

Since the beginning of the new decade, talks about cryptocurrency have intensified. News recently spread among the 'hunters' for digital coins that a single transaction transferred \$1.1bn of bitcoin — which has become the largest transaction in the history of the cryptomarket. Some countries are already thinking about creating national digital currencies. Venezuela is one of those trying to implement such a project. In 2020, the country intends to sell oil and extracted gold for the Petro cryptocurrency. Why is virtual money gaining popularity and what is the situation with bitcoin in Belarus?

By Anna Kosar

## Apartment for bitcoins

The blockchain technology was legalised in our country in 2017 after the President signed a decree on the development of the digital economy — which is used to transfer cryptocurrencies. Now there are many varieties of digital coins, but bitcoin remains 'king'. This money is obtained using mining: the solution of complex mathematical tasks on computers. It's also possible to purchase virtual money through exchange services or cryptocurrency exchanges.

Today, payment for real goods and services with bitcoins is not a problem. Cryptocurrency is accepted by Microsoft, Wikipedia, PayPal, Subway, Shopify and dozens of other major companies. In Belarus, among them are, for example, a network of tire service centres — TyrePlus, and the Apple Safe Connect hardware store. It's sometimes possible to find ads for the sale of villas and apartments using cryptocurrency.

## Is a national cryptocurrency likely?

In early 2019, the first cryptocurrency exchange was launched in Belarus: Currency.com. In July, the second exchange — iExchange — was registered. A platform of the BelVEB Bank Holding also operates; it launches cryptobonds of Belarusian enterprises. The Director of the VINT Consult JSC consulting company, a member of the Board of the Digit and Life Association of Digital Transformation — Trofim Yeremenko explains, "The principle of operation of the cryptoexchange is similar to the classical exchange. A person registers an account, puts a certain amount in, splits it using financial tools, and then, based on forecasts, transfers funds from

one asset to another. I believe other exchanges will appear soon, in particular, with certain target areas."

The expert believes that, in the near future, Belarus will obtain its own national cryptocurrency, "The country has effective digital legislation, initiative companies, and society is already sufficiently enlightened on the topic of virtual money and blockchain. Of course, the positive experience of China will also help [the state has recently announced the launch of its own version of bitcoin]. The more successful examples there are in the world, the faster we will adapt the corresponding solution to our reality."

## Technology of the future

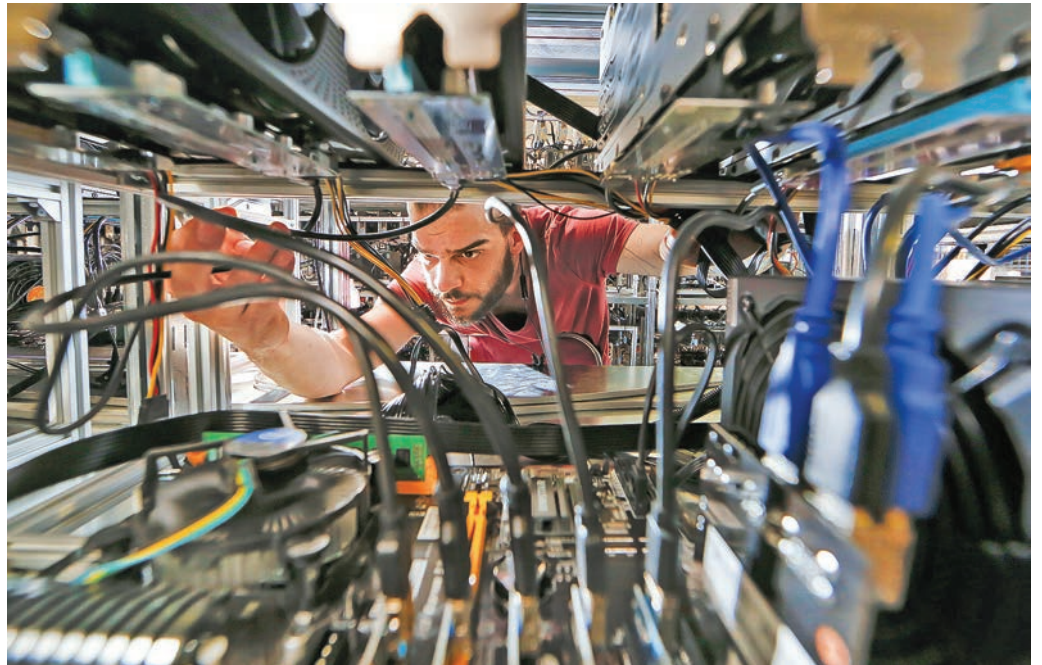
Mr. Yeremenko notes that digital money is popular among Belarusians as an opportunity to make profit but there is little information about its practical use.

The success of bitcoin has led to the emergence of alternative cryptocurren-

"Selling 'digital gold' can make good money but there's a risk of bankruptcy

cies, with Ethereum, Ripple, Litecoin and Monero being the most important of them. They are also based on blockchain but can use other types of encryption and process transactions faster.

"The first generation cryptocurrency was used for blockchain technology advertising. After all, there is no better way to spread information about an innovation than to let a wide range of people make money on it," the expert says. "We should acknowledge an increasing awareness of the usefulness of blockchain. Moreover, Belarus has cre-



REUTERS



ated all the conditions for widespread implementation and testing of these technologies in various sectors of the national economy, social protection and public security."

ated all the conditions for widespread implementation and testing of these technologies in various sectors of the national economy, social protection and public security."

Mr. Yeremenko has no doubt that, in the future, cryptocurrencies will replace Fiat money. He explains why this has not happened yet, "Many players in the global market are not ready for absolute transparency, which will inevitably come with a full transition to the blockchain. This technology will eliminate corruption, unfair competition, fraud, and reduce the impact of sanctions. However, this transparency of relations will become vital for a more dynamic development of the economy, politics, social sphere, and even culture."

The advantage of digital coins is in their limited issue. For example, no more

than 21m bitcoins can be issued. This guarantees protection from inflation, which is becoming a problem in many states. Aleksandr Kurbaty, the Chairman of the High-Tech Park's Expert Council, believes that Belarus should not rush to introduce its own national cryptocurrency, "Blockchain is the heart of cryptocurrency and it requires research — as with any other technology. Our country has chosen the right path. As part of the pilot projects of the High-Tech Park and the National Bank, we are experimenting with fragments of a possible future digital currency, evaluating its technological and regulatory aspects. I don't think we'll be leaders in the development of the cryptoindustry, but we can still have a part in it. Primarily, it's important to observe the world's experience, but keep our fingers on the pulse all the time. Moreover, digital money is a much broader concept than cryptocurrency. In the future, blockchain can be upgraded and, when integrated with artificial intelligence, form a completely new product."

ECONOMY

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### The first specialised store of products made from Belarusian linen opens in Tokyo



The Ambassador of Belarus to Japan, Ruslan Yesin, attended the opening ceremony of a store selling products and clothes made from Belarusian linen. "Belarusian flax can be increasingly seen in Japanese homes, offices, and wardrobes, and the opening of a specialised store will make it possible to use the potential of the distribution network along with the opportunity to purchase through electronic platforms. In 2019, more than \$250,000 of Belarusian linen fabrics were delivered to the Japanese market," added Mr. Yesin.

The Belarusian Embassy explained that this is the first specialised store in Tokyo, which offers a wide assortment of products from the Orsha Flax Mill and its Japanese partner, NBR.

### Irish company intends to build a solar power station in Pinsk

Irish Pure Energy, which already has successful experience in this area in several cities of Belarus, intends to implement the investment project.

The share of local fuels in the fuel and energy balance of Pinsk is almost 70 percent. The challenge is to switch



to alternative energy sources. Water energy is already being used in the city: Dneprobugvodput enterprise is operating a small-capacity hydroelectric power station built on locks. Solar collectors are next in line. The project is currently being analysed and detailed in order to determine the power of the photovoltaic station. It can generate 4 to 12 megawatts of electricity. Depending on the outcome, the investor declares its readiness to invest from 5m to 12m Euros in the project.

### The National Museum of Art begins broadcasting excursions online

They take place on weekends, being conducted by best art historians of the country. Without leaving a house, one can watch a documentary about the history of the museum *Home Where Arts Live* and get acquainted with *50 Masterpieces* while joining online broadcasts of the events. A curatorial tour of Yekaterina Isifatova took place dedicated to the exhibition, entitled *They Will Understand Us in 100 Years*. Lazar Khidekel, alongside Georgy Zaborsky's lecture *The Space of Utopia*, as part of the same exhibition.



Moreover, new virtual exhibitions are also functioning on the National Art Museum's website, enabling to get acquainted with the work of such famous Belarusian artists of the 20th century, as A.A. Astapovich, V.V. Volkov, N.M. Voronov, and M.P. Stanyuta.

### Tickets in the style of Suprematism will appear in Vitebsk

What happens if we cross public transport and high art? 'Stylish streets' are confidently predicted in the northern capital of Belarus. Back in 2016, trams and trolleybuses painted with sketches by Kazimir Malevich and Nina Kogan began to run through Vitebsk. These 'masterpieces on wheels' not only delight the locals, but also attract tourists from all over the world. Since May of this year, anyone can take a piece of transport Suprematism with them. Vitebskoblavtotrans has developed a new type of ticket. Their decoration is a composition of geometric figures based on the works of Kazimir Malevich. The signature of the famous avant-garde artist is easily seen in the bright stripes and circles. Tickets will go on sale soon.



The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
March 26  
2020

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# Guys are in perfect form!

## Lighter and more durable: new lifeguard combat clothing will arrive in the Ministry for Emergency Situations' divisions this year

By Inna Gorbatenko

A lifeguard should be as mobile as possible, and clothing plays a key role in this. Ergonomic, comfortable and at the same time with protective functions — the requirements for rescue equipment are high. The new form, developed at the Research Institute of Fire Safety and Emergencies of the Ministry for Emergency Situations, fully corresponds to them. Compared with the uniforms used today, it surpasses all indicators several times.

### Know-how

Centre employees are developing the latest lightweight models of rescue equipment, introducing new technologies and increasing its protective abilities. It's understandable, as combat clothing should protect firefighter-rescuers from high temperatures, flames and other unpleasant surprises.

When developing new clothes, special attention was paid to its weight. Full combat equipment of a firefighter, along with a helmet, shoes and additional equipment, which are used today in fire departments, weighs about 25kg, with combat clothing weighing about 4.5kg. With such 'baggage', a lifeguard works in an environment not suitable for breathing. Using the latest technologies, specialists of the Scientific Research Centre have managed to reduce the weight of combat clothing to 3.3kg.

The new form is produced from Belarusian materials. It has four layers. The material of the top is resistant to open fire and flame. Under it lies a waterproofing membrane so that the clothes are not wet. A little lower is a heat-insulating layer that protects against heat flow. The fourth layer is the binder, able to absorb and evaporate excess moisture. Thus, the new form does not pass water from the outside, but

'breathes' from the inside due to the steam and drainage functions. It's very convenient during long combat work.

"The thickness of all four layers is about 5 millimetres. They are combined in such a way that this is enough to protect the firefighter during work at an emergency site. New combat clothing does not burn, does not even smolder in rooms with temperatures up to 300 degrees, enabling a rescuer to touch surfaces heated to 400 degrees," said Sergei Astashov, who heads the Scientific Research Centre at the Research Institute of Fire Safety and Emergencies of the Ministry for Emergency Situations.

The new form, although it has become lighter, has retained all the characteristics inherent in combat equipment.

### Peculiarities

The location and design of the pockets became more rational, the number of reflective and light-accumulating elements increased, with reinforced lining made of heat-resistant material appearing on the knees and elbows. One more advantage is a three-piece sleeve; this has not been done before. Now it's more convenient for a rescuer to carry out emergency rescue operations. He is not constrained in his movements, since it is speed that often affects safety and efficiency. Moreover, with the hands raised up, the new uniform does not bulge, that is, a safe gap between the trousers and the jacket is maintained.

The development has already successfully passed a series of laboratory tests. Now a new form is being tested in practice by several fire departments of Minsk, with rescuers evaluating development exclusively positively.

The Scientific Research Centre has developed not only a combat uniform, but also shoe, made entirely of genuine leath-

er. The sole is attached not to glue, as in ordinary shoes, but is poured on a special machine, increasing their service life.

"We carry out systematic work so that all personal protective equipment for the firefighter-rescuer are of domestic production. Our task was to make a rescuer as easy and fast as possible. More than 2,500 copies of shoes have already been dispatched to the Ministry for Emergency Situations. Later technologies changed, the metal was replaced with a Kevlar insole, and the metal toe cap was replaced with a composite one. Now new shoes weigh only 1.8kg," says Mr. Astashov, while demonstrating us a sample. "This is comparable to the weight of the combat

boots, in which rescuers are on duty. By the way, the new anti-perforation insole withstands a load of 120 kilograms per 1sq.cm."

Shoes are made in two versions: shoes with zipper and boots. The shoes do not use ordinary shoelaces, but tightening rings, enabling to more accurately fit the shoes to the size of one's own feet and not worry that the shoelaces will suddenly untie. Another advantage of new shoes is that they don't get wet within an hour.

We are talking about one more integral element of rescue equipment: a helmet. According to Mr. Astashov, helmets of foreign manufacture, which had no analogues in the country, are still purchased. The new helmet is completely Belarusian-made: from top accessories to internal equipment. It weighs only 1.5kg (which is 300 grams lighter than its 'peers'!). The helmet is made of fiberglass, with the emblem of the Ministry for Emergency Situations being applied on its top. It can be equipped with additional equipment — a flashlight, a helmet-mounted headset and an action camera. This helmet looks cool! By the way, it's the video from the rescuer's camera that often helps shed light on the circumstances of the incident and analyse the combat work. Today, more than 3,000 copies of new helmets have been successfully operated in units of the Ministry.

In conclusion, Mr. Astashov said that the combat clothing samples developed at the Research Institute this year will be put into mass production. Then they will go into service with the fire departments. An important factor is the price of new equipment. It is 2.5-3 times cheaper than foreign analogues, while at the same time it is not inferior to them, and in some respects even significantly superior.



Yury Mozolevsky

Scientific Research Centre specialists have managed to reduce the weight of military clothing to 3.3kg

# Mom's House opens in Minsk

By Irina Sergeeva

According to the author and project manager — Tatiana Shchuko, it took almost a year and a half from the idea to the opening. Mom's House aims to provide an opportunity for every woman on maternity leave to develop, recover and, most importantly, to do this without interrupting caring for the child. Special attention is paid to the needs of mothers of under one's.

The project implements the 'self-mother' philosophy of modern mothers which gives a woman the moral right not to choose but to successfully combine self-development and motherhood and gives a child the opportunity to get to know their mother through immersion in her daily life.

"After my first baby was born, I felt what it means to be in social isolation," Tatiana Shchuko admits. "I decided it wasn't a good lifestyle for me." It appears there are many such mothers and, with this in mind,

## Co-working, open space and educational centre for women on maternity leave: Mom's House opens in the capital



I've united them in the *Mom's Movement* project; we gathered with our children, danced and performed on outdoor platforms as part of it. Sometime later, thematic meetings, lectures, marathons, brunches and mother's picnics were added and we

discussed topics interesting to both a mother and a woman. During this time, we held about 200 events and realised that we need our own venue — Mom's House, where women can come with babies and simply breathe, getting support from other

mothers and paying attention to themselves."

Funds for the project were raised by parents of Belarus and abroad on the Uley crowdfunding platform and over 400 people financially supported the idea.

Mom's House offers moth-

ers yoga classes and coaching sessions. Women are invited to participate in the speaking club, master classes in macrame and knitting, and style fundamentals. Some rooms can be rented for family celebrations and corporate events.

There are plans to set up classes on etiquette and for pregnant women, to launch a Mom's Start-up business accelerator, to organise mom's dances, open a book club and help women recover after childbirth.

Children, in turn, can try music, play in a performance, pass a master class on painting gingerbread. In the future, they are expected to be offered courses in acting, modelling, baby gymnastics and child development.

For families, group meetings with a psychologist are planned, as well as film screenings and holidays.

Actually, Mom's House will be happy to welcome not only mothers with children but also fathers, grannies, granddads and other family members.



# About the beauty and uniqueness of our native land

Belarus has shot the first documentary about wildlife suitable in format for screening in a movie theatre. The film describes a unique place — the Turov meadow of the Pripyat where hundreds of thousands of birds, including very rare ones, stop during migration. Producer Aleksandr Myshalov tells us about the shooting process and work on the original project.

By Svetlana Savelieva

The *Big Bird Transit. Station Turov Meadow* film opens with a series of 10 films about the wildlife of Belarus. The Pripyat floodplain meadow was chosen for filming because it is a special place; only a few of its kind have preserved in Europe. It is important for bird migration as they stop here to rest after a long flight and continue their journey to the north.

“If you come to this meadow in February or September, you’ll face the most boring view. However, in May, there are simultaneously about 200-300,000 birds here!” says Mr. Myshalov.

This is the place chosen for nesting by such rare species as the great snipe, terek sandpiper, squatarole and black-tailed godwit. The birds are extremely cautious and even just to see them in their natural conditions is great luck, not to mention taking pictures on camera. During the migration period, many foreigners come to the Turov meadow. They spend days on end in specially equipped ‘hides’ in order to catch in the frame, for example, the morodunka — a very rare small bird with a characteristic long curved beak. “Dutch birdwatchers were sitting there, trying to capture the double snipes’ mating calls. They waited for three days but saw none. They went away but, after we arrived, the birds suddenly appeared,” said the producer, sharing the story of

the shooting process.

“Filming wildlife takes great time and effort. It’s easier for photographers: they simply need to wait for an animal or a bird to take a picture. This isn’t enough for us. We need to capture a moment when it is doing something interesting, when it’s staying in a nest or making mating calls. It’s impossible to film it just walking for an hour. We are also unable to force it to act,” he continues.

The creative team, with the active assistance of the APB-Birdlife Belarus public organisation spent a considerable time on location to collect enough material. They were lucky: the Turov meadow was shot in the spring of 2018 and, in spring 2019, it was almost empty — because of the weather (drought, and then rains), there was no nesting.

In addition to the story about birds, the film also touches on an important social theme — the need to preserve floodplain meadows. This task is relevant for many European countries, including Belarus, as



recently these meadows have not been used for agriculture and have become overgrown with shrubs. To prevent this process, they are trying to resume grazing and haymaking. For example, 15 aurochs (Hake bulls) that were brought to Belarus under a UNDP project were recently brought to the Srednaya Pripyat Reserve.

Each film of the cycle lasts for an hour, and this is not just a review story but a separate dramaturgical work. These are three films about the large migration of birds that live in the Turov meadow, Novolukoml Lake and the Belarusian swamps. The first of them will be shown in the spring. The rest will premiere within a year. We are also working on films about bison and deer.

“Films, animalistic, of course, were shot in Belarus before,” the producer said. “But no one has ever prepared such films for screening in a cinema.” All the pictures from the series about wild nature were shot in the necessary 4K resolution for a large movie screen and accompanied by Dolby Digital 5.1 sound.

“I am sure that the films will contribute to the development of internal and external tourism, and will also benefit Belarusians both in the educational and cognitive sense, and in the matter of ideology — love for the Motherland and understanding the beauty and uniqueness of the native land,” Mr. Myshalov adds.

## How many pearls are there in Polesie?

By Olga Valchenko

### Eleventh grader from Gomel has created a unique guide to her native land

A pupil of secondary school No. 66 of the regional centre, Darya Kukharenska, has worked on a vibrant album with a story about the sights of the Gomel Region for three years. The results of Darya’s painstaking work were evaluated at the highest level: the girl twice became a laureate of the Prize of the Special Fund of the President of the Republic of Belarus for Social Support for Gifted Pupils and Students.

To describe the most interesting places, famous and little known architectural monuments, she has covered hundreds of kilometres. The result was worth it: a large-scale study dedicated to the Year of the Native Land was published in three languages. Darya became enthusiastic about the topic of popularising her native land three years ago, during a school trip.

“We were walking around Gomel park and its environs and stumbled upon the St. Ilya Church — a wooden building of the 18th century. We became interested in it as everyone seems to be local, but no one has ever been to this temple. It turned out that it belongs to the Russian Orthodox Old Believer Church and is the oldest surviving Old Believer church in Belarus.”

Under the guidance of geography teacher Nina Lyamtseva and senior lec-

turer at the Geology and Geography Department at Francysk Skaryna Gomel State University, Tatiana Flerko, curious Dasha began to explore the cult wooden architecture of the Gomel Region.

To collect detailed information, she has travelled across the entire region. To capture the churches of Polesie alone, they had to cover about 700km. The original buildings in Turov, Yelsk, Yampol, Petrikov and other settlements have become part of three tourist routes.

Darya’s project was awarded a 3rd degree diploma of the Republican competition of research works among schoolchildren. A year later, she has already claimed a victory: this time for the study of the ancient estates of the Gomel Region. The pupil stresses, “I wanted not just to remember popular places like the Kozel-Poklevsky possessions in the Zhlobin District. The main task is to show the

tourist potential and other interesting places, e.g., the once magnificent Boguslavsky folk farm in Gomel, the remaining fragments of the Yastrzhemsky estate in the Khoyniki District or that of Gorvat in Narovlya.”

Researchers, Dasha and her curator-teachers took into account logistics, infrastructure and the historical value of objects. Based on this, they created potential tourist routes. Geographer Nina Ivanovna gives an example of one of them, “We start with the Boguslavsky folk farm, then we go to the Khaletsky family estate in the village of Khalch, Timofei Groshnikov’s house in Vetka, we then examine the Dobrush Paper Mill’s manor and industrial complex, and the merchant’s house in Ogorodnya-Gomelskaya village before finishing the tour with Duke Paskevich’s hunting lodge in Korenevka. The latter, according to our surveys, arouses the greatest interest, despite the fact that so far it can only be seen from the outside; the building itself, a monument of architecture, is given over to the office of a forest base.”

Dasha is mostly worried about the Khaletsky estate, “This is a real early 19th century palace, built in the late classical style. The most beautiful building on the high bank of the river is now in disrepair. Nearby is a picturesque park. I really want the estate to be restored, as we can’t lose this part of our history.”

In the meantime, in order to increase the popularity of the tourist pearls of the region, the school has created an information site and released a photo album about manors and parks in three languages, with Dasha also writing an English presentation with the help of her teachers. The schoolgirl is certain that the Gomel Region has something to surprise even sophisticated tourists while locals and youth of the region surely boast something to be proud of.



Ivan Yarinovich

INSIDE

The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
March 26  
2020

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## First coronavirus vaccine trials begin

Trial to explore possible life-saving treatments, says global health body's head

The first vaccine trial for the deadly coronavirus has begun, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Head said. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted the trial began 'just 60 days after the genetic sequence of the virus was shared by China'.

While the trial is a milestone, health officials say it will take at least 12 to 18 months for a vaccine to be available for public use.

At the virtual news conference held at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Tedros praised the researchers around the world who he said are acting together 'to systemically evaluate

experimental therapeutics'.

"Multiple small trials with different methodologies may not give us the clear, strong evidence we need about which treatments help to save lives," he said.

It was for this reason that the WHO and its partners were organising a study in countries in which some of the untested treatments are compared with each other.

Countries that have confirmed they will join the 'solidarity trial' include Argentina, Bahrain, Canada, France, Iran, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Swit-

zerland, and Thailand.

"We know that many countries now face escalating epidemics and are feeling overwhelmed," said Tedros noting that there is also hope.

Countries could do many things such as physical distancing measures — like cancelling sporting events, concerts, and other large gatherings which can help slow transmission of the virus.

They can reduce the burden on the health system and help make epidemics manageable, allowing targeted and focused measures.

"But to suppress and control epidemics, countries must isolate, test, treat and trace," Tedros cautioned. "If they don't, transmission chains can continue at a low level, then resurge once physical distancing measures are lifted."

He said that the WHO continues to recommend that isolating, testing and treating every suspected case, and tracing every contact, must be the backbone of the response in every country.

"This is the best hope of preventing widespread community transmission," said Tedros.

## WHO fully supports measures taken in Belarus against the spread of coronavirus



The World Health Organisation supports the actions of the Health Ministry of Belarus on early detection of the virus, monitoring contacts, their isolation and professional assistance to patients. This is stated in a letter sent to Vladimir Karanik by the Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, Dr. Hans Kluge.

"I'm especially concerned about the menacing and rapid spread of coronavirus infection in the European region," Dr. Kluge wrote. "WHO calls on all countries to intensify their efforts, using a combination of evidence-based public health measures to contain the disease and control its spread, which is crucial in Europe. In this respect, we would like to express our full support and solidarity regarding the measures taken in Belarus against COVID-19."

At the same time, Dr. Kluge noted high professionalism of the Health Ministry of Belarus. "In particular, I'd like to emphasise the professional approach of the Health Ministry of Belarus in responding to this emergency, including early detection of COVID-19 infections, tracking contacts, isolation and patient care. These measures are extremely important to stop transmission and prevent the spread of coronavirus infections. Within this regard, I highly appreciate your active efforts to ensure regular and open informing of the population about the development of the situation and the measures taken. We're also grateful to Belarus for openness in the exchange of information and timely reporting, in accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005), which helps us better understand the nature and course of this epidemic and co-ordinate global responses," the letter reads.

The Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe stressed that the approach of the Health Ministry of Belarus is fully consistent with WHO recommendations, and all measures are adopted, taking into account the development of the epidemiological situation and adequate assessment of existing risks.

## Van Dyck painting stolen from University of Oxford gallery

A work by 17th century master Anthony Van Dyck is among three 'very high value' paintings stolen from a University of Oxford Art Gallery



*A Soldier On Horseback* by the Flemish artist, a leading court painter in England under King Charles I, dates from around 1616. Two other works were stolen from Christ Church Picture Gallery, St. Aldates.

Police said a 'thorough investigation' was under way to recover the paintings.

The burglars also made off with *A Boy Drinking* (c. 1580) by Annibale Carracci, and *A Rocky Coast, With Soldiers Studying a Plan* (late 1640s) by Salvator Rosa.

A Christ Church College spokesman said staff had initially alerted police to the theft of the 'important cultural artefacts', and the gallery will be closed until further notice.

Detective Chief Inspector John Capps, from Thames Valley Police, said, "The paintings which have been stolen are very high value pieces dating back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The artwork has not yet been recovered but a thorough investigation is under way to find it and bring those responsible to justice." He added there would be an increased police presence in the area, and that any witnesses or anyone with CCTV or other footage from near the area should get in touch.



## Venice's famously-polluted canals clear as tourists stay away

Like all Italians, Venetians have spent recent days in lockdown, mostly confined to their homes as Italy reels from the coronavirus pandemic

But for residents of the world-famous city — built around a network of canals — there has been a slither of a silver lining: the water in Venice's famously congested waterways is the cleanest it has been for years.

On the Facebook page, Venicia Pulita, residents have shared videos and images of the canals, free of the thousands of tourist boats that usually ply the waterways on a daily basis.

Once upon a time, residents of Venice would swim in the lagoon waters, but the onset of mass tourism and the correspond-

ing increase in boat traffic in recent decades has made it rare.

A report from the European Parliament in February 2019 described the levels of both air and water pollution in Venice 'worrying', blaming unregulated boats with diesel marine engines.

But while it may look pretty, the Venice Mayor's Office explained that the change is not actually due to improved water quality. "The water now looks clearer because there is less traffic on the canals, allowing the sediment to stay at the bottom," a spokesman said. "It's because there is less boat traffic that usually brings sediment to the top of the water's surface."

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



# The most inspiring folk project

A mouse eye-view and rockers' paintings:  
some reasons to visit the *I'm Monet, I'm Shishkin, I'm Malevich* exhibition

By Irina Ovsepyan

**Open participation for all, festival of colours, audience voting and an indescribable holiday feeling reign at the National Centre of Contemporary Arts which hosts the *I'm Monet, I'm Shishkin, I'm Malevich* all-Belarus exhibition for the fourth time**

"This year, we have more than 500 artists, each has brought one work. The single selection criteria that we accept is compliance with the law; otherwise, artists are absolutely free in their choice," explains one of the organisers of the popular exhibition, Dmitry Popov. "We deliberately don't separate professional and amateur painters, the capital and regions, children and adults. This is the key: to create a common space for all. We are glad that every year famous artists like Andrey Plesanov and one of the best Belarusian landscape painters, Nikolay Isaenok, take part in the exhibition along with amateurs."

**Among the participants, there are completely unexpected artists. It appears that a guitarist with the popular 'NIZKIZ' rock band, Leonid Nesteruk, has an art education and actually belongs to a circle of musical professionals: the 'Taming of the**

**Bison' panel on the facade of the 1st workshop of the Karamin Plant was his diploma work at the Academy of Arts. Moreover, Mr. Nesteruk has been participating in national exhibitions for several years.**

This time, Leonid has presented his *Battle* picture. His canvas painted with acrylic



The purpose aims to create a common creative space, explains organiser Dmitry Popov

paints features an image of the school notebook sheet, with carefully crossed out red fields: this is the 'war' that all boys used to draw. His deliberately clumsy figurines, airplanes and tanks are drawn in a child's manner; through them, the author addresses us with a pow-

erful pacifist statement: our grandfathers fought in the Great Patriotic War to ensure that war remains only in boys' drawings.

"Interestingly, none of the professional artists has realised that it's very cool modern art," Dmitry Popov is perplexed. "However, the author's philosophy is simple: it's the only war that I've experienced

and in which I participated. It's only needed to add: thank God!"

All the exhibition works are numbered so that the artists don't overwhelm newcomers with prominent names. If someone wants to learn about an author, they can simply look at the catalogue, while the visitors are invit-

ed to vote for their three favourite works. The winner of the audience vote will be presented with a personal exhibition at a National Centre of Contemporary Arts' hall as part of the future project. This year, it was Sergey Grinevich, from Grodno, who showed his work there. The hall allocated to his paintings will have enough

space to feature large format canvases depicting the path of Christ: from the Last Supper to the crucifixion on Calvary.

"Sergey Grinevich is a professional and popular artist who has many interesting projects," Mr. Popov comments. "He likes working with unusual angles and

looking at things 'with a mouse's eye' — as he calls it. For example, the classic plot of the Last Supper is revealed completely unexpectedly in his painting: while looking at the feast of Jesus and the apostles from behind, we are becoming participants in the action."

Last year, the *I'm Monet, I'm Shishkin, I'm Malevich* exhibition was attended by over 5,000 people; its popularity was an object of envy for many museum projects. People come here not only for art but also for spiritual comfort: they are not afraid to look ignorant, not versed in art, against the background of experts. In a huge exhibition, the simple is easily and organically intertwined with the complex, and the clear — with the thought-provoking. Specialists will also not feel bored as the project gives a stunning slice of popular culture, existing side by side with the academic: close to bouquets of sunflowers or poppies, we can see portraits of the Joker or the characters of *Game of Thrones*, photographic landscapes and a Mona Lisa in an embroidered dress with a bouquet of cornflowers. The latter is a ready print for a T-shirt.

The panoramic exhibition project has already started its work in Minsk and invites all to enjoy the results of work by professional artists and amateurs from all over the country until April 26th.

*6am, Americano Coffee* a play by writer and playwright Vlada Olkhovskaya was included in the top ten at the prestigious international competition *Authors on Stage!* The winner is entitled to half a million Russian Roubles (more than \$7,000) for the production, and this is the first time that the author from Belarus has been among the winners.

By Irina Ovsepyan

**What about the prize? Is it given to the author, so that they themselves can look for a director, or how is it organised?**

All winning plays are posted on the website of the National Association of Dramatists. Theatres (from all regions of Russia, except Moscow and St. Petersburg) submit applications and receive a budget. In this way, at the same time it's a support programme for non-capital theatres, for whom half a million Roubles for staging is really big money, enabling them to make high-quality scenery and invite any director they like.

**Tell us about the play... Have you worked on it for a long time?**

It turned out to be a very curious play. I'm a person who is inspired by positivity. There are people who need to be criticised so that they show what they are capable of. I'm the other way around: if I'm praised, I will move mountains. Many warn me

not to be conceited, but I don't work that way. When they praise me, it's as if I've been given a credit of trust and I need to try and prove that they didn't make a mistake. After the premiere of the *'Trickster Club'* in May, they showed me the theatre from the inside, everyone was behind the scenes, I talked with the actors and they turned out to be not only good artists, but also cool people. And I realised: I needed to do everything to get back on the scene again, so that my work is once again interesting! The idea of the play evolved like a mosaic, piece by piece, but against the backdrop of positive communication with the troupe, everything suddenly came together — and I literally wrote the draft of *'6am, Americano Coffee'* within a night. The play has many ideas that excite me: for example, the continuity of life. A person lives not just to learn, get a job, get married, save up for an apartment — one needs to take something from every day, find something good in it. There are not many characters,

## 6am, Americano coffee



**Young Belarusian writer Vlada Olkhovskaya is familiar, firstly, to fans of the detective genre, as her criminal thrillers are successful among readers. However, those keen on theatre have warmly welcomed Vlada's debut as a playwright this spring: her play *'Trickster Club'* was staged at the Belarusian State Youth Theatre and enjoys constant full houses.**

but everyone should open up - I always rely on artists. I re-read what I wrote and it turned out it wasn't bad! I decided to submit an application for the *'Authors on Stage!'* competition. Firstly, the jury is very serious and the main criterion is the quality of the text, and secondly, the fact that the winner's work provides a certain future attracted me.

**The jury, of course, is brilliant: prose writer and playwright Yuri Polyakov, Director of the Moscow Art Theatre Aleksandr Dmitriev, Chief Director of the Theatre on Pokrovka, Gennady Shaposhnikov, writer Tatiana Moskvina, founder of the Modern Theatre Svetlana Vragova...**

I was scared when I saw this list, I almost changed my mind about sending the play. But then I decided it was necessary!

**Were there many applications?**

More than 300 from 17 countries, and each author could send only one piece. The first bit of good news was when I reached the longlist. After a while, a shortlist was announced. I didn't think I would go any further as there were such celebrities as Nina Sadur and Lyudmila Ulitskaya, as well as many experienced and successful playwrights already working at theatres. Among the winners, I'm probably the only person who has very little experience.

**And what about your debut performance of *Trickster Club* at the Youth Theatre?**

I saw it in May and in December: these are two different plays. The artists opened up, adding their own acting moves. They are so talented; I look at them and think: how do you guys

do this? You always hope that the actors and director will enjoy working with your material. But it seems to me that when the audience gives them a standing ovation, they really deserve it.

**A classic question about future plans ...**

I know for sure that I'm not going to stop writing plays.

**What about detectives? Have you abandoned them in the wake of your success in drama?**

Books are still published, it's just now that it's hard to see against the background of all the theatre-related events going on. The novel, entitled *'The Last Matador Exit'* is the fifth in a series of psychological thrillers; in just a few days it became a bestseller. I'm waiting for the release of the audiobook, which we did together with the Swedish company.

# Paradise is where there's bread!



Valentina Gotovchits and Stepanida Stepanyuk

The tradition of making buckwheat bread in the Malorita District has gained the status of historical and cultural value

In the Malorita District's Doropeevichi village, people eat 'grechanik' — a buckwheat bread — both when fasting and on holidays. The tradition of its production in these areas was recently officially included in the State List of Historical and Cultural Values of Belarus as an intangible manifestation of human creativity. According to the original recipe, buckwheat bread is baked in many villages of the district. In one of them, our correspondent touched on the mystery of cooking.

By Valentina Kozlovich

In the Malorita District's Doropeevichi village, people eat 'grechanik' — a buckwheat bread — both when fasting and on holidays. The tradition of its production in these areas was recently officially included in the State List of Historical and Cultural Values of Belarus as an intangible manifestation of human creativity. According to the original recipe, buckwheat bread is baked in many villages of the district. In one of them, our correspondent touched on the mystery of cooking.

## Kneading the dough in the evening

To find the recipe we went to the village of Doropeevichi to visit Valentina Gotovchits. It was she who brought the buckwheat bread for tasting to the Ministry of Culture. Stepanida Stepanyuk — the guardian of rituals, national weaving master of Belarus and the holder of the 'Honorary Citizen of the Malorita District' title — volunteered to help her daughter Valentina.

"Did everyone like your bread in Minsk?" I ask.

Valentina smiles, "They must if I returned home with a good result."

Valentina Gotovchits has worked for twenty years as an agronomist on the farm and explains why villagers prefer buckwheat bread, "From time immemorial, buckwheat on our lands yielded a better crop than wheat. Therefore, it was sown."

Nevertheless, Valentina still adds bought wheat flour into the dough while she herself grinds the buckwheat flour. She doesn't make it on the millstones, of course, but using modern technology. However, the flour must be coarse, so that buckwheat pieces are visible in the finished bread.

The process consists of four main stages: preparation of the dough, proving, kneading and baking. The first three tasks were already done by Stepanida before our arrival in the evening.

"Eggs, yeast, homemade whey, as well as buttermilk, are added to the dough, but during the fasting we can only knead the dough using water. We knead in the evening, allowing it to stand and become more

Buckwheat bread, recognised as a cultural heritage of the country, is baked everywhere in the Malorita District: in Gvoznitsa, Grushka, Brodyatin, Zburazh and many other villages



## Ingredients for buckwheat bread

Buckwheat flour, wheat flour of the first or highest grade (proportion optional), water (it can be either whey or buttermilk) and 50g of grated yeast.

Everything is stirred until it's like thick sour cream and put in a warm place for 7-8 hours. After that, add 50g of yeast, 200g of sour cream, one egg, salt to taste and flour to the desired consistency of the dough. Then it's necessary to knead for 40 minutes so that the dough does not stick to your hands. We leave the dough for 1-2 hours. We lay out the finished dough in greased forms and bake in the oven at 180 degrees.

acid. In the morning we knead it again so the excess air comes out, and then let it stand for two more hours. My mother and I have different recipes, I feel that this time she was experimenting," notes Valentina, worrying about the result and inviting us to her parents' house, where Stepanida has already heated the stove and the 'grubka' (a masonry stove).

Millet porridge and 'draniki' (potato pancakes) are languishing in the 'grubka', with firewood burning out in the stove. The windows have woven curtains and the floor is covered with home-made throw rugs. On the walls are handmade carpets.

In the middle of the room there's a hand weaving loom. It's not a house — it's a museum!

We enter. The hostess tipped the bowl with the dough towards the 'grubka'. She raised the rushnik and saw that the dough had risen, so we arrived just on time — it's high time for the dough to go to the oven.

But no rush! Valentina reads a prayer, crosses herself and the dough, and only afterwards lays out a thick mass onto the oiled sheet. She opens the flap, rakes the heat out of the crucible with a 'kotsyuba' (coal rake) and puts the bread in ... We have 40 minutes to talk while the buckwheat is baked.

hasn't ever forgotten weaving. When we began to revive folk crafts, we turned to her. Stepanida restored the old way of weaving the 'kozhushek' pattern and became famous after seventy years!" Lyudmila Begeza, a methodologist of the Malorita District Methodological Centre for Cultural and Educational Work, joins our conversation.

Stepanida believes that she has a specific mission, "I'm 85 years old, I've lived longer than my father and my mother, because I had to remember the 'kozhushek' pattern but I still need to recollect the 'frog's glasses' pattern!"

Stepanida Stepanyuk initiated the opening of a weaving club for children, and Valentina Gotovchits heads it today. Soon the house of folklore will appear in Doropeevichi. The local farm is repairing the house on the main street, after which it will be transferred to the department of culture for this purpose.

Time passed quickly between stories and recollections, and Stepanida Alekseevna realised that it was time to get the bread out of the oven. We cut it and eat. It's delicious: hot and aromatic. With homemade dried sausage, jellied meat, potatoes with crackling, with soaked tomatoes — you can imagine nothing better for a dinner!

The bread has many different names: 'grechanik', bread with holes, 'baba', buckwheat bread. Some add potatoes to flour, some — cooked millet or black onion seeds while others even pour two or three drops of homemade cognac.

Stepanida wouldn't admit what she'd experimented with. "Throw a log into the stove, it shouldn't be empty!" she reminds her daughter of the ritual to never leave the stove empty and invites us to the table ...

## From mother to daughter, from daughter to granddaughter

Mother and her daughter are neighbours, with their houses standing nearby, divided only by a fence. They run a common small farm, as Stepanida says: a cow, three pigs, four sheep, hens, a dog, a cat, 40 hectares of land, a car, a T-40 tractor ...

"My sons help to slaughter and butcher the hog, I milk the cow and I also plough the field myself on the tractor," Valentina laughs, seeing my eyes go wider.

The skill of weaving and baking bread is transferred in the family along the female line. From Stepanida to Valentina, the next, probably, will be the oldest great-granddaughter of Baba Stepa, Dasha. Or maybe Dasha's two younger sisters will sit at the 'krosny' (a hand weaving loom) and learn how to bake bread.

"Stepanida Stepanyuk is a living legend of the Malorita District, but all her life she worked on a farm or as a seamstress in a tailor's shop. She

## THE MT REFERENCE

Following the results of the February meeting at the Culture Ministry, the State List of Historical and Cultural Values of Belarus was expanded with the technology and tradition of baking homemade bread in the village of Zhorovka and the village of Kuzmichi, of the Minsk District's Lyuban District. The traditions of baking a wedding loaf in Volkovysk, Slonim and Ivanovo districts were previously recognised as cultural values.



# Yamakasi from the neighbouring yard

By Tatiana Pastushenko

## How is parkour developing in Belarus?

*Yamakasi* and *District 13*. If you've ever watched these films, you probably know what parkour is. An extreme occupation for young people, based on overcoming various obstacles and performing tricks using everything that catches their eye — railings, parapets, etc. — has now become an officially recognised sport. Together with other gymnastic disciplines, it is one of those promoted by the International Gymnastics Federation. This year, the first world championship under the auspices of FIG is planned in Japanese Hiroshima. Should we expect a debut by Belarusian athletes on the world stage and how is parkour developing in our country?

## The first wave

The first wave of parkour development in Belarus occurred in the 2000s. Films about the sport were released, inspiring hundreds of boys pouring onto the streets to repeat what they saw on the screens. One of them was Denis Saperov, "I grew up in Mogilev. When the film *Yamakasi* was released, we still didn't know that there was such a thing as parkour. But together with other guys we made T-shirts with the name, put together a team and started running around the streets in search of adventures. In 2005-2007, in Mogilev, we organised the first festivals, and after that other young people picked up the idea. After a couple of years, I moved to Minsk and trained here."

A gymnastic past helped Denis to do various tricks: he had been engaged in the sport from the age of four and left it being accomplished at the sport. Furthermore, he once worked as a stuntman. Nevertheless, according to Denis Saperov, despite parkour being an extreme sport, one of its main principles is safety.

"This is one of the criteria for evaluat-

ing the performance of athletes at competitions along with the accrual of points for complexity of elements, as well as composition and technical elements. There should not be desperate jumps. If they begin to be seen in this sport, this will lead to a huge level of injuries. Everyone understands this and judges will lower their grades for unjustified risk and the implementation of dangerous elements," explains Denis.



Denis Saperov (centre) was among the first to join parkour movement in Belarus and is now developing this sport

## Recognised sport

Two years ago, in Belarus, the Belarusian Gymnastics Association began to develop parkour. Denis Saperov is one of those who are currently working on promoting this new sport.

"So far, parkour has not been developed centrally in our country. Groups are now operating in Minsk and Gomel. Since September, we have planned to start teaching children parkour on the site of the Belarusian State University of Physical Culture. In the meantime, the guys who began to engage in this sport a long time ago are training on their own while following global trends and learning new elements.

In total, about 80-100 people are involved in parkour in Belarus. In order to come into this sport, Denis continues, in

fact, nothing is needed: only desire.

"I opened the first group in Minsk back in 2007. About 50 people came right away. Mostly they were teenagers who had nowhere to expend their energy and wanted to express themselves. When their parents came into the hall, they said: 'It's better to do things under supervision than on their own on the street'. You can't jump thoughtlessly, as this will lead to injuries,

so you need to thoroughly prepare for the implementation of each element."

## Rating oneself

A group of Belarusian 'parkour gymnasts' was preparing to perform at the World Cup in Hiroshima. This is not in fact the first world forum to be held in parkour, but previously they were unofficial. Denis says about the chances of Belarusians, "If, at the first World Championship, our guys played in the form in which they are now, they would have fought for the top three places. If we are able to perform at the World Cup this year, we believe we won't be last or first. Today the British, French, Spaniards, Germans and Russians are very strong at parkour. Nevertheless, our guys wouldn't embarrass themselves. It is im-

portant to go to such a tournament in order to understand what level we are at."

There are few applicants for the performance at the World Cup: Filipp Ageenko — one of our most experienced tracers helping to develop parkour in Belarus, Andrey Lenoï, Maksim Legenky, Ilya Volkov. They have experience of performing at national and foreign competitions. Now they are ready to conquer new peaks. Filipp teaches acrobatics for adults and assures us that it's never too late to take the first steps in parkour, "Of course, it would be great if we had a system so that we could educate children to show good results in the future; this is what we need to concentrate on now. In this sport, there are no age restrictions. In the USA, there are people who were engaged in parkour, and are now conducting classes for the elderly: they are taught to overcome obstacles, maintain their balance and to fall correctly. It's very useful."

## Perspective jumping

The guys hope that, in the future, this sport will be included in the Olympic programme. In the meantime, they are organising competitions in Belarus and are preparing to enter the world stage. Nikita Ostanin, an active athlete and one of the organisers of the tournaments, says that before they had specialised venues for extreme sports, it was much more difficult to do this: it was necessary to make an obstacle course for athletes while ensuring safety.

"It's important that a lot of people attend competitions. For example, in one of the last tournaments, about 50 adult athletes and 20 children participated. Parkour is now developing all over the world and in our country. It's no longer perceived abroad as a subculture or childishness: this is a serious new sport. I believe that in the coming years in Belarus it will also take a serious step forward," notes Nikita Ostanin.

# Without spectators and frugally

By Irina Sergeeva

## The ceremony of handing over the Olympic Flame to the organisers of the 2020 Games was held at the Panathenaic Stadium, where the first Olympic Games in modern history were held in 1896

Due to the recommendations of the authorities not to hold public events, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus, the celebration was held in a modest atmosphere without guests, spectators or a large circle of journalists.

The ceremony started at one of the oldest sports arenas in the world — the Panathenaic Stadium, with the participation of two Greek athletes: Katerina Stefanidi and Eleftherios Petrounias. They lit the torch on a special altar. The participants of the relay from the Japanese side — three time Olympic wrestling champion Saori Yoshida and three time Games winner, judoka Nomura



Tadahiro — were unable to travel to Greece.

Spiros Kapralos, the President of the Greek Olympic Committee and an IOC member, made a welcome speech, and Yoshiro Mori — the Chairman of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee — sent a video message.

Spyros Kapralos received the Olympic Flame from the 'chief priestess' played by actress Xanthi Georgiou and passed it to Naoko Imoto — a representative of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, a participant in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta who

works for UNICEF in Greece.

The torch for the 32nd Summer Olympics will be delivered to Japan in a specially made miner's lamp. The relay in Japan starts on March 26th and will pass through 858 cities and villages. The torch of the Games was lit on March 12th in Olympia. In 2018, the International Olympic Committee met the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee halfway and allowed the Olympic Flame to be lit not just one hundred days before the start of the Games, as is customary, but in advance, to coincide with the date of the tragic earthquake in 2011.

The first part of the relay was held in Greece from March 12th-13th and was shortened due to a large crowd of spectators. The right to open the relay was granted to 2016 Olympic champion Anna Korakaki (Greece) and 2004 Olympic marathon champion Mizuki Noguchi.

## ARENA

### FC BATE presents new logo

The management of the Borisov team has announced the redesign of the football club in a live online broadcast. The description of the new version says that the old BATE logo required 'major repairs' and redesigning to the level of 2020, when it is not just desirable to indicate its presence in the digital market — but necessary. At the same time, the design studio has kept the traditional colours of the club.



### European Football Championship postponed to 2021

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has postponed the 2020 European Championship due to the coronavirus pandemic. The tournament is expected to run from June 11th to July 11th, 2021. Previously, the championships of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, England, the Champions League and the Europa League,

as well as other tournaments were suspended due to the virus. The matches of the quarter-finals of the Belarus Cup were held according to the original schedule, the decision to postpone the start of the national championship has not yet been made.

The European Football Championship is being postponed for the first time in history. The 2020 event was scheduled to take place from June 12th to July 12th. In honour of the 60th anniversary of the first continental championship, the tournament was planned to be held in 12 cities of 12 countries: St. Petersburg, London, Munich, Baku, Rome, Bucharest, Dublin, Copenhagen, Bilbao, Glasgow, Budapest and Amsterdam. At the same time, the opening match of Euro 2020 between the national teams of Italy and Turkey was to be held in Rome.





## Photo of the week

Stalin's Line historical and cultural complex hosted a military-historical reconstruction of WWI battle — *Naroch Offensive Operation. Epilogue*

### EXHIBITIONS

**NATIONAL ART MUSEUM**  
20 Lenin Street  
Until 15<sup>th</sup> April. *We'll Be Understood in 100 Years: Lazar Khidekel*

**NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM**  
12 Karl Marks Street  
Until 31<sup>st</sup> March. *Young Talents of the Capital*

**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS**  
116 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> April. *Prototype of European Constitution*

**BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM**  
13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street  
Until 25<sup>th</sup> April. *Frantishek Bogushevish's Blessed Kushlyany*

**NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS**  
47 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> March. *Jazz! Cats! Spring!*

**NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS**  
3 Nekrasov Street  
Until 26<sup>th</sup> April. *I'm Monet; I'm Shishkin; I'm Malevich*  
Until 26<sup>th</sup> April. Personal exhibition of Sergey Grinevich

**GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY MUSEUM**  
8 Pobediteley Avenue  
Until 27<sup>th</sup> March. *Heirs of Great Victory*

**YANKA KUPALA LITERARY MUSEUM**  
4 Yanka Kupala Street  
Until 28<sup>th</sup> March. *Valeriana Zholtok: Passion for Life*

**TROITSKY SUBURB**  
7A Bogdanovich Street  
Until 26<sup>th</sup> July. *Live Exotics*

**GALLERY ARTEL**  
58/1-6 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 30<sup>th</sup> March. *Unknown Van Gogh*

**LIBRA**  
37 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
Until 7<sup>th</sup> April. *Sand and Blood: Francisco Goya and Pablo Picasso*  
Until 7<sup>th</sup> June. *Pop Art*

**MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY**  
15 Svobody Square  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> March. *Dreams of France*

**VLADISLAV GOLUBOK PARLOUR**  
14 Starovilenskaya Street  
Until 29<sup>th</sup> March. *Poetry of Embroidery*

### THEATRES

**BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS**  
1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square  
26.03. Tosca  
27.03. Creation of the World  
28.03. Figaro's Wedding / Night of opera arias and romances  
29.03. The Firebird / Scheherazade  
31.03. Miraculous Flute  
01.04. Sleeping Beauty  
02.04. Prince Igor

**MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE**  
5 Volodarsky Street  
28.03. Oscar and Pink Lady  
01.04. Hot Mothers  
02.04. Summer Cottage Residents

**YANKA KUPALA THEATRE**  
7 Engels Street  
26.03. Inspector  
27.03. Prudok Radio / Paulinka  
28.03. King Lear / Harvest  
29.03. Kalyady Night  
31.03. Evening / The First / Inspector  
01.04. Nobleman Zavalnya, or Belarus in Fantastic Stories  
02.04. People on Marshes

**CONTEMPORARY ART THEATRE**  
5 Oktyabrskaya Street  
27.03. House Upside Down  
28.03. Tartuffe  
29.03. #Itsdemocratiom

**BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE**  
44 Kropotkin Street  
26.03. The Mad Woman  
28.03. Wisdom Measurer  
29.03. Hunting for Self  
31.03. Suffering from Common Sense / Train  
01.04. Gender Tricks  
02.04. Doctor Raus' Career

**CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE**  
5 Frunze Street  
28.03. Luxurious Wedding  
01.04. Featherhead

**MUSICAL THEATRE**  
44 Myasnikov Street  
27.03 and 28.03. Truffaldino from Bergamo  
29.03. Cleopatra  
30.03. Dubrovsky  
31.03. Come In. Open ballet-phantaomagory  
01.04. Wedding in Malinovka  
02.04. Titanic

**YOUTH THEATRE**  
17 Kozlov Street  
26.03. Warsaw Melody  
27.03. Happy New Year!  
28.03. Vanyushin's Children  
29.03. Hotel of Two Worlds / Zhmurik  
31.03. Pieta / Sasha, Take Garbage Away  
01.04. Love of Three  
02.04. Gogol. Fatum