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Valeria Moshchina and Melania Chaikovskaya during *Our Children* campaign at Minsk's orphanage

## Marathon of surprises and gifts

The unique New Year's charity campaign called *Our Children*, which, under the patronage of the President, has united and delighted the country's young generations for more than a quarter of a century, has acquired a new format this year. One of the first events of the *Our Children* campaign took place at the residence of the Belarusian Father Frost in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. And it's no coincidence, since the magical estate is turning 20 years these days, having appeared in the most ancient forest in Europe on Aleksandr Lukashenko's initiative. Children from the countrywide were invited here to the opening. However, many of their fellow countrymen were able to join them thanks to live broadcasts online. The most fabulous atmosphere reigned in the relict forest of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, opening the New Year's marathon of surprises and gifts. Father Frost wished all children and adults strong health and happiness and not to forget to help others find a holiday.



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# ‘Only by joining forces can we counter threats’

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, met with the heads of delegations who arrived in Minsk to participate in the 19th Meeting of Heads of Security Bodies and Intelligence Services of the CIS



The Head of State called it symbolic that Belarus is hosting this meeting, in the era of wars and political cataclysms,

**“Despite the political and sanctions pressure from the West, primarily the United States, we continue to develop our peaceful stable state (doing everything for this) based on the principles of social justice.**

There is a great demand for justice now in our states. But, unfortunately, the situation around us is not getting safer. Tensions are growing in various regions of the world. Some simmering conflicts are turning hot, and hybrid proxy wars are being unleashed everywhere. Not only proxies.”

The President also noted the complete degradation of a number of international structures — from the OSCE and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to the International Organisation of the Red Cross, “They have turned into demagoguery platforms and tools for serving the interests of global players. Moreover, we spend a lot of money on various kinds of conferences, realising that they will not yield anything. The last one took place in Dubai.

**They have reached the point of absurdity. The European Peace Fund allocates funds for the war in Ukraine... The world is plunging into chaos with unpredictable consequences. It is not yet possible to find even a fragile balance...**

In such conditions, the role of intelligence services increases, whose most important task is to ensure the protection of their states and citizens from internal and external threats.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that the effectiveness of foreign intelligence activities in obtaining reliable, relevant and, above all, forecast information, allowing country leaders to make informed decisions in the interests of their people, is of particular importance.

“The main thing here is to one-up our opponents, to thwart the scenarios they are trying to materialise. As I have been told, one of the main tasks of the NATO intelligence community and their allies is the disintegration of the post-Soviet space. They want to drive a wedge in our centuries-old good neighbourly relations, and then set us against each other. We went through this. Therefore, I urge you not to sever your relations under any

circumstances, even if one of our states adheres to a different point of view in the policies that this or that state is pursuing today,” the Belarusian leader said.

The President added that opponents are trying to put pressure on the population using destructive methods, carry out cyber attacks on the critical infrastructure of government agencies, and spread fake news and hoaxes.

The President deems it necessary to focus on the economy, “If everything is fine inside the country, no one will dare interfere. Economy is the key to stability.”

The Belarusian leader warned against breaking ties, as Ukraine did. Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that for many years he had called on the then Presidents of Ukraine not to rush to leave the CIS. The Belarusian leader gave the same advice to ex-President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili.

“It’s easy to leave. It’s more difficult to come back. In politics, it is very important to be patient and not to take hasty decisions,” the Head of State said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko once again emphasised that the above-mentioned threats can only be countered by joining forces. “Our relationships of trust rely on our common history (you can’t change it anymore), economic, scientific, educational potential and interpersonal contacts inherited from the once united country. This is our economic space. Yes, a lot here depends on Russia. But let’s be honest: Russia becomes different every month, every year. More than ever, today, due to certain conditions, Russia is the cementing, unifying link of the entire post-Soviet space. You know, due to what conditions. Let’s preserve this economic space. Let’s preserve this common market. Is it really not clear? Look at Ukraine,” the President said.

The Head of State emphasised that the Russian side was provoked into a conflict, including by discriminating against citizens in Ukraine on the basis of nationality. Aleksandr Lukashenko also added: the United States behaved vilely towards the Ukrainian President. The Head of State noted that in the media the behaviour of Vladimir Zelensky is often called arrogant, but he simply demands that Western partners comply with agreements.

The Head of State also recalled the conflict between Vladimir Zelensky and the military. Aleksandr Lukashenko

talked about the internal political situation in Ukraine during meetings with foreign and Belarusian journalists a few months ago. For example, in February the President said that peace should be negotiated primarily with the Ukrainian military.

**“Ukraine’s military have a somewhat, to put it mildly, different point of view than Ukrainian politicians and President Zelensky. And Vladimir Zelensky is well aware of it. The most professional military are most convinced that the war must be stopped. You will see that we — and the Russians in the first place — will have to negotiate with the Ukrainian military all the same. And there are no politicians, but you see what kind of politicians there are — talking heads have been gathered from all over the world. Talking, you know, is not doing. Everyone knows how to talk, but they haven’t been there to go fight at the front or at least go there during a battle.**

People are thrown there like cannon fodder. And they are ready to sacrifice millions of Ukrainians — end quote. The military understands this. And the military will be able to come to an agreement,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised back then.

During the meeting, the President of Belarus noted the activity of foreign intelligence services on the territory of the country, “We see the activity of foreign intelligence services on our territory. Forms of their work are becoming more and more aggressive. They have started to insert not just spies but terrorist agents

here. They are trying to create extremist cells, form some regiments out of our fugitives, and recruit mercenaries.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that he was not exaggerating, but on the contrary, he could not reveal everything about the matter, “You understand me. We and the Russian Federation have detained probably about two dozen groups of terrorists already, who primarily seek to carry out terrorist operations in Russia and Belarus.”

Highly publicised events in Machulishchi (an attempt to attack a military airfield and destroy Russian equipment), in Grodno, attempts to cripple railroad in different regions of the country were mentioned as evidence.

“We see very serious activity in Belarus’ territory. It is clear that this ‘sanitary cordon’ — a so-called thousand-kilometre window. Some call it a balcony or a window. It is clear that they will constantly aim to cut it off in order to reach Moscow through Smolensk as always. Frankly speaking, we cannot allow this and will stick to this line together with our allies in every possible way,” the Belarusian leader added.

Aleksandr Lukashenko said that Belarus supported and will in every possible way support its ally, Russia.

**“They shouldn’t complain about us. Our policy is transparent, open and we will always follow this policy. We are forced to defend ourselves and help our allies. This policy will continue from now on,” the Head of State concluded.**

**Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia (SVR) Sergei Naryshkin firstly thanked the Belarusian side for the opportunity to hold the event in Minsk and separately expressed gratitude to Aleksandr Lukashenko.**

Sergei Naryshkin especially noted the Belarusian experience of countering external pressure, “Belarus has repeatedly experienced overt aggression from the Western bloc led by the United States of America that apparently hates Minsk’s steadfast determination to defend its interests, and the interests of its state and citizens. The Belarusian government and the public have always managed to withstand this onslaught with dignity and have proved that pressure from the Euro-Atlantic bloc must and can be resisted... The President of Belarus gave a very useful piece of political advice on how to act in the current difficult situation, when the Western bloc is abusing its position and trying to destabilise the situation in our countries, to disunite, to separate and isolate the Commonwealth countries. However, we are not giving in and will not give in.”



Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The large foreign business trip of the President of Belarus was a key topic in the information space. The Middle East, China, Africa, participation in the World Climate Summit in Dubai, dozens of meetings and negotiations, a huge number of new projects and agreements — both the route and agenda of the Belarusian leader's foreign visits are amazing in scale.

Following the results of these foreign visits, Aleksandr Lukashenko convened a meeting at the Palace of Independence, during which he set clear goals. The Head of State demands that the government and other responsible parties promptly join in the implementation of the agreements reached.

# Belarus intensifies co-operation with far arc countries

“Today I would like to discuss with you the results of our business trip — the government delegation and mine along the far arc, as we often call it,” the President said.

The geography of visits stretched effectively from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. The President explained that the near arc includes Belarus' neighbors and partners from the CIS countries.

*“Russia and the People's Republic of China are two states, with which we have the most advanced relations. It is a different story. You know that the President's decisions on each of these states have been adopted and are being implemented. And the 'far arc' has been defined. The states that are of great interest to us are located to the north and to the south,” the Belarusian leader stressed.*

## On working with India

Aleksandr Lukashenko mentioned the advancement of co-operation with India although neither the President nor

ments reached during these business trips,” the President said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Belarus had approached work with Equatorial Guinea differently, “Everything proceeded under my strict control. The Minister of Foreign Affairs came to this country to establish contacts. Specialists got down to work after that. When they visited this country prior to my visit, ministers outlined 15 main areas of our work and 74 specific projects that we have agreed to implement jointly with our friends in Equatorial Guinea. And they must be implemented. I absolutely insist on this and warn you.”

This is why the Head of State instructed Presidential Aide Aleksandr Kosinets to oversee the work with Equatorial Guinea and Kenya in the Belarus President Administration. “You will be in charge. Note it down and oversee it. Study all the aspects of this matter. This work should be under control of the Belarus President Administration. I don't want situations that occasionally happen when we have to revisit our relations with foreign partners, scrap something

## On a productive visit to China

As for the People's Republic of China, First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Snopkov should be responsible for work with this country. Nikolai Snopkov attended the recent highest-level negotiations in Beijing together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Aleksandr Lukashenko called the visit to China very useful and productive. China is ready to work on the matters the parties discussed during the visit, “We didn't hear a 'no' [during the negotiations]. Chinese President Xi Jinping was receptive to all our proposals saying that China was ready to work, advance co-operation, join efforts, and proceed in a friendly manner. China is the future of the entire planet. The fact that we have good relations with it is our benefit, our accomplishment.”

## On the United Arab Emirates

As for the Emirates, they work with us on individual matters. There is no slowdown anywhere. We agreed that we

may work together in Africa. They have a very big interest in it. Taking into consideration their influence in the world and their financial resources, they can do a lot there. Therefore, if they are interested in certain projects, they are welcome to join us,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

## On About general tasks

The Head of State encouraged all the participants of the meeting to work effectively, consistently and promptly to implement the agreements reached with various countries. To do this, it is important to work as a team. “Everything should be concentrated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Everything should be there. Let's see how the new Minister of Foreign Affairs will deal with these issues. There are a huge number of issues. This is why I want both Sheiman and Kosinets to get involved and so on. The government and ministers will have to implement all agreements. I warn you against any slowdown,” the Belarusian leader said.



members of the government have visited this country recently.

“Work with the Indian state is another matter. We have been unable to come up with a fundamental solution. Back in the day the former Minister of Foreign Affairs tried to come to grips with it,” the Head of State emphasised.

The President instructed incumbent Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Aleinik to put forward proposals on how to deal with these issues soon, no later than the first quarter of the next year. “I want to see a plan for work with India. Specifically, a plan. Just like we did it in Africa with Equatorial Guinea. We don't need tourist trips. We need solutions for concrete issues,” the Head of State explained.

## On monitoring the implementation of agreements in Africa

“When it comes to Africa, I want to warn everyone. I have invited the vice premiers to this meeting, although they don't know the details of these preparatory visits of our specialists and ministers. I have invited you to ask you to oversee the fulfilment of the arrange-

ments or add something. We have reached agreements, and we need to implement these projects,” the Belarusian leader emphasised.

The President noted that during his trip to Equatorial Guinea, he openly said that Belarus was not going to engage in any charity.

“We are not the money-printing America. And not China that has a huge amount of reserves. And not even Russia. We should take care of our financial interests and work extremely conscientiously. We have very good prospects there. They need everything that we know how to make,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Speaking about Kenya, the President addressed Viktor Sheiman, “I have already told you during the flight to get involved in African matters the way you used to do. You should oversee this matter as a special envoy of the President. Regarding Kenya, you know that their President asked us to help with three big things, and we can benefit from helping them with these and other matters, too. Therefore, Africa, and Kenya in particular, is your area of responsibility. You were the one to get our foot in the door there. So you will be responsible for it now.”

## There should be no foot-dragging — this is the main point made by the President

Press Secretary of the Belarusian President Natalya Eismont told journalists about some of the results of the meeting with the Head of State, “The President convened a meeting to tell the government and other officials to immediately get down to implementing the agreements that were reached during the important talks abroad. The visits were extremely eventful and strenuous. The President had never left the country for so long. Everyone saw how many meetings and negotiations the President held and how many flights he took. From the Pacific to the Atlantic, as the Head of State described it.”

The visits helped thrash out co-operation plans with the so-called far arc countries. Co-operation prospects with these countries seem to be very bright.

Africa is one of the most promising markets. The President is encouraging everyone to work hard, fast and effectively.

As the President noted, there are no problems in co-operation with China. This is our strategic partner with whom we have co-operated and will continue to co-operate.

There is also great mutual interest in expanding co-operation with the United Arab Emirates. Not only in a bilateral format, but also as part of joint projects in Africa, as the Head of State remarked.

Negotiations held by the government delegation in Uzbekistan and Vietnam were also discussed. Prime Minister delivered a detailed report on the outcomes of the visits. Belarus-Uzbekistan co-operation is about specific plans and projects. And we are reinvigorating our relations with Vietnam. Both sides are ready for this.

The President emphasised that the vice premiers should be actively involved in the work, just like ambassadors and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a whole.

In general, the results have been reviewed, tasks have been set, responsibilities have been distributed. There should be no foot-dragging — this is the main point made by the President.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

# Innovation works for the economy



Benefits for residents, assistance with equipment and finding investors: how technology parks are being developed in Belarus

The dynamic development of technology parks is one of the most successful areas of innovation policy in Belarus. Today, technology parks are one of the sources of generating new jobs in the regions, and the key result of the activities of their residents is the steady growth in the volume of products produced, including innovative and high-tech products. First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology (SCST) Denis Korzhitsky told how the creation of technology parks is beneficial for the country, how they will be developed further and what conditions are provided to residents.

## The role of technology parks in the economy

Over the period 2016–2022, the number of technology parks in Belarus increased from 10 to 17, and the number of their residents doubled — from 128 to 258. At the same time, the number of resident employees more than tripled.

“It is not by chance that attention is paid to technology parks. Under the conditions of sanctions, the economy’s need for domestic scientific and technical developments, as well as their rapid implementation into mass production, is intensifying. The State Committee for Science and Technology has dealt with this problem before. Over the past five years, we have managed to increase the number of technology parks. It is important that two thirds of their number are located in the regions,” First Deputy Chairman of the SCST said.

“For technology parks and their residents, the income tax is set at 10 percent at a regular rate of 18-20 percent, and real estate and land taxes are 0 percent. A decreasing rental rate coefficient for state-owned areas is also applied: for technology parks — 0.1, for residents — from 0.1 to 0.9,” Denis Korzhitsky explained.

“Innovative development funds have



Technoparks have been created in all regional centres, as well as Novopolotsk, Pinsk, Gorki, Bobruisk and Molodechno. The territorial coverage of support for innovative entrepreneurship is expanding. Brest Science and Technology Park and InKata technology parks have been created. Projects to create branches are also being implemented.

According to Denis Korzhitsky, the task of scientific technology parks is to speed up the process of introducing developments into production.

“The state creates a production and technological infrastructure, providing buildings, communications, equipped premises for production, research and development activities. Thus, developers have the opportunity to quickly and without significant infrastructure costs begin producing products,” he added.

More than 4 thousand new highly productive jobs with good wages have been created on the basis of technology parks.

“We managed to increase the production volumes of residents’ products almost sixfold. So, in 2022 this figure reached Br500 million; over the current nine months we have already reached this level. The technology park model really works and allows us to solve a number of problems in increasing the knowledge intensity of GDP, as well as increasing the share of innovative and high-tech products,” First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee on Science and Technology noted.

## Benefits for residents

Since the state and the government pay special attention to the development of technology parks, their residents are provided with a number of tax benefits.

been created, which are another measure to support residents. Now these funds can not only provide consulting services and provide production facilities, but also make specific investments in projects, in particular support regions. Currently, innovative development funds have been created by 12 technology parks for a total amount of Br660 thousand, four more technology parks plan to create such funds by the end of this year. In addition, financial support instruments are being actively developed on the basis of the Belarusian Innovation Fund, which closely co-operates with our technology parks,” First Deputy Chairman of the SCST explained.

According to him, the technology park tool is in demand among republican entrepreneurs.

“So, the Minsk City Technopark is preparing two more sites for commissioning. Brest Technopark is expanding. Sites for entrepreneurs are being prepared in Baranovichi and Pinsk. InKata technology park has created branches in Bobruisk and Molodechno. All this suggests that the state will continue to support the development of this model,” Denis Korzhitsky assured.

## Equipment for the production

Technopark residents have the opportunity to produce their products using equipment installed in shared use centres. These centres are created for those companies that cannot afford expensive equipment. In addition, technology parks provide a range of engineering and con-

sulting services in order to accelerate the development of residents’ production volumes. All this has proven itself well both over the past five-year period and over the two years of the current one.

“Not all technology parks currently have shared use centres. These centres are created as they become filled with residents. Equipment is purchased only when it is in demand. We are trying to approach this issue rationally,” First Deputy Chairman of the SCST stated.

It is planned that shared use centres will appear in

almost all technology parks, but they will be equipped with equipment only upon requests from technology park residents.

## Search for investors

“Every year, through the efforts of the SCST and the administrations of technology parks, we organise a number of platforms where residents can demonstrate their products and developments. In this way, you can look for potential consumers of these products, as well as investors for your development. Just recently, our residents participated in a fair of innovative developments. A republican competition of innovative projects is held annually. This year, 22 applications were received from industrial enterprises, as well as enterprises from other sectors of the economy, to search for developments among Belarusian entrepreneurs,” Denis Korzhitsky said.

In addition, he emphasised, the State Committee for Science and Technology constantly provides technology parks

with space at international exhibitions. “We give residents the opportunity to travel abroad — to Russia, China and other countries with which we are actively developing co-operation. Thus, technology parks can show developments and advertise the products of their residents.”

## Successful projects

The developments of technology park residents are presented in various sectors of the economy, from aerospace to the food and defence industries.

“So, one of the well-known residents of the technology park successfully sells its coffee products. Their tablet coffee is patented in the EAEU and other countries. This development is an original solution that improves the quality of the coffee drink and preserves its aroma,” Denis Korzhitsky noted.

In addition, on the basis of the technology park, a number of defence enterprises produce their products, which are actively creating new solutions in the field of equipment and weapons.

“Residents of the Brest Technopark have created a software product for calculating utility bills. It is already being actively implemented in Brest, and they are also planning to launch it in Baranovichi. Recently, residents of the Minsk Technopark demonstrated to our Prime Minister joint developments with the Russian Federation in the field of aerospace. Coral Technopark presented the development of automation of pharmacy kiosks, which they plan to implement in our country. There are also developments of medical devices and pharmaceutical products, in particular import-substituting products,” First Deputy Chairman of the SCST said.

Based on materials of belta.by

# Foreign students talk about studying at Belarusian universities

More than 30 thousand guys from many countries around the world study at our universities. Some come for higher education, others enroll in master's programmes, and others choose Belarus to pursue science in graduate school. The high level of teachers, a wide range of prestigious and in-demand specialties, comfortable prices and responsive fellow students — all this attracts foreigners to us.



## ‘Prospects are great’



Aleksandr Kulevsky

By Taisiya Azanovich

### Heart shape is a good sign

Fourth-year student at the Faculty of Geography and Geoinformatics of BSU Xingze Rong came from Beijing. He reads Bulgakov in the original and speaks Russian quite well, although he began to learn the language not so long ago. He knows a couple of words in Belarusian: ‘kali laska’, ‘dzyakuy’, ‘velmi dobra’. One day he had to prepare for an exam using a textbook in Belarusian language, but the guy was not at a loss — an online translator helped. In Belarus, he fell in love with potato pancakes with sour cream and saltison. He says that he became attached to our people for their friendliness, and liked the university teachers for their kindness and creative spirit,

**“The contrast is evident! Chinese children are taught to work from early childhood; we spend more than 10 hours at school every day. The discipline is ironclad, the teachers are strict. If you answer incorrectly, you may even be kicked out of class. And here the professor explains with a smile what solutions there are for this or that problem. It’s shocking at first. The amount of information that students receive is also impressive. You need to sit down with your textbooks.”**

Adapting to a foreign country is always difficult, no matter how welcoming it may be. Before enrolling, Xingze studied Russian at the Faculty of Pre-university Education of the of BSU. He remembers well how he opened a textbook on geochemistry and was horrified — he didn’t understand anything. And in classes he was embarrassed to answer at the blackboard. In another telephone conversation, his father advised: ‘Learn! There is no other way’. The guy braced oneself and began to intensively improve his linguistic skills: every day he lis-

tened to music and read books. Not long ago, Xingze spoke at an international conference and received a diploma for the best report, “My father advised me to go to Belarus. He works in the aerospace field and was passing through Minsk. I fully understood his impressions when I flew to you. Through the porthole I saw a lake in the shape of a heart and thought: a good sign. And one day I found myself on training practice in the forest: I was standing in the middle of a huge coniferous forest and couldn’t breathe. After the noisy Beijing, I felt indescribable emotions of calm and tranquility.”

The student has already visited four cities of Belarus. He takes a photo of each one and sends it to his parents. When he came home, he gave his father a Belarusian watch, a linen scarf for mother, and a hat for grandmother. While Xingze is not planning to return to his homeland, he plans to enroll in a master’s programme, “Belarusian education is valued in China, so my prospects are great. I can get a good job and earn a decent salary.”

BSU Rector Professor Andrei Korol

notes a pleasant trend: the number of foreigners is growing. Over 5 thousand people from approximately 60 countries study at the university, this is the highest figure in the republic. Just five years ago this figure fluctuated around 2.5 thousand.

“Our university is attractive due to its wide educational range,” says Andrei Korol. “This is pre-university training, bachelor’s, master’s and postgraduate programmes, internships and academic mobility, summer and winter schools, advanced training. In the last three years alone, English-language master’s programmes have been launched at each faculty.”

At BSU, foreigners, along with Belarusians, actively participate in all student projects, from scientific research to volunteer

lin. His father is a family doctor, and mother is a nurse. The parents have a private office in Teltow, where the guy does an internship every summer. Hisham proudly notes that his father praises his knowledge,

**“It was my dad who advised me to go to Minsk and enter BSMU. I always wanted to become a doctor, but in Germany my dream might never come true. Every year thousands of people try out for medical universities, but the chance of getting in is low.”**

After Hisham’s stories about his studies, his brother Ibrahim also came to Belarus. He is now in his third year.

“German students get acquainted with the structure of the body using diagrams or mannequins — all because of the large number of students,” Hisham sighs. “But there is no such model that would replicate the complex anatomical structure of a person. There are enough exercise machines here for everyone!”

The guy also appreciated other advantages: training in small groups, a lot of practice. Now the student is doing an internship at the 3rd City Children’s Clinical Hospital in Minsk. He is given an inpatient medical card and sent to the patient.

The fundamental principle at BSMU — ‘preparation at the patient’s bedside’ — has been preserved for many decades, says Oleg Ishutin, dean of the medical faculty for foreign students, “The practice takes place in the most prestigious healthcare institutions in the country: Republican Scientific and Practical Centre, hospitals and clinics. Many people work as paramedics in their free time.

**Students have a choice: study in Russian or English. More than 65 percent chose the second option. We guarantee high quality education at an affordable price. For comparison: training in European countries costs twice as much.”**

The Honor Board at the university, where the photo shows BSMU graduates from all over the world, from the USA to Australia, speaks about the competencies of foreign doctors better than any statistics. For example, Jasur Madyarov from Uzbekistan was included in the list of the best doctors of 2020 according to the All-Russian Pro-Doctors Award. Kaushal Kishore Tiwari became the founder of the National Society of Cardiology and Pulmonology of Nepal. He demonstrated his talent so clearly that already in his second year he was trusted to participate in surgeries. Arunachalam Muthia from India, after finishing his studies in our country, opened a clinic in his city and called it ‘Minsk’ — in gratitude to the Belarusian teachers.



events. They get access to the entire BSU infrastructure. Moreover, all foreign students are provided with places in a dormitory if they wish.

### Chance to reach the goal

Applicants from other countries choose a university based on three criteria: prestige, cost and comfort. In Belarus the streets are calm, people are friendly. Unless the weather can be confusing, laughs Mohammed Khalafalla Abdulrahman from Sudan. He often sends his parents photos from Minsk. Snowy landscapes beautifully highlight the student’s dark skin color.

“For me, the usual temperature is plus 40. I’m studying at the university for the second year, but I haven’t adapted to your frost yet. The only thing that warms me is the thought that in a few years I will receive a prestigious profession as a dentist.”

The Belarusian State Medical University (BSMU) can safely be called an international university. Here is fifth-year student Hisham Lubani is studying to major in general medicine. He flew to Belarus from Ber-

# She took the crown to Minsk

The finale of the large-scale event brought together 30 flight attendants from 22 cities on stage in Moscow. To compete for the main title, the girls went through several qualifying rounds and eight months of preparation. Professional skills, appearance, ability to behave in unusual situations, charisma — all this was crucial. The only participant from Belarus was out of competition. Anna Titovets returned home with the crown and told us how she surprised the jury.

By Irina Lukashik

## Time to make your dreams come true!

The bright, cheerful and sociable brunette's phone is bursting with messages and calls. The girl still receives hundreds of congratulations a day not only from relatives and colleagues, but also from her passengers! And some even personally supported Anna, "After being presented with the crown, a man approached me and introduced himself as the husband of the girl who had flown with us on board the day before. And what do you think, they decided to come to the finals for my sake! Was I surprised? I should think so! And when the passenger Yulia herself came up to me with flowers, I immediately recognised her. It's so cool that complete strangers took the time to share my important day."

Anna admits that participation in the competition gave her a whole bag of pleasant moments and new acquaintances. And all this might not have happened if it weren't for chance.

"I have been following the competition on social networks since 2014, watching every final.

*Many people ask why they didn't apply earlier. But, as for me, there is a time for everything. Perhaps these couple of years were needed for me to become stronger. This is the only way I can explain the surge of confidence when one day before going to bed I saw a notification about a new casting and realised that I needed to try and not observe," the girl says.*

A Belavia flight attendant won 2023 edition of Top Stewardesses international contest

Belavia  
Belarusian Airlines



### QUIZ

- Who is the best passenger?  
— A sleeping passenger (laughs).
- Which flights are your favourite?  
— Moscow and St. Petersburg.
- A common phrase in work?  
'Thank you' is the most popular thing I say, this word hypnotises passengers.
- Top 3 qualities of a flight attendant?  
— Impeccable appearance, communication skills and responsibility.
- A city you always want to return to?  
— Of course, Motherland! For me, it is Zhodino and Minsk.
- Favourite part of the job?  
— Smiles of passengers and their good mood at the end of the flight.

One message changed the girl's life. But it was not difficult for a flight attendant with 10 years of experience to shine in the qualifying rounds with her knowledge of passenger service, emergency equipment, English, and first aid. She passed her first casting for the profession with the same success, "I still remember how surprised the commission was when, when asked about my main shortcoming, I mentioned punctuality. Why? It's simple — I always come on time and wait for the others. Besides, I was fluent in English after MSLU, I was in perfect health, so I passed without any problems."

"Would you change your decision now?" I wonder.

"Never in my life! I love my job, it has instilled in me a taste for life and travel. I think I was destined to go into this area. When I told my parents about the contract, my mother smiled and silently went to turn on the tape. On the recording, in kindergarten, I talk about what I will become when I grow up. Then I said that I wanted to work on an airplane and be a flight attendant."



## Drums for good luck

The girl began preparing for the finals much earlier than she found out that she had passed. She focused on a creative performance and was right. Anna brought the whole hall to life by playing the drums — she performed live one of her favourite compositions by the British band Depeche Mode. And she learned this in just six months and proved: if you really want it, nothing is impossible! "The idea arose completely by accident: friends suggested trying it, and I fell in love with this instrument. Now I even listen to music with drums in the car. It was not easy to learn, but it helped that I studied ballroom dancing for five years. There is a sense of rhythm and tact, and then it's a matter of technique."

The girl performed number 1, she had only two minutes to change her image, set up her equipment and make a splash. A support group helped with this —

friends and colleagues who also came to Moscow.

"We worked like at a Formula 1 pit stop.

*Taking the stage first is already a big responsibility, and in my case it increased significantly. But the guys helped with everything: while I was changing clothes backstage, a friend was installing the drums, the makeup artist changed the 'stewardess hairstyle' into airy curls. A couple of seconds later I was already standing on stage. I was inspired from the first notes! At that moment I didn't think about anything, I just enjoyed the atmosphere. I looked at the audience and felt a wave of high because I saw how much they liked it. My moment of glory was a success!" Anna laughs.*



Another part of the competition is walking in uniform. The standard for Belavia flight attendants is a skirt no higher than the knee, a scarf tied in a knot on the right side and black smooth leather shoes with a six-centimetre heel. In the final, Anna allowed herself a little prank — she walked out in 12-centimeter stilettos.

— But this is only on stage, and in the sky there must be discipline in everything, without it there is no way in aviation. Early flights and night flights, impeccable appearance have become a way of life for me.

— Were you worried before the announcement of the results?

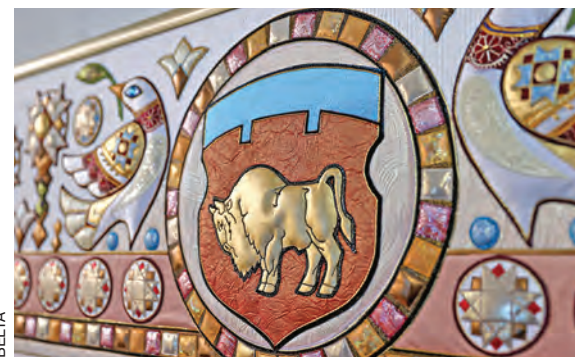
"I still can't describe my state at that moment. When many nominations had already been distributed and only six girls remained, my heart jumped out of my chest. They called my last name, and I was speechless, goosebumps ran all over my body. And there is only one thought in my head: 'This is a victory, mine!' And for this I am grateful to my profession - it turned out to be a very interesting story with a happy ending. I am glad to be part of this event and would like to wish all future finalists to experience the same emotions," the winner admitted.

In addition to the main title and crown, the competition also gave a trip to Dubai for two. We are interested in who Anna will share her vacation with. "Honestly, I haven't decided yet. I really want to take my mother, but you will be surprised - she has never flown and is terrified of it. The vacancy is still open."





Lyubov Kirillova has been working with fabrics for over 40 years. She started out as a successful clothing designer, then decided to expand her creative space. Now her artistic panels can be seen on almost all continents. In Belarus, the works of Lyubov Kirillova are exhibited in many places; they are selected for exhibitions and as official gifts on behalf of the country. What is the artist's professional secret, how easy it is to work with fabrics and how linen allows one to convey national character, we learned in Kirillova's workshop.



# The art of painting with fabrics

The story of a Belarusian woman who created a unique decorative style — Faberge textiles

By Aleksei Gorbunov

## Fairy tales, folk traditions and synthesis of styles

A beautiful, stylishly dressed woman smiles warmly at us from the doorway. In the room there is a huge cutting table, cabinets, on the shelves of which there are pieces of fabric of various colours and patterns, and, of course, finished works. They cause amazement: how is it possible to create such rich, voluminous and soul-stirring works from ordinary textiles?

The craftswoman recalls that while studying at art school, fairy tales became a source of inspiration for her: *The Mistress of the Copper Mountain*, *The Scarlet Flower*, *Cipollino*.

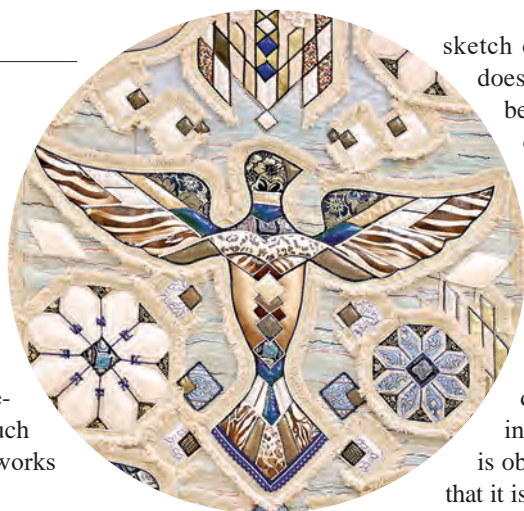
"Already as an adult, when creating a description of *The Scarlet Flower*, I realised that it is our *Paparats-kvetka*. After all, it was brought far away, and it is *Paparats-kvetka* that blooms red once a year," Lyubov Kirillova notes. In addition to fairy tales, she is inspired by the works of the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha, one of the founders of the art nouveau style. Well, and of course, folk motifs and traditions of Belarusian weaving — the same Slutsk belts — have a huge influence on creativity.

The artist also came up with the definition of her own creativity herself — the author's decorative style, or textile Faberge. It may sound somewhat immodest, but you need to compare yourself with someone so that the viewer understands what the work is like in terms of execution and content.

"In addition, such a comparison sets a very high bar and forces continuous improvement," says the craftswoman. Her signature technique was developed for a long time, bit by bit, until a unique handwriting began to be discerned in it. "The main thing is to believe in yourself, and then the result will come," Lyubov Kirillova says.

## It takes 3–4 months for metre-sized works

She calls fabrics her paints, because it is with linen, brocade, velvet and satin that the artist 'paints' her paintings. Each of her works begins with a life-size



sketch on cardboard. Only then does the selection of material begin. "There are hundreds of types of fabric at hand, but you need to choose a maximum of ten, or even less. At the same time, one fabric should work with another. This play of texture is the most interesting thing. When different fabrics are mixed in the work, a new material is obtained, and it often seems that it is not fabric. At exhibitions,

many people touch the panels with their hands to understand what they are made of. Maybe ceramics or metal?" our heroine explains.

A huge amount of work goes into each composition in the Faberge textile style. It takes three to four months for metre-sized works, and six months for larger ones. Moreover, Lyubov Kirillova fundamentally does not work on several panels simultaneously.

"I live my work. It is impossible to do several jobs at once technologically and emotionally. When you work on a piece for months, it's impossible not to love it. That's why I don't have any passable jobs — all are complex and favourite," explains the craftswoman.

## Exhibition at the Palace of Independence is a very responsible event

Works by Lyubov Kirillova are in collections in Austria, Germany, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, USA, Finland and other countries. But the artist calls the current exhibition at the Palace of Independence a gift from heaven, "We managed to present a wonderful collection of 34 seats. Exhibiting at the Palace of Independence is very responsible. All the country's leadership, high-ranking guests and diplomats are there. For an artist this is a shock in a good way."

The panel of the interlocutor can also be seen in the registry office of the Oktyabrsky District of the capital, in the Supreme Court, in the gallery of the President Hotel.

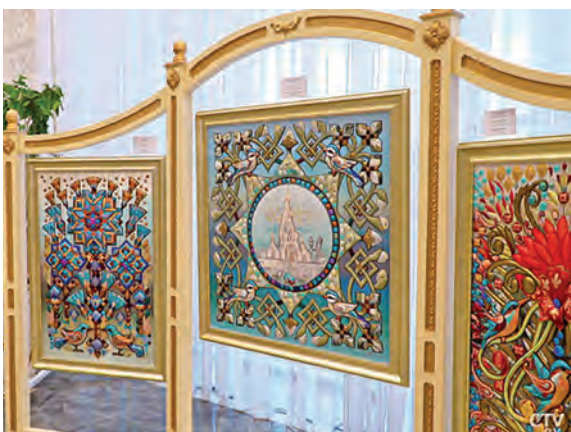
Kirillova's *Eden* panel was placed in the lower hall of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Minsk. On a wide semi-column next to the baptistery there is a huge canvas 220 cm by 350 cm.

"*Eden* took almost two years of work. The plot is taken from a biblical legend. I depicted the Garden of Eden, where the tree of life grows, using the infinity symbol, with which the vines are intertwined. There are also birds and cherubs, they fly around the monogram of the name of Christ — the centre of the composition," says Lyubov Kirillova.

In the main secular hall of the nearby Memorial Church in honour of All Saints there are several more works by Lyubov Kirillova. Including the diptych *Valoshki [Cornflowers]*.

"Valoshki personify our native Belarusian nature, they seem to depict a path along a field where cornflowers, daisies, forget-me-nots, and bells grow," the craftswoman says.

"It seems to me that it depends on the mentality of Belarusians. We are calm, we love peace, silence, nature and our country. All this is reflected in the works. Of course, social issues also concern artists, but my deepest goal is to bring love, beauty and a positive charge of energy so that creativity inspires. Otherwise, why create then? If you don't work for the joy of others, the meaning is lost," Lyubov Kirillova summed up.



# Useless clown

A split is brewing in the countries of the collective West over support for Ukraine. They are ready to write off Vladimir Zelensky as scrap.

**Events around Ukraine by the end of 2023 are developing rapidly. Joe Biden's team is going all-in and betting their reputation, money and political power on this project. The failure of Kiev's 'military victory', the gradual destruction of the previous anti-Russian coalition and the reluctance of Europeans to pay for Washington/London's miscalculations are forcing the White House and Downing Street to quickly look for ways out of the stalemate.**

By **Aleksei Avdonin**, an analyst with the Belarusian Institute of Strategic Research (BISR)

## In nobody's favour

Under these conditions, the United States did not come up with anything new and organised Zelensky on a typical tour of countries around the world to conduct lobbying negotiations. Thus, the latter attended the inauguration of the new President of Argentina, Javier Milei, where he tried to talk with Prime Minister of Hungary Orbán. It is he who is one of the key opponents of Ukraine's inclusion in the European Union.

Bloomberg sarcastically commented on these efforts of the President of Ukraine,

*"Zelensky traveled thousands of kilometres to Argentina to try to convince Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to abandon his objections to the start of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the European Union. Zelensky himself called the conversation with Orbán as frank as possible."*

The United States is in a hurry and trying to exert maximum pressure on the countries of the European Union and thereby ensure the rapid admission of Ukraine to the EU. According to the political leadership of the United States, such a decision will prevent the West from completely losing control over Ukraine.

Today Washington is openly putting pressure on dissenting Europe-

ans through the European Commission under its control. On December 12th, Hungarian Agriculture Minister István Nagy said that the European Commission is threatening Hungary, Poland and Slovakia for banning grain imports from Ukraine.

It is noteworthy that upon arrival in Buenos Aires, Zelensky held a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, during which he stated that a possible decision of the European Council on the start of negotiations with Kiev on joining the EU would be important for Ukraine. According to Zelensky, this decision 'will have a significant impact on the motivation of Ukrainian society and the army'.

*However, it is clear that the deep authorities of European countries (corporations and banks) are not interested in entering into direct confrontation with Russia and aggravating their already poor economic and energy situation...*

As a result, the time frame for considering the issue of Ukraine's accession to the European Union is constantly being delayed, and Hungary's position is being strengthened by other EU countries that are either openly or half-heartedly opposed to the idea of European integration of Ukraine.

**“The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**  
*“This war [in Ukraine] does not give Biden and the American authorities any authority. We need some kind of victory here. The Americans need to put something on the table in order to win. That is why they are hurrying up. They are looking for new options, including the termination of support for Vladimir Zelensky.”*

**During a working trip to the Brest Region on October 6th, 2023**

## There are no more victories

Washington sees the indecision and hesitation of the European Union well and understands that in order to preserve Euro-Atlantic unity, some victories on the battlefield in Ukraine are urgently needed.

*The New York Times* recently reported that the Pentagon would send a lieutenant general to Kiev to develop a new military strategy. Journalists of the publication note that instructors from the United States trained Ukrainian troops before a counter-offensive according to the American model, as previously in Afghanistan, Iraq or Vietnam. However, this approach was unsuccessful, and the Russian defense line turned out to be much stronger than the West expected.

*It is assumed that, despite the struggle in the US Congress between the two American parties, as a result, official Washington will allocate new military assistance to Ukraine by the end of 2023.*

It is clear that the implementation of this assistance takes time, and the United States needs military victories now to demonstrate to the EU countries the correctness of previous decisions. Therefore, the United States, together with the Kiev regime, is ready to take extreme radical measures.

This week, the head of the Russian Radiation, Chemical and Biological Defence Troops, Igor Kirillov, released intelligence data that Ukraine, in October-November 2023, purchased a batch of chemicals from Germany for the production of a toxic substance — mustard gas. This means of mass destruction is necessary for the Ukrainian special services to prepare anti-Russian provocations, the essence of which is trivial — to use the substance on the

battlefield or against civilians, and then blame Moscow for this for the next wave of sanctions and censures.

*It is possible that Zelensky's visit to the United States after visiting Argentina is connected with the need to approve tête-à-tête new agreements and plans for the extreme radicalisation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict with Joe Biden and his entourage.*

## Why is Sleepy Joe in a hurry

Biden is in a hurry — a direct threat of impeachment and a series of criminal cases against him personally and members of his family is clearly looming on the horizon. It seems that Western capital has already finally realised the failure of Joe Biden's policies and his projects to fight Russia and China. His time is up, he has not lived up to hope. The time has come to eliminate the toxic 'Sleepy Joe', and with him his protégé in Ukraine, Vladimir Zelensky.

Recently, the head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergei Naryshkin, said that Western countries are increasingly discussing the need to replace the President of Ukraine. Among possible successors to Zelensky in the West, the candidacies of Zaluzhnyi, Budanov, Ermak, Arestovich or Klitschko are being considered.

The geopolitical failures of the United States are forcing them to shift their attention to discrediting the upcoming presidential elections in the Russian Federation. Thus, according to the head of the State Duma commission to investigate the facts of interference of foreign states in the internal affairs of Russia, Vasily Piskarev, recently control centers from the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Poland and Ukraine have been most active in discrediting the elections.

*More than 100 media projects under their control are preparing foreign audiences to recognise the presidential elections in Russia as illegitimate. These same resources simultaneously carry out tasks to discredit the Armed Forces. In parallel with this, provocateurs are being trained. Relevant trainings are organised, for example, in the Baltic countries and Georgia.*

Training events are carried out for 'pseudo-observers', as well as for so-called journalists in exile. This activity is carried out through organisational and grant support, financed, among other things, by the German Foreign Ministry. It should be understood that similar attempts to shake up society may be made in relation to Belarus during the 2024/2025 election cycles.

*Thus, it is clear that the West is preparing for further confrontation with Russia and the escalation of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine. The Western camp itself is extremely difficult to maintain unity, which is associated with excessive costs and the lack of real benefits and bonuses from Ukrainian projects.*





# A century-long robbery

If they could, they would steal everything: how the West has robbed many states for centuries and still does not want to return historical values to their owners

At the end of November, a diplomatic row with roots going back deep into the colonial era erupted between Britain and Greece. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis arrived in the Foggy Albion to meet with his British counterpart Rishi Sunak. In an interview on the BBC, the presenter asked the politician about the fate of the ancient sculptures that were taken from the Parthenon at the beginning of the last century by the famous plunderer of antiquities and part-time ambassador of the royal court in Istanbul, Lord Elgin. Mitsotakis responded that keeping part of the collection in London and part in Athens would be 'like the French cutting the *Mona Lisa* in half'. The hint, given the anti-colonial tendencies of our time, is quite clear: the marble statues stolen in 1801 must be returned to their homeland. However, Downing Street was mortally affronted...



By Anton Popov

## Marble of discord

Sources of *The Telegraph* told the publication that Prime Minister Sunak personally cancelled the meeting with his Greek counterpart, saying that the parties had allegedly previously agreed not to raise the issue of the Elgin statues at the meeting, and Mitsotakis had broken this promise. As a result, Sunak decided to send his deputy to the negotiations, but the Greek side already abandoned the summit. The disappointed Prime Minister of Greece left the inhospitable banks of the Thames River.

*The dispute between Athens and London about beautiful ancient statues has been going on for many years. Back in 1801, the above-mentioned Lord Elgin received permission from the vizier of the Turkish Sultan to excavate in the Athenian Acropolis and remove from there all the valuables found.*

The Brilliant Porte did not show any particular interest in the ancient ruins, which by this time had been under Turkish heel for 350 years, and the firman was received without much delay.

## The Thief Lord

As soon as Lord Elgin and several fellow robbers found themselves on the land of ancient Attica, he developed a vigorous activity. Using saws and lifts,

50 local workers removed 12 sculptures from pediments, 15 metopes (square slabs with relief), 56 fragments of a frieze depicting the Panathenaic Procession and many other antiquities. The work was carried out in a hurry and barbarically — for example, one of the caryatid statues of the portico of the Erechtheion was cut out by the desecrators of the ancient sanctuary and replaced with a stone support.

*The complete collection of the Thief Lord reached Britain only in 1807. Some of the stolen goods had to be retrieved from the seabed after the crash of one of the transport ships, and the aristocrat himself, with the habits of a robber, was in a French prison until 1806 after a reckless attempt to pass through imperial territory.*

The Greeks, having barely gained independence in 1830, tried to return the statues, but nothing came of this either in the 19th century or in the 20th. And in 1963, the British deliberately cut off even the chance for future generations to restore justice — the British Museum Act states that trustees can give away or sell items from the collection only if they were created after 1850, are badly damaged, or there are duplicates in better condition. Antique sculptures do not fall under any criterion. Of course, it would be possible, for example, to change the legislation or at least transfer antiquities to the Greeks for a while for exhibition. But judging by Prime Minister Sunak's reaction, such a move is not even being considered.

There are precedents for the return of valuables from the looted Parthenon. In 2006, the University of Heidelberg, Germany, donated a small fragment of a marble bas-relief. And last year, an image of a battle between people and centaurs was transported from Sicily to Greece.

British Labour, led by Keir Starmer, immediately used the situation to their advantage. Starmer called the current head of government's response pathetic, and one of his colleagues told the BBC, "Going into a fight with a NATO ally for a headline shows how weak Rishi Sunak is. He should have talked about the economy, immigration, the Middle East — these are the things the country expects from a leader, but Rishi Sunak is not a leader." However, if Labour wins the next election, one should not expect an immediate return of ancient works of art to Greece: the British are famous masters of demagoguery and playing with false promises.



## Devastation of Egypt

*Not only the Greeks had their own grievances against the European colonialists. Egypt, having undergone even more terrible plunder, is ready to lay claims to the British and French, who either jointly or in turn stole the heritage of the pharaohs.*

Last fall, before the official opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, which never took place, archaeologist and former Minister of Antiquities Zahi Hawass announced that he intended to return to the country and exhibit in the new museum the three greatest stolen relics: *Rosetta Stone*, *Nefertiti Bust* and *Dendera zodiac*. The first was stolen by Napoleonic soldiers during the conqueror's Egyptian campaign and then handed over to Britain as a diplomatic gesture; the second was taken out of Egypt by German archaeologists in 1912; the third was removed from the ceiling of the Temple of Hathor in Dendera by order of French officials in 1820 and transferred to the Louvre.

The history of Egyptian antiquities clearly shows the barbaric attitude of the West towards the culture of other peoples and the lack of understanding of how developed the power of the pharaohs actually was. Thus, on *Rosetta Stone*, after being handed over to the British, the inscriptions 'Captured in Egypt by the British Army in 1801' and 'Donated by King George III' were knocked out, which, according to all the canons of archaeological science, is vandalism of the highest level. A similar situation occurred with the *Dendera zodiac*, a unique map of the starry sky created around 50 BC, which the French dropped into the Nile River during transportation, and when the artefact was removed from the water, it turned out that it had lost its white-blue colour and became light brown.

*For the colonialists, the heritage of foreign cultures was just amusing curiosities, and in the bas-reliefs of ancient Hellas,*

*the artefacts of Ancient Egypt and the antiquities of South America, Australia, New Zealand or Africa, they saw only a curious example of savage craftsmanship.*

## Diligent students

It has long been noted: who keeps company with the wolf, will learn to howl. More recently, we have witnessed that Ukraine has gained enough from the West. On November 22nd, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture announced that it had agreed with the Netherlands to transport 2,500 kilogrammes of cultural property, mostly gold, made by the Scythian tribes inhabiting the Black Sea region to Kiev.

At the beginning of 2014, a combined collection of four museums from the Crimean Peninsula, then still part of Ukraine, went to Amsterdam. Then an armed coup took place in Kiev, and the Crimeans decided to return to their native harbour. However, the Dutch court for almost 10 years did not agree to recognise the choice of the residents of Crimea and give back the Scythian gold. But on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the events, they decided to transfer the valuables to the Zelensky regime. At the end of November, the yellow metal stolen from Russia was delivered to a museum on the territory of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra taken away from believers.

*Interestingly, the reverse process is also underway in Ukraine, and while it is stealing cultural property belonging to Russia, it itself is being mercilessly robbed. Moreover, artefacts that have not only historical, but also enormous spiritual significance go to the West.*

We are talking about the relics of saints, which, according to the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, have been taken out from the Kiev Pechersk Lavra to museums in France, Italy, Germany and the Vatican since the summer as part of an agreement concluded between Kiev and UNESCO. This is precisely why, and not because of 'checking the safety of cultural property', and access to crayfish was closed.

One of the methods of conquering a people in the West has long been considered the elimination of an original local culture and replacing it with one's own. Therefore, in the fight against neo-colonialism, the aspect of cultural resistance and repatriation of stolen property is very important.



# He can do miracles

Report from the New Year's estate of Father Frost in Belovezhskaya Pushcha

TOURISM



By Valentina Kozlovich

It is winter in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. The road at the entrance to the national park is in a grey haze. And at the Father Frost estate — we ate in fluffy snow, ice on the lake and frost in the air.

“We had a little fight with Winter, so the old lady decided to play pranks — to bring in some warmth before the holidays. But mother moved away, became kinder and again sprinkles the Pushcha with snow,” Father Frost explains why there is a thaw in mid-December.

When it's minus outside, it's hot in the estate of the fairy-tale Belarusian wizard. The winter tourist season has opened in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. The whole of December promises to be full of events — the estate is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Snow Maiden has arrived. One of the first events of the *Our Children* campaign took place at the residence of the Belarusian Father Frost in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Colleagues from Kostroma and Veliky Ustyug, Zyuzya Poozersky from the Vitebsk Region and Bolotnik from the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve, came to visit Father Frost. Like the national park, the Father Frost estate welcomes guests all year round — up to 150 thousand people. But the most fabulous atmosphere in the relict forest, where bison live, reigns on the eve of the New Year. By the anniversary, the estate had been spruced up — the shopping arcades and cafes where they serve national cuisine were thoroughly updated, fabulous wooden sculptures were painted, which should



bring colour and light to the grey winter days. However, there are no such people here, Father Frost is convinced, “In the winter season, the estate sparkles with fairy lights, and there are so many guests that I need assistants. In addition to the granddaughter Snow Maiden, this is Mother Winter and our daughters — Vyuga, Stuzha and Metelitsa.”

Every year, up to 20 thousand letters arrive at the wizard's residence. Now the postman brings them in bags. Letters in envelopes of different colours, which children and adults wrote with pens and felt-tip pens, lie in the chest and are waiting to be read.

“Someone needs a new toy, someone asks for a brother or sister. Recently, a boy sent a letter and told about his father, asking that he undergo spinal surgery ahead of schedule — before the holiday. I called the capital's medical centre, and they heard me there. The operation was successful, the man is recovering and will be able to go to the New Year's party with his son,” Father Frost admitted that he is capable of miracles.

Snow Maiden adds,

**“Not a single letter is left unattended. We answer everyone. If you believe in miracles, they happen.”**

From the Father Frost residence, a forest path leads to the apiary. On the way we meet the moose Rogalik with a sleigh. A magical clearing with 12 months calls to the fire. The magic mill is ready to reveal its secrets... We go, accompanied by two persistent jays.

“These are hooligans, they always give me away with their screams, you can't get through quietly,” Father Frost complains.

Covered in fluffy snow, the legs of the fir trees, which have grown well over the twenty years of the estate's existence, reach out to meet us. And the centuries-old



knight trees Oak Dubovich and Elm Vyazovich look down on them — is this really age?

Father Frost looks at the power of the forest centenarians and says that he is still older, “Sometimes children wonder if I'm mortal. I answer them, ‘My life depends on your faith’. When children believe in me, my beard grows longer. And with the loss of faith, the beard will melt like snow, and I will disappear. I hope this never happens.”

The Snow Maiden Tower, the Treasure Box where children's crafts are kept, a magical bridge, an alley with zodiac signs — guests will see all this at the Father Frost estate. And the most popular place is near the New Year tree. Starting this season, round dances are held not at the 140-metre beauty, which was considered the tallest Christmas tree in Europe, but at her granddaughter. The grandma spruce passed the baton to a slender baby, who was decorat-

ed with balloons and lights. Near the Christmas tree there is a lot of space for round dances and a selfie zone. It is planned that in the future the residence of Father Frost will also move closer to the tree — the symbol of the New Year. There will be more carved towers than the current one. And the wizard will be able to invite guests to his house.

“On November 18th, I went to visit a colleague in Veliky Ustyug for his birthday, I liked his mansion. I would like something like this,” Father Frost, it turns out, also has a wish to fulfil. He knows that it will come true, the main thing is to believe in a miracle and be able to wait.

The New Year's marathon of surprises and gifts is open, Father Frost reminded us all. The wizard from Belovezhskaya Pushcha wished the readers of *The Minsk Times* to be healthy and happy themselves and not to forget to help others find a holiday.



# Star Ball has found a hero

## The best football player of Belarus 2023 has been chosen

**Bingo! The intrigue was resolved finally and irrevocably. To the sound of fanfare, the ABFF summed up the results and named the best representatives of the football year going down in history.**

By **Sergey Kanashits**

The laureates and numerous guests sported expensive tuxedos, sparkled with smiles, clinked glasses — sleek and happy, they devoured food with excellent appetite and partook of the celebration organised for them on a grand scale, mentally imagining themselves in the image of Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe, trying on the laurels of Luciano Spalletti or Jürgen Klopp. Living well isn't against the law, and a banquet is a sacred thing, especially when the busy season is left behind. It doesn't matter that he didn't bring great success either on the domestic front or in the international arena; the main thing is to believe in the best and look to the future with optimism. In ABFF, apparently, there are no problems

with this: they look and believe that it, a bright and enthusiastic tomorrow, will come quite soon. Meanwhile, the fans continue to wait patiently, sadly asking themselves a simple and banal question: when will representatives of the Belarusian football elite be able to express themselves not only on the dance floor and in the chic surroundings of fashionable restaurants, but also in harsh battle in the stadiums of the world? We would like, you know, that reaching the group round of at least the most modest UEFA Conference League (not to mention winning a place in the final round of the World or European Championship) would no longer seem like a chimera, look fantastic and distant, like the Andromeda Nebula, but would become more or less specific outlines that you can

**Max Ebong had a great season and rightfully became the best football player of the year**



### STAR BALL 2023

**Player of the Year — Max Ebong (Astana). Coach of the Year — Igor Kovalevich (FC Neman). The best referee is Aleksey Kulbakov. The best goalkeeper of the championship is Sergey Ignatovich (FC Shakhtyor Soligorsk). The best defender of the championship is Sergei Karpovich (FC Neman). The best midfielder of the championship is Artem Kontsevoy (FC BATE). The best player of the championship, forward and scorer — Vladislav Morozov (FC Dinamo Minsk). The best player in beach soccer is Igor Brishtel (BSC Kristall). The best player in mini-football is Dmitry Shvedko (MFC Stalitsa Minsk). The best football player of the year is Anna Pilipenko (FC Dinamo Minsk).**



**Forward of FC Dinamo Minsk and the Belarusian national team Vladislav Morozov excelled in several categories at once**

reach and feel. But a social event, whatever one may say, is still good and pleasant. After all, it's true what they say: whoever rests well works well! Or vice versa: whoever worked, also rested?

The process of festive materialisation of spirits and distribution of elephants was preceded by a meeting of the ABFF executive committee, which, having gathered within the walls of the Football House, officially closed the year, resolving several pressing work issues. In particular, the council decided that the new season will start on February 25th with a match for the Super Cup, in which the teams of FC Dinamo Minsk and FC Torpedo-BELAZ Zhodino will compete. The first matches of the quarterfinal stage of the Belarus Cup will be held from March 1st to March 3rd. And the games of the first round of the 34th national championship in the major league will begin on

March 14th. In addition, the executive committee unanimously decided to increase the amount of application fees for participation in the elite division: instead of Br41 thousand, you now need to get Br80 thousand from wide trouser legs. In addition, the limit on young players was canceled by a majority vote: from now on, no one will force teams to let them onto the field. It is imperative that the guys grow and progress by getting playing practice. What the previous leadership of the ABFF presented almost as a feat, a panacea and the path to a bright future for all domestic football, the new management hastily wrote off as scrap and anathematised, throwing it out of the head and heart like an old unnecessary rag. However, there is little surprise here: a new broom sweeps in a new way — this has always been the case in our football. What will come of it all this time, life will show.

For now, we can safely state only the following: the ceremony evening was a success! A 24-year-old midfielder Max Ebong, who was born in Vitebsk, blossomed in Soligorsk, and now plays in Kazakhstan for Astana, was recognised the best football player of 2023. You can't argue with the choice: the guy really had a great season. And most importantly, he looked more confident and better than everyone else in games for the Belarusian national team. One has only to wish Ebong that, after recognition, he continues to improve his skills and climb up, and not go head over heels downhill, as happened with his predecessors: three heroes of previous years (Maksim Skavysh, Andrey Solovey and Vladimir Khvashchinskiy) after they were recognised as the best players of the year suddenly they lost either luck or motivation and turned into their own pale shadow.

## 'The body tenses, and the soul rests'

**'Bulking up' applies for him. Powerlifter from Belynychy Mikhail Teteryukov, whose training once started at a modest 83 kilos, competes in the largest weight category — over 125 kilogrammes. The strongman's personal record in the bench press is 240, which is comparable to almost five bags of cement. He wants to add at least ten to this, and ideally, to bring the total weight of the pancakes up to three hundred.**

By **Lyubov Solovieva**

Mikhail has been in sports for almost 30 years, "I started training at the university. The guys around me raved about the gym and powerlifting. I gave in too. Thus, I went to training once, twice, three times — and I was hooked. I can no longer live without this. At 44 years old, I do four to five workouts a week and get such pleasure — it's just awesome! The body tenses, and the soul rests, all accumulated problems and negativity fly away."

The athlete works as a foreman-performer of work in a local housing and communal services. He organises the process of major and current repairs of houses, roads and sidewalks. But since he started as a construction site foreman, he can fix a leaking roof himself, make brickwork, plaster, putty, "I think about 40 percent of the facilities in Belynychy were built with my participation. The eyes and soul are happy. It's very nice when guests come and note changes for



the better. I personally notice how cosy and neat it is here."

After graduating from the mechanical engineering university in Mogilev, Mikhail worked for himself, went to work in Moscow, but was drawn to his loved ones — there is nothing sweeter than his native land. The fact that he and his wife, as a young family, received an apartment also played a role, Mikhail got a job in the housing and communal services, "We are

raising a daughter and son. The safety of children and opportunities for their realisation also became a significant reason for returning to Belarus. I like living in a small town. In Belynychy you can take a peaceful walk at any time. Breathe fresh air, enjoy the scenery, eat delicious food at an affordable price. At the same time, all the benefits of civilisation are at your disposal: education, medicine and leisure."

Mikhail inspires young people to lead

a healthy and active lifestyle. His daughter played handball, graduated from a pedagogical university, and teaches physical education to preschool children. Sometimes she trains in the gym with her dad. His son played football and now plays tennis and basketball.

As for students, Mikhail Teteryukov does not rule out that one day he will decide to train aspiring strongmen, "Many people in the gym work out without a coach and make mistakes. They look at the veterans and want the same result, only very quickly, so they tear themselves with the heavy weight of shells. And to raise a good athlete, it takes time and effort!"

### TO THE POINT

Powerlifting is a power lifting event that includes the back squat, bench press, and deadlift. Previously, Mikhail Teteryukov was engaged in all three types, but in the end he opted for the bench press. He is a master of sports in powerlifting, silver medallist of the national championship, winner and prize-winner of the Republican Universiade. This year, the athlete won the strongman tournament in Alexandria, and also took silver at competitions in Mogilev and Shklov.

## Photo of the week



Anton Stepanishchev

Ursa Vasilisa in the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**December 15th** is International Tea Day — celebration of one of the oldest and healthiest drinks on Earth. It was on this day that the

World Declaration of Rights for Tea Workers was adopted in 1773. It is believed that tea as a drink was discovered by the second emperor of China, Shen Nung, around 2737 BC, when the emperor dipped tea tree leaves into a cup of hot water.

**On December 15th,**

**1966,** the French astronomer Audouin Dollfus discovered the satellite of Saturn, which he named Janus (lat. Janus). However, 12 years later, astronomers Stephen Larson and John Fountain discovered that in fact two different satellites were moving in very close orbits. Therefore, Janus is also called the 'two-faced' satellite. And the second satellite of Saturn was named Epimetheus.



**On December 16th, 1946,** Christian Dior opened a fashion house in Paris. In February 1947, the first and most famous collection of the legendary couturier was presented. Soon the richest and most famous



clients wanted to dress for Dior. Today, the French fashion house Christian Dior is a world-famous company that produces clothing, perfumes, decorative cosmetics, accessories and skin care products.

**On December 17th, 1903,** brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright were the first in the world to fly a Flyer motor aircraft they made with an internal combustion engine in the US state of North Carolina. The first flight range was 37 metres, duration 12 seconds. This day became the birthday of aviation.



**December 17th** is Day of Belarusian Cinema. The history of national cinema begins with the black and white silent film *Forest Story* by Yuri Tarich, which was filmed in 1926 based on the story *Swineherd* by Mikhas Charot. In 1939, Minsk had its own film studio (its current name Belarusfilm). The Minsk International Film Festival *Listapad* was held this year for the 29th time and is known far beyond the country's borders.



**On December 18th, 1973,** a 9-day orbital space flight began on the Soyuz-13 spacecraft by pilot-cosmonauts Pyotr

Klimuk and Valentin Lebedev. The commander of the spacecraft is Pyotr Klimuk, a Belarusian, a native of the village of Komarovka, Brest Region. For this first flight into space, the cosmonaut was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.



**On December 18th, 1994,** the Chauvet Cave gallery with unique prehistoric rock art was discovered in France. None of the caves in France with similar rock



paintings can compare with the Chauvet Cave either in size, or in the preservation and skill of the drawings. The age of some of them reaches 30–33 thousand years.

**December 20th** is State Security Officer Day in the Republic of Belarus. National security is the protection of the vital interests of citizens, society and the state, as well as national values and way of life from a wide range of external and internal threats.



**On December 20th, 1699,** Peter the Great issued a decree on the transition of Russia to a new calendar and on the

postponement of the New Year celebrations from September 1st to January 1st. By his decree, Peter ordered on January 1st, 1700 to decorate houses with pine, spruce and juniper branches, as a sign of fun, be sure to congratulate each other on the New Year and Centenary. New Year's customs took root in Russia quite quickly, because earlier at that time in Rus' they celebrated one of the most favourite periods of the year — the Great Winter Christmastide.



**On December 21st, 1913,** the first crossword puzzle was published in the Sunday supplement of the American newspaper *New York World*. It was compiled by Arthur Wynne, who worked in the entertainment department and was constantly looking for fresh and original material for the newspaper.

**December 21st** is World Basketball Day. On December 21st, 1891, the first basketball match in history took place in Springfield (Massachusetts, USA). The game was invented by physical education teacher James Naismith. Most of the rules of the game, which Naismith wrote, are still in effect today.

