

Minsk High-Tech Park programmers at work

The advancement of the country is apparent

Belarus is an absolute leader within the CIS for developing information and communication technologies, according to the annual report on *Measuring the Information Society*, issued by the International Telecommunication Union

Diplomats talk, while life demands concrete solutions

Little was announced following the 'Normandy Four' talks in Minsk but much could be inferred, with participants appearing optimistic

By Nina Romanova

The French Minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, stated, "The mechanism of talks has not broken down altogether, which is the most important thing."

His Ukrainian colleague, Pavlo Klimkin, told Ukrainian journalists, "Today's meeting was held in Minsk, so let's not speculate on anything regarding other venues."

Frank-Walter Steinmeier, of Germany, urged modest expectations before flying to Minsk, but noted that he believed 'major progress' had been made regarding exchange of prisoners of war and an agreement to withdraw military equipment from another four points on the contact line.

The skeptical Russian Minister, Sergey Lavrov, noted his view that the meeting was 'positive', underlining that agreements secured by leaders went 'unchallenged'.

The ministers spoke briefly, following the diplomatic formula, but were clearly optimistic. However, the media have made a point of saying that no breakthrough has been made.

Political analyst Andrei Shpakovsky gives us his opinion:

The fact that the Minsk Agreements have been signed is already a breakthrough. A sequence of measures has been set up and, if followed, peace will be achieved within the territory of Donbass. Why are ministers showing optimism? Because the agreements are unquestioned. At the moment of signing the Minsk Agreements, it was quite obvious that this was an optimal formula. It was clear to all, including to the parties of the conflict.

They became stuck because some tried to gain a piece of the pie, while others didn't want to observe some agreements... Prior



'Normandy Four' heads of foreign ministries meet in Minsk

to these talks, some people in Kiev expressed somewhat different views on the Minsk format and the agreements reached, suggesting a change of venue from Minsk. There was absolutely no sense in it. You can, of course, change venue, but if you

can't reach an agreement in Minsk, where Belarus doesn't intervene and provides all the right conditions, then you won't reach an agreement anywhere; even in the Canary Islands! We must understand that the best possible mechanism is laid out

in the Minsk Agreements. Leaders of four countries, diplomats and experts, have worked out this document not in vain; it's efficient and up to date. I see no need for an alternative.

It's also necessary to take political decisions, and put agreements into practice. For now, at least, the hot phase of military operations has been stopped. There's no full-scale military action, and people are not dying en masse, as before. We continue to exchange prisoners of war, and dead bodies, so that relatives may bury them. These issues don't cause serious interest among journalists and, from the height of global policy, seem technical in nature. However, they're important to individual families. For residents of Donbass, every new set of talks in Minsk results in decisions which may become a breakthrough.

Honouring the homeland

Alexander Lukashenko presents state awards to representatives of various spheres, with Palace of Independence hosting the ceremony

By Alexander Pimenov

"We summed up the results of the past five-year period at the Belarusian People's Congress not long ago. It's been an uneasy period in the development of our society, with difficulties and achievements. On the whole, Belarus has made clear progress in its development, to the merit of our people, who have been hard working every day to multiply the wellbeing of our country. Today's ceremony is the first in a series, honouring the best workers of 2011-2016," the Head of State said.

Orders and honorary titles were conferred on thirty-six people, in recognition of their many years of productive work, exemplary fulfilment of service, and attainment of high results in manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, international relations, scientific research, healthcare, art, culture or sport. Each has made a major personal contribution to enhancing their sphere, to the benefit of the nation.

Mr. Lukashenko expressed gratitude to those from the manufacturing sector, employed at enterprises rightly considered to be Belarusian brands. "Their products sell well in our country and abroad. These enterprises apply promising innovations, and new technical so-



Bestowed with state awards

lutions, to improve the quality of products, reducing their prime cost, energy and material intensity," the President remarked.

The ceremony was also attended by a large group of the military, including soldiers and representatives of the Interior Ministry, honoured with Third Class Orders for Service to the Homeland. "You have a very important mission, to ensure safe living conditions, to maintain law and order in society, and to enhance the country's defence capacity. We're grateful to you for protecting peace and accord in our homes. These are the most

valuable elements, for individuals, for society, and for the country as a whole," Mr. Lukashenko remarked.

State awards were also conferred on doctors, on personnel from the Belarusian Research Centre of Epidemiology and Microbiology, and from Minsk Regional Maternity Hospital.

Mr. Lukashenko also awarded successful Belarusian athletes, and artistes from the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Belarus. The President thanked the latter for their promotion of ideals of beauty, harmony, and high art in society.

Neighbours approach their bilateral relations in a businesslike way

By Vladimir Velikhov

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Poland to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Konrad Pawlik, has reported that, owing to its EU membership, Poland has access to efficient, up-to-date production technologies. "We're ready to share our experience with Belarusian counterparts and strengthen co-operation in the agricultural sector," he has told journalists in Minsk.

The Ambassador emphasises growing trade in agricultural goods and food products between Poland and Belarus. "The recent visit of Poland's Deputy Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, who is also

Minister of Economic Development and Finance, shows the gradual normalisation of relations between our countries," the diplomat stressed. In October, Minsk played host to the economic forum *Good Neighbourliness*, which gathered nearly 500 businessmen from Belarus and Poland.

Mr. Pawlik notes that Poland is implementing its *Flavours of Europe — Quality and Tradition* programme in Belarus, aimed at promoting European food products. The programme is financed by the European Union and Poland and, as the diplomat comments, should promote trade between our two countries, while attracting mutually beneficial investment.

New projects to follow

By Alexey Fedosov

Belarus to advance diversified contacts with Japan, notes Chairman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus, Mikhail Myasnikov, on meeting Shinji Kawasaka, the Head of the Asia-Pacific Economic and Environmental Research Society

Mr. Myasnikov remarked that Belarus and Japan have many joint projects but that more are always possible. He asserted, "We must ensure economic and political contacts. Importantly, these ties

should be diversified." Proposing that parliamentary co-operation and contacts between commercial entities become the prime focus, Mr. Myasnikov asked the Japanese guest his opinion on how best to promote economic projects between Belarus and Japan.

While in Belarus, the Japanese delegation visited several mechanical engineering enterprises and companies producing radiation measurement equipment. Japan has concrete project proposals to offer; it's hoped that the visit will help advance Belarusian-Japanese relations, including in the economic sphere.

Partners verify strategies

We can judge the level of relations between Minsk and Baku via the number of meetings by our heads of state. Alexander Lukashenko has been to Azerbaijan three times on official visits and once on a working visit. Meanwhile, Ilham Aliyev has paid four official visits to Belarus, with the exchange coming more regularly in recent years.

By Vasily Kharitonov

Our presidents meet at least once a year, either in Belarus or Azerbaijan. Moreover, they are in contact at international events. Such active dialogue corresponds to our level of strategic partnership.

Undoubtedly, the November visit of the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, to Baku, will support this partnership.

From the first minutes of their meeting, the presidents of Belarus and Azerbaijan spoke about their intention for more active co-operation. Addressing his colleague, Mr. Lukashenko noted, "You can rely on us as your closest friend. If we can be useful to you in any way, we'll always come to help. You know well our capabilities. You're a great friend of Belarus... We have no closed topics, liaising across all areas; we'll continue doing so. We don't harm anyone by our collaboration; we're open and we'll continue to be open, to publicly discuss the most burning of today's issues."

Ilham Aliyev echoed this sentiment, saying, "Relations between our states are the closest and friendliest. We've aiming to continue our collaboration with Belarus, across all avenues. Today's bilateral format covers most spheres of life. We're gaining co-operation in traditional spheres while determining new areas. We're friends and partners. We've always supported each other and continue to do so in all spheres. I'm confident that the current visit will inspire the development of our collaboration."

Trade-economic co-operation was a major topic of negotiation. Since 2015, trade turnover has been falling tangibly, largely due to the unfavourable situation in the world economy. However, this doesn't mean that partners will stop seeking ways of improving the situation. Joint work in the oil sphere is one such focus; recently, Azerbaijan supplied a batch of oil to Belarus as a one-time deal. Naturally, the President has suggested



Alexander Lukashenko and Ilham Aliyev had much to discuss in Baku

AWARD

Ilham Aliyev has awarded Alexander Lukashenko the Heydar Aliyev Order — a rare award bestowed upon foreign citizens for outstanding service to Azerbaijan. It is given for special services rendered in the course of implementing the Azerbaijani idea, for reinforcing the unity of Azerbaijanis all over the world, and for special accomplishments in establishing political, economic, scientific, and cultural ties between Azerbaijan and other countries.



studying opportunities for further co-operation.

With the reconstruction of two oil refineries, Belarus is achieving refining depth of up to 90 percent. Meanwhile, its proximity to the European market makes transport convenient. Azerbaijani companies can easily find much of interest.

The oil business is important but is not the only instrument for the prompt increase of trade turnover between our countries. Hopes are also pinned on the development of production co-operation, with Baku and Minsk aiming to create favourable conditions for economic, financial and investment activity. The sphere of mutual interest covers transport and transit, as stipulated by a joint statement by our presidents, signed after the official talks. The document also specifies political priorities, in particular, the intention of expanding co-ordination in foreign policy,

bilaterally and within international organisations.

The goal for mutual trade turnover is \$700m, to be facilitated by the opening of trade houses: of Azerbaijan in Belarus and of Belarus in Azerbaijan. The presidents expressed their belief that the current visit of the President of Belarus should raise inter-state co-operation to an even higher level.

On the last day of his Baku visit, Alexander Lukashenko laid a wreath at the Tomb of the first President of sovereign Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev. The Belarusian Head of State also laid flowers at the monument in the Avenue of Martyrs.

The business element of the schedule involved a meeting with the Azerbaijani Prime Minister, Artur Rasizade, with major attention paid to implementing agreements reached during top-level negotiations.

Production co-operation and mutual investments are

to the fore, with the alliance between the Ganja Automobile and Minsk Automobile Plants as the most convincing illustration of mutual benefits from collaboration. This year, 2,000 Belarusian

tractors are to be assembled with Ganja Automobile: the largest manufacturer of 'Belarus' tractors outside the Eurasian Economic Union.

Other promising machine building projects include assembly of Belarusian buses in Ganja and of agricultural machinery in Sumqayit.

New areas of co-operation are also interesting. Belarus has proposed co-operation in the production of carpets and cotton goods, since Azerbaijan's

agro development strategy envisages considerable increases in cotton production. This opens up prospects for closer interaction with Baranovichi Cotton Production Association.

The President of Belarus told Mr. Aliyev that Minsk welcomes Azerbaijani businesses taking a share in the capital of this enterprise. The same model has been proposed for production of Azerbaijani carpets in Belarus.

Belarus aspires to construct agricultural enterprises in Azerbaijan and to open new joint medicine production. Meanwhile, Baku is keen to unite the transit and transport-logistics potential of our two countries. Both proposals are being met with eagerness.

It's clear that the current visit of the President to Azerbaijan has enjoyed intensive business content. Our two heads of state have signed a package of documents, covering co-operation across various spheres, including an action plan to implement a programme of socio-economic co-operation between our states until 2025. A comprehensive programme of co-operation was signed for the agro-industrial sector for the same period. Various documents tackle liaisons in sport, tourism and education. The spheres of mutual interests are vast and diverse.

Apparent success of mission

By Alexey Fedosov

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Isfandiyar Vahabzade, completes his work in Minsk, invited by the President to personal farewell ceremony at Palace of Independence

Diplomats who have worked effectively to strengthen relations between Belarus and the countries they represent are traditionally invited to a farewell ceremony with the President. The success of Mr. Vahabzade's mission is indisputable. Since 2011, our two states'

presidents have exchanged visits twice, with Alexander Lukashenko paying a recent visit to Azerbaijan.

The President believes the past six years to have been especially intense in relations between Belarus and Azerbaijan. "During this period, we've laid the foundations for strong, fundamental relations, for which I'm grateful to you," he told Mr. Vahabzade.

The Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Belarus has devoted much focus to cultural ties between our countries, translating Belarusian classical works into his native language, to ensure that

Azerbaijani people may learn more about the Belarusian character. He's succeeded, as our countries and our leaders enjoy mutual understanding and have set a clear path towards further co-operation.

After recent talks in Baku, Mr. Lukashenko and Ilham Aliyev announced their target of at least \$700 million of turnover. The new ambassador, expected soon to arrive, will oversee these plans.

Mr. Lukashenko sincerely thanked Mr. Vahabzade, inviting him to visit our country at any time, saying that he should consider it to be his second homeland.

Profitable avenue to the East



Mikhail Kovalev

Asia is much spoken of, with the USA initiating a global trade association with a number of countries in the region: the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The market looks promising and many countries are eager to join, including Belarus. What are our chances?

Asia Pacific is a region of rapidly developing economies, including China; last year, it surpassed the USA for GDP (calculated at parity prices). India — as foreseen by various international expert organisations — could become the second or third largest economy in the world by 2050. Also developing fast are Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mongolia, and other Asia-Pacific countries.

Total imports into Asia have increased from 5 to 8 trillion Dollars over the past three years but our share is very small, at no more than about 0.1 percent for each country. Several major contracts, backed by the Development Bank, have provided us with the biggest share of exports; Belarus has been providing Bangladesh and Sri Lanka with around 0.14 percent of their imports. Vietnam, India and China are close to this figure. China imports over \$2 trillion of products but we sell mostly potash fertilisers, alongside our assembly of wheeled tractors for transportation of Chinese missiles, at a joint venture.

Our task is to penetrate this region and win a significantly larger share of the Chinese market. There is a saying that 'If you manage to sell in China, then you'll sell around the world'. The Chinese market is really the most difficult, with stiff competition.

So, we need to offer goods that are in demand. Which items manufactured in Belarus are likely to help us gain a foothold there?

Primarily, food items, as almost all Asian countries are experiencing a meat and dairy revolution. The population is becoming richer, supplementing the usual diet of rice with meat. Milk consumption is also growing. In my opinion, we're missing out in this respect. Our neighbours, the

We look at Belarus' co-operation with the Asian region, chatting with Mikhail Kovalev, the Dean of the Belarusian State University's Faculty of Economics



Belarusian pavilion at EXPO China-Eurasia international exhibition

Lithuanians and Ukrainians, have begun exploring the dairy product market in China.

According to forecasts, the world has no other similarly promising market for food. China annually buys food worth \$170bn, while Japan purchases \$82bn in food, South Korea — \$34bn, and Indonesia — \$31bn. The market is largely captured by its nearest neighbour — Australia, but Ukraine and Lithuania are setting an example for us.

Of course, we must also promote our machinery: agricultural and road machinery, and buses. We have some contracts but we mostly speak of intentions. We need to establish joint production and refine our technology to the requirements of importing countries.

We're talking about the whole region, but its member countries differ in scale, in their level of economic development and in their social conditions. How should we build a strategy for co-operation with such various countries?

The Asian countries have a common feature: they tend not to import in pure form but to import investment products. They want to develop their

MT REFERENCE:

Urumqi is now hosting the 5th International EXPO China-Eurasia Forum, occupying 140,000 square metres of exhibition space and featuring over 2,000 companies from 57 countries, and around 200 guests of honour at ministerial level. Over 3,000 professional buyers are attending, and Belarus enjoys the status of a guest of honour.

When the first international shows were held in the 1950s, they aimed to organise trade and demonstrate new technologies. Now, they primarily showcase national branding. The fact that Belarus was invited to participate indicates not only that our enterprises are of interest, but our country as a whole commands respect.

own industry. Therefore, we need to create industrial and engineering firms to build poultry farms and other agricultural facilities in the Asian states — which are in demand there at the moment. Almost all countries in the region are densely populated: China and India have close to 1.5bn people and over 250m live in Indonesia. Thailand's population is close to 70m. People need to be fed, and our experience in the modernisation of agriculture could help.

We cannot ignore the fact that we are part of integration processes. As part of the EAEU, we plan to join the single financial market and the market for gas and oil by

2025. What role could co-operation with Asian countries play in this respect?

The EAEU has established excellent relations with China, India and other countries. An agreement on a free trade zone has been signed with Vietnam, so there are no obstacles. Meanwhile, the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt project will contribute to better integration of EAEU countries. Trade turnover between China and the EU amounts to almost \$500bn; if we can concentrate at least 10 percent of goods from Western China to Western Europe through the territories of Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus, we could

double our transport and logistics revenues within a few years. At present, these account for \$4 billion.

The world is on the threshold of change regarding its technological order, and change is evident in the structure of the world economy. It's becoming increasingly difficult to make money from traditional products. New industries are likely to bring the greatest benefit. Which niches are open in the East and do we have resources to occupy them?

The success of our high-tech sector is impressive, as is primarily represented by the High-Tech Park. Of \$850m of exports ensured by our programmers last year, a significant share went to Asia. I'm convinced that, if we act insistently, opening branches there and creating joint companies, we'll achieve \$2bn of software exports by the end of this five-year period.

The Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park could help. The first companies are already registered but are mostly Chinese firms, with branches in Belarus. We must work to open more joint ventures with the Chinese, similar to Midea-Horizont. We can jointly produce, for example, solar power plants (China is a world leader in this field), as well as other products hard to be transported directly from China to the EU. However, this could be done in Belarus. I'm speaking not only of Belarusian-Chinese companies but also of Chinese-European; the latter could become residents of our Industrial Park.

We also need to think of the establishment of joint research laboratories, making 21st century products. Cars and tractors are still in demand but we should think about those of the future: unmanned, electronically controlled, and running on electricity or hydrogen.

By uniting efforts, we can do a great deal, especially with the special relationship between our countries. The current EXPO China-Eurasia — where we enjoy privileged status — is bright confirmation of this.

90-tonne BelAZ starts work in Mikashevichi

New 90-tonne BelAZ launches at Mikashevichi's Granit enterprise, as the greatest heavy-duty dump truck working on Belarusian territory, taking on the work of vehicles with 45 to 60 tonne capacity

By Pavel Losich

Granit's chief engineer, Valery Batura, recently launched the giant truck with a bottle of champagne against its bumper, as on the hull

of a ship.

Granit has been using vehicles manufactured in Zhodino for 40 years. The Head of the Automobile Transport Fleet, Alexander Kislyuk, is pleased with the acqui-

sition, saying, "We extract very heavy crushed stone, which is a challenge for any vehicle but those from BelAZ, which can cope with even the severest of conditions. I hope to build the fleet further, from



Heavy weight from Zhodino works

the basis of this 75571 model."

The enterprise's automobile fleet has 64 Zhodino-manufac-

tured heavy duty dump trucks. Next year, Granit plans to buy three more 90-tonne vehicles.

The advancement of the country is apparent

Belarus is an absolute leader within the CIS for developing information and communication technologies, according to the annual report on *Measuring the Information Society*, issued by the International Telecommunication Union. The Union assesses the ICT Development Index of 175 countries, across eleven criteria: from specific technological criteria to the number of mobile subscribers and active Internet users. Belarus is ranked 31st, with an ICT Development Index of 7.26, up from 84th position in 2008. Our closest CIS rival, Russia, is ranked 43rd.



Design bureau programmers at Adani enterprise

By Anton Kostyukevich

The country's confident growth in its international ranking is primarily connected with Belarus having made concerted efforts, notes the Dean of the BSUIR's Faculty of Computer Systems and Networks, Valery Prytkov. He tells us, "The High-Tech Park is developing at very optimistic rates, as are services in the sphere of providing access to IT. From our side, as a faculty training personnel in this sphere, we're closely integrating educational programmes with practice. Branches have been created on the premises of IT companies, alongside several training centres of world manufacturers of computer equipment and software, such as Cisco, IBM and NVidia. We're training in the use of their technologies, giving our students international certificates."

He continues, "The Olympiad movement is also developing. For two years in a row, our teams have qualified for the finals of the ACM

ICPC World Programming Championships. In the latest, we were ranked 17th and brought home bronze medals in 2012. It was a great result, taking into account that 128 teams performed in the finals, while the selection rounds saw more than 13,000 teams compete. We organise Olympiads at our faculty, testing on the use of databases, Linux administration, and 1C programming. Our students are extremely motivated: admission scores across some specialities remain at a level of at least 360."

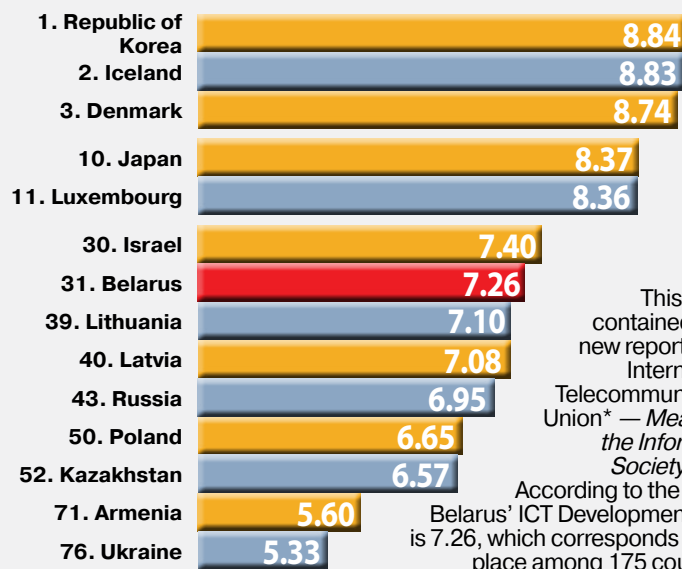
The cost of broadband Internet access in Belarus has been praised for its affordability: \$7.2, against a global average of \$40. The Connected Consumer Survey, conducted via Google, places Belarus among the most active Internet users, with 91 percent of those with Internet access logging-in daily. The older generation doesn't lag behind, with 78 percent of those aged over 55 using the Internet for personal purposes, unconnected with work. This corresponds to

the level seen in Denmark and Finland. Belarus is ranked 23rd for its number of subscribers to broadband connection (31.15 per

100 residents), neighbouring the USA and Greece. By 2020, this figure should rise to 34.7 per 100 residents.

INFORMATION SOCIETY-2016

Belarus is a CIS leader regarding information and communication technologies (ICT).



This data is contained in the new report by the International Telecommunication Union* — *Measuring the Information Society-2016*.

According to the report, Belarus' ICT Development Index is 7.26, which corresponds to 31st place among 175 countries.

The Index uses eleven indicators, tackling access to ICT and the use of ICT, as well as working knowledge of technologies by the population

Changing employment attitudes

By Valeria Gavruseva

How easy is it to find employment? Statistics inspire hope, as official unemployment rate falls to 0.9 percent (among an economically active population) from 1.1 percent, in early 2016

Just 18 months ago, the number of those registered as seeking employment was less but there has been a rush to register, to avoid payment of the 'tax for parasites' (Br420). Neighbouring Russia is keen to follow suit, as Russian Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, has announced.

He believes it is only fair that all contribute, since all are eligible to draw benefits. Last year, the number of unemployed registered as seeking work rose 1.5-fold, while the number of individual entrepreneurs increased by 8,000.

The Head of Labour Relations, at the Department for Monitoring Socio-Economic Development, at the NAS' Institute of Economics, Ivan Kilin, explains the desire to ensure employment for everyone. He tells us, "World practice knows two mechanisms of labour market response towards unfavourable situations. In the West, they use

'change of the situation' as the major instrument; we employ 'change of the level of salary', enabling us to preserve social stability."

Director of Kvadrat Recruitment Agency, Svetlana Korosteleva, says that, compared to the beginning of the year, the situation has slightly changed, with more vacancies gradually appearing. She notes, "These include some very good jobs, with high salaries; the problem is finding a suitable candidate, as work experience and qualifications are necessary."

Employment can also be found by becoming an individual entrepreneur,

registering as self-employed. Mr. Kilin explains, "The procedure of becoming a self-employed person is simple, taking just one day. Those who become individual entrepreneurs, from being unemployed, can gain a subsidy worth 11-20 amounts of the living wage budget. Moreover, some types of activity can be performed without this procedure: for example, providing the services of a tutor, translator, secretary, photographer or musician. All that's necessary is to file an application with the tax authority for place of residence and pay a single tax."

Waltz of foreign guest

By Veronika Nikitina

From January-September, Belarus invested about \$50 million in Austria, comments Deputy Foreign Minister Yelena Kupchina, at opening of contact-co-operation exchange between representatives of Belarusian and Austrian business circles

"Austria is traditionally among the top five investors in Belarus. However, it's also important to understand that our country is making efforts. From January-September 2016 alone, Belarus invested around \$50m in the Austrian economy, including \$1.5m of direct investment," Ms. Kupchina asserts, adding that our country is constantly making efforts to improve its business climate.

The Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vladimir Ulakhovich, notes that Belarus and Austria are co-operating in the field of technology. "In this respect, Austrians are very interesting and important partners for us, having advanced technologies. We have projects relating to roads, technological equipment, and major infrastructure projects," he underlines.

Rudolf Lukavsky, the Head of Austria's Trade Representation in Belarus and Russia, emphasises, "I represent an extensive delegation in Minsk, which is extremely interested in joint projects. We're pleased that our invitation to participate in the forum has found response among Belarusian companies. Our countries have established good economic relations and this gives grounds for optimistic forecasts."

Full-format meeting to expand portfolio of operations

First Vice President of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Philip Bennett, to visit Belarus in early 2017, notes new Head of EBRD Office in Belarus, Alexander Pivovarsky, on meeting Belarus' Economy Minister, Vladimir Zinovsky

Mr. Pivovarsky thanked the EBRD for its considered and constructive dialogue with Belarus in expanding co-operation with the public sector, the launch of major projects and candid relations with the Bank's management.

The parties discussed EBRD strategy for Belarus for 2016-2019, as approved in September 2016, in addition to the Bank's current and future projects in Belarus.

Participants of the meeting stated that the new strategy does not have any restrictions. According to Mr. Zinovsky, EBRD operations in Belarus between 2011 and 2015 received a record 929 million Euros. He believes that the full-format strategy will help expand the EBRD portfolio of operations in Belarus, while launching major projects in energy, utilities and transport.

Mr. Pivovarsky noted the plans of the EBRD's First Vice President, Philip Bennett, to visit Belarus, in Q1 2017.



Four new Yak-130 training fighter-aircraft donated to military personnel of 116th guards attack air base of the Air Force and Air Defence Troops in Lida

Pilots to assess new machinery

116th guards attack air base at Lida receives four new Yak-130 training fighter-aircraft, produced by Russian Corporation Irkut

By Tatiana Kondratieva

The first four aircraft represent a new type of aircraft for Belarus. Arriving at Lida air base last year, the Yak-130 is the world's only training aircraft with aerodynamic arrangement and subsonic ability, similar to a modern jet fighter. The craft can be used to train pilots even for perspective fifth-generation aircraft.

Oleg Dvigalev, Commander of

Air Forces and Air Defence Troops, delivered the keys for the new machinery. He congratulated the crew and announced, "Acquiring the next four Yak-130 training aircraft gives the possibility of further improving our pilots and cadets' skills in mastering advanced machinery. Availability of such aircraft makes it possible to plan training of aircraft personnel, for application to combat training with light attack aircraft. This year, it's planned that

we use the craft during joint actions with operational command troops, and with divisions of special operations forces."

He continued, "It will be used for air support of troops. For example, in combating illegally armed groups. New machinery offers new opportunities. Our pilots have fully mastered this plane and have even shared their expertise with Russian colleagues. The new planes are being used alongside the SU-25 in



Pilot accepts new technique

combat formations, as the Yak-130 has more advanced gunsights and navigation."

The Lida air base has everything needed to service and operate the Yak-130. Pilots have praised the new plane across a variety of tasks, including hitting targets on ranges. Crews have been using most types of standard weapons, including aerial bombs, and unguided air-to-surface missiles of various calibres.

In August of last year, for the first time in the history of our aviation, specialists training in the use of precision weapons guided KAB-500 bombs to their targets. This year, the Yak-130 landed for the first time on a runway by night.

The introduction of new planes will allow flight crews to train to a new level in the coming academic year: being called the 'Year of Quality'.

Reconstruction of anniversary of river crossing through centuries

By Yelena Klimovich

Anniversary of Napoleonic army's crossing of River Berezina and battle on Brilevskoe Field, in November 1812, marked with largest ever military-historical reconstruction at this memorial complex, near Borisov

The event gathered around 450 soldiers in uniform, from various kinds of troops, from Napoleonic times, from Belarus, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania and Belgium. A hundred fought on horseback, recreating the battle of Brilevskoe Field. With losses of 35,000, the word 'berezina' entered in French language, meaning the crushing of all hopes.

Soldiers of various European nationalities are buried on our land, inspiring the heads of various diplomatic missions to visit this site. For the 204th anniversary, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Didier Canesse, laid wreaths, together with repre-



At Brilevskoe Field

sentatives of Minsk Regional Executive Committee and Borisov District Executive Committee, at the foot of each of four monuments, constructed at Brilevskoe Field Memorial Complex.

Of course, it's impossible to recreate the battle in detail; the reconstruction was rather collective, including separate episodes of battle. However, even these events were breathtaking for those gathered

at Brilevskoe Field Memorial. Where else do we see cannon gunners in high bearskins, smart uhlands and hussars posing in the saddle, and cuirassiers in white jerkins and iron cuirasses, wearing leather helmets with horsehair plumes?

There were Vivandières and wives of officers, accompanying them in fashionable redingote (fitted frock/riding) coats, worn with a



shawl — similar to that given by Napoleon to Josephine. Spectators had the opportunity to see foot troops and cavalry in action, with commentary from candidate of historical sciences Igor Grutso. There were explosions and gunplay, and a rainbow over the river; perhaps, leading to the treasure of Napoleon...

Winged winner

By Alina Kasel

Crested lark is bird of 2017

The APB-BirdLife Belarus public organisation has announced the bird of 2017, at Minsk's Oktyabr Cinema, attracting hundreds of 2nd-4th grade pupils, from several schools in the capital. At the beginning of meeting, children heard about the bird of 2016: the garrot. Later, participants of artistic competitions were awarded with diplomas and gifts.

"Three candidates were proposed, the jackdaw, black-headed gull and crested lark, but the majority vote went to the latter," explains Karina Solovey, a PR specialist for APB-BirdLife Belarus.

She tells us, "This bird is listed in the Red Book but can be sometimes met in the south of our country. In Europe, its numbers have declined by 95 percent over the past three decades. In 2017, we'll pay more attention to this bird and its habitats, helping protect it through diverse campaigns and educational activities. Like its predecessors, the crested lark shall be depicted on a stamp and on a commemorative coin, on posters in the underground and in other places."

We are definitely acquainted with you, the pretty stranger!

Owing to her unusual hobby, a Belarusian schoolgirl has surpassed Western art critics and became a national hero

By Kristina Khilko

“Who is this lady, and where have I seen her before? Her profile looks familiar, though neither Greek, nor Roman,” mused Masha Denisyuk, looking at *Portrait of a Stranger* online. At that moment, the schoolgirl from Minsk couldn’t have imagined that the picture of a 17th century lady would make her famous worldwide.

I’d recognise this nose from thousands

Masha has been interested in world history since childhood. While her peers were playing with dolls, she was reading the myths and legends of Ancient Greece. At eleven, she began to study Lev Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis. Her classmates thought she was too much of a swot, but Masha Denisyuk is now the class star, being a national hero!

A year ago, she created a group on VKontakte social network called *Monarchs and Aristocrats of Europe*. Every day, she posts portraits of European nobility from the past and writes interesting facts from their biographies.

Masha found *Portrait of a Stranger* on the website of an auction house. The canvas had been exhibited at Christie’s and Sotheby’s several times, but nobody

wanted to risk purchasing a work whose author and subject were unknown. The paintings would have continued to wander from one auction to another, had Masha not saved her.

“I collect portraits of nobility by country, categorising them in chronological order, and by other parameters. I have three hundred folders,” says Denisyuk. “Hairstyle, sleeve length, and collar shape are important, helping me define the date of painting by around a decade. I was looking through my collection and came across a similar picture. I saw the same bulbous nose, prominent chin, and wall-eyes and realised that it was impossible to confuse this young lady with anyone else. Allow me to introduce you to Danish princess Ulrika Eleonora!”

The schoolgirl hastened to write to the attributer of the auction house, letting them know about her discovery.

European critics were blown away, since a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl had solved a puzzle that had confounded hundreds of specialists. The picture that had remained unsold for a long time was immediately acquired by the Royal Danish Museum.

The author still needed to be unearthed, but historians soon pinpointed court artist Abraham Wuchters.



The unknown masterpiece is to the left while, to the right, is the portrait of the Princess of Denmark, Ulrika Eleonora, created by Jacob Dagerre, which helped solve the riddle

MT REFERENCE:

Ulrika Eleonora was born in 1656, daughter to Danish monarch Frederick III. At nineteen, she was engaged to Charles XI, King of Sweden. Despite political discord between the two countries, and the match being disapproved of, the marriage was a success. According to legend, Carl never cheated on his wife. The couple had seven children, and three lived to adulthood. The Queen was involved in charity work, often helping the poor; she built a house for widows in Stockholm and several orphanages. Because of frequent childbearing, she suffered from ill-health and died at thirty-six. Charles XI outlived his spouse by four years but, before his death, confessed to his mother that, without his wife, life had lost its meaning.

“The canvas is now hanging in Frederiksborg Castle, where the princess lived. It’s really great that my name has left a mark in the history of this masterpiece,” says Masha proudly.

Hard to watch historical films

Both national and foreign media have picked up the story, and the National Art Museum of Belarus has invited her to take a tour of its archives: a rare privilege.

Masha has noticed other mistakes made by fine art experts, saying, “Sometimes, it comes to the point of ridicule: at one auction, I came across a portrait of Charles II, King of England, called *Portrait of an Unknown Lady*!”

She also finds it impossible to watch historical films, noting, “How can you believe an actress whose hairstyle is of the fifteenth century, and whose dress is from the 1340s—1350s, while the action takes place at the beginning of the eighteenth century?”

She chose her profession long ago, telling us her intention to apply to the historical faculty of the BSU. Masha also plans to go on vacation to Germany, revealing, “I love to travel. I’ve explored Belarus and have visited St. Petersburg, where I was impressed by Mikhailovsky Castle. This summer, I travelled to Poland and the Czech Republic. Now, I dream of seeing Fasanerie Castle in Germany, which has a huge gallery of portraits. I cannot wait to see it. What if I suddenly make a new discovery!”



Masha Denisyuk Wuchters.

Capital’s tourist attraction

Minsk is again ranked as ‘most affordable capital’ for Russians’ winter holidays

By Maxim Osipov

The ratings are calculated on the cost of a return flight from Moscow, in addition to two-nights accommodation in a three-star hotel, across thirty-five European capitals.

According to the study, conducted by Russian Lenta.ru, a vacation in Minsk costs 8,886 Russian Roubles (around \$138.70). Flights cost less than \$61 and a night in a hotel averages at \$77.50. Moreover, departure from Moscow’s Zhukovsky Airport allows considerable saving on tickets.

Minsk’s attractiveness goes beyond hotel prices, which is no surprise to Moscow historian and blogger Alexander Usoltsev. Recently, he was among the representatives of Russian media visiting Belarus as part of a major press tour. He asked the Belarusian President about tourism development: an issue of great interest to all travellers and holiday experts.

“Minsk is more than just a city to me. I’ve visited many times and, each time, I fall more in love with its lifestyle and orderliness. In Minsk, I proposed to my future wife, nine years

ago. I don’t regret it happening in this beautiful city,” he says.

Mr. Usoltsev sees plenty of reasons for recommending Minsk and Belarus to his countrymen. He comments, “Nezavisimosti Avenue is worth seeing, with its space and Stalin-esque houses, in perfect condition; you only see such views on Moscow’s Tverskaya Street. This might be good or bad but it’s definitely nice for tourists that everywhere is so clean, light and safe. If you’ve never visited Minsk, make sure you come, or visit anywhere in Belarus!”



Island of Tears — a monument to all those who died in wars

Vilnius is second in the rankings (\$183), followed by Budapest (\$187). The top ten capitals also include Kiev, Riga, Bratislava, Prague, Helsinki,

Belgrade and Warsaw. The most expensive European capital is Swiss Berne, where two-nights cost almost \$200, with \$552.50 for a flight.

Thousands rally in anti-austerity protest despite minimum wage increase

Protests in Madrid against austerity measures in Spain highlighted the public's anger at their government's attempts to balance the books



Anti-austerity protests in Madrid

With orders from Brussels to resolve the country's economic crisis, Mariano Rajoy's government imposed public spending cuts for close to seven years, and with the Spanish recession still ongoing, citizens are becoming increasingly irate.

Inagi Lopez, an 18-year-old protester, lamented the lack of 'certainty' for young people, saying, "We have a duty to protest, because this country is turning into something worthless."

"We have to demand our rights,

and to have something that guarantees our dignity in the future," he continued.

Despite the government's approval of an eight percent increase in minimum wage, after seven years of austerity, much of the Spanish

public are still discontent.

Finance Minister Cristobal Montoro said the rise from 764.4 Euros to 825.5 Euros per month — approved at a weekly cabinet meeting — was 'negotiated with other political groups'.



Rebuilding a sunken ship: good for the local community, or a Titanic fail?

Residents of China's Sichuan Province have expressed concerns about the construction of a life-size Titanic replica in their neighbourhood

Many said they'd never heard of the doomed ocean liner before developers chose the site. Their worries centre around fears they will be forced out of their homes. However, Seven Star Energy Investment Group, the company behind the project, insists it is something China 'needs'.

CEO Su Shaojun said, "So why China? Because actually, with the Titanic, we're presenting something for the whole of humanity. It's not like a certain country owns this thing. Just like the US can make 'Kung Fu Panda' and that's very common. The

same goes for 'Mulan'. For China, the Titanic represents something of universal value."

Seven Star Energy says it aims to create a virtual reality experience of how it felt to be aboard the Titanic, while remaining respectful of the fact that some 1,500 people died when the ship struck an iceberg and sank in 1912.

Local resident Li Jieyong said she hoped the project would bring prosperity to the area, "If we're not going to have to move out of here then that will be really good for us. US old folks might do a little business in that case. But then if we have to move then that won't be any good. They wouldn't provide enough compensation for us to get by."

UNESCO adds Cuban rumba, Belgian beer to list of the world's 'intangible' heritage

Belgian beer, Cuban rumba dancing and traditional New Year celebrations in several countries all make it onto UNESCO's latest list of heritage worthy of protection

The UN's cultural body accepted Belgium's application, recognising that brewing fosters a unified identity in a country divided by language. But the 200 breweries, 1,500 different ales and lagers, and 30 brewing museums transcend the linguistic and geographical boundaries.

Belgian beer culture thus joins the likes of French gastronomy and Argentinean tango on the UNESCO list.

"I especially like the fact that they (beers) are global, universal, they make people gather together, and think that is what touched UNESCO, and for Belgium it highlights our traditions, our own culture that



is linked to beer," said Yvan De Baets, owner of the Brasserie de la Senne brewery.

UNESCO also celebrates rumba in Cuba as a symbol of 'marginal society' that developed in poor areas.

With African, Antillean and Spanish roots, it's praised for connecting people with music and dance.

New Year celebrations in 12 countries from Turkey to Central Asia are also on the list. Customs ranging from meals to street performances are cited as encouraging peaceful communities.

OPEC agrees first production cut in eight years

The once all-powerful OPEC cartel has agreed its first production cut in eight years, creating a spike in the price of a barrel of crude on world markets

However OPEC's cut depends on non-OPEC producers making cuts of their own. OPEC will meet the producers outside the cartel on December 9th.

Saudi Arabia will be making the biggest cuts, some 486,000 barrels a day.

Kuwait, Venezuela and Algeria have agreed to monitor the package.

"This agreement is subject to a 600,000 barrels per day reduction from key non-OPEC producers. The Russian Federation has committed to reduce output by 300,000 barrels," said OPEC President Mohammed bin Saleh al-Salah. Indonesia, only readmitted to OPEC in January after a six-year banishment, refused any cuts and so are out again, taking their 700,000 bpd with them. The big winners are Iran, who are being allowed to maintain production unchanged.

"Initially Indonesia was requested to reduce by a certain amount and since Indonesia couldn't accept that reduction, that reduction has been distributed among the other countries," said the Chairman of OPEC's Board of Governors, Mohamed Hamel.

Analysts say the cuts will not lead to a price explosion as supplies are still plentiful, and OPEC rejected suggestions the cuts are an admission of failure that the strategy of trying to put shale oil producers out of business had failed.

Banknote controversy in Great Britain

The Bank of England's new plastic £5 note has fallen foul of vegans and members of the UK's Sikh and Hindu communities

The outcry is over the use of animal fat in its production. The process involves a small amount of tallow which is found in some soaps and candles and is derived from animal waste products.

The revelation has triggered an online petition calling for the note to be banned. It's gathered more than 100,000 signatures.

The controversial fiver has caused a storm on social media. The Bank claims it was unaware of the traces of tallow when it signed the production contract with supplier Innovia.

The Bank of England's boss has said a solution is urgently being sought. The new plastic £5 note was introduced in September and is more durable than the previous one. It is expected to last an average of five years.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



At 5th Belarusian Painting, Graphic Art and Sculpture Biennale

BI-5 biennale is in the limelight

Around 400 works, by more than 250 painters, on show at 5th Belarusian Painting, Graphic Art and Sculpture Biennale, held at the Republican Art Gallery of Belarusian Union of Artists, in the Palace of Arts

By Veniamin Mikheev

The Biennale presents the best works, according to the selection commission, of the past two years, created by members of the Belarusian Union of Painters: painters, graphical artists and sculptors. The organisers note that such major exhibitions allow audiences to see the various ways in which artists experiment, and the preoccupations of their work: the internal conflicts that drive them to express themselves through art.

Self-perception through national identity is important to artists, who build creatively on the legacy of the past. History is a vital force in their work, feeding into political themes within art.

2016, as the Year of Culture in



Belarus, has been rich in anniversaries, of famous Belarusian writers, poets and musicians: Aloiza Pashkevich (the 140th anniversary of her birth), Maxim Bogdanovich (the 125th anniversary of his birth), Kondrat Krapiva (the 120th anniversary of his birth), Ivan Shamyakin and Ivan Melezh (the 95th anniversary of their birth) and Vladimir Mulyavin (the 75th anniversary of



Painters try to be original

his birth).

Some use their art to draw attention to social problems, responding to political and economic events. Others dedicate their work to contemplating the beauty of our world, depicting it in landscapes and still-life paintings. Even indi-

rectly, works reflect our collective consciousness.

The BI-5 exhibition demonstrates diverse trends, genres and techniques in Belarusian painting, graphic art and sculpture. For artists who take part in the project, the response of the audience is very im-

portant, as is dialogue with visitors. Multi-level audience interpretation, regardless of medium or concept, is an essential part of the artistic process. Like literature, art commands a different response from us as we mature, revealing new themes and asking new questions.

Philosophy of poetry preserved in translation

By Alexander Pimenov

Book by Chinese poet Wang Guozheng in Belarusian language presented in Minsk

At the launch for *Melodies of Open Heart* (a collection of Wang Guozheng's poems) from *Light Signs: Poets of China* series, the Editor-in-Chief of Zvyazda Publishing House, Alexander Karlyukevich, noted that it isn't easy to publish verse, since poetry lacks a large readership.

However, there is cultural value in promoting verse, including that of famous Wang Guozheng, of

China. "The Belarusian language is worthy in expressing significant poetry. I'm confident that Wang Guozheng's verse will be interesting to Belarusian readers," asserts Mr. Karlyukevich, adding that Zvyazda Publishing House aims to continue its *Light Signs: Poets of China* series. Moreover, there are plans to release an edition about China, in which Belarusian ambassadors to China from various times share their views on the Heavenly Empire.

The Chairman of the Belarus-China Friendship Society and Director of the Republican Institute

of Chinese Studies named after Confucius (BSU), Anatoly Tozik, underlines that Belarus and China are approaching their 25th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations. The development of ties in trade and economic spheres is facilitated by knowledge of culture, and the soul and history of another nation. Chinese philosophy, like language and poetry, is complex, and fascinating, so such translations are a wonderful addition to our cultural treasure trove. Mr. Tozik stresses that the Institute will support the development of the project.

Melodies of Open Heart is the seventh collection within the *Light Signs: Poets of China* series, released by Zvyazda Publishing House, following books by Wang Wei, Du Fu, Li Bo, Ai Qing, Li He, and Li Qingzhao. The publishing house also has plans to prepare a collection of verse by Meng Haoran.

Wang Guozheng is a bright star in contemporary Chinese poetry, whose creativity greatly influenced young people in the 1990s. Since 2000, his poems have been studied in schools across China.

Most of Wang Guozheng's poems begin by contemplating a

particular topic, concluding with references to his own life, using aphorisms and philosophy to tackle issues of morality.

The new edition contains original verse, translated directly from Chinese. Artist Kamil Kamal has illustrated the book.

Zvyazda Publishing House first released the *Light Signs: Poets of China* series in 2014. The major goal is to show Belarusian readers Chinese culture across various historical periods. Belarus' Information Minister, Lilia Ananich, conceived the series, which involves an international editorial board.

From Lisbon to Vladivostok through Minsk

International exhibition of contemporary art hosted by Belarusian capital in December

By Alexey Fedosov

The project, initiated by the Belarusian Embassy to France and Belarus' Permanent Representation with UNESCO, opens at the Mikhail Savitsky Art Gallery in Minsk, on December 21st, marking the end of the Year of Culture in Belarus. Works by contemporary artists from more than twenty-five cities across Eurasia will go on show as part of this major project, which is considered to be one of the brightest in this Year of Culture, as the Embassy notes.

"The exhibition *From Lisbon to Vladivostok Through Minsk* will demonstrate the country's determination and its leading role in building a common European house, without dividing lines, borders and opposition. Minsk will become a unique cultural capital of Eurasian fine arts during the exhibition," the Embassy notes.

Artists' works from the following countries and cities are being featured: Austria (Vienna), Bulgaria (Sofia), Belgium (Brussels), Hungary (Budapest), the UK (London), Germany (Berlin), Italy (Rome), Kazakhstan (Astana), Latvia (Riga), Lithuania (Vilnius), Moldova (Chisinau), the Netherlands (The Hague), Poland (Warsaw), Russia (Moscow, St Petersburg, Vladivostok), Romania (Bucharest), Serbia (Belgrade), Slovakia (Bratislava), Ukraine (Kiev), France (Paris), Portugal (Lisbon, and Madrid), Monaco (Monte Carlo), the Czech Republic (Prague), Switzerland (Bern), and Estonia (Tallinn). The co-authors of the Belarus State Award prizewinning project are Professor Victor Alshevsky and Belarus' Ambassador to France, Pavel Latushko.

The art project will stress the



During the press conference

initial role and function of the territory of modern Belarus, as a centre of communication for neighbouring states and cultures. Despite the scale and unique nature of the project, it has taken only a year to bring it into operation.

According to the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to France, Pavel Latushko, the exhibition *From Lisbon to Vladivostok Through Minsk* aims to underline the uniting power of art in our contemporary world. He notes, "This exhibition is a kind of collective manifest of painters from various European states, who meet in this shared exhibition in Minsk, to declare their counterbalance to negative, disconnecting developments observed in politics. For us, it's especially vital that such an exhibition is held in the capital of Belarus."

The exhibition features works by painters from twenty-five European

countries: Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and elsewhere. In total, around eighty pictures are on show, diverse in style, theme and time of creation. The composition of painters demonstrating their pieces in Minsk is no less diverse, including the young and the more mature. All are rather well-known in their countries and within Europe. Most will appeal to Belarusian audiences, who'll be seeing their works for the first time.

The event is held under the official aegis of UNESCO, with European diplomatic missions in Belarus rendering significant support in organising the exhibition. Due to their activity in the sphere of cultural exchange in their host countries, consultations were held with painters, and many showed interest in Belarus and the art project, entitled *From Lisbon to Vladivostok Through Minsk*. This has resulted in



Emblem of the exhibition

the project being presented to Minsk and guests of the capital.



V. Alshevsky reveals the secret of one of the works

the project being presented to Minsk and guests of the capital.

The exhibition is organised without budgetary funds. Rather, the diplomatic corps of Belarus has raised finances, alongside Minsk City Executive Committee and various business partners. At present, most works on display have been delivered to Minsk.

"This exhibition, like a patchwork blanket, embraces the whole European space, literally from Lisbon to Vladivostok. It features works created in the style of modern conceptual art, as well as canvases in more classical style. The exhibition harmoniously combines the incompatible, as a metaphor for the unity of Europe and its residents. The show is diverse, while being united by common culture and pan-European humanitarian values," notes the curator of the exhibition, Belarusian artist Victor Alshevsky.

Many artists are arriving in Belarus for the exhibition. The organisers hope that the project will attract Minskites seeking New Year entertainment. The exhibition includes a range of cultural events, including concerts, master classes for children

and other surprises.

The project is held under the aegis of the Foreign Ministry, being also supported by Minsk City Executive Committee. Belarusian embassies in European and Asian states also render organisational support to the exhibition.

The exhibition aims to emphasise Belarus' leading role in developing a wide cultural space, to unite the countries and peoples of Eurasia.

The concept of a 'Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok' was drawn by Charles De Gaulle, who dreamed of building a 'common European house'. In his speech in Strasbourg, in 1959, French President Charles De Gaulle stated, "Yes, it is Europe; from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is Europe. It is the whole of Europe that will decide the fate of the world."

The exhibition *From Lisbon to Vladivostok Through Minsk* will demonstrate the country's determination and its leading role in building a common European house, without dividing lines, borders and opposition. Minsk will become a unique cultural capital of Eurasian fine arts during the exhibition

Art subtly influences perception

By Vladimir Mikhailov

International Art Capital: from France to Belarus exhibition to promote rapprochement of two countries' cultures, notes Belarusian Ambassador to France, Pavel Latushko, speaking at National Centre of Contemporary Arts

Mr. Latushko underlined that Belarus and France enjoy centuries-long

cultural ties and views the exhibition in Minsk as a bright example of modern bilateral cultural contacts. He thanked famous opera singer Arkady Volodos (a Frenchman with Belarusian roots) and his wife, artist Anne-Marie Volodos, for both attending the event and for their assistance in organising. Two works by this prominent French painter are on display.

Natalia Sharangovich, who heads the National

Centre of Contemporary Arts, has called the exhibition 'a spectacular event in the country's cultural life, strengthening cultural contacts between Belarus and France'.

Running until December 22nd, the show features works by fifteen famous modern French artists (five from the La Société des Artistes Français, five from the Salon Comparaisons and five from the Salon du Dessin et de la peinture à l'eau

(Drawing and Watercolour Salon). Thirty artworks from Paris are on display, having been previously hosted by the *Art en Capital* show, at the Grand Palais. More than 2,000 masters from around the world regularly take part in the event, which has been running for around a decade.

The Minsk event also includes works by eleven Belarusian painters and sculptors, who took part in the prestigious French expo *Art*



Opening of the exhibition

en Capital, hosted by Paris' Grand Palais in 2015.

The international exhibition in Minsk was organised

in co-operation with the Belarusian Embassy to France and the National Centre of Contemporary Arts.

Not bad so far but could definitely do better

First stage of new biathlon season ends, with Biathlon World Cup and Belarusians causing a stir in Sweden

By Alexey Grishin

Despite having taken 18 months off, Darya Yurkevich is already the main sensation of the first stage of the World Cup. She hit every single target on the firing lines, and finished third in the women's 15km race, taking bronze. She then claimed the same again in the Vladimir Chepelin individual race.

The men's team hasn't claimed a World Cup medal since March 2005.

Biathlon fans are hoping that Dasha's return, and on such good form, is an indication of so much more to come. The Vladimir Chepelin race is prestigious and Mr. Chepelin himself is still performing well.

During the men's event, there was little breeze, but Chepelin still missed a target (although made up for this a little by firing all his shots at speed, entering the top ten for rapidity, unlike Dasha).

Anton Shipulin and Simon Eder missed four targets, while Simon Fourcade and Ole Einar Bjørndalen missed three. Chepelin, even without his speed, would



Darya Yurkevich doesn't hide her emotions at awards ceremony



Vladimir Chepelin during men's 20km individual competition

not have appeared at the bottom of the rankings. Clearly, his coaches deserve praise, alongside the sup-

port crew.

Chepelin assured fans that he won't retire yet, saying, "There's

no limit. I'll try to improve, and perform consistently. I have the ability."

Vladimir praised Darya Yurkevich's performance, adding, "I watched the women's race the day before and was pleasantly surprised at her bronze. Before my start, I knew that if I made minimum errors, without missing my targets, I'd be in with a chance of a prize."

Darya didn't hide her joy. "Before the race, I set myself the task of hitting every target. As you see, anything is possible, even to hit twenty targets in such weather. Certainly, I didn't think about gaining a medal during the distance range. Bronze was a true surprise, but rewards my determination. I'm so pleased: for myself, for the team, and for fans. In training for the main start of the season, the World Championship, I'll target the individual race, which is my forte," Darya told journalists.

Awards from prestigious tournament

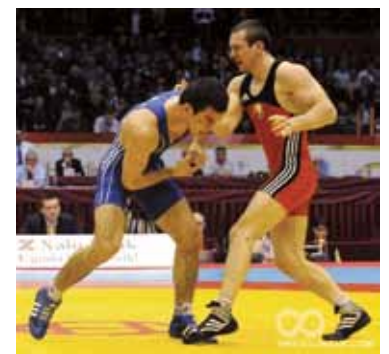
By Semen Bondarev

Two silver medals claimed by Belarusian Greco-Roman wrestlers at major international tournament in Baku, Golden Grand Prix

In the under 130kg weight category, Kirill Grishchenko of Belarus did well in the quarter-finals, defeating Vasily Parshin of Russia, and in the semi-finals, beating highly-experienced Alexander Chernet-sky, of Ukraine (a bronze medalist at the World Championship in Las Vegas). However, he then lost to Oyan Nazariani of Azerbaijan in the battle for gold.

Silver also went to Alexander Grabovik in the under 98kg weight category. On his way to the finals, one of the most promising Belarusian wrestlers defeated Reinier Monteagudo Romero of Cuba and then Amir Hossein Hosseini of Iran. In the decisive fight, Alexander lost to Musa Evloev of Russia.

Representatives of Belarus' national team in freestyle and women's wrestling failed to earn medals in the capital of Azerbaijan but successfully performed at the tournament in Nice. Belarusian wrestlers



earned eleven medals in France, including six gold. The international tournament in three types of wrestling (freestyle, women's and Greco-Roman) was held in Baku for the ninth time and brought together more than 700 athletes from fifty countries.

Thank you for all the games!

By Kirill Karin

Belarus' national team forward, Konstantin Koltsov, announces retirement from the ice

Konstantin has played more than a hundred matches in the National Ice Hockey League, spending last season with Dinamo Minsk HC.

He trained at Minsk's Yunost school and has played with Russian clubs Severstal, Ak Bars, Metallurg, Atlant and Spartak.

In 2011, the sportsman was awarded the Gagarin Cup in the Kontinental Hockey League. Koltsov played with the national team of Belarus across ten world championships, and in the winter Olympic Games of 2002 and 2010.

Play-offs after a long break

Belarus' national women's handball team through to 2017 IHF World Championship first qualifying round

By Igor Svitov

On December 4th, on the last day of the 2nd qualifying group matches, at Uruchie Sports Palace in Minsk, our women's handball team, coached by Tomaž Čater, beat Kosovo 31:13. The Belarusian team had an evident advantage, gaining a confident victory. Anastasia Mazgo scored nine goals: by

far the most. In the first round, the national team of Belarus defeated Turkey 37:23, and Switzerland 35:27.

The national team of Turkey is also through to the play-offs of the World Handball Championship, having beaten the Swiss 29:25. Belarus led its group, with six points (a goal difference of 103-63). Turkey had four points (88-78), Swit-



Moment of Belarus-Switzerland match

zerland earned two (87-85) and Kosovo none at all (51-103).

The 2017 IHF World Women's Handball Championship knockout round will be held on December 18th, on the last day of the 2016

World Championship in Sweden. The decisive matches for entrance to the finals will take place in June, while the final tournament is being hosted by Germany, in December 2017.

Opening of the week



Logoisk Ski Complex, near Minsk, opens season for those keen on active leisure

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 19th December. *On Screen and Behind*
Until 30th January. *Celestial World on the Earth*
Until 5th February. *Russian Pictorial Art of 19th-20th Century*

BOOK MUSEUM OF BELARUS' NATIONAL LIBRARY

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 22nd December. *Light Trace*

HOUSE OF PICTURES

89/3 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 11th December. *Great Classics of 20th Century: Pablo Picasso, Huan Miro, Vasily Kandinsky*

EXHIBITION HALL OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY MUSEUM

9A Bogdanovich Street
Until 13th March. *Noisy Feathered Rainbow*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 22nd January. Exhibition of carnivorous plants

LEONID SHCHEMELEV CITY ART GALLERY

10 Revolyutsionnaya Street
Until 31st December. *Pictorial Art Opening*

NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 20th December. *Love is Flight*
Until 15th January. *Time of Silent Stars: from Black-and-White to Red*
Until 29th January. *Belarusian Trade in History*
Until 28th February. *Time of Miracles: Winter Holidays and Entertainments*
Until 1st June 2017. *From Romanian Dinary to Belarusian Rouble*

ARENA CITY

84 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 1st February. *IllyuzIum* interactive entertaining exhibition of illusions and 3D pictures

OUTLET

44 Zhukov Avenue
Until 31st December. Exhibition of reptilians: *Tropics*
Until 31st January. *Hidden Reality*

UNIVERSITY OF CULTURE ART GALLERY

1 Oktyabrskaya Square
Until 7th December. Belarusian actors in Russian cinema, Russian actors in Belarusian films

BELARUSIAN STATE CIRCUS

32 Nezavisimosti Avenue
09-11.12. Arena Triumphators

THEATRES

BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
08.12. Pagliacci 09 and 10.12. Romeo and Juliet 12.12. Viva la Mamma!
14.12. Carmen 15.12. Macbeth

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street
08.12. Paulinka 09.12. Two Souls
10.12. Art 11.12. A Glass Slipper; Evening 13.12. Abduction of Europe or Ursula Radziwill's Theatre 14.12. Office

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue
08.12. Two Arrows 09.12. The Battlefield
10.12. Even a Wise Man Stumbles
11.12. A Very Simple Story 12.12. Master and Margarita 13 and 14.12. The Mechanical Man 15.12. Robbery and Midnight

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
08.12. Pesnyar 09.12. Testosterone
10.12. Lady for a Day 11.12. Pane Kokhanku 13.12. Double Eternity 14.12. Taming of the Shrew 15.12. Bridegrooms

MODERN ARTS THEATRE

5 Oktyabrskaya Street
08.12. Mad Triangle 10.12. Mad Money

REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street
08.12. Dzed 09.12. The Poet's Diary
10.12. Adel 11.12. Mr. Joke
12.12. Latent Men 13.12. An Uninvited Guest 14.12. Three Giselles

BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street
08.12. Birds 09.12. Tartuffe
10.12. The Wolf and the Seven Kid Goats
11.12. Morozko 14.12. Interview with Witches
15.12. Gospel from Judah

BELARUSIAN REPUBLICAN YOUNG SPECTATOR'S THEATRE

26 Engels Street
08 and 09.12. Belarusian Vaudevilles
10.12. My Little Enchantress

MINSK CONCERT HALL

5 Oktyabrskaya Street
11.12. Only Women in Jazz
12.12. Thank You, Margo!

MTZ HOUSE OF CULTURE

24 Dolgobrodskaya Street
08.12. The Girl and the Crow
10.12. The Sleeping Beauty illusion show

MAZ HOUSE OF CULTURE

117A Partizansky Avenue
14.12. The Marriage Contract