



Belarus provides assistance to Türkiye and Syria affected by the devastating earthquake

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Did you know that some Belarusian museums can be visited without leaving home, using the Internet?

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Mechanical assembly fitters at Zoomlion Plant Zeng Pengjia and Kirill Kostrov

A country where dreams come true

Mechanical assembly fitter Zeng Pengjia came to Belarus for a dream. Passionate about his work, a responsible specialist from China works in China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park. It is here, he admits, that he found his place. The skills of a foreigner were appreciated at the Zoomlion Plant, where he has been working for the third year.

“I love being here. I help Belarusian colleagues to assemble truck cranes. At home, I worked at a similar enterprise. I know the company’s standards and am happy to pass them on to your specialists,” Zeng said.

There are other employees from China at the plant. All of them quickly found friends here and developed good relations with their Belarusian colleagues.

“Belarus is a very comfortable country. There is everything for a decent life. The people are hospitable and friendly. We haven’t thought about moving here with the whole family yet, but who knows what will happen next. China-Belarusian relations are developing, and the countries are getting closer to each other,” Zeng Pengjia believes.



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Danya Titova

Solidarity and co-operation. Peace and security



Belarus calls for greater unity and greater solidarity in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation — as stated by Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko at a meeting with new CSTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov

The President of Belarus stressed that all members of the CSTO should unite and act together, because it is always easier and simpler to act this way,

“If someone thinks that the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is not our conflict, that we will sit quietly somewhere — nothing of the kind, it will not be like that. The time will come (it is not far away, literally tomorrow) and it will require us to define ourselves, to take a certain position. I am not saying that this should be done to the detriment of national interests. Despite all the shortcomings in the union we will have to clearly define our policy, our line in order to act together. It is always simpler and easier to act together,” Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced.

The Belarusian leader once again stressed that no one is pushing states to act contrary to their national interests.

“However, we will have to find compromises. Within the CSTO we have found them long ago, and we act as one organisation. I think we have to go through this difficult period, and it will further unite our organisation on the principles that are necessary and possible for every state, which is a member of this organisation. Let us think about it together,” the President of Belarus said.

Imangali Tasmagambetov assumed the position of CSTO Secretary General quite recently. In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, “I am pleased to meet with you, an experienced person. We have much in common. You and I worked in the Komsomol in our youth. You have come a very long way that deserves respect. Today there are few people who have such experience from the Soviet times (we can evaluate this period differently), and they are worth a lot. I think this experience of yours, including your diplomatic work, will be useful to us. Especially this year during Belarus’ presidency in the organisation. It will be also useful during forthcoming years of your work in the CSTO. It will not only come in handy, it will be in high demand.”

The President emphasised that such experience is highly valuable, because it is necessary to pass it on to a younger, less experienced generation, “Kazakhstan has already been experiencing it — the change of generations in politics. This rarely goes painless. I would like it to be painless. Both for us and for you.”

The Belarusian chairmanship in the CSTO is held under the motto ‘Through solidarity and co-operation towards peace and security’. Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled important points during the meeting,

“Challenges are many. We took the risk to compile the programme of our presidency in the organisation so that we could try to solve the problems that we have, especially on the borders of CSTO member states. I do not speak of your experience in vain. You have a great memory. You know well both the Caucasus and Central Asia. We have problems there. Let us try to resolve them and, as much as possible, bring the Collective Security Treaty Organisation together in these difficult times. You see what is happening on the perimeter.”

Imangali Tasmagambetov thanked the Belarusian leader for supporting his candidacy for the position of CSTO Secretary General at the organisation’s session in November 2022. He said that he assumed his duties on January 10th, 2023.

Later, the CSTO Secretary General told reporters some of the details of the meeting. According to him, a wide range of topical issues was discussed with an emphasis on the further activities of the organisation,

“Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to the very difficult issues of our organisation’s activities. First of all, he highlighted the special importance of strengthening allied interaction and solidarity of the CSTO member states in this difficult time of the systemic crisis of international relations and external threats.”

The system of ensuring international peace and security that has taken shape in recent decades is in crisis, which negatively affects, among other things, the CSTO. Along the perimeter of responsibility and borders of the CSTO, we see them forming a kind of belt of instability, an arc of conflicts from the southern borders of the CSTO states in Central Asia through the South Caucasus directly to the Eastern European region, the Secretary General noted.

“Therefore, the Belarusian President urged to further develop a set of anti-crisis measures, improve existing and create new components of the crisis response system.

The CSTO has a solid multifunctional potential to respond to a wide range of growing challenges and threats,” Imangali Tasmagambetov emphasised.



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus Sergei Aleinik and CSTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov

CSTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov,

“Practical steps are envisaged in order to strengthen the military capabilities. They are primarily aimed at ensuring the combat readiness of the collective forces of the organisation. In this regard, this year Belarus will host three exercises: Vzaimodeistvie, Echelon and Poisk. One of the most important areas of activity will be the improvement of the work in the areas of countering terrorism and transnational crime, drug trafficking, uncontrolled migration and also in the field of information support... We will continue to co-operate with major international associations, including the UN, the SCO, the CIS, and the OSCE.”

FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ISSUE

FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

On November 23rd, 2022, the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko presented goals and priorities of Belarus’ presidency over the Collective Security Treaty Organisation at a plenary session of the CSTO Collective Security Council in Yerevan, “In emerging conditions we see the following fundamental goals of Belarus’ presidency. **Domestically** we have to improve the unity of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation member states. These are fundamental goals: to increase our unity, reduce the level of tensions, and address contradictions between them for the sake of strengthening the organisation itself, for the sake of ensuring security and stability in the organisation’s responsibility area. **The targets in foreign policy are as follows:** enhancing the role and the significance of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the system of international relations. Let me explain: countries don’t really want to deal with us, particularly our main competitors, so to say, NATO countries. They keep their distance from us whatever we may offer to individual NATO member states, to the collective West. But very serious shifts have been secured within the framework of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Heads of European countries already notice us. **They may call us some ‘paper tigers’ at first but since they’ve noticed us, it means we exist. And we will have to move in this direction.”**

In his speech, Aleksandr Lukashenko also named the priorities of Belarus’ presidency over the Collective Security Treaty Organisation:

First. The resolution of crisis situations and the prevention of further destabilisation in the CSTO’s responsibility area should remain in the centre of our attention. January events in Kazakhstan [2022], the conflict in Ukraine, the situation at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, and the situation at the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border vividly confirm the vital importance of this idea. All of us need peace! And as all of us stated absolutely unanimously, nobody needs war!

Second. Effective positioning of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the system of international relations by advancing co-operation with international organisations and third countries represents a key factor for our organisation’s inclusion in the most pressing problems on the international agenda.

Third. The military component of the CSTO is an inalienable component of the organisation, on the basis of which, in fact, it was created 20 years

ago. As for priority tasks in this field, we believe it is necessary to increase the readiness of components of the CSTO forces to carry out their missions and to step up military technology co-operation of the member states.

At the meeting of the leaders of the CSTO member states on May 16th in Moscow, the Belarusian leader also spoke about the importance of the analytical and forecast component in the activities of the organisation. From here follows the **fourth** direction, voiced by Aleksandr Lukashenko, “We are going to focus on building up the institutional potential of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the sphere of information and analysis. We see this as a guarantee of a qualitative strengthening of the organisation and a more effective response to emerging security challenges and threats... **Information and psychological operations are akin to military operations. We have to be ready for them.** The formation of a network of national analytical institutes for strategic studies in the member states will be a concrete practical contribution to the accomplishment of this task. It will allow uniting the scientific and expert potential of our countries in the name of ensuring peace and security.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Every invention of Belarusian scientists becomes part of the national heritage. This was stated by the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko at a ceremony to award Doctor of Sciences diplomas and professor certificates to scientific and pedagogical workers.

“In our country, people of science enjoy great respect and support from the state. You know how much effort and money have been invested to preserve the continuity of scientific schools and achievements of past times, to create the conditions for the development of modern science... We do have something to be proud of. Everyone who visited the Intellectual Belarus science and technology exhibition made sure of this.

Nevertheless, you, scientists, understand more than anyone that in science there is no time to rest on your laurels and there is no time to revel in your successes. Especially today, when our country confronts unprecedented political challenges, all of us, and science in the first place, must look only forward, and do it both for the benefit of people and in the name of creation. In other words, all your innovations should contribute to the development of culture, strengthen the economic power of the state and ensure our national security,” the Belarusian leader said.

The Head of State presented Doctor of Sciences diplomas to eight scientists. Among them was Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences Dmitry Karpinsky. He got the scientific degree for establishing the properties of multiferroics based on bismuth ferrite, the use of which will make it possible to create new functional materials for electromagnetic field sensors, devices for energy storage and collection.

The degree of Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences was also awarded to Viktor Kisel for his work in the area of laser materials. They have already been introduced into batch production at Peleng and are used in complex optoelectronic devices and systems for range measurement and tracking of moving objects.



Doctor of Technical Sciences Yury Krivoguz was awarded the scientific degree for the development of scientific principles of forming polymer composite materials on the basis of polymer mixtures of different polarity and creation of domestic competitive materials based on mixtures of structural thermoplastics and modified polyolefins which are used at the enterprises of Belarus, Russia and China.

The Doctor of Medical Sciences diploma was awarded to Larisa Parkhomenko. She developed a new method of chemoradiation treatment of locally spreading cancer of the mucous membrane of the oral cavity, tongue, pharynx and larynx.

Stepan Temushev was awarded the degree of Doctor of Historical Sciences for the development of a new area in Belarusian historiography associated with the formation of state finances in ancient

National heritage

The Head of State congratulated the scientists on conferring high ranks, noting that they had come a long way before overcoming these professional standards



Russia and the definition of their role in the major events of the Middle Ages in the East Slavic region.

Aleksandr Trofimuk was awarded a diploma of Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences for the development of the theory of numerical invariants of partially soluble groups and the theory of factorisable groups. The results have been used in the development of a software for the GAP computer algebra system and are considered promising for use in computer science and cryptography.

An academic degree of Doctor of Philological Sciences was awarded to Svetlana Kharitonova for the scientific and theoretical substantiation of the concept of system formation of children’s mass media, the formation of their visual and semantic structure and the realisation of educational potential, which contrib-

utes to the development of journalism and media communication for children.

Vladislav Khrustalev was awarded a diploma of Doctor of Biological Sciences for the development of a new system for classifying the elements of the secondary structure of proteins and a method for assessing their stability, designing and testing of vaccine peptides against influenza virus, human immunodeficiency virus,



prion diseases, which makes it possible to increase the efficiency of the synthesis of peptide vaccines.

Then the President presented professor’s certificates. The communication of the Head of State with scientists continued in an informal setting over tea. They discussed their developments and the direction in which domestic science should develop in general. The Head of State aims the leadership of the scientific sphere at practice-oriented topics: from military sciences and security to civilian life.

We need to act promptly, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed,

“We need to use this time, because tomorrow it will be too late. Tomorrow the world will calm down again and will rest on its laurels, on the achievements that you have received to date. The world will be different. Therefore, we need to seize the moment. If we succeed in harnessing this opportunity, we will reap the benefits. This is the basis of our independence.”

The Head of State stressed that the long-term efforts invested in the development of the agricultural industry are yielding results. This is evidenced by Belarus’ farm export numbers, “Oil does not yield as much as agriculture. Oil has plummeted. Meanwhile, food exports hit \$8.3 billion.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also noted that the world’s population is growing and additional volumes of food will be required. Therefore, the agricultural sector is a very promising area.

One of the participants of the event was the Head of the 1st Group of the Research Laboratory of the Military Academy Pavel Chernyavsky. He said that his scientific work is connected with the first information unit of the Belarusian Armed Forces — the company of information technologies which is unmatched. He recalled when visiting the Military Academy in 2019, the Head of State stated the need

to develop information technologies and keep the unit — the IT company.

“We, Belarusian scientists, are ready to implement the most complex technological solutions, scale up the results of our research and guarantee the successful implementation of the scientific tasks at the national and, if necessary, international level to preserve the peace on our Belarusian land. We work daily to make the whole world talk about our achievements,” Pavel Chernyavsky assured.

The specialist is convinced of the huge intellectual potential of the country, “Intelligence is our main weapon. In terms of this type of weapon, Belarus is one step ahead of other states.”

He stressed that the IT company is one of the advanced units. According to him, those who want to get there are thoroughly interviewed. Only best students make it to the company to implement the most complex technical solutions for the country.

“You were right to say that we need to attract the best people.

People in uniform are disciplined, loyal and reliable. No matter how hard they try to destabilise us, invest money and so on, you work very persistently in this regard. We need to bolster this company. The product should be modern and necessary for the country,” the President agreed.

Speaking about the development of IT technologies in the country, the Head of State mentioned the creation of the High Technology Park and noted that ‘certain people ran abroad’ not so long ago.

“I don’t judge them. The United States and others targeted our IT sector with an aim of slowing it down, imposed sanctions. Well, what choice did they [Belarusian IT specialists] have [in the conditions of sanctions]? Some left, some returned. Some travelled around the world and decided in favour of Belarus. Belarusians are a special breed: few of them can live abroad and be happy... Well, they left but the IT sector did not collapse. On the contrary, it presses forward. Those who left... Well, their place was taken by others,” the President emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that in addition to HTP, many large domestic enterprises, the Academy of Sciences have been working on information technologies. Moreover, they create a full-fledged finished product, but not a part of the software for foreign companies.

A tour of the Palace of Independence and a new art exposition called *UMiraTvorenie* (Sense of Peace), located within the walls of the symbol of the Belarusian statehood was also pleasant bonus for the participants of the event. The author of the presented paintings is the domestic artist Mikhail Krot. The beauty of the Belarusian nature served as a source of inspiration for their creation.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Lida Foundry and Mechanical Plant is a truly unique production. For almost 50 years of its existence, the enterprise has gone through different stages of development, but all this time hundreds of Lida residents who worked on it have made a worthy contribution to the socio-economic growth of the city and the country. Today, Lida metallurgists are proud of the quality and demand for their products, which are known and expected in Belarus and abroad. In 2022, exports increased by 21 percent compared to 2021. How do they manage to invest in the renewal of production, develop know-how, and raise wages for employees today?

Where metal moves

Lida Foundry and Mechanical Plant increases production volumes, invests in the environment and introduces innovations



It's always hot in the foundry

By Tatiana Vrublevskaya

In conjunction with science

Lida Foundry and Mechanical Plant Director Roman Trubitsky described the current situation in production, “We specialise in the production of castings and blanks from grey and alloy cast iron using various technologies for machine-building enterprises. In particular, for automobile and tractor internal combustion engines, agricultural machinery produced in Belarus and Russia. The enterprise produces about 700 tonnes of products monthly. The main types of cast iron castings are made by casting in a lined mould. When using this technology, the metal solidifies evenly, but the main advantage is the accuracy of the casting. Part surface needs minimal machining.”

The plant employs almost 350 people. Revenue from product sales per person increased by 37 percent.

Now the plant is participating in the implementation of the ‘Casting Technologies’ state scientific and technical programme together with the Physical-Technical Institute of the National Academy of Sciences.

“We are talking about an investment project for the modernisation of the smelting complex, which consists of two smelting furnaces. The new

equipment has already been practically manufactured, for which Br1.7 million have been spent. The total cost of the project is more than Br3 million. This amount includes the company’s own funds, money from the republican budget and extra-budgetary investments. It is planned to invest almost Br1.3 million to complete the project this year,” Director explains.

Thanks to the development and implementation of the project, the production of castings will increase to 8,500 tonnes per year, the duration of melting will be reduced, the unit costs for electricity will be reduced by 20 percent, and emissions of pollutants into the atmosphere will remain almost the same.

Roman Trubitsky continues, “In general, the enterprise is actively engaged in the modernisation of treatment systems. At the moment, a part of the

equipment for cleaning exhaust gases from shot blasting drums has been installed. And already in 2023, an aspiration system will be installed, which will reduce particulate emissions by 25-30 percent. We continue to co-operate with the Belarusian National Technical University, the Belarusian Research Institute of Foundry (BELNIIIT) and the Physical-Technical Institute of the National Academy of Sciences on the development and implementation of innovative technologies.”

With a steel character

The enterprise has introduced a technology for manufacturing models and moulds by 3D printing, which allows obtaining results that are unattainable by means of classical technological processes. An important advantage also lies in the significant



Head of the foundry shop at Lida Foundry and Mechanical Plant Denis Kulikov



Caster Artem Narbut came to the plant seven years ago, having mastered the profession from scratch

scale, the whole enterprise is engaged in it.

Usually the customer sends a drawing of the part and asks to consider the possibility of production, then the technology is developed with process engineers. Then comes the creation of 3D tooling and drawing up of drawings, according to which the model shop creates model mould tooling. And only after that it is transferred to the foundry.

Male endurance

Working in a foundry is a fascinating sight. People in protective helmets move easily and naturally, without interfering

which not everyone can master.”

Head of the Foundry Shop Denis Kulikov is pleased with his team, “Our team is good. There are 130 people in my subordination, there are both young guys and old-timers. We are constantly developing new types of products, achieving excellent quality, so we feel like a single mechanism. Each casting is a separate chemical composition. The smelter, like a skilled cook, must add certain materials to the melt in the right amount in order to obtain a given alloy and provide the required properties. I myself have worked for 15 years here — and I cannot imagine a more courageous profession.”

It's good to have work

Leading Marketing Specialist Zhanna Ovsyannikova is sure that the activity of the entire enterprise directly depends on the work of its service, “It is very important to properly build work with the consumer — from the analysis of product requirements to the conclusion of a contract and access to serial deliveries. Last year, 7,894 tonnes of products worth Br25.4 million were sold. In general, the volume of exports for 2022 amounted to al-



Lida Foundry and Mechanical Plant is a truly unique production



Caster of metals and alloys Yaroslav Mateshko



Young people come to the enterprise and put down roots

time savings for the production of pattern equipment.

Recently, the plant received an order for casting and die-casting of a new innovative product for the Russian Railways. In addition, a pilot batch has already been delivered to the customer. The casting is complex; several rods are used to obtain it. Special requirements are imposed on all surfaces, since the casting is not subjected to machining, but is immediately installed in the unit. The project is large-

with each other in their work duties amid the fire and heat. Caster of Metals and Alloys Artem Narbut tells us with a smile, “A good foundry worker must understand the metallurgical industry and be able to operate the machine. It is important to be careful: any flaw on the surface of the lining, violation of the heating mode of the tooling can lead to defect. You need to be strong and hardy: some operations have to be done manually. This is a real male profession,

most Br14 million (\$5.3 million in equivalent), or 121 percent of the 2021 level. The main share in export deliveries is castings for the assembly of agricultural units of Avtotekhnologii Plant LLC in the Volgograd Region — 53.5 percent. Shipments to the Zavolzhsy branch of UAZ LLC in the Nizhny Novgorod Region are in second place. The main share in the structure of sales to the domestic market is occupied by Minsk Motor Plant Holding Management Company.”

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,
"It is with great pain that Belarus learned the sad news about one of the most destructive earthquakes in the south-east of Türkiye, which led to numerous human casualties and destruction of historical and cultural monuments, infrastructure and life support facilities."

Condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, February 6th, 2023

"On behalf of the Belarusian people and on my own behalf, I express my sincere condolences to you and all the Syrian people over numerous casualties as a result of the devastating earthquake in northern Syria."

Condolences to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, February 6th, 2023

Shocked by the plate

Our planet shakes in a tectonic sense as well. But keeping seismic calm Belarus always comes to the aid of those who need it.

A series of powerful earthquakes that took place in Türkiye and Syria on February 6th and had echoes in the following days, claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people. Over 90,000 more were injured. Unfortunately, the number of victims is constantly increasing. The rubble has not been completely cleared. Earthquake shocks led to the fact that the Arabian Plate, together with Türkiye, moved about 3 metres in the northeast and southwest directions in relation to the Anatolian Plate. Local authorities talk about a humanitarian catastrophe, scientists about the region's seismic activity, and Belarus about humanity. The President of Belarus instructed to send to Türkiye an emergency rescue team of the Emergencies Ministry, certified according to UN international standards. Previously, the Head of State also instructed to work out the shipment of humanitarian aid to Syria. There is a civilisational approach of Minsk and a certain historical continuity: Belarus has always provided assistance to victims of major cataclysms.



By Maksim Osipov

Iranian fracture

The largest in area among the uplands of Western Asia is the Iranian one, which still retains high seismic activity. Most of it is within Iran, in the east it enters Afghanistan and Pakistan, the northern part runs in the south of Turkmenistan, the southern part is along the border with Iraq. Geologically, the Iranian Plateau is one of the parts of the Eurasian Plate, which has found itself stuck between the Hindustan Plate and the Arabian Platform. Tectonic activity continues here.

Not surprisingly, Iran is one of the most seismically active countries in the world. Several large faults intersect here, which cover at least 90 percent of the country's territory, so earthquakes are frequent and destructive.

Since 1900, at least 126,000 people have died as a result of such cataclysms. At the same time, according to researchers, in 1721 alone, up to 250,000 people could die in earthquakes on the territory of modern Iran, in 893 — up to 150,000, and in 856 — up to 200,000.

Double strike on Syria

The northwest is one of the most affected areas in Syria. It was here that about three million people fled from the war, many live in tents, ancient ruins and makeshift shelters. A fuel crisis has left many without heat this winter, Syria's shattered infrastructure has led to thousands of people contracting cholera in recent months, and there is no one and nothing to provide medical care in the destroyed hospitals. Only about 45 percent of pre-war medical facilities are now functioning in Syria, according to the International Rescue Committee. According to the latest data, 8,500 people became victims of the disaster in Syria.

AAA conflict

The seismological danger of the territory of modern Türkiye has been specified since ancient times. It is on it that four large tectonic plates converge: the Eurasian in the north, the Anatolian in the centre, the African and Arab in the south. Because of this, the country is entangled in a semicircle of seismic faults that go from Syria to the north and turn west not far from the Black Sea coast. There they stretch to Istanbul, from where they leave for the Aegean Sea.

The current earthquake occurred in an area inhabited since antiquity, where three tectonic plates converge — Anatolian, African and Arab. Moreover, this AAA conflict here is by no means the first historically. The US Geological Survey estimates that there were 124 earthquakes in the 20th century, averaging over 1,000 deaths each, 17 of which occurred in present-day Türkiye.

Belarusian rescuers work in the disaster zone in Türkiye

On behalf of the President, the Belarusian Emergencies Ministry sent a special response team Zubr to Türkiye, which suffered from the earthquake. In addition, a cargo of humanitarian aid was sent to Syria.

The first flight with our rescuers and special equipment took off from Machulishchi airfield on February 8th in the early morning. The Ilyushin Il-76 aircraft landed at the airport of Gaziantep, over 30 specialists on board went to Türkiye, including doctors, cynologists, and a chemical and radiation safety reconnaissance group. The detachment works in the city of Kahramanmaras, which is 59 kilometres from the place where the epicentre of the earthquake was located.

DIRECT SPEECH

Belarusian Emergencies Minister Vadim Sinyavsky,
"The mission is designed for 12 days, taking into account travel time. The decision on the further presence of our rescuers in Türkiye will be made depending on the situation and the need for emergency rescue operations."

Every minute counts...

"The detachment is fully prepared to work on saving people, removing rubble and complex concrete structures. To do this, we have unique equipment, tools and, of course, specialists. When responding to emergency situations, the detachment is able to perform tasks offline for ten days at two sites simultaneously," Head of Zubr Igor Zarembo.

Employees of the Emergencies Ministry brought with them all the necessary rescue tools that may be needed to search for and release the victims.

In addition, they have their own equipment — two MAZ trucks and two off-road cars.

Members of Zubr team place great hopes on service rescue dogs. Five of them arrived in the Turkish province — Labradors, German and Belgian Shepherds. These breeds are the hardest and non-aggressive, which is an important component in the search and rescue mission.

On February 9th, the second group of Belarusian rescuers set off for Türkiye. Humanitarian aid was also sent to earthquake-affected areas of Syria.

THE LARGEST EARTHQUAKES OF THE CENTURY

- On January 12th, 2010, Haiti was hit by a magnitude 7.0 earthquake. 316,000 people died, more than 300,000 were injured, 1.3 million were left homeless. The capital of Port-au-Prince was almost completely destroyed.

- On May 12th, 2008, an earthquake of magnitude 7.9 occurred in the Chinese province of Sichuan, which was also felt in India, Thailand, Russia and other countries. 87,600 people became victims, more than 370,000 were injured.

- On December 26th, 2004, an earthquake hit the Indian Ocean. The shift of tectonic plates over 1200 kilometres caused a tsunami up to 10 metres high. According to various estimates, from 225,000 to 300,000 people in 14 countries died.

- On July 27th, 1976, — an earthquake occurred in the Chinese city of Tangshan, Hebei Province. According to official data, almost 243,000 people died. Tangshan turned into ruins, and destruction was also recorded in Tianjin and Beijing.



REUTERS



From Brest to Grodno with a single click



The Tretyakov Gallery, the Louvre, the British Museum — these famous historical and cultural sites can be visited without leaving home, using the Internet. Did you know that our museums also have virtual tours? Having studied the websites of more than 150 institutions, we have prepared a selection of the most interesting online exhibitions.



3D tour at the Museum of the Defence of the Brest Fortress



The remains of an ancient city can be seen in Turov



Exposition at the Squirrel Museum in Bolshaya Berestovitsa



Navigation helps with orientation in Bereza Historic and Regional Studies Museum



In Mir Castle, a tour is conducted by a guide dressed in an old uniform

By Polina Gardevich

Know and remember

Surely everyone at least once had a chance to visit the Brest Hero Fortress Memorial Complex. But, if for some reason it was not possible, you can do it online. The site of the complex says that several expositions are available for a virtual walk: 'Museum of War — Territory of Peace', 'Chronicle of the Brest Fortress', 'Defence of the Eastern Front' and 'Museum of the Defence of the Brest Fortress'. I decide to take a look at the last one. The red-grey halls immediately immerse you in the gloomy atmosphere of hostilities. The blue arrows on the floor tell you which direction to go. In hall number 7 I find a part of the plate with the inscription 'I'm dying, but I don't give up!', made in 1941 by the defender of the fortress, scratched out. It seems so realistic, as if I see it in reality.

The Bereza Historic and Regional Studies Museum invites visitors to get acquainted with the online exposition about the history of the Carthusian monastery, founded in the 17th century. Guests have the opportunity not only to see six halls, but also to listen to an audio tour from the guide. On the walls of each virtual room there are photographs, diagrams and engravings that relate to the history of the town of Bereza and tell about the construction of the monastery, its current state. At first glance, it's hard to figure out what's what. But next to each picture there is an 'I' icon. I wonder why? I click on it. The image is enlarged to full screen, allowing you to better see the details, and the voice of the audio assistant explains to which historical period the selected part of the exposition belongs and what is shown on it. It's like asking a real tour guide.

Animated mannequin

You can get acquainted with one of the oldest cities in Belarus — Turov — at the virtual historical and archae-

ological exposition called 'Ancient Turov', created by the local museum of local lore. By clicking on the link on the site, I get inside the building. At first, it seems that it was on real archaeological excavations: in the very centre are the remains of an ancient city. How to look inside? I'm trying to find a way by clicking all the icons in a row. But in vain: even virtual exhibits cannot be touched. Looking around, I notice several stands about the first princes of Turov and the history of the city.

A search for interesting online excursions in the Vitebsk Region led to the website of the Glubokoye Historical and Ethnographic Museum, where I found a link to a video tour. The protagonist of the video in a grey suit, old-fashioned glasses and with an old suitcase walks around the exposition, demonstrates old coins, clothes of ancestors, while the voice-over tells about the development of agriculture and industry. Then something strange happens: the mannequin that was holding the iron suddenly comes to life and shows how to use the device correctly. Then it freezes again, as if nothing had happened. Wow!

Visiting the squirrel

In the Grodno Region, you can walk around the Squirrel Museum in Bolshaya Berestovitsa. I heard a real squirrel lives there. Can't wait to look at it. But everything turns out to be not so simple. It's not easy to get inside from the first attempt. After making several circles around the building, I finally find an arrow leading inside. And here is the cage for the red-haired inhabitant! However, the animal was not there: apparently, it hid in the house. Then I'll take a look at the exhibit. On a separate stand, the collection 'Squirrel in Art' is presented: a variety of squirrel toys sit on the shelf — from large to very tiny.

In the New Castle of the Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum-Reserve, the creators of the online tour not only provide an opportunity to wander through the halls on their own, but also allow you to go out to the balcony, from where a beautiful panorama opens. Another iconic object in the Grodno Region — Mir Castle — can be visited with the help of a video tour. There are three expositions to choose from: 'Weapons of Honour and Courage', 'Warriors on the Same Field' and 'Combining Space and Time: Belarusian Lands on the Maps of the 16th–18th Centuries'. The most colourful is the first one. The guide not only talks in detail about various types of weapons and demonstrates them, but

also immerses guests in the atmosphere of past centuries with his appearance — his military uniform. Completing the tour of the regions of Belarus, I open the site of the Khatyn Memorial Complex. Repair work is currently underway on the territory of the incinerated village, but this is not a hindrance to an online walk: the museum is available for remote visiting. Guests will not get lost: the map shows the route to follow to get acquainted with all the exhibits. It's very convenient!



At the Museum of the Defence of the Brest Fortress

Excursion in book format

The National Historical Museum offers visitors the 'Belarus and Belarusians' online project. The exhibition is presented in book format. When you start flipping through it, the pages rustle as if you are holding a real edition in your hands. It contains illustrations that accompany the story about the history of the formation of the Belarusian statehood from ancient times to the present day. There are also several thematic pages about Belarusian traditional clothes, language, cuisine and music. You can also take a walk online in the National Art Museum, as well as in the Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War.



Milestone

What future does the development of neural networks promise us?

At the beginning of the 19th century, British workers began to sack factories where new machines were being introduced. They did this out of fear that the machines would take away their work, because the machines coped with production tasks much better than people. The rioters began to be called Luddites, and the movement itself began to be called Luddism. Subsequently, this name began to be applied to people who are fighting against the introduction of new technologies. A little later, there were fears that the advent of photography would kill the fine arts. It was prophesied that the telephone would destroy personal communication, and television would make the theatre unnecessary. But each time these fears turned out to be in vain, and inventions contributed to a qualitative leap in our civilisation. It would seem that it is time to understand the trend, but recently artists in the best traditions of Luddism took up arms against neural networks. Not all, but only those that can generate images. Well, let's figure out what happened there and whether we are on the verge of a new era that brings us no less massive changes than all the inventions listed above.

By Yuri Terekh

Now on the specifics

We will not talk about all neural networks, there are too many of them for this, but only about one of those that artists and designers took up arms against, namely Stable Diffusion. Just specify: all those concepts that I use below, like 'sees', 'understands', 'draws', etc., are nothing more than a language convention. To correctly explain what a neural network is and how it works, one needs a book with mathematical formulas about three centimetres thick, and there is simply no equivalent translation of the concepts used into a language accessible to the vast majority. Therefore, I'll say it in a somewhat futuristic-romantic way: the neural network makes it possible to obtain snapshots of the memories of the electronic model of the brain about certain objects or events. Most of these networks that a person without special education can use are commercial and available for limited or paid use, but it is the one we are considering that is completely free for distribution and use. Anyone with a sufficiently powerful computer can install the necessary software and use it at their own discretion.

How it works

The neural network can work in different ways, but the easiest way is to write what you want to see, how it should be, what details, lighting, style should be there, and get the final result.

The principle is extremely simple. The neural network saw about four billion images that are tied to different concepts. After receiving your request, it simply remembers what exactly matches the words you entered, and, after a little thought, gives the result. It sounds simple, but there

are incredibly complex calculations behind it.

And for understanding: I created all the illustrations for this material using the same neural network, it took about 45 seconds for each drawing, plus the query typing time.

The neural network is able not only to generate images, but also to understand ready-made ones, starting from them, taking into account your wishes. That is, you can independently draw a certain composition in the baby style and ask them to make a photorealistic drawing based on it. If something does not work out, you can clarify what exactly the network sees in the figure and correct the concepts. Usually it determines what is drawn very accurately. Well, if you don't need photorealism, you can ask for the style of any relatively well-known artist or designer, the neural network knows almost all of them.

And now the most interesting. The network is not static, it can be trained further. Or rather, you can retrain it with anything, although the process is extremely resource-intensive. You just need to take a few dozens of your own photos from different angles and show them to the network, linking them to your name. After that, you can ask to draw yourself flying on a dragon or in the cockpit of a spaceship. Well, or in an embrace with a famous movie star in the bed scene, there's enough fantasy for that. By the way...

Ethics

The neural network does not know what is beautiful and what is ugly. What is ethical and what is unacceptable. What is legal and what is illegal.

It doesn't know anything at all, it's just a very complex calculator for generating images. All it can do is match images with concepts. And if there are some safeguards in commercial systems that limit the freedom of use, simply because companies are afraid of lawsuits in a field not yet regulated by law, then in our case there are no restrictions at all.

As is always the case with ground-breaking new technologies, they will be in a grey area for a while. What imposes on users the need to look back at the current legislation and moral and ethical standards.

But what about the artists?

Let's return to the creative people protesting against the introduction of such technologies (and by protests I now mean not just outrage, but the creation of entire social movements fighting to ban such tools). Several very controversial lawsuits have already been filed from artists and copyright owners who believe that their work was illegally shown to neural networks for training and the ability of neural networks to reproduce their style violates their rights.

People fear that the spread of neural networks can knock many artists out of the profession and devalue their work. Just as the British workers feared that the machines would put them out of work.

Can neural networks replace real artists? No, not until they can... A neural network, by definition, is not capable of imagining something. It cannot set a task for herself and realise it, but an artist

can. Yes, with the help of a neural network, you can create images on a given topic and significantly correct them, but this is just a tool. However, such a tool is a great crutch for people who cannot draw but need unique thematic images. For example, for four months now I have been designing my modest Ludzhory Telegram channel using a neural network. Even not so long ago, with the help of a neural network, I visualised the articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus, the violation of which is the basis for the termination of citizenship for fugitive criminals. Completely delighted with the result. After all, if you do not have an artist, finding a suitable image is sometimes more difficult than writing a text. And yes, it saves a lot of time.

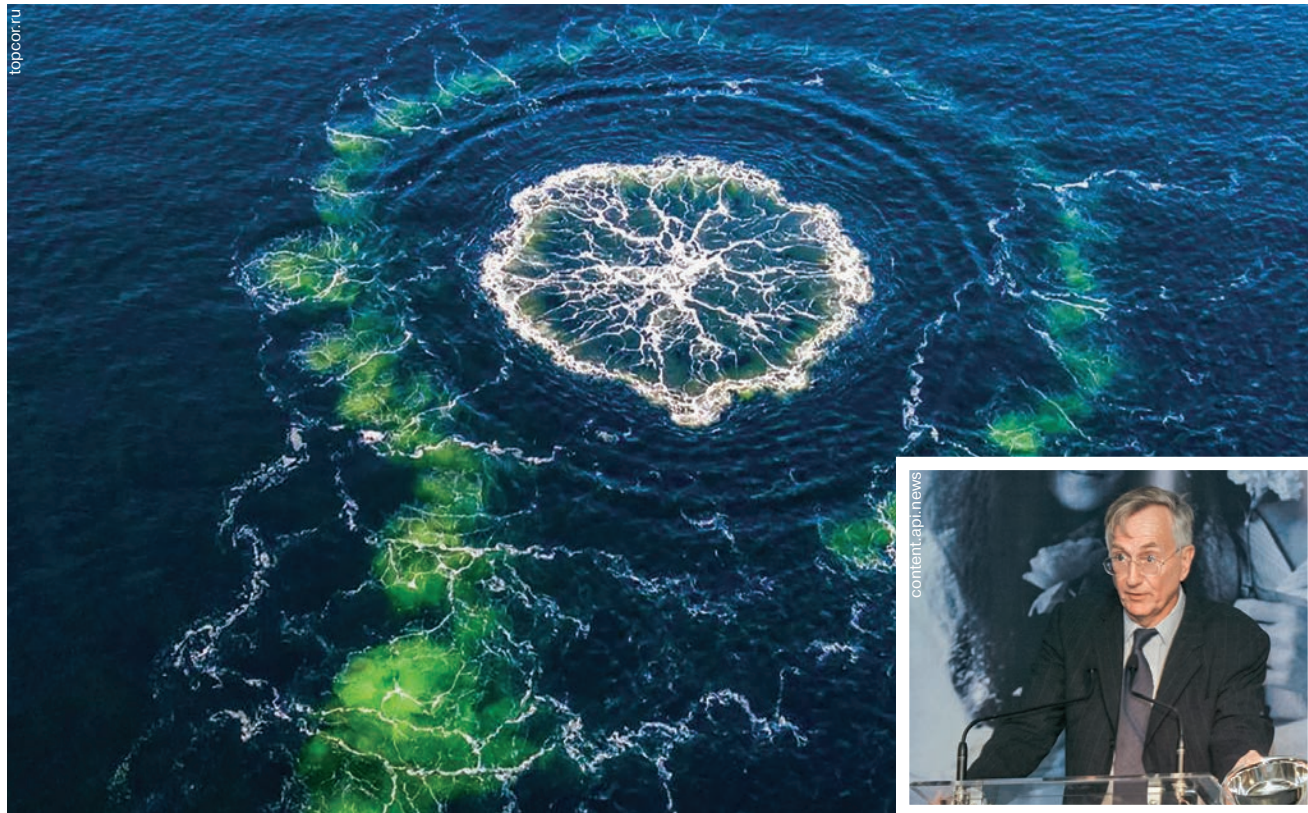
Naturally, the scope of the profession will now narrow somewhat, the neural network is quite capable of performing the rough work. For example, it takes literally a couple of hours to fill a certain fictional art gallery for a movie or a game with non-existent works of art, while for a person this is a task for several months.

Neural networks will make life much easier for small bloggers, small publications, small game studios. This is a wonderful crutch that the needy can rely on, but they cannot replace real artists.

Although the threshold for entering the profession will certainly be raised. Everything will be about the same as it was with the advent of photography.

Is the advent of neural networks a revolutionary achievement that will affect all of humanity? Certainly yes. The future, as always, has come imperceptibly.





Zombie nation

Cheap synthetic opioid — fentanyl — flooding US street drug supply is dragging down life expectancy, turning US cities into Zombielands and killing 1,500 people a week

The US is in the midst of a catastrophic fentanyl epidemic that is causing an eye-watering number of deaths and tearing the fabric of American society apart.

The ultra-strong opioid being cut with virtually every street drug in the country killed a record 75,000 Americans in 2021, the equivalent of 1,500 lives lost every week.

The extreme potency of the drug has made it popular as an illicit street drug. Fentanyl has now infected almost every major city in US, turning once-thriving streets in New York, Los Angeles and Philadelphia into wastelands. Scenes of zombified addicts shooting up or smoking the drug in front of children are increasingly becoming a part of everyday life.

It takes just a small dose of fentanyl to cause an overdose. Just two milligrams — the equivalent of five grains of salt — is enough to cause death.



Experts have described the drop in life expectancy from 78.8 in 2019 to 76.4 in 2021 as 'dramatic' and 'substantial'.

Officials in Washington state say they run out of space in morgues and crematoriums as the drug tears through local communities.

Direct accusation

Seymour Hersh claims US Navy behind Nord Stream 2 pipeline explosion

The bombing of the Nord Stream underwater gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea was a covert operation ordered by the White House and carried out by the CIA, a report by a veteran investigative journalist claims.

Seymour Hersh, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, has claimed that US deep-sea divers, using a NATO military exercise as a cover, planted mines along the pipelines that were later detonated remotely.

In September, a series of powerful explosions destroyed the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines that run through the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany and provide cheap gas to mainland Europe. The attack was soon revealed to have been a deliberate act but no culprit has yet been identified.

Hersh, 85, who broke stories such as the mass murder of 500 civilians at My Lai in Vietnam and the torture of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, says that the 'Black Op' was ordered by President Biden, and that the attack was carried out by the CIA in co-operation with Norway.

In a 5,000-word report published on the online publishing platform Substack, Hersh writes that the operation was disguised 'under the cover of a widely publicised mid-summer NATO exercise known as Baltic Operations 22 or BALTOPS 22', which was conducted in June off the coast of Germany.

He says that Biden's decision to sabotage the pipelines came after more than nine months of top-secret planning within the American national security community. "For much of that time, the issue was

not whether to do the mission, but how to get it done with no overt clue as to who was responsible," Hersh has written.

Swedish officials suspected the blasts were the result of 'gross sabotage', and some Western officials were quick to blame the attacks on Moscow as it blocked gas supplies to Europe in response to sanctions over last year's invasion of Ukraine.

"These are deliberate actions, not an accident," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said at the time. "The situation is as serious as it gets."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in response to Hersh's report that Moscow has 'repeatedly expressed' its belief that the US and NATO were involved in the explosions.



Venice Carnival returns

The opening show of the world famous Venice Carnival kicked off on February 4th as performers took to brightly lit floats and gondolas for the 'Original Dreamers' parade

After three years of scaled-back events due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of visitors have travelled to the Queen of the Adriatic for the beloved festival.

Spectators lined the banks and bridges of the Grand Canal to catch a glimpse of the colourful displays, flashing lights and masked dancers aboard dozens of floating barges.

'Take your time for the Original signs' is the creative title of this year's event. It draws inspiration from the constellations and in particular, the Zodiac.

The traditional Venetian carnival mask, known as the 'butua' allowed revellers through the ages, from both the upper and lower classes, to soak up the festivities while concealing their identities. The festival was banned many times throughout the years and finally outlawed in 1797 by the Holy Roman Emperor Francis II.

The modern-day Carnival was restored by the Italian government in 1979 in a bid to revitalise the city's tourism industry. The year's carnival will end on February 21st.

Egypt opens 4,000-year-old tomb

Egypt has restored, documented and opened to tourists the Middle Kingdom tomb of Meru, the oldest site accessible to the public on Luxor's West Bank, home to some of its most spectacular Pharaonic monuments including the Valley of the Kings

Meru was a high-ranking official at the court of the 11th Dynasty King Mentuhotep II, who reigned until 2004 BC and who, like Meru, was buried at the necropolis of North Asasif, the ministry said in a statement.

Meru's rock-hewn tomb was restored by the Polish Centre for Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of Warsaw and Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

"This is the first site from such an early period in Western Thebes to be made accessible to visitors," the ministry statement quoted Fathi Yassin, General Director of Antiquities in Upper Egypt, as saying.

The tomb, which faced the procession avenue to Mentuhotep II's temple, contains a corridor leading to an offering chapel with a niche for a statue of the deceased. A burial shaft descends to a burial chamber with a sarcophagus.

"This is the only decorated room of the tomb, with an unusual decoration of painting on lime plaster," Yassin said.

Meru's tomb had been known since at least the mid-19th century, according to the Polish Egyptian archaeological mission. Italian conservators cleaned some of the wall paintings in 1996.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Any natural disasters with unpredictable consequences in modern management theory are called Grey Swan. And in the conditions of Grey Swan event, it is important to realise how to quickly respond to the tyranny of the random, make prompt decisions, and most importantly, how to ensure the stable operation of the economy and finance. In this matter, the key is to find an answer: which countries will show the highest economic growth and determine the dynamics of the world economy.

Dance of the Grey Swans

Who will pull through the world economy amid global cataclysms and their unpredictable consequences?

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

Personal forecast for each country

According to the forecasts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India and China will provide half of the world GDP growth in 2023. The growth rate of the Chinese economy will be 5 percent (due to the lifting of quarantine measures), India — 6 percent.

Furthermore, according to the forecasts of the fund, the combined contribution of the United States and the European Union to the growth of the world economy will be only 10 percent. Interestingly, earlier Managing Director of the IMF Kristalina Georgieva said: in 2023, a third of the world economy will suffer from a recession, global growth will be held back by the economies of America, China and the EU, which are 'slowing down at the same time'. She predicted that half of the EU would face recession, but America could avoid it.

In January, the World Bank also released its forecast: global economic growth will slow to 1.7 percent in 2023, and any new negative event (including Grey Swans) could trigger a recession.

According to UN forecasts, global economic growth will be the slowest in decades. It will be about 1.9 percent, while last year it reached 3 percent. The consequences of the conflict in Ukraine (food and energy crises, a sharp increase in inflation, an increase in the debt burden) will only intensify in 2023. Economic growth in the United States will be at the level of 0.4 percent, the European Union — only 0.1 percent, however, it will be the highest in China — 4.8 percent.

Other research centres predict that the largest growth, at the level of 5-8 percent, will be demonstrated by the countries of the Middle East, South Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia and Oceania.

Boomerang effect

Not so long ago, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that developed countries were the driving force of the world economy in the 20th century, but in the 21st century developing countries are likely to be on the rise.

Negative trends in developed countries (Group of Seven — G7) are already making themselves felt and are expressed in large-scale staff cuts in key corporations.

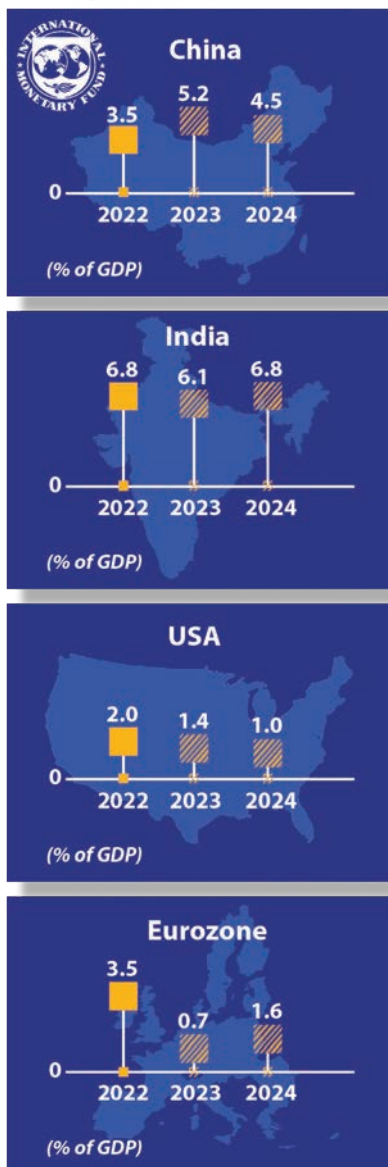
So, in mid-January, the American bank Goldman Sachs Group announced the dismissal of 3,200 employees, which is associated with \$2 billion losses of the banking giant. Let us remember that this is how the infamous bank Lehman Brothers began its fall, the bankruptcy of which launched the global financial crisis of 2008.

In early February, the Boeing Corporation shared its plans to cut 2,000 employees in 2023 from the finance and human resources departments in The Seattle Time. Their functions are planned to be transferred to the Indian consulting company called Tata Consulting Service in order to reduce costs. Boeing Corporation demonstrates negative performance amid the cessation of deliveries to Russia due to sanctions, the development of domestic passenger aircraft industry in China, Russia, as well as failures with the release and disasters of new versions of Boeing aircraft.

Negative expectations are also strengthening in the UK. Recent social studies have shown that most of the population of the Foggy Albion believes that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will not be able to fulfil his New Year's promises to improve life in the country (raise wages, stop migrants flow and reduce prices).

As a result, ex-premier Liz Truss announced her readiness to appeal to the wrong course of the Sunak economy and return to big politics.

IMF growth forecast



In other words, we are witnessing the boomerang effect in action: the Anglo-Saxons, having imposed sanctions against Belarus and Russia, themselves got into a political mess with a permanent change of governments amid a deteriorating economy, falling living standards and discontent of their own citizens.

Experts from the investment bank Sinara and Freedom Finance Global allow the growth of the Russian economy to the level of 0.7 percent.

In the context of positive expectations regarding the Russian economy, the latest statements by the Managing Director of the IMF Kristalina Georgieva at the forum in Davos should be mentioned. She emphasised, "Even centuries of war have ended at the negotiating table, and the sooner we find a way to end this terrible war, the better for everyone. And of course, it will be great news for the global economy."

As you can see, the forecasts for the points of growth of the world economy differ from different analytical centres. In principle, it is already clear who will pull through the entire world economy in 2023 — developing countries. But something else is important for you and me — the Republic of Belarus is currently focusing on a thorough assessment of the above-described trends in the global economy in the development of its foreign trade relations.

We are actively co-operating with regions that show and will show consistently high growth rates for the coming decades. The leading contributors of global growth will enable us to ensure the high performance of our national economy.

Military mode

In order to get out of the crisis, the calls of European politicians to transfer the economy to a military regime are becoming more and more distinct. At the end of January, the leading faction of the European Parliament, directly President of the European People's Party (EPP) Manfred Weber called for the transfer of the EU economy to a military footing.

The difficult economic situation of the EU countries is expressed not only in vicious appeals. These calls are supplemented by absurd and dreamy phrases of the highest European officials. Thus, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen never ceases to vividly predict that EU sanctions 'will plunge the Russian economy into recession for decades'.

However, already in February 2023, the IMF changed the forecast for the Russian economy for 2023 from a fall of 2.3 percent to an increase of 0.3 percent.

Even toys eventually turn into relics, at least family ones. It is so gratifying and touching when the granddaughter swaddles her grandmother's doll, and the son prepares a whole battalion of dad's tin soldiers for the next counterattack...

What Belarusian children played at the beginning of the 20th century

By Vladimir Likhodedov

Antistress for children

Whatever toy store you go to today, your head is spinning from the variety of products, more and more, however, of Chinese origin. If only the children played with these things, which, according to the assurances of the sellers, will entertain and calm, and even teach something. In fact, dolls with vampire faces, hyped novelties of anti-stress and puzzles are increasingly gathering dust in the corners, while their little owners are busy with other games — uploaded to all kinds of gadgets.

Barbie and Ken, Lego and Tetris

Children of the 1980s and 90s had a more reverent attitude towards toys. The girls dreamed of Barbie and Ken, not of pathetic Chinese fakes, but of real ones with bending arms and legs. Baby dolls were also popular, the sizes and shapes resembling real babies. The boys glued models of airplanes. They built cities of the future and entire space galaxies from Lego (oh, those who had the original designer were considered lucky!). Gradually, portable game consoles came into fashion — Chef and Wolf & Eggs (ELEKTRONIKA Game Watch IM 02), and they were replaced by the notorious Tetris puzzle.

'Best Things to the Children!'

Big talking, dancing and singing dolls, beautiful brides and Cinderellas, pyramids in the form of Kremlin towers, huge shiny tumblers, growling teddy bears, wooden cars and trains, which are exactly like real ones, are also remembered by children of the post-war period. Surely, even in families of modest means, adults tried to buy the desired toy for the New Year or for a birthday of their adored baby. It is not for nothing that the 'Best Things to the Children!' phrase, attributed to the leader of the world proletariat, is firmly rooted among the people.

Bebe Dolls, Leno and nurses

But how impressive was the assortment of toys in the Minsk Trading House of Ilya Kaplan at the beginning of the 20th century! The store that sold all sorts of things was known far beyond the city limits. For high-quality, albeit expensive products, people came from different regions of present-day Belarus and beyond. Judging by the catalogs of the supplier of the store of the N. Vetter and E. Ginkel Moscow JSC, the choice

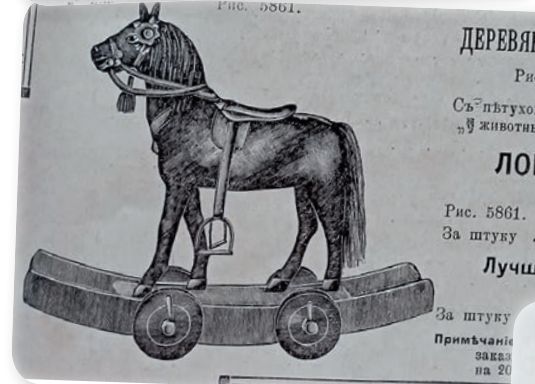


CONGRATULATIONS!

Vladimir Likhodedov was awarded the Order of Friendship of the Russian Federation for his services in strengthening co-operation between the peoples of the two countries. During a meeting of the collegiums of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Russia, the award was presented to him personally by Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

monkeys, pigs, on stilts... Such stuff cost from 2 rubles 60 kopecks per dozen. The most expensive of the assortment was a clown with a face-changing fan: 12 figurines would cost 8 rubles 40 kopecks.

Clockwork carousels were also an expensive pleasure. And if a dozen snowmobiles could be purchased for 5 rubles 40 kopecks, then the price of clockwork foreign carousels reached up to 40 rubles!



Almost like Teddy

One of the legends about the origin of the teddy bear, which has long won the hearts of both children and adults in different parts of the world, is that it comes from Germany. It is believed that the first bear, standing on two legs and shaking its head, was made by the seamstress Margret, who was confined to a wheelchair since childhood. However, the illness did not prevent the girl from opening a workshop, and eventually a toy factory, from which more than one thousand cubs scattered around the world.

Teddy bears, with and without a roar, as well as hares, donkeys, monkeys, were also presented in the Minsk store. Bear cubs cost from 60 kopecks to 6 rubles 50 kopecks apiece. It was possible to purchase other 'animals' approximately for the same price.

'How I love my little horse!..'

A real rider felt like a toddler, to whom his parents bought a wooden horse. After all, it was covered with skin, with a tail and a mane. And also with a removable saddle and harness. Dream, not just a horse!



of goods for children was huge — for every taste and, of course, the wealth of parents.

Happiness was to run steam trains on tin rails, which were sold from 5 to 10 rubles apiece! It was possible to purchase finely carved semaphores for the railway, wholesale up to 7 rubles 20 kopecks, and arc station lights up to 4 rubles 60 kopecks per dozen. And I would completely complement the picture with tin railway booths with barriers — from 80 kopecks to 2 rubles 10 kopecks apiece.

As we can see, far from poor people could please the heirs with such toys. At the same time, wholesale prices are indicated in the catalog. At retail, these gizmos cost 20-50 percent more commercially.

It was also easy enough to captivate beloved daughters. After all, the best gift for a girl is, of course, a toy toddler.

Dads, being generous, bought Bebe Dolls with hinged porcelain heads. Depending on the size and configuration, their wholesale cost reached as much as 80 rubles. Just incredible money!

But clockwork dolls on wheels were

also available to buyers with an average income. They cost from 85 to 90 kopecks apiece. The same can be said about swaddled papier-mâché Leno Dolls. For a dozen of these babies they gave from 60 kopecks. A soft doll with a wig and closing eyes cost 22 kopecks, and a nursing doll with a baby in her arms or in a cradle would cost 30–60 kopecks.

Circus performances were probably popular at that time. Favorite events, especially among young spectators, were, of course, clown tricks. So in the Kaplan store, tin clockwork figurines of cheerful characters were presented for every taste — with flutes, violins, cymbals, drums, playing the cello, as well as with

The cost of one rocking chair reached 7 rubles 80 kopecks. By the way, in the catalog of Vetter-Ginkel, there was a postscript to the horses that they were not in stock, and the goods had to be ordered two weeks in advance and for at least 20 rubles.

By the way, such horses, plush elephants and bears can gather dust, forgotten, somewhere else in old closets or in attics, becoming more and more valuable every year. Does your family keep mom's favorite doll, dad's railroad, or grandpa's wood carved car?

Photos from the personal collection of Vladimir Likhodedov

Bright and uncompromising

Belarusian wrestlers won almost fifty medals at the International Sambo Tournament for the Prizes of the President of the Republic of Belarus

By Sergei Kanashits

Belarusian sambo is a brand. Our wrestlers are invariably the favourites of any competition, always in the lead in the overall medal standings and each time they set themselves only the maximum tasks. The next, already 27th international sambo tournament for the Prizes of the President of the Republic of Belarus, was no exception. Aleksandr Lukashenko sent a greeting to the participants on the eve of the competition, “The Belarusian capital is once again cordially and hospitably hosting the best representatives of one of the most spectacular and technical martial arts. Sport has always been an ambassador of peace, so let the Minsk tournament serve the lofty goals of uniting people, strengthening mutual understanding and friendship between peoples for many years to come.” The Head of State expressed his conviction that under the legendary vaults of the Sports Palace, sambo wrestlers would be able to demonstrate their skills and fortitude, and fans would fully enjoy the bright and uncompromising

fighters. So in the end it happened.

In the past years, the tournament in Minsk could easily be compared with the world championship in its level, it had the highest rating category and even the status of the World Cup stage. Today the situation has changed for all known reasons — politics is persistently pushing sports out



The fight between Oleg Nagorny and Vasily Ostapets



Aleksandr Kruglik (right) performs a wrestling technique

of its original boundaries. The International Federation of Amateur SAMBO (FIAS), as it can resist pressure and pressure, but in some ways is forced to compromise. Thus, Belarusian and Russian athletes perform without national symbols, and our countries are not allowed to hold competitions under the auspices of FIAS. Despite this, it was possible to gather a fairly decent line-up of participants in Minsk — more than a

hundred sambo wrestlers from five countries: Belarus, Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Our team put up almost the strongest team and confidently excelled in the medal standings, winning a total of 47 awards: 16 gold, 14 silver and 17 bronze!

The fight turned out to be emotional and there was someone to look at on the carpet. For example, at the current world champion 22-year-old Elena Kupavo.

police: in battalions and detention groups of the security department, in special police units. Aleksandr Koksha is one of the most titled Belarusian sambo athletes, he is a world and European champion, winner of the European Games in Minsk. An excellent student of combat, political and sports training, our wrestler does not forget about his roots: he regularly visits his native Dubrovno, which is not far from Orsha, and annually holds a children’s tournament there for his prizes.

Now the April European Championship in Israel is on the agenda of the Belarusian sambo wrestlers. In connection with the participation of our and Russian athletes in the tournament, some states (Poland, Lithuania, Estonia) forbid their athletes to compete there (here’s democracy), but this, of course, will not affect the overall level of competition in any way — wrestlers from almost three dozen countries will compete for medals in Rishon LeZion. Next — the stages of the World Cup in Kyrgyzstan and Serbia, the 2nd Games of the CIS countries in Minsk, the World Championship in Armenia... The schedule, as we see, is very busy. Despite all attempts at isolation, Belarusian sambo athletes remain ready to fight and continue to glorify their native Belarus.

Winners all around

Basketball players of the national women’s team have not played in Minsk for about a year and a half, so the fans had something to see over the weekend. Our girls played two matches with the Russian national team — in addition, there were interesting experiments of the coaching staff with the squad.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Even at the beginning of the training camp, which preceded the tournament, called the Friendship Cup, head coach of our national team Natalia Trofimova said, “Now we have a good opportunity to test the younger and older generation of players in the same team. Let’s see what happens.”

For the first match, the coaches included both experienced Alex Bentley, Anastasiya Verameyenka, Maryia Papova, Volha Ziuzkova, and very young girls — 21-year-old Yuliya Vasilevich, 17-year-old Katsiaryna Novik and Palina Damianiuk, 18-year-old Palina Kastiukovets. After the first quarter our team led 19:4. Belarusian team remained stronger in the second quarter as well — 14:8. Two more quarters of the match were won by the Russians with a minimum margin, but the victory remained with Trofimova’s team — 63:45. Then the coach noted: the girls showed themselves well. However, she warned: in the second match, the roster of our team will change by about half, because the game will be completely different.

Natalia Trofimova was not disingenuous. In Sunday’s



match, they posed expectations on youth — the most experienced basketball players of the national team followed the game from the stands. The Russians went into a fast break and after the first quarter they were 18:8. Much to the break, our team reduced the gap to four points, and in the third quarter, first levelled the score, and then took the lead. But not for long: it was not easy to break the resistance of the rivals, and in the end the Russians won with a score of 71:61. The best player in the Belarusian national team in this match Yulia Vasile-

vich said after the game, “The first match was more successful for us. Nevertheless, there were experienced players in the roster, and we felt more secure: we knew that we could rely on them, that in case of any mistakes they would cover us, and in terms of psychology, it was a little easier. The second match turned out to be more chaotic: there is young blood on the floor, we want to run, score, because of this we made many mis-

takes. But, of course, we showed the character and desire to win.”

Yulia Vasilevich says: there were some jitters in the second fight. There is not so much chemistry in the team, some basketball players played their first game as part of the national team. Katsiaryna Novik is one of these girls. This weekend she made her debut in the national team. At the same time, she scored 10 points in the second match.

“I am always critical of myself. In the first game, I showed myself by 30 percent. It’s not my highest efficiency. But in the second game I felt more confident. There were no senior players, there was no extra responsibility. I worked on the accuracy, and it turned out much better...” the basketball player admitted.

Natalia Trofimova, however, chose not to single out individual players in the youth team, “I always repeat to the girls: ‘You all have a chance’.

Our youth demonstrated their character in the second match against the Russian national team. So far, their skill is not as much as that of older players, but it was due to their character that the team held on. Now everything will depend on the young players: how they will use their time. If we continue to work, then I think the result will certainly come.

As for our performance at this tournament, I am more than satisfied. There are certain points and nuances that we need to improve in our game. We will work on it.”

Belarusian and Russian national women’s teams competed each other in Minsk



Photo of the week



On February 15th, the Remembrance Day of Internationalist Soldiers was celebrated in the country. In the photo: during an excursion to the Vitebsk City Museum of Internationalist Soldiers.

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On February 16th, 1923, a British expedition led by archaeologist Howard Carter found the main Egyptian treasure: the stone sarcophagus

of Pharaoh Tutankhamun. When the sarcophagus was opened, a golden coffin with his mummy was found inside. The room where the sarcophagus was located was filled with so many precious objects that it took five whole years to dismantle them.

On February 17th,

1852, the Hermitage was opened to the public. By that time, it already had the richest collections of monuments of

ancient Eastern, ancient Egyptian, ancient and medieval cultures, art of Western and Eastern Europe, archaeological and artistic monuments of Asia, Russian culture of the 8th-19th centuries. The Hermitage was founded in 1764 as a private collection of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great.



On February 18th, 1930, the planet Pluto has been discovered. Pluto has long remained completely unexplored. Its existence was theoretically predicted by the American astronomer

Percival Lowell in 1915. 15 years later, the planet was discovered by an astronomer Clyde William Tombaugh. According to the new classification, Pluto now belongs to the category of minor planets, or planetoids.

On February 18th, 1893, Maksim Goretsky was born (1893-1938), a Belarusian writer, literary critic, lexicographer, philosopher and folklorist. His documentary literary memoirs called *In the Imperialist War* laid the foundation for the documentary genre in Belarusian literature. He is the author of the *Two Souls* story, the *Vilna Communards* novel, the *Komarovka Chronicle* and others. Among other things, he collected Belarusian folklore.



February 19th is the World Marine Mammal Protection Day. On February 19th, 1986, the International Whaling Commission declared



a commercial whaling moratorium. The day is celebrated to attract the attention of the public, government officials, and all humanity of the protection of this unique animal species and all marine mammals in general. Only 119 species have survived on our planet so far.



On February 19th, 1878, the era of audio recording began. An American inventor Thomas Edison patented a

device for the mechanical recording and reproduction of the sound, which he named the phonograph. Public demonstration of the device immediately made Edison famous. The great merit of Edison should also be recognised that he guessed to perpetuate the speech of the great people of his time.

February 20th-

26th is Maslenitsa — an ancient Slavic holiday with numerous customs, which has come down to our days through the centuries. It is celebrated during the week before Lent.

Maslenitsa is a cheerful farewell to winter, illuminated by the joyful expectation of close warmth, spring renewal of nature. Traditionally, the main attributes of the holiday were a stuffed Maslenitsa, fun, sleigh rides, festivities and, of course, pancakes — round, ruddy and hot.



February 21st is the International Mother Language Day. It was proclaimed at the 30th General Conference of UNESCO in November



1999 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. Thus, it has been celebrated annually under the auspices of UNESCO since 2000. The initiative aims to recognise and encourage the use of native languages, especially the languages of national minorities.

February 21st is the International Tourist Guide Day. It was established by the World Federation of Tour Guides Associations (WFTGA). It is

not possible to say exactly when this profession appeared, but it is obvious that it is connected with the development of interstate relations. It has become difficult for people to do so without the help of professional guides, ever since people began travelling actively and visiting different cities and countries.



On February 21st, 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the first policy document of scientific communism, which outlined the main ideas of Marxism and became the first programme of an international communist organisation.