



*The Great Historical  
Atlas of Belarus* helps  
convey the country's  
history to the future  
generations



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*Dudariki* honoured amateur folklore ensemble of Minsk's gymnasium No. 14 among special prize holders

Tatiana Stolyarova

## A tradition with special meaning

The Palace of the Republic has recently welcomed special guests — winners of the 'For Spiritual Revival' award, special prizes for cultural and art figures, and the 'Belarusian Sports Olympus' prizes. Aleksandr Lukashenko came to congratulate these outstanding Belarusians and present them with their significant awards. The Head of State noted that the 'For Spiritual Revival' awards ceremony is a great tradition that gives special meaning to the Christmas holidays. → **2-3**



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# A tradition with special meaning

## The President bestows 'For Spiritual Revival' awards and special prizes to figures of culture, art and sports

By Olga Korneeva

Last week, the Palace of the Republic welcomed special guests — winners of the 'For Spiritual Revival' award, special prizes for cultural and art figures, and the 'Belarusian Sports Olympus' prizes. Aleksandr Lukashenko came to congratulate these outstanding Belarusians and present them with their significant awards.

The Head of State noted that the 'For Spiritual Revival' awards ceremony is a great tradition that gives special meaning to the Christmas holidays. "We dedicate this evening to our compatriots — those who preserve and enrich the national culture of Belarus and every year surprise us with their incredible achievements," he said.

According to the President, the high aspirations of the award-winners do not fit into the canons of the modern pragmatic world where everything is sold and bought, and morality and justice are depreciated.

"The nominees place the great idea of service to the public and the state above material gains. With their deeds they reinforce the belief in kindness and pure intent in our hearts," stated Mr. Lukashenko.

He stressed that their example makes him proud of the Belarusian nation, which has preserved the best national traits such as responsiveness and generosity, diligence and sense of purpose, genuine patriotism.

"Thanks to the heroes of this celebratory evening, many Belarusian kids left without parental love have been able to feel warmth and care. People suffering from serious disease and people in difficult life situations have been able to find understanding and support," stressed the Head of State.

Five 'For Spiritual Revival' awards were bestowed upon groups of workers and representatives of religious associations for their active humanitarian activities in 2019.

These include the Head of the Parish of St. Mary Magdalene Church of the city of Minsk, Archpriest Ivan Khoroshevich, for significant contribution to strengthening ideas of mercy and the organisation of the House of Spiritual Enlightenment.

The Head of State said it was symbolic that the Belarusian Public Association of Veterans is one of the winners of the 'For Spiritual Revival' award this year. "Let's mark their contribution to preserving memories of the heroic

deeds of the nation and vigorous humanitarian efforts."

The staff of the Belarusian Association of Large Parents Public Association was awarded the prize for their great work on the material and moral support of large families, alongside implementation of humanitarian projects *The Contest for the Best Large Family*, Minsk City Forum of Mothers, and the *Kindred People* television project.

The 'For Spiritual Revival' award was also bestowed upon the staff of the branch of the Brest Regional Museum of Local Lore cultural institution — Berestie Archaeological Museum — for their efforts to preserve the national cultural heritage and create an updated exhibition at the museum branch.



**Laureates of the President's special prizes: chief coach of Belarus' national modern pentathlon team — Vasily Gulevich, Chairman of the National State TV and Radio Company of Belarus — Ivan Eismont, Chief Director of the Main Directorate of the TV Channel Belarus Five — Pavel Bulatsky, Olympic champion in trampolining — Vladislav Goncharov, and Minister of Sports and Tourism — Sergey Kovalchuk (centre)**

The author's team consisting of the Academic Secretary of the Department of Humanities and Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus — Aleksandr Kovalenya, the Editor-in-Chief of RUE Belkartografia — Galina Lyakhova, the Director of the Belarusian Electronic Documentation Research Centre, Vyacheslav Nosevich, was awarded the prize for the creation of the fundamental cartographic publication — *The Great Historical Atlas of Belarus*.

For outstanding achievements in the field of professional art, folk and amateur art, training and patriotic education of creative youth, charity activities that have received public recognition, 10 special prizes from the President of Belarus were awarded to cultural and art workers.

The staff of the Vitebsk Centre of Modern Art cultural institution was awarded a special prize for creating an exposition of the Museum of History of the Vitebsk People's Art School and conducting the large-scale exhibition projects *Ossip Zadkine. The Return* and *Aleksandr Rodchenko. A Photo from VKHUTEMAS*.

The team consisting of the Deputy Head of the Information Department of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Television Channel, Bo-

ris Gersten, the Director of the Vladimir Bokun's Workshop, Vladimir Bokun, and the Production Director of the Vladimir Bokun's Workshop, Vladimir Lutsky, was awarded a special prize for creating *The Chronicle of the Minsk Ghetto* series of documentaries.

The honoured amateur group of Belarus — the symphony orchestra of the Molodechno State Music College named after M. K. Oginski — was awarded a special prize for great contribution to the creative education of youth and the implementation of cultural projects at the Oginski International Symphony Forum-Competition of Young Composers from the CIS Countries, *Friendship Bridges: Belarus — Russia* and *The Spiritual Page of Native Land*.

Workers of the Brest City Cultural Centre received a special prize in recognition of their outstanding achievements in developing amateur art, organising large-scale events timed to coincide with the 1,000th anniversary of Brest, and implementing the *Brest — the CIS Capital of Culture 2019* interstate programme.

A special prize was also conferred on employees of the National State TV and Radio Company of Belarus for the implementation of creative projects that promote the national culture of Belarus at home and abroad and for significant contribution to the creative education of youth.

Workers of the Ivye Culture and Recreation Centre were granted a special prize in recognition of their contribution to the development of folk art and implementation of the *Ivye Flavour* project.

The President's special prize was bestowed upon the creative team of People's Artist of Russia Igor Krutoi, Production Director and founder of the Sechenov.com company Aleksei Sechenov, and Artistic Director of the Art Major Producer Centre at the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts Aleksandr Vavilov, who developed the concept of the open-

ing and closing ceremonies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Games 2019 in Minsk.

The Skif Military-Patriotic Centre for Special Pre-conscription Training was awarded a special prize for its contribution to patriotic education of youth, the implementation of cultural projects to set up an exposition of the Margelov Museum of the History of Airborne Troops and Special Forces, and organisation of events dedicated to state holidays and commemorative dates.

Among the prize winners are also the *Dudariki* honoured amateur folklore ensemble of Minsk's gymnasium No.14 which was praised for outstanding achievements in amateur art and the successful presentation of Belarus in the International Festival *Accordion Gathers Friends*, the Minsk International Book Fair, and other projects.

A special prize was also conferred on a team of experts consisting of the Assistant Professor of the Chair of Monumental Art at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, Denis Chubukov, a master of vocational training of the same chair, Kirill Orsik, and an individual entrepreneur and a member of the Belarusian Union of Artists, Alevtina Bashkatova, who worked on the mosaic in the altar of the Memorial Church of All Saints and Innocent Victims Who Fell to Rescue Our Motherland in Minsk.

According to Mr. Lukashenko, the traditional 'Belarusian Sports Olympus' prize should inspire athletes to new accomplishments during the forthcoming Olympic Games in Tokyo.

These significant prizes were given to the Chief Director of the Main Directorate of the TV Channel Belarus Five, Pavel Bulatsky, the athlete and coach of the national trampoline team of Belarus of the Sports and Tourism Ministry, Vladislav Goncharov, as well as the chief coach of the national modern pentathlon team of the Republican Centre of Olympic Training for Water Sports, Vasily Gulevich.

At the ceremony, the Head of State recalled that Belarusians created their independent state thanks to the memory of their origins and fidelity to the land of their ancestors. The President underlined that the country will continue to support and encourage everyone who enriches the cultural heritage of Belarus and preserves moral and spiritual guidelines while reviving and filling national traditions with new meaning.

"They are our anchor, which will help us stay steady on the wave of globalisation, aimed at the destruction of state foundations," the President said.



BELTA



# The country is proud of you

The holders of the President's awards are people to be proud of. They are those whose example we wish to follow. They have made their success through their hard work, selfless devotion to their beloved cause and a sincere desire to use their talents in the service of the country and their fellow countrymen. The activities, inspiration and energy of these enthusiasts make our world better. They glorify our beloved Belarus and, over this Christmas period, we thank them for this. On the eve of the ceremony, we met with some of the winners — and they share their emotions!

## 'FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL' AWARD

**Ivan Gordeichik, Chairman of the Republican Council of the Belarusian Public Association of Veterans, Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly on Labour and Social Affairs:**



It's not only a well-deserved award. Veterans — primarily participants of the Great Patriotic War — are people who survived, defeated fascism and prospered. These are people who've provided us with everything we have now that's bright and good. After the libera-

tion of our country, they rebuilt everything that was destroyed during the Great Patriotic War with their own hands. Through their example, they show the youth of today how to live their lives and how to treat their homeland. They remind every citizen how we must preserve and honour the memory of those who died.

This year is special: we'll celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory. Last year, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from Nazi occupation. The prestigious award and attention of the Head of State against this background is exciting and heart-warming. After all, it concerns not only our public association: but each and every veteran and war participant — as well as the present generations who owe their lives to them.



**Tatiana Kravchenko, Chair of the Belarusian Association of Large Parents Public Association:**

This award shows great appreciation for the 28-year work of the whole of our organisation. We started our activity as a small association in the Frunzensky District of Minsk, gradually growing to city level and then reaching a Republican scale... Our task was to raise the status of the large family in the society, to draw attention to its problems. As I see it, many of the results we've achieved have become possible thanks to our organisation.

## SPECIAL PRIZES



**Boris Gersten, Deputy Head of the Information Department of the 2nd National Television Channel, documentary screenwriter:**

We have been working on *The Chronicle of the Minsk Ghetto* cycle for six years, since 2013. I have always been concerned about the Holocaust and the fact that the topic is not sufficiently explored: true, there were studies and books, but there has been almost no emotional video material or films about it. Of course, there are not many chronicle shots but there are staged elements. We met many people and found heroes who miraculously survived those terrible times. For me, the theme of the Holocaust is related to my father's personal tragedy: all his loved ones died in the ghetto in Western Ukraine.

Each film of *The Chronicle of the Minsk Ghetto* shows a different aspect of the history of the Holocaust in the capital of Belarus. All four films have been shown on TV in Belarus, Israel, and other countries.

**Denis Chubukov, Assistant Professor of the Chair of Monumental Art at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts:**

The creation of the altar decoration of the Memorial Church of All Saints and Innocent Victims Who Fell to Rescue Our Motherland, using the technique of mosaic, has taken almost five years... The work was time-consuming and on a large-scale: suffice



it to say that the total area of mosaic is 400 square metres. We represent a large team of about 100 people, each of whom played their part in this significant task.



**Vladimir Gabrov, Head of Rechitsa Military-Patriotic Centre for Special Pre-conscription Training — Skif:**

We're receiving a special award for a significant contribution to the patriotic education of our youth and the realisation of cultural projects for an exhibition at the Margelov Museum of the History of Airborne Troops and Special Forces and also for holding events dedicated to public holidays and memorable dates. There are numerous exhibits in the museum: about two thousand. Many of them are unique and make a visual study of the history of special forces possible. As for the centre itself, I will say briefly: my pupils — who are mostly schoolchildren and even those from elementary school — know things that even experienced special operation forces' soldiers can envy! We bring up true men!

**Grigory Soroko, Director of the Molodechno State Music College named after M. K. Oginski:**

I am more than happy to talk about receiving a special award from the President, because the winner is the whole team: the symphony orchestra of the Music College, where I worked for 40 years. Our repertoire includes more than three hundred masterpieces of



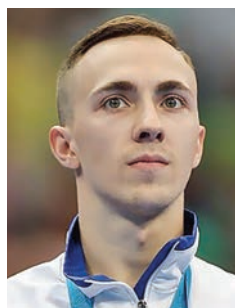
world music classics and works by Belarusian authors. We are doing a great job aimed at aesthetic education in Minsk and other regions. We've also done much to conduct a joint project with the Union of Composers of Russia: the Forum-Competition of Young Composers from the CIS Countries. Our team is a kind of laboratory where young talents 'test' their compositions. Another powerful project is *Friendship Bridges: Belarus — Russia*.

**Ivan Eismont, Chairman of the National State TV and Radio Company of Belarus:**

As a national state TV and radio company, we shoot a huge number of projects that contribute to the development and promotion of our culture both in the country and abroad... We are also always happy to provide a forum for projects for children. In this respect, we cannot but recall the *Junior Eurovision Song Contest* which we held in November 2018 in Minsk. Our goal was to give children a bright colourful show, which will be talked about for a long time. We have done everything possible for this and set an example to the whole world, proving that a children's song contest can be no less spectacular than an adult competition. *Junior Eurovision Song Contest 2018* broke all records in terms of the number of participating countries, the number of tickets sold and the number of on-screen viewers. The stage, sound and lighting at the Minsk-Arena, with its 15,000 seats, were highly appreciated in Europe. Now colleagues are approaching this level. Look at the great scale which Poland conducted the *Junior Eurovision Song Contest* after us.



## 'BELARUSIAN SPORTS OLYMPUS' PRIZES



**Vladislav Goncharov, Olympic champion in trampolining:**

The past year was rich in events and difficult. The 2nd European Games in Minsk were an important milestone for me in my sports career. The victory at this forum was the result of the whole team,

psychologists and coaches, and it's not just a day's work. Sadly, not everything was a success at the World Championship. An individual gold from a world forum is still the only award I lack in my collection. However, it was extremely pleasant to win the team competitions. In this category, Belarus has not been first at the world championships for 25 years! Happily, we were able to repeat this achievement.



**Pavel Bulatsky, Chief Director of the Main Directorate of the TV Channel Belarus Five:**

The 2nd European Games were, of course, the most significant sporting event of the past year. In 2019, a record volume of sports broadcasts was shown. Round-the-clock broadcasting of Belarus Five TV Channel and Belarus Five. Internet Channel, live broadcasts from arenas, daily news releases and special projects, exclusive interviews, species stories, diaries, work as a broadcaster at sambo and wrestling tournaments. The 2nd European Games were a serious test for the Belarusian sports TV channel, and our team successfully passed it.



**Vasily Gulevich, Honoured Coach of Belarus in modern pentathlon:**

Modern pentathlon is a very difficult sport. Here, success is always the result of a great deal of thorough joint work. Our present results are no exception: these are gold medals at the world and European championships, as well as awards at other major European events. Of course, it is nice that the Gomel school of pentathlon in Belarus is already a kind of brand. Our trainees are known, respected and accepted in the national team. The main line-up of the national team includes now four Gomel athletes — including Olga Silkina who won two gold medals at the World Championship last year!

**Continuation of the topic on pages 6-7**



# Visa facilitation agreement signed



The Republic of Belarus and the European Union sign agreements on facilitating visa procedures and on readmitting individuals staying without an authorisation

try visas with longer periods of validity using a simplified procedure.

The cost of Belarusian visas for European Union citizens will also drop to 35 Euros. Apart from that, the list of justifications for issuing free visas for non-commercial purposes will be expanded. The duration of stay for foreigners in Belarus will be doubled from 90 days per year to 180 days.

persons, who do not meet or no longer meet the requirements to legally stay on each other's territory.

Belarus will be granted a two-year transition period with regard to the readmission of third-country citizens. The joint declaration attached to the readmission agreement obliges the European Union to provide technical and financial support to Belarus in this area.

## ACCENT

Belarusian parliamentarians plan to ratify the agreement on visa facilitation with the EU at the spring session.

"The parliamentarians of Belarus declare their readiness to ratify this agreement as a priority at the next spring session of the Parliament. We also call on our colleagues in the European Parliament to make this process irreversible on their part," the Chairman of the Standing Commission on International Affairs of the House of Representatives, Andrei Savinykh, says. According to him, the agreement will facilitate travel for citizens, the development of international — including tourist — contacts, as well as strengthening the atmosphere of trust and understanding between peoples.

Based on materials of belta.by

The ceremony took place in Brussels and Belarus was represented by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei. The Croatian Internal Affairs Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Davor Bozinovic (Croatia currently presides over the European Council), and European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, signed the documents on behalf of the EU.

Before signing, Davor Bozinovic reminded that the sides had been negotiating since 2014. In his words, visa statistics points to strong ties between Belarus and the European Union. In 2018, nearly 700,000 citizens applied for a Schengen visa. The share of multiple-entry visas exceeded 80 percent. "Belarus is a country with a high number of issued Schengen visas and a low percentage of denials," he pointed out.

In turn, Vladimir Makei noted that the sides had tried to sign the documents much earlier but they had not managed to accomplish it for various reasons. He said he expects the European Union to use all its capabilities to temporarily freeze the cost of Schengen visas for Belarusians at 60 Euros until the visa facilitation agreement comes into force.

After the agreements were signed, Mr. Makei met with the Secretary General of the European External Action Service — Helga Schmid, and the European Commissioner for Budget and Administration — Johannes Hahn. The diplomats discussed the advancement of co-operation in the bilateral format and within the framework of the *Eastern Partnership* initiative.

## What are the fundamentals of the Belarus-EU visa facilitation agreement?

The agreement provides for mutual facilitation of visa procedures for a broad spectrum of citizens and for reducing visa fees. Citizens will be able to apply for visas to embassies of European nations and to visa centres.

The price for a Schengen zone visa for Belarusians will drop to 35 Euros while the decision to issue a visa or not will be made within ten days (30 days if additional background checks are required). Many categories of citizens will be able to apply for visas without paying the fee depending on the purpose of the visit and will be able to get multiple-en-

## When will the agreements come into force?

Once the documents are signed, they must be ratified by the National Assembly of Belarus and endorsed by the European Parliament. They will come into force on the first day of the second month after the two sides have notified each other about the completion of the ratification procedures. In other words, Belarusians will have to wait for several months.

The European Union's revised Visa Code will come into effect in early February. The document provides for raising visa fees up to 80 Euros. Belarusians will have to pay this price until the Belarus-EU visa facilitation agreement comes into effect. Once it happens, the visa fee will automatically drop from 80 to 35 Euros.

The European Union expects the agreements to come into force in June.

## What are essentials of the readmission agreement?

Once the document comes into force, Belarus and the European Union will have to readmit (take back) their own citizens, third-country citizens and stateless



Ksenia Sokolova

# International traffic grows

By Arina Novikova

**In 2020, Belarusian Railways will intensify international co-operation with a priority on the development of passenger and cargo transportation, increasing their volume — including through the organisation of transportation by accelerated container trains using the capabilities of Belintertrans — Transport and Logistics Centre and its companies established abroad**

Transportation along the China-Europe-China and China-Belarus-China routes will be developed, and co-operation with residents of the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park will continue in the transport and logistics sector and in the organisation of transportation in international traffic.

"It is also important for us to participate in the organisation and holding of a number of international conferences, forums and exhibitions, and to present

the transport and logistics capabilities of the Belarusian Railways," say company officials. In particular, an international conference — *From Europe to China Along the New Silk Road: Railway Logistics in Transit Through Belarus* — will be held in Hamburg, Germany, and the company will participate in the 12th Baltic Transport Forum in Kaliningrad.

Co-operation with foreign railway companies will continue to improve the competitiveness of this type of transport and improve international freight and passenger transport. A series of events is planned in Austria, Poland, Russia, Tajikistan, Hungary, France, and China; the Belarusian delegation will participate in solving important international issues in the industry.

The plans also include further development of co-operation with foreign manufacturers of railway rolling stock, machinery and equipment and the implementation of investment projects.

# Gold and currency reserves are growing

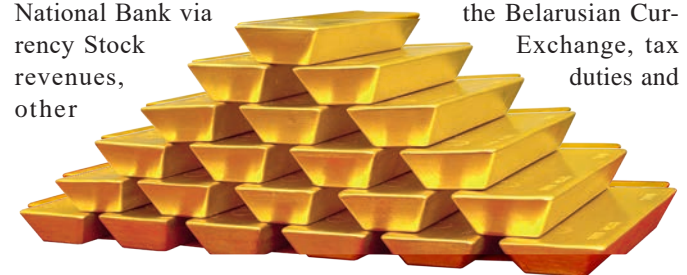
By Svetlana Yevgenieva

**According to the preliminary data, Belarus' foreign currency reserves amounted to \$9.4bn (equivalent) as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

According to the country's main monetary guidelines for 2019, the volume of international reserve assets was expected to reach at least \$7.1bn by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

Overall, in 2019, Belarus' foreign currency reserves went up by \$2.2bn (or 31.2 percent), including by almost \$235m (or 2.6 percent) in December alone.

In 2019, the country's gold and foreign exchange reserves were mainly bolstered due to the purchase of foreign currency by the National Bank via the Belarusian Currency Stock Exchange, tax revenues, duties and other



payments in foreign currency to the state budget, and also due to the issue of bonds denominated in foreign currency by the Finance Ministry and the National Bank. In 2019, the National Bank and the Government of the Republic of Belarus honoured foreign and domestic obligations in foreign currency to the total of around \$4.2bn, including \$355m in December.

According to the country's main monetary guidelines for 2020, the volume of international reserve assets is expected to make at least \$7.3bn by January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, with domestic and external liabilities in foreign currency fully repaid by the Government and the National Bank.



# Plans in place

The Council of Ministers has approved a list of tasks for the country's socio-economic development for the coming 365 days. This is a kind of road map, the signing of which was preceded by a Presidential decree.

By Vladislav Sychevich

The document is complex: apart from the action plan aimed at the creation of conditions for economic development, quarterly values for the key performance indicators of the Government and public administration bodies have been approved.

GDP is perhaps the key indicator. Its growth in the first quarter is expected to be 0.7 percent and is to reach 2.8 percent by late 2020. According to forecasts, the growth of exports of goods and services in the first three months of the year is expected to be half a percent. At the same time, by the end of the year, the figure will grow to 3.6 percent. Real disposable income of the population is likely to increase, as well as foreign direct investment on a net basis. In the first quarter, the latter should reach \$675m (\$1.7bn by late 2020).

Belneftekhim Concern will join the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation



and Trade and other interested companies to take compensatory measures in the oil industry this year to ensure the efficiency of oil refining. This includes the continuation of the pricing strategy for oil products in the domestic market in 2020, taking into account changes in oil prices.

A separate block of the action plan is devoted to the creation of conditions of economic development to ensure favourable terms for investors. Investment legislation will be improved, a strategy for attracting direct foreign investments until 2025 will be developed, and an infrastructure plan for the country's development for the next 5 years will be formed. Investment legislation is to undergo some changes: it's expected to be corrected to secure additional guarantees protecting investors' rights, to create a special legal regime for the conclusion and implementation of special investment agreements. It is also proposed

to prohibit the revision of privatisation transactions after 3 years.

The Government's plan also provides for greater autonomy for the heads of organisations and local authorities. An interdepartmental working group will be established to prepare proposals for improving the system of support for the development of territories. By August 1st, each region will form a portfolio of investment projects for 2021-2025. In addition, the Government will prepare proposals to change legislation on criminal and administrative responsibility. In particular, work will continue to decriminalise economic crimes. Detention for economic crimes is proposed to be considered only as an exceptional measure.

Special attention will be paid to areas with a difficult situation on the labour market. This year's list includes 29 of these. This figure has fallen since the 53 listed in 2019.

## Agro-industrial complex increases supplies to China

By Igor Svetlov

**Expected export of Belarusian agricultural products to China grew by more than a quarter by the end of 2019 to reach approximately \$110m**

Due to the accreditation of 14 new meat producers in China and an increase in the range of products for export, Belarus plans to significantly increase the volume of beef and poultry supplies to the country in 2020. The work is in full swing aimed at expanding the range, including ready-made meat products, accreditation of other enterprises and pork supplies.

Dzerzhinsky agro-combine is one of the largest exporters of agricultural products to China. According to General Director Vladimir Lukyanov, 2019 was particularly successful. Deliveries to China of parts of poultry carcasses increased 3 times to reach 2,500 tonnes. Although the distance is not insignificant, the products are supplied by rail in 2.5 weeks and make a good profit. Expanding the export range will make it possible to increase revenue.



BELTA

## Charging easily available

By Natalia Yemelyanova

**The number of electric charging stations will grow to 500 country-wide in 2021**

Belorusneft is a national operator for the creation and development of a network of electric charging stations in

Belarus. This year, the company plans to install about 150 such stations in Minsk; so far, 85 of them operate in the capital. The emphasis is on providing a range of services: modern gas stations networks have also created optimum conditions for customers to relax and service their cars.

Last year, 54 charging stations for electric vehicles were put into operation in Minsk, and the number of electric charging stations in the Republic increased to 250. The majority of them are near attractions and visitor accommodation: parking lots, hotels, shopping and business centres and sports complexes.



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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Vytinanka folk music ensemble, from Stolin, to present Belarus at World EXPO-2020 in Dubai

Vytinanka will represent the country for the third time at the world exhibition: in 2015, the ensemble performed at the Belarusian pavilion in Milan and, two years later — at EXPO-2017 in Astana (now known as Nur-Sultan). The ensemble was created in 1981 and, in 1992, it was awarded the 'People's' title. In 2004, it became known as an Honoured Amateur Ensemble of the Republic of Belarus. At EXPO, musicians usually perform at least three or four concerts a day. The ensemble uses only national instruments: accordion, violin, trumpet, flute and cymbals.

The World EXPO-2020 will be held in Dubai (UAE) from October 20th, 2020 to April 10th, 2021.



### Monument to Yanka Kupala unveiled in China

A monument to People's Poet of Belarus Yanka Kupala — designed by Wu Weishan — has been unveiled in the grounds of Beijing Foreign Studies University as part of the completion of the Year of Belarus' Education in China. Taking part in the inauguration ceremony were the Ambassador of Belarus to China — Kirill Rudy, the University administration, representatives of China's state bodies, ambassadors, senior officials of



the Secretariat of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, and journalists of the Chinese media. Monuments to Belarusian writers are already found in other Chinese cities: in Tianjin (to Yakub Kolas) and Xian (to Yanka Kupala).

### Unique publication about Belarusian flora to be presented in Minsk

*The State Cadastre of Flora of the Republic of Belarus. Fundamentals of the Cadastre. Primary Survey 2002-2017* will be presented in the Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences.



The book is the most complete reference book about the Belarusian flora. Scientists from the Institute of Experimental Botany at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus have been working on it for more than 20 years, and the publication itself is unique. The fundamental work of 600 pages contains the most complete summary data on rare and endangered, economically useful, poisonous and other species of plants and fungi, plant communities and valuable plantings. The book includes over 2,000 maps and 1,000 drawings.



### Belarusian Ambassador meets with Pope Francis

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and concurrently to the Holy See — Sergei Aleinik — took part in the annual audience of Pope Francis to the members of the diplomatic corps. On the fringes of the event, the Ambassador had a brief conversation with the Pontiff and conveyed to him Christmas and New Year greetings from the Belarusian leadership. During his visit, Mr. Aleinik also met with the Vatican Secretary of State — Cardinal Pietro Parolin. The parties discussed topical issues of Belarusian-Vatican relations, hailed the interaction in international organisations and exchanged views on the situation in the region.





# Preserving the country's history for future generations

The author's team consisting of the Academic Secretary of the Department of Humanities and Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus — Aleksandr Kovalenya, the Editor-in-Chief of RUE Belkartografia — Galina Lyakhova and the Director of the Belarusian Electronic Documentation Research Centre, Vyacheslav Nosevich, was awarded the prize of the President of Belarus 'For Spiritual Revival' for creating *The Great Historical Atlas of Belarus* which not only helps convey the country's history to the present generation of Belarusians but also preserve it for future generations

By Olga Korneeva

Galina Lyakhova noted that this is an award for many people: Belarusian scientists and cartographers. "It took us more than ten years to create the atlas. Over the years, its concept has been refined and added to, but our desire to demonstrate a conceptual model of the Belarusian state's establishment and development in the format of historical cartography remained unchanged," she says. "We've succeeded: the four volumes contain over 400 maps. Each of them is unique and reflects a scientific view on domestic history. The atlas also has considerable text and many illustrations that help the reader to better understand the historical events which took place in the territory of Belarus in the past."

The idea of creating an atlas was born in 2005 and its first volume was published in 2009; the last — the fourth — was released in 2018. The work was painstaking for the authors and required a great deal of professionalism. Scientists and specialists of Belkartografia had to study archival materials, clarify and link the spelling and designations of all settlements, borders of states, territories of voivodeships, provinces, counties, districts



Galina Lyakhova

and regions. "The completed maps reflect the history not only of Belarus but also to a large extent of the Eastern European region. At the heart of each map there's an original source. We tried to present large-scale maps of individual territories, city plans and battle plans," explains Aleksandr Kovalenya. "Each volume is supplemented by general maps which show all the more or less significant localities of the corresponding time with their

designation. The geographical index introduces the reader to the historical and modern names of all settlements placed on the general map, belonging to the villages and estates, the time when first mentioned in the sources, variants and name changes."

As Galina Lyakhova admits, some difficulties were related to the lack of cartographic materials. "We had to make maps virtually from scratch. It was difficult to find a method and way of depicting the material to really objectively, reliably and clearly demonstrate everything that happened in the past in our publication, also tracking all the dynamics of the events. In addition, it was necessary to bring together the maps, since we wanted them to be interconnected in the atlas," she said.

Mr. Kovalenya believes the edition is a significant scientific, spiritual and cultural event in the life of Belarusians. "It's unique in the CIS and also Europe. *The Great Historical Atlas of Belarus* is a business card that serves to assert the country's prestige abroad. We have proved to ourselves and the European community that we have rich history, culture and national traditions and that our scientists are able to solve the most complex problems," he stated.

## Dudariki ensemble: live sound and genuine emotion

By Marina Kuzmich



Dmitry Rovensky

**An Honoured Figure of Culture of Belarus and an excellent student of education, Dmitry Rovensky, has been leading the Dudariki amateur folklore ensemble of Minsk's gymnasium No. 14 for almost half a century. Folk songs, dances and games during their performances are full of charm and positive energy.**

The skill of the musicians impresses even the most sophisticated spectators, not only in our country. *Dudariki* have toured half the world. In 2014, they represented Belarus at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. This year, they received an invitation to perform at festivals in Poland and China. Spectators everywhere show their appreciation with sincere applause and the band never return home empty-handed. Dmitry Rovensky is the holder of the UN diploma for the preservation and development of national traditions, a medal for the promotion of folklore in Europe, the Russian title of national musician of the

Russian land and the medal of the Marshal Zhukov Foundation 'For Courage and Love for the Fatherland'.

The current collective of the *Dudariki* folklore ensemble of Minsk's gymnasium No. 14 was awarded a special prize by the President, awarded to cultural and art figures for outstanding achievements in amateur art and the successful representation of Belarus in the *Accordion Gathers Friends* International Festival and the Minsk International Book Fair.

...From the entrance I hear the quadrille rhythms and harmonica tunes. I look into the classes where there are lessons in choreography and music.

"Few people know how to play the tambourine correctly," Dmitry immediately points out. "Be sure to use a rattle! We even have a performance where a group of twenty young girls with tambourines go out to compete with a group of young boys playing harmonicas!"

During the performance, the ensemble artists play harmonicas, pipes, violins, cymbals, drums, flutes and ocarinas. Members of the ensemble can also play music on saws, scythes, flax gouging devices, and the washing boards our ancestors used.

How do ancient household objects give melodic sounds in the hands of *Dudariki's*

members? Dmitry says the main thing is a sense of rhythm while the rest is a matter of technology.

There are almost thirty people in the concert ensemble today. In total, the group has more than eighty students, with thirteen being representatives of the Rovensky family. His daughter and two sons, and now their grandchildren, Sonya and Timofey, learnt how to play the folk instruments in the ensemble. In total, there are five generations in the Rovensky musical dynasty.

He did not immediately realise that he was destined to play music. He used to work as a radio presenter, a welder, a fireman and a joiner. After the army he was sent to work at a school. Here he decided to create an original children's folk group. He studied litera-

ture and borrowed experiences. The first performances of the group during city holidays were successful. On one occasion, composer Igor Luch-enok attended a rehearsal of the ensemble and was pleasantly surprised by *Dudariki's* creative activity. He expressed the confidence that they would succeed in the future.

Every year, the number of people who want to get into the group of folk musicians increases. *Dudarochki* was established for children from six years old. Dmitry doesn't hold any auditions. Children, after getting to know the interesting folk dances and songs at the beginning of the school year, come to sign up for classes themselves. After a few years, these beginners can play beautifully on several musical instruments. The classes for violin, cymbals, harmonica and wind instruments are working. In this type of school, *Dudariki* members are also taught to sing and dance. For the first time in the country, the artistic director began to create combined creative performances. This is not only a feature of the ensemble, but also an innovation.

Saying goodbye to *Dudariki*, I felt great pride in the artists and appreciation for their creative work, thanks to which the whole world can learn about Belarusian musical heritage.







BELTA

# Ancient city under glass

There is a unique city in Belarus. Nobody has lived in it for a very long time, but interest in the history of this ancient settlement doesn't fade. Employees of the Berestie Archaeological Museum help their contemporaries to find out what kind of people lived here ten centuries ago and how they lived their lives. The team was awarded the 'For Spiritual Revival' award for their work to preserve the national cultural heritage and to create an updated exhibition at the end of 2019.

By Alevtina Chernovolova

"This award is one of the most honourable in the field of culture and preservation of historical and cultural heritage. It's an indicator of the work of the entire team at the Brest Regional Museum of Local Lore, of which Berestie Museum is a branch," says Aleksey Mityukov, the Director of the Regional Museum of Local Lore.

Berestie has been welcoming visitors since 1982. Since 2016, modernisation has been carried out, so the museum has gained a second wind, with the glass facades of the building being renewed, a natural ventilation system being created and the fence around the excavation being repaired. The surrounding area has changed beyond recognition, becoming informative and interactive. For example, small architectural boards tell guests what the city was like during different periods of its history, with 13th century stylised wooden pavements depicted and the flowerbed made in the form of the 18th century Berestie Castle.

At the same time, there was a re-opening at Berestie itself. The theme and concept remained the same, but the content of the museum has changed significantly. Specialists updated twelve rooms of the historical exposition and added two more. One is dedicated to 15th-18th century Brest-Litovsk while the second houses a cinema where one can watch popular science and animated films. "The exposition is now interactive. Sculptural compositions were created in almost every room to visually demonstrate the crafts and activities that existed in the ancient city, and the appearance of Berestie residents. We've also introduced technical innovations: 3D glasses with a virtual tour of Berestie, audio guides in Russian, Belarusian, English, Chinese and Polish," said Mr. Mityukov, listing the major innovations.

Berestie is a unique museum, established on the site of the citadel of the ancient city, where scientists, under the guidance of Professor Piotr Lysenko, dis-



covered 11th-13th century wooden buildings during excavations. Of course, there are many archaeological museums in Europe, but the Brest one is unrivalled. The island-town of Sviyazhsk, the excavations in Novgorod and Krakow are similar to Berestie, but the expositions there are combined and prefabricated. "We have preserved the excavation of the city in the form in which it lay from the 13th century and as archaeologists found it in the 1960-70s. Here we learn where the Berestie area came from, how our ancestors lived, what they did, and a lot of other information that needs to be conveyed to our contemporaries. On the basis of this knowledge, we must educate the younger generation, instil a love of history, homeland and, of course, do it with modern methods," believes Mr. Mityukov.

Tourists are sensitive to changes. Almost 65,000 Belarusian and foreign visitors attended the archaeological museum last year, which is almost a quarter more compared to 2018. Thanks to the visa-free regime, the number of guests from Europe and China has significantly increased.

The work done over three years is only a step in the development of Berestie and the team does not intend to stop there. There are ideas for further development. It's planned to equip a children's corner, as well as interactive areas in the exhibition halls. The area around the museum will continue to change and new projects will appear, including *The Day of the Archaeologist*.

Undoubtedly, the earth retains many more secrets about ancient Berestie. It's possible that the excavations launched half a century ago at the site of the ancient citadel could be continued. "A lot has to be done by archaeologists in terms of studying the ancient city. This is important for all of us, because Brest is one of the most ancient cities in our country, not only in terms of the chronology, but also for archaeological finds. There are reasons to believe that the city is much older than its official date of 1019," concluded Mr. Mityukov.





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# Bushfires are creating violent weather systems

**‘Intense and voracious’ fires in Australia are interacting with the atmosphere and creating their own weather, including lightning, which can cause new wildfires**

Australia’s wildfires, unprecedented in their size and severity, are so intense they are setting off a series of bizarre phenomena, including fire-driven thunderstorms, fire clouds and so-called ember attacks.

Though rain brought some much-needed relief to Australia’s east coast, officials say the wildfire risk remains high, with forecasts showing that conditions will likely dry out and temperatures will creep up again later this week, adding fuel to more than 130 fires

that are burning around the country. Smoke from the fires is still affecting air quality and visibility across New South Wales and the neighbouring state of Victoria, according to Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology, but emergency crews are working to clear roads and restore power to affected communities during the respite.

“Priority today and over the next few days is to turbocharge the recovery process,” New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian tweeted.

But Australia is not yet in the clear. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who has faced harsh criticism for not addressing the link between the country’s wildfires and climate change, warned that the

fires will continue to burn for months to come. The New South Wales Rural Fire Service reported that there are still 69 uncontained fires in that state alone, many of which remain severe.

“There are places where flames have been 70 metres high, and there’s evidence in some places that temperatures of the fires have been 1,000 degrees Celsius,” said Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick, a climate scientist at the Climate Change Research Centre at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

These ‘intense and voracious’ fires are interacting with the atmosphere and creating their own weather, including lightning, which can cause new wildfires, she added.

# China has launched world’s first smart high-speed train

**The country has just hurtled past another milestone in its vast high-speed railway expansion plans**

As the countdown to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics continues, the new 108-mile high-speed railway line connecting the capital with Olympic host city Zhangjiakou has just entered service, cutting the travel time between the two from three hours to 47 minutes. But this isn’t just another bullet train.

This beauty, part of China’s Fuxing series, can run up to 350 kilometres per hour without a driver — said to be a world first. It’s also been dubbed the world’s first smart high-speed railway. Taking about four years to build, the line, also referred to as the Jing-Zhang high-speed railway, connects Beijing, Yanqing and Zhangjiakou, all three of which will host events dur-

ing the upcoming Winter Olympics. The route will stop at ten stations, including Badaling Chang Cheng, the most popular section of China’s Great Wall.

Chongli railway, a branch line from the Jing-Zhang railway, is also open and will ferry passengers from the capital city to Taizicheng Station — a stone’s throw away from several skiing competition venues and the Olympic Village.

The new rail line began operations on December 30th, with the first train running from Beijing North Railway Station to Taizicheng Railway Station.

“The bullet train can automatically depart, operate between stations and adjust the train’s operation to meet its precise timetable after a single button is pressed,” a researcher from China Academy of Railway Sciences said.



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# Punta Ventana collapses as powerful tremor hits

**A famous tourist landmark and one of Puerto Rico’s most cherished natural wonders collapsed after an earthquake shook the island**

Punta Ventana, which translates to ‘Window Point’, was a stone arch shaped like a round window located in Guayanilla along the southern coast. The rock formation was one of the island’s most iconic treasures and major tourist attractions. A 5.8 magnitude earthquake struck the island recently, wiping out the natural structure.

The UPRM Meteorological Laboratory shared a photo on Twitter of Punta Ventana before and after the earthquake, showing where the soaring arch once stood before its tragic collapse. “The

# Scientists in Poland create a new kind of artificial bone

**Medical experts in Lublin in eastern Poland are pioneering the use of an innovative artificial bone technology that has saved some patients from amputation**

One of the first to benefit was Daniel Bardega. Following a motorcycle accident he faced a choice: accept an experimental procedure, or lose his right leg. “Of course, at the beginning there were quite a few worries, because there was no guarantee that my body would accept the material, that it wouldn’t be rejected.” A large section of Daniel’s leg bone was destroyed in the crash.

Doctor Adam Nogalski used pieces of the artificial bone, called FlexiOss, together with a metal plate, to re-build a seven-centimetre section of Daniel’s femur.

“The main problem of the cavities in the bone was solved by implanting the new material, which goes in place of the bone in small segments,” says Doctor Nogalski. “Eight years after the operation, the result of the treatment is good, and the patient can move without crutches.”

The FlexiOss technology was co-developed by biochemist Anna Belcarz. She knew that surgeons weren’t happy with other bone replacements which come in powder form and are tricky to handle.

In contrast, FlexiOss can be cut and shaped when dry and becomes flexible when wet. It’s also made with artificial compounds, rather than animal bone, reducing the risk of rejection. It stays in the body and bone cells grow in and around it.

“FlexiOss looks like pumice stone,” she says, “but isn’t. It’s a material that replaces the bone, and when it’s dampened with a solution it has a level of elasticity, and can be formed by the surgeon during the operation.”

The FlexiOss project has benefitted from a million Euros in EU grants, including Cohesion Policy funds. It has won 14 awards and been accorded 3 patents.



# Each name preserved in memory

Those wanting to learn more about the history of the partisan movement in Belarus during the Great Patriotic War have a unique opportunity to view documents about the national avengers and partisan troops. Access to primary sources has been allowed by the *Partisans of Belarus* joint project of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House and the National Archive. Simply visit [partizany.by](http://partizany.by) portal and search for the appropriate name or that of a guerrilla group. If the relevant materials have been preserved in the archive and have already been digitised, they will appear on screen.

By Vladimir Yakovlev

“This is the first project in the CIS dedicated to the partisan movement,” explains Ivan Sinichkin, the Deputy Director and Editor-in-Chief of the publishing house. “The release of a huge amount of information about the movement is timed to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from Nazi occupation and Victory in the Great Patriotic War.”

Apart from employees of the publishing house and archivists, the project involves scientists, historians, volunteers and students. The total number of digitised documents has already exceeded 100,000, these are basically award lists of heroes which describe significant fighting episodes. They are sometimes accompanied by service notes and autobiographies of the partisans.

Among the names immortalised on the pages of the portal are many Russians who fought as part of Belarusian partisan units. Perhaps someone, after reading the archival materials, will recognise their relatives. “This possibility will become more real when we process the materials of the partisan groups that operated in Pskov, Smolensk and other Russian regions which — due to circumstances — have joined the National Archive of Belarus,” Mr. Sinichkin adds.

Journalists of the publishing house work closely with the Belarusian Archive of Film and Photo Documents to add images taken in the detachment to the text materials. Photos of the heroes are also sometimes available. In the future, it is planned to post thematic photo collections on the site describing the life of partisans, forest schools and hospitals.



Photo from the archives

## FACTS AND FIGURES

A total of **1,255** partisan detachments — as brigades, regiments and formations — operated in Belarus during the war. They were led by famous commanders: Minay Shmyrev, Vasily Kozlov, Roman Machulsky and others. Partisans from the Smolensk, Kalinin, and Orel regions also fought in Belarus. By late 1943, partisans controlled almost **60** percent of the territory of Belarus. One of the most effective actions was the rail war which was waged on the enemy’s communications during the preparation and conduct of the battle of Kursk. In some directions, the movement of German trains with weapons and manpower was suspended for up to two weeks. In total, more than **370,000** partisans and underground workers fought in Belarus during the war.

# Send more explosives

The collections of the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War History in Minsk, at first glance, boasts quite unusual exhibits: including a dining spoon and a fork. However, there is an amazing story behind them. They belonged to Hitler’s general. But in early 1944 he was captured by scouts of the 125th Kopatkevichi partisan brigade, and the tableware, seized in the form of trophies, found their way to the then-famous Soviet saboteur Grigory Tokuev. And later, along with other relics of the legendary sapper, were transferred to the museum. The *Partisans of Belarus* Internet project of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House explores the heroic deeds of this Hero of the Soviet Union.

By Vladimir Fedorov

Grigory Tokuev’s battle started on the western border of the country. He was already a squad commander of the 214th airborne brigade, having already taken part in the Soviet-Finnish conflict. However, the war with the Nazis did not begin as planned, and paratroopers had to fight as ordinary infantry. It’s well-known that platoon commanders don’t live long. Surrounded, severely wounded and unconscious, the young officer was captured. When he recovered, the first thought was to escape! On his second attempt, luck favoured the bold and, for the third time, Grigory broke away from his pursuers and found the partisans in the forest.

Being familiar with the business of subversion, he took up the most dangerous occupation: sabotage on the railway. Partisans were required to have remarkable courage, endurance, ingenuity, and ability to navigate the terrain. That was exactly Grigory Tokuev. In less than a year, the sabotage group led by him derailed 34 enemy trains, with 16 of these being blown up personally by Grigory. He didn’t spare himself. Once he didn’t have time to run away before a mine exploded and was shell-shocked, but after recovering he once again returned to his mission. By March 1943, his military deeds had been marked with the highest award: the Order of Lenin.

“Grigory Tokuev was the most experienced and brave sapper of the detachment,” said Vladimir Grigoriev, a

researcher of the Partisan Movement History Department at the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War History. “He invented a unique push-action mine of special design. It was in his detachment that they made a device for derailling enemy trains, which was used when there were no explosives. It was called a partisan arrow, or wedge. The device weighed a great deal, and they had to take it to the appointed position on a horse and then carry it. It’s displayed in our museum in a thematic section that describes the guerrilla rail war.”



Photo from the archives

**Grigory Tokuev’s group destroyed a total of 55 German positions with manpower, equipment and ammunition**

In quiet moments, Grigory sometimes recalled the native village of Potashevskaya in the Shenkursk District of the Arkhangelsk Region. There he completed seven training courses, then studied at the Arkhangelsk flying club and practiced skiing. These skills greatly helped in the fight against the enemy.

However, wounds and concussions made themselves felt and he had to go on a plane to the ‘mainland’ to heal. Having recovered, Grigory immediately requested the front line and soon he wrote to the head of the central headquarters of the partisan movement P.K. Ponomarenko: ‘We ask you to send for our detachment more triton, machine guns, light machine guns, rifles, hand grenades and bullets...’

All this was delivered from the ‘mainland’ and the partisans used the weapons to great effect against the Nazis. Tokuev’s group destroyed a total of



Photo from the archives

**Grigory Tokuev**

Golden Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union, bestowed on Grigory in 1944.

His aggravated wounds once again put the young man in a hospital bed. He had to forget about picking up weapons. Grigory faced the question: where to go and what to do now? He chose Belarus destroyed by war, which after the liberation had to be restored virtually from scratch. He had fought there, his comrades were there, and Larisa — the love of all life — was waiting for him. Taking into account Grigory’s sports past, he was sent to Spartak voluntary sports society, where he worked with dignity until his retirement. He had a daughter and three sons, and this is another feat of the front-line soldier, albeit not so dramatic, but equally necessary for the country and people.

The hero is not forgotten. “Our family keeps a memory of the military heroic deeds of our beloved grandfather Grigory Arkadievich Tokuev and his extraordinary personality,” writes granddaughter Tatiana Tikhonovich on the Internet. “Now his grandchildren and great-grandchildren tell their friends and acquaintances about the heroic deeds of their legendary grandfather. The memories of him will always be in our hearts!”



# My granddad's ring brings me good luck

Young singer Anastasia Zhabko is well known to viewers: she was placed 1st at the *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk* children's vocal competition, was twice among the top ten finalists of the national selection round for *Junior Eurovision* and has recently won the Republican TV competition — *Talent of the Country* — broadcast by ONT channel. We talked to the 13-year-old 'star' to learn what modern teenagers dream of and what are their expectations from the profession and themselves.

By Irina Ovsepyan

**Nastya, we have known each other for several years but I see violin earrings in your ears. Are they your good-luck charm?**

No, I just love them. However, I do have a charm: a ring belonging to my granddad Genrikh. I didn't know him personally as he died in 1987, but I wear his ring, and I think it brings good luck.

**Winning the *Talent of the Country* competition is not mere luck. It's a great job...**

Children sometimes have to work not as children: that's why the results are good. I think I've been preparing for this project all my life.

**Speaking about your plans for the future I can't help remembering you were among the top ten finalists in the national selection round to the *Junior Eurovision* twice. Are you going to try again?**

Why not? However, the main thing for me now is to write my own music. Contests are still secondary; it is important to find my own listener.

**What kind of music do you appreciate?**

It's vocal music where I can show off my voice. Importantly, it must have good meaning.

**What are the most pressing topics for you?**

Probably self-expression and forming my personality. I'm now at the age when we are searching for ourselves and our character is being formed. We are trying to decide who we want to be, while adults put certain limits on us and impose things we don't like.

13-year-old Anastasia Zhabko impressed the jury of the *Talent of the Country* — including producer Kim Breitburg and operatic professionals — with her powerful jazz vocals.

**Let's talk about plans for the future. Are you going to connect it to pop music?**

I can't say that I sing only pop songs. I would classify jazz as classic. After finishing my 9th year at school, I want to study at the Art College's Department of Pop Vocal. I'll then think about my future. A couple of months ago, I was seriously considering three professions: a forensic investigator, a prosecutor and a diplomat. I was dissuaded from becoming an investigator, although initially I really wanted to do criminology! I think it's an interesting profession.

**It's not a usual choice for a woman. How do you see the role of women in the modern world?**

Previously, a girl had to be always gentle, soft, graceful and vulnerable but now everything is different. Women are sometimes more courageous than men and often choose male professions. I'm not a feminist but it's better to be strong than weak.

**The *Talent of the Country* competition was judged by a famous composer and producer of musicals — Kim Breitburg...**

It appears he liked my work. His wife Valeria said that she often gives the song I performed in the final to her students to learn at the Gnesin Academy of Music. She said that she'd set me as an example in terms of technique and emotion.

**Operatic singers often say they need to 'negotiate' with the voice — just as with a person. Does this happen to you?**

The state of the voice very much affects the performance, it's unpredictable. For example, some songs might require a lower register; in this case, it is necessary to sing so that you don't get too much on the top notes. I think I sing lower notes quite well but after five minutes on the stage, I'm not so sure.



Vitaly Pivovarchik

Nastya was born into a musical family. She started singing at the age of 3 and began to professionally develop her voice at the age of 6. Her only vocal teacher is her older brother Gleb Zhabko.

**What would save you in such a situation?**

It would be mastery and knowledge — nothing else. If you sing in the way it's been given to you from birth, then nothing will be achieved. If you have to perform when you are not well, only the technique can save you — and nothing more. I remember, a few years ago, we went to the 'Golden Voice of Russia' competition in Ostankino; the jury comprised Olga Kormukhina and other 'stars'. I suddenly fell ill and had a high temperature... I performed well and was placed first but this was exclusively owing to my technique: ten minutes after the performance, I couldn't even speak, let alone sing.

**Didn't you say: 'I can't participate, I'm sick'? You went onto the stage anyway?**

Yes, of course. It's impossible to do anything else. Whether I'm sick or not, these are only my problems.

**What do you feel when performing on the stage?**

When I first started (I was very small and my parents say I learned to sing before I could speak), I only liked singing. Now I feel very different emotions. When I took the stage in the final of the national selection round for the 'Junior Eurovision', I had absolutely no excitement but a single thought: 'Nastya, everything is fine, you are ready, everything is cool'. I saw how the audience were cheering and how they were supporting me... and I felt so good! I used to shake and worry all the time but now I feel great when taking the stage. This is true bliss.



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## Vladislav Syrokomlya's literary legacy soon to return to Belarus

The return through a donation to the National Library of a large collection of both lifetime and posthumous publications — over 50 books by famous Belarusian and Polish poet Vladislav Syrokomlya — is a true Christmas gift for Belarus: most of these are very rare and previously absent in Belarusian publications

By Irina Sergeeva

A unique collection of rarities — including the original of Vladislav Syrokomlya's rare photo from his youth — was bought from a private collector with the support of the Honorary Consul of Belarus in Lausanne, Andrei Nazheskin and

the Charge d'Affaires of Belarus in Switzerland, Pavel Matsukevich.

Previously, for more than six months, the staff of the National Library of Belarus negotiated the acquisition of the collection, and the authenticity of each book was examined. As a result, we can now say that the collection is



absolutely unique. Many books have preserved their original publishing bindings, which are usually lost in libraries through many years of active use.

The official ceremony of the presentation of the book heritage of Vladislav Syrokomlya will take place this year.



# Belarusian sportsmen take part in 3rd Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne



The team from Belarus perform in five disciplines: biathlon (Darya Kabisheva, Yulia Kovalevskaya, Victoria Shashkova, Konstantin Baburov, Andrey Gavrosh and Artem Krilenko), Alpine skiing (Maksim Davydovsky), speed skating (Varvara Bandarina, Karina Shipulya, Maks Fedorov and Andrey German), cross-country skiing (Darya Mayorova, Anna Machekhina, Mikhail Morozov and Gleb Shakel), ice hockey mixed NOC 3x3 (Daniil Karpovich, Andrey Murashko, Ilya Korzun and Yan Shostak). Vasily Yurchik — who heads the NOC’s International Relations Department — leads the Belarusian mission.

By Arina Novikova

Taking part in the competitions are around 1,880 athletes from more than 70 countries. They compete in 16 disciplines of eight sports: biathlon, cross-country skiing, ice hockey mixed NOC 3x3, Alpine skiing, figure skating, Nordic combined, short track speed skating, ski jumping, bobsleigh, skeleton, luge, curling, freestyle skiing, speed skating, snowboarding and ski-mountaineering.

The 3rd Youth Olympic Games in Lausanne will run until January 22nd. They are held by the Inter-



national Olympic Committee once every four years. The Games debuted in Innsbruck (Austria) in 2012. The 2nd Winter Youth Olympic Games took place in and around Lillehammer, Norway, in 2016.

It has been announced that biathlete Yulia Kovalevskaya opened the awards by earning the first medal for the Belarusian team at the 3rd Winter Youth Olympic Games in Switzerland, claiming bronze in the individual 10km race. The Belarusian covered the distance in 33 minutes and 39.5 seconds, making three misses at four firing lines. The first place was taken by Russian Alena Mokhova, who showed the final result of 32 minutes and 26.7 seconds, with two misses. Silver went to French athlete Jeanne Richard — 33 minutes and 30.5 seconds.



## Best track-and-field athletes of Belarus named

Best Belarusian track-and-field athletes of the past season were named. The traditional ceremony of presenting the bronze sports ‘Oscars’ — the Athletics Award — took place in the capital for the sixth time, with several surprises.

By Dmitry Komashko

Last year, track-and-field was rich in high-profile events, including the 2nd European Games, the European Team Championships and the first ever Match Europe v USA in Minsk, finally ending with the World Cup in Qatar. It was not easy to work through such an abundance of results and give out the awards. Traditionally, the most intriguing part of the official programme was the presentation in the category ‘Athlete of the Year’. The organisers made sure to mention the best in each of the age categories, as well as four special nominations. The jury decided that walking race athlete Yelizaveta Grishkevich, who won silver at the Youth Olympic Festival in Baku, had the best

season among the girls. In the boys category, discus thrower Roman Khartanovich was noted in the U18 category for earning a gold medal at the Youth Olympic Festival in Baku and setting the Belarusian youth record. Other juniors taking to the stage included the country’s record holder in the 400m, Alina Luchsheva, and the winner of the European Athletics U20 Championships in Borås in the 10,000m walking race, Nikita Kolyada. The titles for the country’s best athletes in the ‘Youth’ category went to high jumper Karina Demidik, who repeated the national record (2.00m) and her colleague, Maksim Nedosekov.

Once again, the evening saw Nedosekov making the ‘double’, having received his second

award in the adult category. It was to be expected, as he spent the season at the highest level and was close to completing it on the podium at the World Cup. For the women, javelin thrower Tatiana Kholodovich became athlete of the year, having won the European Cup in Samorin and achieving a brilliant victory at the 2nd European Games.

The best coaches of the country are Valery Oksenchuk, working with a whole galaxy of throwers (including Tatiana Kholodovich), and Tatiana Nareiko, who coaches Maksim Nedosekov.

In the remaining nominations, the following athletes were awarded:

‘Personality of the Year’ — Alina Luchsheva, who brought the 4x400m silver relay medal



Minister of Sports and Tourism, Sergey Kovalchuk, awarded Belarus’ best athlete of 2019 — Maksim Nedosekov

to the Belarusian team at the European Junior Championship and set the national record in the U20 category.

‘Act of the Year’ — Vitaly Zhuk, for lending Ilya Shkurenev (competing under the neutral flag) one of his poles in the pole vault decathlon at the World Championships.

‘Newcomer of the Year’ is high jumper Yegor Guptor, who twice broke the Belarusian record (U18) and also became winner of the European Youth

Olympic Festival and leader of the world season among U18 athletes. In the same category, the award was also received by runner Yekaterina Masyuk.

‘Breakthrough of the Year’ is Karina Demidik, who added 8 centimetres to her personal record and matched the national record, as well as javelin thrower Aleksey Kotkovets, who rewrote the youth records of Belarus three times and almost made it to the World Cup finals in Doha.

## ARENA

● **Women’s national team of Belarus won bronze medals in the team pursuit at the ISU European Speed Skating Championships in Heerenveen**

Tatiana Mikhailova, Marina Zuyeva, Yevgenia Vorobieva and Anna Nifontova showed a final result of 3 minutes and 05.47 seconds. The Netherlands’ team were the winners, finishing within 2 minutes and 57.98 seconds, while silver went to the Russians — 2 minutes and 59.04 seconds.



In a similar men’s programme, Belarusians Vitaly Mikhailov, Ignat Golovatyuk and Yegor Domoratsky took 5th place, finishing in 3 minutes and 49.78 seconds. The strongest squads were the teams of the Netherlands, Russia and Norway. Ignat Golovatyuk took a similar position in the final standings in the men’s 1,000m event.

In the women’s 1,000m, Anna Nifontova was placed 13th while Yevgenia Vorobieva took 20th place. In the women’s mass start, Tatiana Mikhailova finished 13th, and Yegor Domoratsky was 15th in the men’s event.

● **Belarusian Irina Krivko finished seventh in the mass start event of the World Cup round in Oberhof, Germany**

The Belarusian was in the leading group for a long time over the 12.5km distance, but at the last firing line, she made four mistakes — to fall behind the winner by 1 minute and 47 seconds. Nevertheless, this was the best result for the Olympic champion this season. Victory in the mass start went to prominent title-holder — Finnish Kaisa Mäkäräinen; her result was 39 minutes and 58.9 seconds, and one miss. Second place was taken by Norwegian Tiril Eckhoff. Despite four uncovered targets, she managed to win a medal, losing 30.2 seconds to her experienced rival. Third place also went to a Norwegian — Marte Olsbu Røiseland; with three misses, she was 35 seconds behind the winner.



Previously, the Belarusian men’s team took fifth place in the relay. The quartet of Anton Smolsky, Sergey Bocharnikov, Roman Yeletnov and Nikita Lobastov lost 1 minute and 54 seconds to the winners. The best result was shown by the athletes of Norway’s national team: 1 hour, 19 minutes and 32.3 seconds. Second place was taken by the French and the team from Germany closed the top three. The Belarusian women’s team took eighth position in the same race.





Sergey Vyazovich’s crew at 2020 Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia

EXHIBITIONS

**NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM**  
*12 Karl Marks Street*  
Until 20<sup>th</sup> January. *Museum of Fir Tree Toys*

**NATIONAL ART MUSEUM**  
*20 Lenin Street*  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> January. *Oman: Pearl of the East. Handicraft Legacy*  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> January. *Signs of Artistic Will*  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> February. *Always Ready and Brave*  
Until 19<sup>st</sup> February. *Schrage Zarfin. Leading to the Light*

**NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS**  
*116 Nezavisimosti Avenue*  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> February. *Kalyady Calling*  
Until 15<sup>th</sup> February. *Light and Air. Piotr Shapiro's Pictorial Art*  
Until 17<sup>th</sup> February. *Encyclopaedia. National Project*

**NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS**  
*3 Nekrasov Street*  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> January. *New Year. Anthology of the Holiday*  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> January. *Exposition of Exit project*

**LEONID SHCHEMELEV ART GALLERY**  
*10 Revolyutsionnaya Street*  
Until 2nd February. *Miraculous World of Embroidered Pictures*

**MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY**  
*13 M. Bogdanovich Street*  
Until 17<sup>th</sup> January. *Kalyada Arrives on a White Sleigh*  
Until 18<sup>th</sup> January. *Golden Sunrise of Belarusian Renaissance*

**MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY**  
*12 Karl Marks Street*  
Until 1<sup>st</sup> February. *Magic of Wild Birds*

**TROITSKY SUBURB**  
*7A M.Bogdanovich Street*  
Until 12<sup>th</sup> March. *Robo Art*

**MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY**  
*15 Svobody Square*  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> January. *Lady's Articles*  
Until 19<sup>th</sup> January. *Minsk-Paris*

**LIBRA**  
*37 Nezavisimosti Avenue*  
Until 26<sup>th</sup> January. *Pablo Picasso. Paragraphs*

**CAT MUSEUM**  
*23 Internatsionalnaya Street*  
Until 31st January. *New Year Season at Cat Museum*

THEATRES

**BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS**  
*1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square*  
16.01. Tosca  
18.01. Anna Karenina  
19.01. La Bayadere / French Fantasy concert  
21.01. Mackbeth  
22.01. Spartacus  
23.01. Traviata

**YANKA KUPALA THEATRE**  
*7 Engels Street*  
16.01. Legends of Kupala Theatre: I've Not Played Queens / Black Lady of Nesvizh  
17.01. Kalyady Night  
18.01. Evening  
19.01. Tolerance  
21.01. ART  
22.01. School of Taxpayers  
23.01. First / Jeweller's Jubilee

**BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE**  
*44 Kropotkin Street*  
16.01. Suffering from Common Sense  
17.01. Concrete  
18.01. If There Is No Tomorrow  
19.01. Hunting for Self  
21.01. Wisdom Measurer  
22.01. Lift  
23.01. Doctor Raus’ Career

**CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE**  
*5 Frunze Street*  
18.01. Night at a Hotel

**THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS**  
*33 Masherov Avenue*  
16 and 17.01. Nobody Promised Easy Life  
18.01. Pygmalion  
19 and 21.01. Wolves and Sheep  
22.01. False Note  
23.01. Mixed Feelings

**MUSICAL THEATRE**  
*44 Myasnikov Street*  
16.01. My Dear Friend  
17.01. Jubilee concert  
18.01. Secret Marriage  
19.01. Jane Eyre

**YOUTH THEATRE**  
*17 Kozlov Street*  
16.01. Hotel of Two Worlds  
17.01. A Man from Podolsk / Sanya, Vanya and Rimas  
18.01. Rich Brides / Zhmurik  
19.01. Caught by Love  
21.01. Playing Happy Family  
22.01. Trickster Club  
23.01. Family Weekend

**BELARUSIAN ARMY THEATRE**  
*3 Krasnoarmeiskaya 3*  
17.01. Romeo and Juliet  
18.01. Once in Verona  
23.01. Three Sisters