

What is Belarus' place in the reports of international ratings and research?



The most heart-warming Republican charity event — *Our Children* — is in full swing countrywide



INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 48 (814) ● FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2019 ● WWW.SB.BY



BELTA

Investment as fuel for growth

Among the issues discussed at the meeting with the President at the Palace of Independence were measures to generate the maximum effect from investments, why the investment of significant funds on individual projects has proved to be ineffective and what decisions the Government will take in this regard. Aleksandr Lukashenko focused on the key point, "Along with exports of our products, investments in fixed assets are the main factor of economic growth... Each Rouble invested should produce a maximum return. As a result, effective employment and decent wages must be ensured. The aim of the investment is stable regional development and improvement of human living standards."

Point of growth

Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out that, since independence — no matter how difficult it was, Belarus has not closed down any of its industrial production: on the contrary, it has been constantly supported and developed. The President outlined specific areas, "We have retained the world's largest enterprises of mechanical engineering, oil refining and the chemical industry. In recent years, the woodworking, cement and food industries have been significantly modernised. New high-tech capacities have been created in the traditional energy system. At the same time, we are actively developing renewable, nuclear energy. For the first time in the history of independent Belarus, the production of a line of passenger cars has been established. We are also for the first time implementing a large scale biotechnological project aimed at amino acid production."

The President noted that, despite all the difficulties in the economic situation, Belarus has managed to maintain a reasonable level of investment in the economy every year. At the same time, he drew attention to an important circumstance, "Investing money in the economy, we focused primarily on the fact that there are traditional enterprises that are based on the processing of raw materials available in our country."

Support for those who can work

At the same time, the Head of State noted that the expected results have not been achieved everywhere; the indicators planned by business plans have not been achieved.

Previously, Mr. Lukashenko instructed to consider in detail the problematic issues both locally and at governmental level. Under their personal responsibility, officials had to develop systemic solutions for the effective development of enterprises. However, according to him, the Government has traditionally prepared proposals for the provision of regular state support by the end of the year, "If this support is justified, we will provide it. However, this will happen only after it is proved that the applicants need this support and did not objectively fail the



One of the major investment projects is being implemented at Svetlogorsk JSC

modernisation and the investment tests they had to meet."

Specific issue

The Head of State asked why the investment of significant funds in individual projects was ineffective and what decisions have been taken by the Government to stabilise the work of enterprises. Specific questions were addressed to the officials, "What has the new Government done to launch production at new enterprises, in which a lot of credit resources have been invested? What should be done to avoid miscalculations? I also want to hear how production is developing and how Belarusian nature is protected."

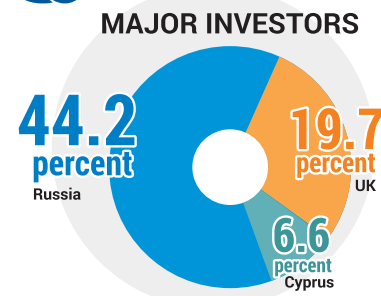
The President stressed the importance of the meeting: hundreds of millions of Dollars are at stake. "I am especially interested in those productions that have been talked about for years but have not started to work or work very poorly. The theme is clear to all, so let's continue without unnecessary words, suffering or complaining to determine what we will do next, especially with several enterprises that should have worked for a long time now — generating revenue," he said.

Complicated situation

During the meeting, Prime Minister Sergei Rumas made a report, stating that

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS, JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 2019

Foreign investments to the Belarusian economy, January-September **\$7.1bn***



Direct foreign investments totalled 73.6 percent of all attracted foreign investments

Belarus' investments to foreign states, January-September **\$4.4bn***



Direct investments accounted for 91.1 percent of all investments to foreign states

* Except banks

BELTA infographics

22 of the 34 particularly important investment projects have already been put into operation. 12 of these 22 projects have reached their design capacity.

The President focused on the sources of the requested additional funding for the launch of projects. He emphasised that it is impossible to spread the budget more thinly and guarantees are necessary that,

after a while, the businesses won't ask for help again.

The most difficult situation, which requires decision-making at the level of the Head of State, has developed at four enterprises. This applies to the construction of pulp and paper industry enterprises in Svetlogorsk, Dobrush and Shklov, as well as the production of cloth fabrics at Kamvol JSC. The fact is, that, for the implementation of these projects, the concerns have requested additional budgetary funds (as in the case of Dobrush and Shklov) and the postponement of the repayment of loans (as in the case of Kamvol and Svetlogorsk).

"The Government has worked out the drafts of the relevant decrees and submitted them to the Head of State for consideration," Mr. Rumas said. "The President didn't support the documents immediately and sent them back once again to be convinced that the measures which the enterprises ask for in the form of state support for the termination of investment projects, are well calculated and grounded."

Restore order

According to the Head of State, in the near future, the work of each of the enterprises will be subject to audit — including the issues of restoring order, executive discipline, economic activity, financial results, the presence of a business strategy, improvement of product quality, competitiveness and import substitution.

The President intends to personally visit and inspect a number of enterprises early next year. Technologies, volumes, profit and profitability will be the criteria upon which the effectiveness of their work will initially be evaluated.

Following the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko ordered an interdepartmental working group, with broad powers to be created. It will have to analyse the problematic investment projects in a short time, primarily, in terms of the amounts requested by enterprises as state support: whether such a volume of funding is really needed, what the money will be spent on and when it will be returned.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Based on peaceful policy

At the meeting of the Security Council, Aleksandr Lukashenko approved the country's defence plan and the concept of the construction and development of the Armed Forces until 2030. Belarus firmly adheres to a peace-loving policy and maintains its status as a keeper of security in the region.

"The Belarusian army has never threatened anyone and will not do this in the future. It is an instrument to prevent war. In case of aggression it should be able to both repel it and cause damage to the enemy. The main task of the Armed Forces is to protect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the country," Mr. Lukashenko stressed.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces has been working on the revision of an important document for the country for the past year — taking into account the views of not only law enforcement but also other interested bodies, also proceeding from the present realities of the current complex military-political and strategic situation.

"We understand what wars are going on now, what conflicts there may be in the future and — based on our potential and capabilities — we are rebuilding our Armed Forces for this. It's on a small scale so far but

now it is time to see at the highest level what we need to do, how to strategically plan the defence of our state," Mr. Lukashenko explained.

The tendency seen so far is not inspiring: the confrontation between the major centres of power — the United States of America, the European Union, China and Russia — is not waning. The arms race has intensified as a result and, according to the President, information warfare has gained steam. "We see a military buildup on both sides of Belarus. The desire to present Russia as the main threat to the West has become the dominant policy of the North Atlantic Alliance," he said, adding that such events determine not only relations between the countries. They also affect the further development of the Armed Forces — not only Belarusian. This is typical for other states as well. "Nevertheless, we firmly and consistently adhere to a peace-loving policy and main-

tain the status of a keeper of security in the region. At the same time, our undoubted priorities remain the development of our own security system, as well as the continuation of military co-operation with friendly countries — primarily, within the CIS. As they say, one's gunpowder should always be kept dry," noted Mr. Lukashenko.

The President emphasised the importance of openness in the modernisation of the defence system, "We should hide nothing from the population, nor from our neighbours. We must be transparent. We should not frighten people, especially our neighbours and our society, but tell them about the situation and the measures that we plan to implement in different situations."

According to the Secretary of State of the Security Council, Stanislav Zas, the emphasis in the updated documents is on preventing the unleashing of aggression and strategic deterrence, as well as the questions of destabilisation of the situation in the country. As Lieutenant General Zas admits, this is the reality of our time faced all over the world: everything begins with provoking internal armed conflict. Much attention was paid to ensuring the needs of the defence of the state.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Together we can achieve much

The President took part in meetings of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council and the informal CIS summit in St. Petersburg

By Yevgeny Kononovich

The leaders of Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia summed up the activities of the Eurasian Economic Commission and compared notes on joint work in the future. This is especially topical for our country. From 2020, Belarus will play a key role within the EAEU: it is taking on the baton of Armenia's presidency. Traditionally, summits of this kind are an excellent opportunity for bilateral meetings. Before the start of the negotiations of the Eurasian five states, Aleksandr Lukashenko met with Vladimir Putin. That meeting on the Neva River city was the continuation of many hours of talks on December 7th, in Sochi. The agenda was purely economic. The heads of state continued to co-ordinate the integration programme of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, including the most sensitive issues in the energy sector. Starting the conversation, Mr. Lukashenko noted the tremendous progress in the development of co-operation with Russia, "A lot has been done, although we do not always talk about our progress. We have achieved a considerable amount, not only in the social sphere but also for the economy."

Solid advantages

Citizens of the two countries are not divided by borders, visas or customs. Belarusians in Russia and Russians in Belarus feel at home. We have equal rights to employment, residence, business, education and medical care. We have created a unified air defence, a grouping of troops, a single space for the work of special services.

"Russia has no problems flying over Belarus. We always act respectfully," the President of Belarus declared, adding, "We have no questions for our diplomatic agencies. We have a common border and customs in the west. 110m tonnes of cargo are currently transported from East to West and from West to East through Belarus. This is the work of a single customs border."

Something to work on

Belorusneft has resumed its operation in Russia and provides not only services — reinvigorating old fields — but also mines oil together with other companies. "We have seen tremendous progress. In the economy, as far as people go, Belarus now buys not only raw materials but also components from you. Over 10m Russians work at the enterprises in Russia which our companies have contacts with — producing final goods. If we consider their families we can multiply this number by four. Just imagine how many people are involved in our trade turnover and joint production. After the collapse of the USSR, we haven't moved far from each other either in the economy, politics, or the social sphere," Mr. Lukashenko stressed.

Vladimir Putin supported him, adding, "Despite the fact that, as we have said, much has still to be done, the results of the work from this document are significant. When we started this process, our trade turnover was \$9bn but now stands at \$35.5bn. In addition, there are issues that we have solved in the social sphere. I know that our colleagues have been working hard since our previous meeting. We are very glad to see you to continue this discussion."



Agreements achieved by presidents

Commenting on the results of the meeting with Vladimir Putin, the President of Belarus told journalists that everyone was satisfied with the progress of the talks. Belarus and Russia have conceptually agreed on energy resources. Prices will be determined in the coming days and Mr. Lukashenko noted, "Next year, Belarus will buy about 20bn cubic metres of gas from the Russian Federation. There are no restrictions here and the figure may reach 22bn cubic metres. After the commissioning of the nuclear power plant, we'll definitely buy 4-5bn less. Accordingly, we've agreed on volumes. As regards oil, we've agreed to buy 24-25m tonnes from Russia and prices will be no higher than the current level in 2019. Oil prices will be announced within a couple of days and I guess 2-3 days will be needed to speak about gas prices. Experts will meet in Gazprom to decide on concrete figures. In general, prices will remain at the level of the present year."

When asked whether it will be necessary to meet with Mr. Putin before the end of 2019, Mr. Lukashenko said, "Yes, if necessary, we'll talk to him on the phone. We have a couple of problems that we need to resolve; these are Presidential issues. As a result of the conversation, if we need a meeting, of course, we will meet at any time, in any place — in Russia or in Belarus."

Position passed on

Even the most experienced journalists of the Presidential pool had not expect-

ed what followed: instead of three hours planned under the protocol, the EAEU summit lasted only... 15 minutes. It appeared all the issues had been agreed upon in advance and the heads of state had only to sign the documents. This year, the Union is celebrating its first anniversary. Five years of work are behind us and much has been done, however, there are still many unresolved problems. There may be no breakthrough in the construction of the Union, but a successful resolution of pressing issues is expected from the chairmanship of Belarus in the EAEU. The vector is set by the strategy of the Eurasian integration development until 2025. Its implementation will be supervised by a new board of the Eurasian Economic Commission which is, simply speaking, the EAEU Government. Mikhail Myasnikovich, a former speaker of the Council of the Republic, will head it from February 1st, 2020.

"We've agreed on the personal composition of the board," Mr. Lukashenko said. "The block of trade is reserved by Russia, though we shall oversee technical regulation. The Agrarian and Industrial Commission shall be headed by Armenia and we'll be responsible for the presidency," Mr. Lukashenko said.

The President of Belarus introduced the new Chairman of the EEC — Mikhail Myasnikovich — to the state leaders, saying, "He is a very experienced man. Kasym ake [President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev] has just sent me a letter saying that he agrees. Our Honorary Chairman [Nursultan Nazarbayev] said that he supports the candidacy of the Chairman."

DIRECT SPEECH

Maksim Oreshkin, Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation:

The meeting of the heads of state discussed what has been achieved since the meeting in Sochi. We had an intense and effective discussion with my counterpart Dmitry Krutoy [First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus]. We took another step forward. Issues in the spheres of agriculture, communications, customs and regulation of the alcohol market have been fully co-ordinated. According to the results of today's talks, there are three groups of issues that block the final agreements. These are agreements in the oil, gas and tax spheres. There are three groups of issues that remain to be resolved in order to finalise all the roadmaps.

The Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, proposed to sign the document, like all the others, without discussion, as the issue has already been agreed. However, the President of Belarus insisted that the decision should not be taken formally. "Maybe there will be questions to follow," Mr. Lukashenko suggested.

"There is a request and a wish," Mr. Putin responded. "We have on the agenda the finalisation and approval of the development strategy of our Union. I would very much like the new Chairman of the commission to inform each of us about how he sees the organisation of his work on issues that are still to be agreed at the national level. I have a request that he travel to our capitals, meet with his colleagues, Government leaders, with those experts who will work with him to promote this strategy."

Mikhail Myasnikovich did not object and clearly outlined the priorities of his work in the new position, "We must make significant progress in the creation of common infrastructure projects, technical regulations and in what should be common for the economies of our states, without replacing national institutions. Of course, we need to develop approaches to the creation of joint large companies, especially those that will work in the field of high technology."

OPINION

Aleksandr Subbotin, Member of the Board (Minister) in charge of Industry and Agriculture of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC):

Belarus has the aura of an advanced country, which is always trying to improve even what is already working well. The main task is to fulfil everything that is written in the Treaty on the EAEU, which is laid down in the strategy of Eurasian integration. These are the four basic freedoms: the movement of goods, services, capital and labour. Everything else is tactical tasks that depend on doing these fundamental things.

Important document

During the summit, an agreement on pensions for workers of member states of the Eurasian Economic Union was signed. The document envisages that the pension provision of workers will be carried out on equal terms with the citizens of the country of employment, regardless of which country of the Union they worked in. It is assumed that each state will pay for periods of seniority in its territory.

Each state will determine the right to a pension and calculate its amount in accordance with its national legislation. At the same time, to determine the right to a pension, the sum of the insurance experience for the entire period of employment in the territory of the EAEU is provided.

The agreement will also resolve the issue of export of pensions and registration of work experience in another EAEU state. The document will contribute to improving the level of social protection of citizens.

FOCUS



The Minsk Times
Friday
December 27
2019



3



About the usefulness of comparisons

By Yulia Demeshko

Our young state is confident in declaring its ambitions on the international arena. In late 2018, Aleksandr Lukashenko met with students of Grodno universities, saying that Belarus is one of the best countries to live in. This year, confirmation of his words can be found in these international reports. Most recently, according to the US News and World Report, our country has entered the top 80 best states in the world. Important indicators of the study were openness to business, quality of life and cultural heritage amongst others.

According to the ranking of the most influential countries in the world, Belarus is 35th. The list takes into account GDP, population, participation in the formation of global economic models and appearance in media headlines. It's clear that Belarus does have some influence in the world. The recognition of this is very reassuring.

However, the area where Belarus truly leads is security. This year, the authors of a major study — the Global Terrorism Index — have identified our country as the safest, placing it in least dangerous, 138th position, thus conversely, leading the list of the safest countries. The results were based on the calculation of such factors as the number of terrorist incidents, the number of dead, injured and the level of material damage in terrorist attacks.

We are also the most punctual, it appears. After analysing the data of the most popular destinations for Russian travellers (15 countries), the international AirHelp compa-

ny has stated that only 6 percent of flights from Belarus registered deviations from the schedule. The most unpunctual country was China, where every third flight was either cancelled or delayed by more than 15 minutes. Even the pedantic Germans

It has recently been announced that Belarus has risen to 50th position (out of 189 countries) in the Human Development Index list. Such positive news cannot be ignored and, following our December tradition, we've decided to summarise where Belarus is acknowledged in the reports of international ratings and research. Our *MT* reporter investigates Belarus' place in the world standings in the outgoing year of 2019.

appeared to top the most undisciplined airlines.

First place in the world ranking assessing access to health services is particularly pleasing. In the World Health Organisa-

tion report, Belarus shared it with Canada and Brunei. We are also in the top 10 countries for organ transplants, ahead of the UK and Ger-

many. Positions in the ranking for 'a happy childhood' countries have also improved: Belarus is now 34th. The Save the Children Fund has examined the level of health care, educational opportunities, the number of incidents of violence among minors and early marriages in 176 countries.

In 2019, the countries with the strongest army traditionally include the United States, Russia and China, though Belarus is also not in last place. According to the expert analytical company — Global Firepower, Belarus ranks 39th out of 137 states in terms of military power (Lithuania is 81st and Latvia is 105th). More than 50 indicators were taken into account, including the level of financing of the military sphere, transport infrastructure and other factors affecting the combat capability of the army. The nuclear potential of the countries was not taken into account.

Among more than a hundred countries Belarus is one of the most well-fed in the world. This conclusion was made by an Irish expert organisation in its Global Hunger Index. Our country was included in the list of 17 countries where the level of hunger is considered the lowest. Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine shared the same position. The hunger tracking tool was developed to improve the effectiveness of measures to combat hunger worldwide.

Belarus is the safest, most punctual, healthy and strong country — as seen by the international community. Of course, similar ratings could be treated differently, but it's always nice to know that the country you live in is among the leaders.



Another cornflower-painted plane arrived

Belavia gets another Embraer 195 jet

By Olga Korneeva

A new Embraer-195 of Belavia airlines has arrived from the manufacturer (San Jose DOS Campos, Brazil) to Minsk National Airport. The jet has been delivered in line with the leasing contract signed by Belavia and Nordic Aviation Capital in April 2018. One Embraer 175 jet and two further Embraer 195 jets have already been delivered to Minsk as part of the contract and another aircraft is expected to come in April 2020.

The new jet is designed to transport 107 passengers in a dual-class configuration: 11 in business class and 96 in economy. The passenger compartment offers maximum comfort to passengers thanks to the 2+2 seat configuration in economy class and 2+1 in business

class. The Embraer 195 jet's business class features rigid partitions and more room between seats.

Belavia representatives noted that the manufacturer makes all the aircraft to match Belavia's requirements. The air carrier has acquired the aircraft on operating leasing terms. The operating lease scheme makes it possible to flexibly manage the composition of fleets to match demand and the volume of transportation by air. As part of the company's fleet modernisation programme, Belavia has acquired eight modern highly effective aircraft in 2014-2018: three Boeing 737-800 and five Embraer 175/195.

Belavia is Belarus' largest air carrier. Based at Minsk National Airport, it offers regular flights to 55 destinations in 29 European and Asian countries.



Coins for memory



By Arina Novikova

In 2020, the National Bank of Belarus to release 13 types of commemorative coins

It has become a tradition to issue commemorative coins dedicated to the Bird of the Year, which is determined by the APB-BirdLife public association. In 2020, the wood grouse has been chosen. The 'Wood Grouse' commemorative coin will be the 14th in 'Birds of the Year' coin series.

The 'Sinsha Reserve' commemorative coin will be issued on environmental themes in the series 'Belarusian Nature Reserves' while a sports collection will be added to with the coin 'Summer Sports. Tennis'.

Commemorative coins will also be dedicated to anniversary dates: the 75th anniversary of the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War; the 100th anniversary of the customs au-

thorities of Belarus; the 550th anniversary of the discovery of the miraculous Zhirovichi Icon of the Mother of God; the 150th anniversary since the birth of the Belarusian landscape painter Ferdinand Rushchits; the 100th anniversary of the founding of the National Academic Theatre named after Yanka Kupala. In addition, the 'Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park' commemorative coins will be released for the 5th anniversary of the park.

The subject of historical and cultural values will be continued with commemorative coins 'Barkolabovo Hirmologion', 'Painting. Avant-garde. UNOVIS', as well as commemorative coins from the 'Belarusian Architectural Monuments' series.

According to the Chinese calendar, 2021 is the year of the Bull. Traditionally, to begin the 'Chinese Calendar' series, a commemorative coin 'Year of the Bull' will be issued in 2020.

belavia.by

nbrb.by

Consumption of natural gas can be seriously reduced

By Svetlana Savelyeva

After the commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power station, consumption of natural gas in the national economy as a whole may be cut to 5bn cubic metres

According to the General Director of Belenergo, Pavel Drozd, the country generally consumes about 20bn cubic metres of gas, the energy system consumes 10bn. After the complete commissioning of two blocks of the nuclear power station, gas consumption in the energy system will be reduced to 4bn cubic metres.

In turn, the Deputy Energy Minister — Mikhail Mikhadyuk — commenting on the impact of reduced gas consumption by the energy system on total gas consumption in Belarus, recalled that the country is implementing a programme to increase electricity consumption in connection with the commissioning of the nuclear power plant. “In general, the country has a set of measures to increase electricity consumption. The task is to get away from gas consumption, where possible,” he said, adding that, according to expert estimates, after the commissioning of the station, the consumption of natural gas in the Belarusian economy as a whole can be reduced to 5bn cubic metres.

The Belarusian nuclear power station — with two reactors with a total capacity of 2,400 MW — is being built under a Russian project, near Ostrovets in the Grodno Region. The first block is scheduled to be launched in 2020, the second — in 2021.

According to Mr. Mikhadyuk, nuclear fuel will be delivered to the station in the first quarter of 2020. “Nuclear fuel is not the only answer, but we are almost ready for delivery. We will begin operation more than a month before the physical start-up, so as not to affect the pace of work yet to be completed at the first power unit. We will deliver fuel in the first quarter,” emphasised the official.

According to the Deputy Minister, pre-start operations — namely, running-in of the equipment — is in full swing. “This stage means that fuel simulators are loaded into the nuclear reactor. At the working parameters of the station, we are testing all the technological equipment; certain regulations are applied,” he explained. Following the results of the run-in, a full audit of the technological equipment of the first and second circuits will be carried out. The next stage envisages loading of nuclear fuel; it’s the so-called physical launch. Then, after further tests, the block is included into the power system.



belaz.by

BelAZ trucks for polar regions

By Igor Svetlov

New Belarusian 130- and 180-tonne dump trucks have joined the fleet of the Kirov branch of Apatit JSC, in Russia’s Murmansk Region

Special vehicles have received their new ‘home’ at the Eastern mine: a 130-tonne truck has become the four-thousandth assembled at the factory and a 180-tonne car was the first dump truck with such capacity at the Kirov branch.

The machinery is supplied to the region under an agreement signed in September. In the next three years, a large batch of the plant’s products will be sent there. It is also planned that the trucks will be later modified and acquire new technical characteristics. Additional unique equipment will make it possible to control them at a great distance. An experimental site for the operation of quarry equipment in unmanned mode is planned to be set up in the Nyorkpakh quarry of the Eastern mine.

In addition, an agreement was recently signed in Maga-

dan on the creation of a modern service sector for BelAZ quarry equipment and strengthening co-operation with enterprises of the region. Promising developments and new models, as well as support services were presented to the participants of the meeting. The parties discussed proposals to improve the efficiency of co-operation.

Over 200 BelAZ vehicles now service gold mining enterprises of the Magadan Region and their load capacity ranges from 30 to 55 tonnes. The major consumers are Susumanzolo-to, Berelekh, Status, Itkana, Kolyma Coal Company and Stroydor. The Service of Quarry Machines acts as an official dealer of BelAZ in the region. In addition, a technical support centre, mobile service, a support point for maintenance and a consignment warehouse for spare parts in the city of Susuman are in operation.

For decades, BelAZ has been a reliable strategic partner for mining enterprises of the Magadan Region. The meeting and the signing of the agreement open new opportunities for partnership.



BELTA

NEWS IN BRIEF



EU proposes Belarus sign visa facilitation and readmission agreements in January 2020

The eighth meeting of the Belarus-EU co-ordination group was held in Brussels. The EU delegation confirmed its openness to further develop relations with Belarus. Belarus and the EU discussed the final steps necessary for the signing and entry into force of visa facilitation and readmission agreements. After signing, both agreements will have to undergo the ratification procedure in the European Parliament and the National Assembly of Belarus. After the agreement on visa facilitation becomes active, Schengen visa cost for Belarusians will decrease to 35 Euros.



Belarus signs a 3.5bn Yuan (or \$500m) loan agreement with China Development Bank

The loan is not related to the implementation of any project and can be used for general purposes, including the repayment and servicing of the state debt, maintaining the gold and foreign exchange reserves of Belarus, as well as promoting bilateral trade between Belarus and China. “The unprecedented nature of this transaction testifies to a new level of relations between Belarus and the Development Bank of China, increasing the confidence of Chinese financial institutions in the Republic of Belarus as a reliable borrower,” notes the Ministry of Finance.



The Digital World mural, created on a Minsk house, named as the best in the world by the Street Art Cities international platform

The mural by Belarusian artist Yevgeny Sosyura has won the competition with a stunning result of 53 percent of the vote, leaving behind such world-famous artists as INTI (Chile), Lula Goce (Spain) and Sasha Korban (Ukraine).

The Digital World mural was painted on the Minsk building in October, featuring a girl weaving the thread of fate from a tangle of constellations — which resembles a network of global connections or blockchain.



Belkartografiya produces the Flora and Fauna of Belarus map using augmented reality

The map is a wooden puzzle for which a special application has been created. It’s the first of its kind for Belkartografiya but the innovation has become possible owing to the use of unique laser technology.

The new map consists of 29 wooden elements. To make the animals ‘come alive’, it’s important to download a free app in Google Play or the App Store and then point the smartphone camera at the pictures. The virtual animals not only move but also make sounds.

ECONOMY

The Minsk Times
Friday
December 27
2019

5

Relay of kindness and smiles



Andrey Sazonov

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

Just a few days are left until the main New Year celebrations and it's children who are waiting for them most excitedly of all: this is the time when the most cherished dreams come true.

Participants of the *Our Children* campaign have recently brought a fairy tale to the children of the Zhdanovichi Special Secondary Boarding School, when employees of Belarusian Railways prepared a concert programme for them. To meet the guests, the young hosts dressed up the Christmas tree — making their own Christmas wreaths and vytinanka (paper ornaments). Director Inna Volchek added, “We also staged several short performances for our guests — including a song in sign language.”

The State Border Committee has organised an entertainment programme for children by the Minsk City Cadet School whose pupils took on the role of good wizards themselves — going to Special Secondary School No. 14 to visit children with hearing impairment. The cadets prepared a show programme with songs, dances and, of course, gifts.

A great holiday reigned in the Bobruisk Orphanage: children prepared a New Year's performance for those who came to congratulate them on the upcoming festival. Among



Aleksey Stolovarov

the participants of the *Our Children* campaign were representatives of district organisations and agencies. Guests from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food were especially welcomed, as several years ago, they took the orphanage under their patronage.

“We visit these children every year to give them some attention, to communicate with them. They lack parental warmth and it's very difficult for them to mature. That's why it's so important to show how much we care,” said the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food, Igor Brylo, hardly able to hide his emotions.

The Republican charity event also attended the Belynichy Auxiliary Boarding School to present New Year gifts from representatives of patronage organisations. Children received sweet treats, while the educational institution was presented with a computer, TV sets and a

vacuum cleaner to improve its material and technical base.

The Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, Andrey Kuntsevich, brought a small library as a present. It included children's and teenage books released by domestic publishers. “Our Children is an integral part of the New Year celebrations. These days, everyone is in a hurry to do good, to surround

with warmth and care those who greatly need it. I am especially pleased to come to Belynichy — which is my homeland. We've been co-operating with the local boarding school for a long time. This year, the charity campaign will cover about 870,000 children, 230,000 of whom experience difficult life circumstances. Our common task is to surround them with attention and care, so



Aleksey Stolovarov

The most heart-warming Republican charity event — *Our Children* — is in full swing countrywide. It's hard to believe that there's any similar large-scale 'marathon of good deeds' anywhere else in the world. The event is focused on the main treasure of the country: our children and their future, and is held on Christmas and New Year's Eve, under the patronage of the President. The small residents of our country who have more difficult lives than others are the focus of attention: children from orphanages and boarding schools, foster, single-parent or very large families, as well as children with poor health. For almost a quarter of a century, Aleksandr Lukashenko has been proving by his own example that kindness and mercy are the heart of our nation and this is confirmed by the statistics: every year, an increasing number of participants and socially important issues are registered and more funds are attracted. The campaign really helps to make the world a bit better.

that every child feels the joy of the New Year holidays,” said the official.

New Year's balls for gifted and talented youth — held in all regional centres and some cities of Belarus — have become part of the campaign's programme. Among their participants were the best students of higher education institutions, students of cadet schools, boys and

girls who have achieved special success in education, sports and creativity. A real Christmas fairy tale was created with polka, waltz and polonaise dances, elegant young ladies in floor-length dresses, gallant cavaliers, chic Christmas decorations, shining trees, balloon sculptures, congratulations and presents...

No doubt, the memories will last for a whole year! It's another advantage of this major good deed which has long gone beyond the original idea: it is not about one-off visits just for the New Year holidays but warm friendships and long-standing traditions. It's so important and joyful to give happiness to others.

The *Our Children* campaign will last until January 10th and the Main Christmas Tree of the Country charity holiday will crown the New Year's marathon on December 27th at the Palace of the Republic. The event will unite 2,370 children from all Belarusian regions.

On a festive train set Belarusian Railway launched New Year's express to Father Frost's Estate



rw.by

By Khristina Glushko

Everyone loves magic, whatever their age, especially on the eve of the winter festivities. And where is the most magical place in the country? In the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, of course, where the Father Frost Estate is hidden in the forest. The New Year's express regularly goes there. It's an unusual train with guides costumed as Snow Maidens and it travels from Minsk-Passazhirsky Station straight to Brest to visit Father Frost. How does the winter wizard entertain his guests?

“Travelers will have a rich excursion programme: they will see the Snow Maiden's house, the magic mill, visit Father Frost's Gift Museum Skarbnytsa, visit the street of Eastern calendar signs and a forest meadow of twelve months, join in a round dance near the New Year tree and, of course, meet with the owner

of the residence — Father Frost himself. The tour programme also includes the Museum of Nature of Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, a walk through the animal enclosures and the chance to treat themselves to pancakes with tea made of Pushcha herbs,” said the Belarusian Railway press service. “A high point of the trip will be an entertainment programme with puppets and a ride on the Father Frost railway.”

The tourist project — ‘Travel to the Father Frost Estate’ — has been around for 8 years and is very popular. Each year, over 1,600 people travel on a tourist train from Minsk-Brest-Minsk. This season, it is expected that about 2,000 passengers will travel to the Father Frost Estate. Belarusian Railways noted that a special New Year's train, consisting of several ‘compartment’ carriages, will run from Minsk to Father Frost's Estate in January.

Start the new year with some recuperation

Those wishing to celebrate the New Year in comfort and with good health are welcome at Belarusian health resorts! This choice has already been made by more than six thousand foreign tourists who will greet the New Year holidays in Belarusian sanatoriums.



By Natalia Yemelyanova

“As for the New Year, the demand for rooms in sanatoriums and health institutions has increased. These are traditionally booked several months ahead and will be completely occupied during the winter holidays,” says the Director of the Republican Centre for Sanatorium-and-Spa Treatment, Gennady Bolbatovsky, adding, “According to predictions, over 6,000 foreigners will stay

at our sanatoriums, 80 percent of these from Russia.”

A one-day stay in a standard two-bed room costs about Br64 (approximately \$30) at New Year, while a holiday banquet is Br135 (about \$64). During this period, two-week visits are traditionally the most popular. “All of these are already sold out — mostly with medical programmes and health procedures,” Mr. Bolbatovsky added.

Diagnostics, treatment and rehabilitation procedures —

included in the price — are provided in full, in accordance with the standards of treatment. Moreover, the list of mandatory medical and wellness procedures included has been expanded: the relevant document was signed late in 2019.

In addition to medical procedures, which include increasingly popular spa treatments, Belarusian spas’ New Year programmes include concerts, national style master classes, thematic feature films, dance evenings, cultural and sports events in the open air, excursions, shop tours, circus performances and meetings with Santa Claus and the Snow Maiden.

On the New Year holiday, more than half of all holiday-makers in Belarusian health resorts are foreigners, though over fifty percent of all breaks sold throughout the year are among Belarusians. This year, about 1.4m people recuperated in Belarusian resorts, including



Ruzhansky (Brest Region), Ozerny, Radon and Alpha-Radon (Grodno), Borovoye, Lesnoye (Vitebsk), Priozerny and Sputnik (on Lake Naroch), Yunost, Krinitza (Minsk), Zarya (Mogilev), Pridneprovsky and Sosny (Gomel Region) sanatoriums enjoy the greatest popularity among Russians and other foreign tourists. This year, 230,000 foreigners recuperated in Belarusian sanatoriums.

almost 800,000 at the expense of the Republican budget and social insurance funds.

Mr. Bolbatovsky believes the number of places available is enough for everyone. “We were tasked to make holidays available for both the employed and unemployed. For these purposes, every year we reserve 25,000 for the unemployed and similar for those who have jobs. I can say that we meet the needs of all the commissions for rehabilitation. Those who are in work — after being referred — receive a voucher to go to the sanatorium within a year, in line with their recuperation needs,” he said.

Disabled people of groups I and II receive vouchers for free, other categories of citizens — depending on their income. On average, pensioners pay 20-30 percent of the ticket price, those who are employed — 30-40 percent.

For 2020, the Republican Centre for Sanatorium-and-Spa Treatment has already completed the process of purchasing health breaks. For these purposes, 225m Roubles has been allocated by the budget (this year, the figure was 200m Roubles). In particular, the number of vouchers for unemployed citizens will increase by 1,500 next year.

Book results of the year

By Larisa Rublevskaya

National Library sums up book results of the year with large-scale exhibition

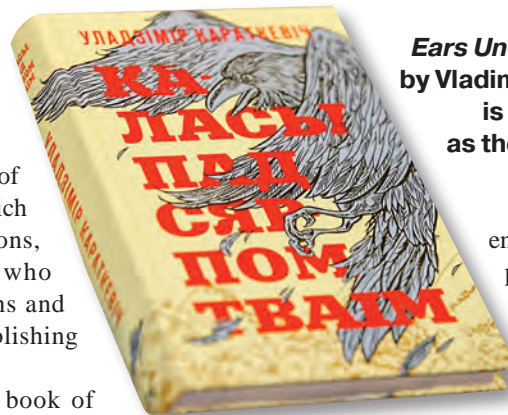
A new joint project of the Information Ministry, the National Book Chamber and the National Library of Belarus was inaugurated in the ‘diamond of knowledge’. The *Books of Belarus. The Year of 2019* campaign gathered book publishers, representatives of bookselling organisations, libraries and the media. The focus of attention was the exhibition, which — for the first time — presents the entire spectrum of book production released during the year. The diversity was impressive since over 500 business entities are engaged in book publishing in Belarus, thanks to which about 9,000 titles of books with a total circulation of more than 20m copies have been released.

At the exhibition, representatives of book publishing, as well as all those involved in book promotion, were

given an opportunity to evaluate the books of 2019 and get to know the Belarusian books which won national and international competitions, as well as to communicate with those who contribute to the preservation of traditions and development of modern national book publishing in an informal atmosphere.

The main event — the most popular book of the year, as determined by the booksellers — was unveiled by Belarus’ Deputy Information Minister, Igor Buzovsky. The chosen book was *Ears Under Your Sickle* by Vladimir Korotkevich, released by the Popurri Publishing House. “It’s a very symbolic choice,” Mr. Buzovsky said, adding, “Next year, we are celebrating Vladimir Korotkevich’s anniversary and this testifies to the fact that the writer enjoys genuine interest from readers — from a wide-ranging audience.”

The exhibition has for the first time presented the



Ears Under Your Sickle by Vladimir Korotkevich is acknowledged as the most popular book in 2019

entire range of book products from the year and publishers and organisations promoting

the development of publishing, popularisation and distribution of Belarusian books were rewarded. Pleasingly, the SB. Belarus Segodnya Publishing House was among the winners in the ‘For Active Promotion of Books and Reading in 2019’ category.

The Director of the National Library of Belarus, Roman Motulsky, believes the project is yet another excellent tradition of the book culture of Belarus. He invited all to visit the 2019 book fair which is running until February 2020.



By Olga Korneeva

The serial work — unique for Belarusian book publishing — has continued for 25 years and the *Belarusian Book Collection* project features the best works of fiction,

domestic literature and history. The first volume (*Yan Chachot. Selected Works*) was published in 1996 and the last — 100th — volume (*Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz. Selected Works*) was released in October 2019.

Pages of national literature

Unique 100-volume *Belarusian Book Collection* project presented at National Academy of Sciences

The series was developed at the Yanka Kupala Institute of Literary Studies of Belarus’ National Academy of Sciences and includes three series: fiction, historical and literary and translations of foreign classics.

The most significant is the first series — fiction, comprising 77 volumes. They include classical works by Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, Maksim Bogdanovich, Kuzma Chorny, Vasil Bykov, Ivan Melezh, Vladimir Korotkevich. The creative heritage of Maksim and Gavrila

Goretsky, Vatslav Lastovsky, Vladimir Zhilka, Yazep Lesik and other formerly suppressed writers have also been returned to the cultural sphere.

Frantsisk Skorina, Kirill Turovsky, Simeon Polotsky, Melety Smotritsky are also the focus of attention. For the first time, the general public has access to such fundamental publications as *Belarusian Chronicles and Annals*, *Belarusian Old Literature* and *Belarusians* by Yefim Karsky, as well as *Chosen Works* by Ursula Radzi-

will, Frantsisk Bogushevich, Vladislav Syrokomlya and Eliza Orzeskova. Translations of works by Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Fedor Dostoevsky into Belarusian are an interesting part of the project.

“We would like to continue the series. Today it’s hard to say what the next volume will be: it’s a collective decision. It would be great to release 200 volumes,” said Ivan Saverchenko, the Director of the Yanka Kupala Institute of Literary Studies, sharing the ambitious plans.

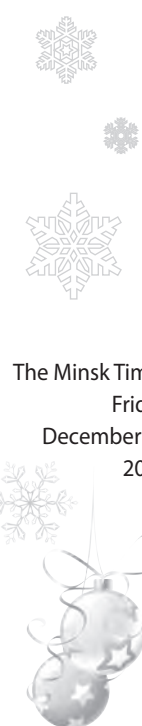
INSIDE



The Minsk Times
Friday
December 27
2019



7



kep.cdn.indexvas.hu



This is the most beautiful Christmas market in Europe

The title of 'The Most Beautiful Christmas Market in Europe 2020', voted by thousands of travellers from around the world, has been awarded this year to the Advent Feast at the Basilica in Budapest, a city that was also awarded the title of 'Best European Destination'

The prize was announced by the European Best Destinations (EBD) organisation and was

the result of a record number of votes from travellers. With a total of more than 289,714 votes from 116 countries for all the entries, the Advent Feast at the Basilica broke the previous winner's record with 39,448 votes. The previous record set in 2018 was 38,830 votes for the Christmas markets of Zagreb.

With Budapest at the top, these are the 20 best Christmas markets in Europe for 2020: Austrian Vienna; Pol-

ish Gdansk; Belgian Brussels; French Montbeliard; Swiss Basel; French Metz; Romanian Cluj Napoca; Dutch Valkenburg; Serbian Novi Sad; German Trier; Czech Prague; Italian Govone; British Winchester; French Amiens; German Rothenburg, Cologne, and Leipzig; Slovakian Bratislava and British Bath.

The EBD promotes culture and tourism in Europe in partnership with the EDEN Net-

work created by the European Commission.

"Located in the heart of Budapest, on St. Stephen's Square, this Christmas market will immerse you in the magic of Christmas," EBD notes. "Long regarded by travellers as the most beautiful Christmas market in Hungary, it also attracts visitors from all over the world who come to experience a moment of pure magic in a warm and cosy atmosphere."

Johnson hails Parliament as 'a vast improvement' on predecessor

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson welcomes his new intake of Conservative MPs in Westminster after a landslide victory at the general election

Their first job will be 'to get Brexit done', as Government officials said they aimed to re-submit the Withdrawal Agreement Bill to Parliament for ratification before Christmas.

"I can absolutely confirm that we will have an opportunity to vote on the Withdrawal Agreement Bill in relatively short order and then we will make sure that it passes before January 31st," Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove said.

Rishi Sunak, the Deputy Finance Minister, said the Government intended to re-submit the Bill to Parliament before Christmas to allow ministers to start work on other priorities such as 'levelling up' the country.

Mr. Johnson and his team were triumphant when he won a commanding majority of 80 at an early election; he said he was forced to call to break the Brexit deadlock.

Once the Withdrawal Agreement Bill has passed, negotiations between London and Brussels will begin on a new deal covering their economic and strategic relationship.

Enormous Roman shipwreck discovered off Greek island

Two thousand years ago, this ship was crossing the Mediterranean Sea full of its cargo of amphorae — large terracotta pots that were used in the Roman Empire for transporting wine and olive oil

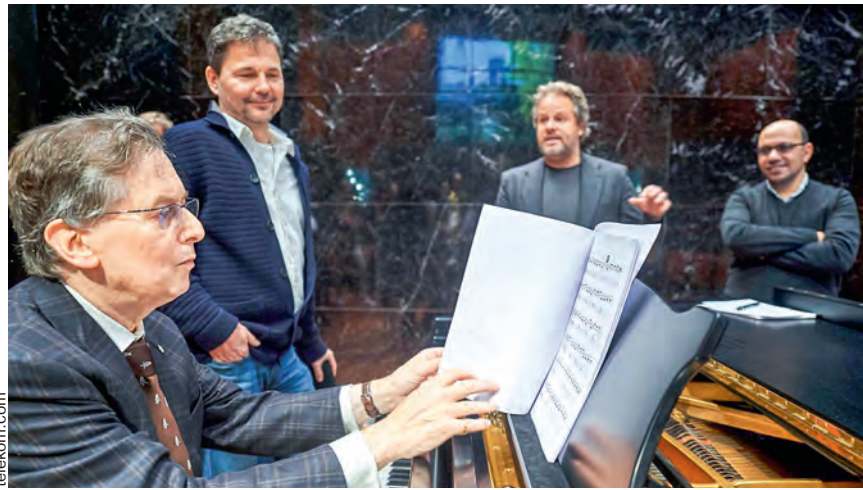
For some reason, it never made it to its destination. But having languished at the bottom of the sea for around two millennia, it has now been rediscovered by archaeologists, along with its cargo, and dated to between 100 BCE and 100 CE. And it has already been judged to be the largest classical shipwreck found in the eastern Mediterranean.

The wreck of the 35-metre ship, along with its cargo of 6,000 amphorae, was discovered at a depth of around 60m during a sonar-equipped survey of the

seabed off the coast of Kefalonia — one of the Ionian islands off the west coast of Greece.

It is the fourth largest shipwreck from the period ever found in the entire Mediterranean and is of 'significant archaeological importance,' according to George Ferentinos from the University of Patras, who along with nine of his fellow academics has unveiled the discovery in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*.

"The amphorae cargo, visible on the seafloor, is in very good state of preservation and the shipwreck has the potential to yield a wealth of information about the shipping routes, trading, amphorae hull stowage and ship construction during the relevant period," they wrote.



AI puts final notes on Beethoven's symphony

In the run-up to Ludwig van Beethoven's 250th birthday, a team of musicologists and programmers is using artificial intelligence to complete the composer's unfinished tenth symphony

The piece was started by Beethoven alongside his famous ninth, which includes the well-known *Ode to Joy*. But by the time the German composer died in 1827, there were only a few notes and drafts of the composition.

The experiment risks failing to do justice to the beloved German composer. The team said the first few months yielded results that sounded mechanical and repetitive. But now the project leader, Matthias Roeder, from the Herbert von Karajan Institute, insists the AI's latest compositions are more promising.

"An AI system learns an unbelievable amount of notes in an extremely short time," said Roeder. "And the first results are a bit like with people, you say 'hmm, maybe it's not so great'. But it keeps going and, at some point, the system really surprises you. And that happened the first time a few weeks ago. We're pleased that it's making such big strides."

The group is in the process of training an algorithm that will produce a completed symphony. They're doing this by playing snippets of Beethoven's work and leaving the computer to improvise the rest of it. Afterwards, they correct the improvisation so it fits with the composer's style.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

The most important of the arts

Belarusian cinematography celebrates 95th anniversary

How can we not just get cinema out of its crisis, but also make it a national brand? When will the Year for Belarusian Premieres come? How much did Belarusfilm arouse interest among cinema magnates from other countries? These all are explored in the article dedicated to the release of the special project by the TV News Agency.

Large-scale reconstruction at Belarusfilm was completed in 2017. But the struggle for Belarusian cinema began much earlier. The earliest critical steps were taken in the early years of independence. Even then, market leaders were staring at Belarusian assets: both in industry and in the arts. But the President immediately made it clear that he would not give up the National Film Studio to be broken apart, “Ideology is not privatised! Everything related to ideology, education and talent is the concern of the state. We will help the most important of all the arts. We will direct money only to the new, on a competitive basis.”

Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union, co-operative ties have also been broken. Digitisation and colour correction at Moscow studios cost a great deal of money for Belarusians. It was necessary to grow and to earn by ourselves while searching for new images and a national idea. The President closely monitored the cinema news and did not miss a single high-profile premiere. It should be mentioned that good films were created even in financially difficult years! But they were more likely the exception to the rule.

In 2018, an anti-crisis manager was sent to Belarusfilm. And what is happening now seems like a complete reboot, says Vladimir Karachevsky, the Director General of the National Film Studio, “A large film factory is a full cycle. We can do everything from script development, filming, distribution and more. Today, the largest pavilion at the film studio is a thousand square metres and 14 metres high, with excellent sound insulation and everything for hanging equipment and networks. Everyone will be fighting for this studio.”

In order to survive and make films, a film studio, as a large production, has to earn. Diversification is key. There are five studios in total, the simplest is fairly basic. They are busy, if not with shooting films, then at least with video clips. Films were shot here by Ani Lorak, Stas Mikhailov, Sergey Lazarev... The film studio expanded the list of services and entered the global market. Nowadays, Belarusian natural sites, along with the studios, after reconstruction, are a favourite place for filming by foreign film groups. The actor of the Russian series *Ugryum River*, Yuri Mironov, says that he is in Belarus for the first time and is experiencing “a complete sense of comfort, the feeling that you are at home”.

As a result, our lake became the *Ugryum River*, and there was a place in Belarus for a Siberian summer in the 19th century: barracks, a dam and a pier were built, even an old brick oven was laid down. The scenery is man-made masterpieces by Belarusfilm’s fifteen craftsmen. Such a thorough approach and service is always included in the price. Belarusian landscapes also suit Yuri Moroz, the director of *The Karamazov Brothers* and *Kamenskaya*. He, like many Russian cinema figures, is a universal talent, being a director, actor, screenwriter and a pro-



ducer at the same time. Minsk is also the main set for the comedy detective series *Flash*, which is filmed by the Russian-Belarusian film crew. However, Russia, for which our sites have always been held in high esteem, is now competing with a dozen countries, notes Belarusfilm’s Director General, “Now we aim to liaise not only with the traditional Russian film market, but also with the film industries of Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, Transcaucasia and the United States. When they learn what we possess as a whole, they wonder why we are still relatively unknown in the world. Meanwhile, this is not only a currency, it is an opportunity to enter into serious co-production. This year, we’ve signed about fifteen different agreements with more than a dozen countries. Talking about co-production is a joint production, which we are trying with Poland and Ukraine; we also plan to work on it with Kazakhstan, Georgia and Uzbekistan. We’ve signed an agreement with China to prepare a project on hockey. They wanted to go to Finland but looked at our arenas and decided to shoot here. An opportunity to enter the Chinese market is a very interesting prospect.”

An example of modern film co-operation is shown by Bollywood — familiar to Soviet viewers from childhood via Indian musical films. But at the moment it’s not made it up to the songs part, as they are shooting a large-scale blockbuster. Tricks, cars, weapons and 17 Belarusian stuntmen, as well as many of our other specialists: from stage directors to the technical group are involved. The Honorary Consul of Belarus in Mumbai, Lalit Chokhani, notes, “I had an idea: why not show Belarus? So more and more tourists from India come here and can see this country.”

The director of this blockbuster, Nilesh Sahay, admits, “I already feel love for your city. It’s a beautiful place. We decided to shoot our first large-scale project here, and we have had a very pleasant impression.”

Belarusfilm is one of the oldest film studios in the CIS. 95 years of age, but not old: the equipment enables us to create a competitive product. The question is in the personnel. To find talents and to attract youth as much as possible, the

National Film Studio even announced a script competition. According to director Vladimir Yankovsky, the school itself needs to be revived, “It’s necessary to restore a film school with serious teachers, with film directors who will teach the younger generation. Nobody teaches them, and there is no one to teach. We must look for such people.”

Kupala, The Fate of the Saboteur, Traces of the Apostle, Almanac, the series *Illusions...* They want to present *Kupala* at the festivals first. We wish them a standing ovation! And the year of premieres at the box office starts with *Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich*. This an action movie, encompassing dungeons, chases, puzzles, secrets and artefacts. Incredible adventures for fans of not just fantasy, but of a historical and adventure novel. Moreover, it’s a true window in time to the 18th century in Lida Castle. The historical heritage of Belarus in the cinema was addressed about 15 years ago: it was *Anastasia Slutskaya* film. The new film is an adaptation of the book by the Belarusian writer and journalist of *SB. Belarus Segodnya* — Lyudmila Rublevskaya, who explains, “We don’t really show Belarus at its best! This Belarus is a European country which boasts castles, travelling musicians and theatres, with knights and ladies.”

Today, the directors call Belarusfilm a centaur. Three large studios in one organism: feature films, documentaries and animation, and there is movement in all directions. The cartoon studio, for example, produces 8 to 10 films a year, this is a



significant figure on the scale of Belarus. It remains only to profitably sell the products. The Chairman of the Union of Cinematographers of Belarus, Victor Vasiliev, forecasts, “Belarusian cinema will develop in the direction of producer cinema and accumulate monetary opportunities to help young cinematography develop. Maybe in this area we will see a new flowering of Belarusian cinema.”

In September 2010, the President addressed the heads of the film industry, “Make a good movie! So that it captures the soul of the people, allowing them to watch it and rejoice!”

How the viewer will receive *Kupala*, whether the soul of the people will connect with it, the answer is soon to become apparent.

Plunging into a miraculous fairy-tale

Museum of Christmas Toys exhibition on show at National Historical Museum of Belarus

By Irina Sergeeva

The exhibition features Christmas toys from Europe, Asia, Australia, America and Africa, including rare exhibits: an exact copy of the toy presented to Pope John Paul II (listed in the Guinness Book of Records), a huge glass ball from the Vienna ball and much more. Visitors are invited to get to know the traditions of New Year holidays in countries such as North Korea, Iran, Congo, Peru, Rwanda, Antigua and Barbuda, New Zealand and many others.

While visiting the *Museum of Christmas Toys*, each child can plunge into a fairy-tale, while adults return to their childhood. The exposition is prepared on the principle of a magical maze, which presents the history of glass Christ-

mas toy production from the mid-19th century to the present day. In addition, the smallest visitors can see a miniature interactive Christmas town.

The exhibition is part of the collection of the world's largest collection of Christmas toys and every year it updates its archives. For the third year in a row, the project is held jointly with the Christmas toy factory — GRAI. Visitors to the museum will be able to learn all the secrets of Christmas decoration production at the unique Belarusian factory and — under the guidance of the company's artists — to attend educational workshops devoted to the manufacture of Christmas toys.

The toys here are very different. The style of Christmas traditions has long been set by Germany but, around the world, Christmas and New Year decorations have their own unique flavour. "New Year ornaments are always a reflection of traditions and times," says collector Andrey Begun. "For example,

embroidered baubles are produced at the factory and it's now a trend: people want to buy Belarusian toys."

The Dutch are impressed by the porcelain: classic, painted in white with cobalt blue tones and covered with glaze. Baubles depicting iconic landmarks, painted bells, clogs and windmills, carved hearts and stars look surprisingly festive and are made in the tradition of the famous Delft porcelain — a subject of national pride for the Netherlands.

Soviet toys occupy several showcases and are represented by examples made of cotton wool from pre-war days, icicles, mushrooms and cones which we used to decorate the Christmas tree with in our childhood. Many of them exist only in a single copy. A separate showcase, for example, has balls featuring copies of famous paintings. Among them are van Gogh's *Starry Night*, Marc Chagall's *Above the City* and *Green Violinist*, as

well as a whole portrait gallery featuring a famous portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer — painted by Gustav Klimt and still topping the list of the most expensive pictures in the world. Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* is also found here: his painting is symbolised by a coal-black bauble.

New Year and Christmas traditions differ around the

globe and it's impossible to confuse Christmas toys made in Indonesia with those produced in Argentina. They should all be seen at least once.

The exhibition will run until January 20th.

CULTURE

The Minsk Times
Friday
December 27
2019
10



BELTA



Scholarship as an investment

Best young athletes and coaches become scholars of the President's Sport Club

The most promising young athletes and coaches gathered in the Hall of Fame at the National Olympic Committee. 192 athletes representing almost 30 sports have achieved significant success at the world and European junior championships and other major international events in the past year. These achievements did not go unnoticed: next year, they all will receive scholarships from the President's Sport Club, and 72 young coaches who had a hand in the success of their pupils will receive financial support.

The ceremony to present the personal certificates was held for the fourteenth time. Many athletes who have received such support in past years have already paid off their advances: Nadezhda Skardino and Irina Krivko, for example, became Olympic champions, while Marina Litvinchuk was the winner or prize winner at the world championships and the Olympics and, in June, along with other former scholarship holders — Vera Gorelikova, Karina Kozlovskaya and others — performed superbly at the 2nd European Games in Minsk. Dmitry Lukashenko, the Chairman of the Central Council of the President's Sport Club, said that among those who have received their certificates today there are certainly those who can also achieve great heights,



Dmitry Lukashenko presents a certificate to biathlete Pavel Belko

“The scholarship of the President's Sport Club can be an important step on the difficult path to the world of elite sport. Eight Olympic champions of our country have already taken advantage of it. I'm sure that among you there are those who can replenish these victorious ranks. You have set yourself the highest goals and you don't need to be motivated further.”

Two-time world junior champion canoeist Aleksandra Kallaur, junior world champions in Thai boxing, Andrey Krichun and Ilya Syritsky, winners of the European Youth Olympic Festival, track-and-field athletes Roman Khartanovich

and Yegor Guptor, wrestlers Yana Tret'yak and Kristina Zdunkevich... Each of these really deserves attention and support. And despite the fact that they are still very young, they can tell us a lot about what victories are. Khartanovich and Guptor, for example, won their gold medals in Baku, though injured. But this did not stop them on their way to victory, and now, they say, they have even more motivation to train and win at the most prestigious events.

“It's a great honour to be here,” admitted the Belarusian figure skating champion and bronze medallist of the

European Youth Olympic Festival, Yevgeny Puzanov, from Pruzhany. “When they called the names of other athletes — world champions and European junior champions — I thought once again about the fact that I'm still not at the top. This, of course, makes you move on. I would like to be invited to this hall again next year and not to be called a prize winner, but a champion. And in the future — the world champion, European champion, the Olympic Games...”

Young athletes have someone to look up to. This year, a record number of coaches — 72 highly-skilled specialists — became scholarship holders of the President's Sport Club. Some of them also conquered the Olympic pedestal. The silver medallist of the Beijing Olympic Games — gymnast Inna Zhukova — whose pupils won silver at the European Junior Championships and bronze at the World Championship, notes, “It's very pleasing that our work was so highly appreciated. This support adds an incentive to our future work, so we will try to justify the trust and not slow down. And we hope that we'll continue to please everyone who gathered in this hall with successes in the future!”



Seven year old chess player Varvara Matskevich is the youngest scholarship holder

TO THE POINT

In the NOC, not only athletes and coaches received awards. For a special contribution to the development of the Olympic movement, the President's Sport Club was awarded the prize of the International Olympic Committee — ‘Olympics in Action’.

International level referees

Three Belarusian football referees receive prestigious international FIFA referee status



Victor Shimusik

On the recommendation of the Belarusian Football Federation's referee committee, the International Football Federation approved Victor Shimusik, Dmitry Dmitriev and Amin Kurgheli as FIFA arbitrators. Prior to this, only Aleksey Kulbakov had such status among the current Belarusian referees. In addition, Anton Gusev, Anton Ignatyuk, Denis Yemelianenko and Sergey Kosovets became assistants to FIFA referees. The same level was previously achieved by Dmitry Zhuk, Yuri Khomchenko, Oleg Maslyanko and Yevgeny Romanov.

Among the women, two representatives of Belarus — Aleksandra Yakushevich and Olga Tereshko — work as FIFA referees; the assistants are Anastasia Danchenko and Yelena Karas.

Two silvers at once

Belarusian freestyle aerial Aleksandra Romanovskaya won second silver at the FIS Aerials World Cup stage in China

The athlete earned 97.77 points. The second gold in a row at the home stage of the World Cup was won by Chinese Xu Mengtao (110.77) while another representative of the country — Kong Fanyu — claimed bronze (92.35).

As far as other Belarusian participants in the World Cup are concerned, Anna Guskova was ranked 9th (82.53), and Alla Tsuper finished the tournament in 14th position in the final standings.



noc.by

ARENA

● The contract between Swedish goalkeeper Jhonas Enroth and Dinamo Minsk terminated by mutual agreement



For those seasons that he played for Dinamo Minsk, Jhonas Enroth played 134 matches for the team, with a 2.51 goals-against-average and a 91.2 save percentage. This season, the Swedish goalkeeper has played in 30 matches (reliability — 89.1 percent).

Enroth was recently one of those accepted into the KHL All-Star Game this season following the results of a cheerleader vote.

The club thanked Jhonas Enroth for his time and wished him success in his future career.

● Volleyball players of Shakhtyor Soligorsk beat Minsk Stroitel in the final match of the Belarus Cup — 3:2 (25:22, 21:25, 23:25, 34:32, 15:12) and win the Belarus Cup for the second year in a row



Volleyball played by the two best teams of the country was certainly spectacular to watch. The starting set was won by Shakhtyor. The squads then went step by step for a long time, until the end when Croatian legionary, Ivan Rajic (who played for Shakhtyor), gave the final word.

Alongside the final, a match for third place was taking place. Gomel's Energia won bronze in a stubborn confrontation, defeating Zapadny Bug — 3:2 (25:27, 16:25, 25:14, 25:20, 15: 8).

● Belarusian tennis player Aleksandra Sasnovich defeated in the final of the tournament in French Limoges



In the decisive match, the Belarusian, who occupies the 67th place in the world ranking, lost in two sets in less than an hour to Russian tennis player Yekaterina Alexandrova who is placed 42nd — 1:6, 3:6.

On the way to the finals of the competition in Limoges, Aleksandra Sasnovich beat Bulgarian Isabella Shinikova (171st in the WTA ranking) — 6:1, 6:2, Russian Anna Blinkova (61st) — 3:6, 6:1, 7:5, Swiss Jil Belen Teichmann (placed 73rd) — 6:3, 7:5 and Belgian Greet Minnen (118th position) — 2:6, 6:2, 6:2.



Photo of the week

Minsk confectioners Yakov Zhudro and Anastasia Suboch making pastries for Christmas celebrations

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 12th January. *East-West*
Until 20th January. *Museum of Fir Tree Toys*

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 10th January. *Russian Impressionism*
Until 12th January. *Vladimir Rynkevich. Terrestrial and Celestial*
Until 19th January. *Oman: Pearl of the East. Handicraft Legacy*
Until 19th January. *Signs of Artistic Will*
Until 1st February. *Always Ready and Brave*
Until 1st February. *Schraga Zarfin. Leading to the Light*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 1st February. *Kalyady Calling*

MUSEUM OF GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 31st December. *Returning Time*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street
Until 19th January. *New Year. Anthology of the Holiday*
Until 19th January. *Exposition of Exit project*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

47 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 12th January. *Panna Doll'ya*
international exhibition

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY

13 M. Bogdanovich Street
Until 21st January. *There Is Charm in Old and Forgotten...*
Until 17th January. *Kalyada Arrives on a White Sleigh*
Until 18th January. *Golden Sunrise of Belarusian Renaissance*

MAKSIM BOGDANOVICH LITERARY MUSEUM

7A M. Bogdanovich Street
Until 1st January. *Melancholy Drugs*

MINSK GALLERY

9 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 9th January. *Museum of Leonardo da Vinci's Inventions*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 12th January. *Dangerous Beauty*
Until 1st February. *Magic of Wild Birds*

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A M. Bogdanovich Street
Until 12th January. *Best Toys from USSR*
Until 12th March. *Robo Art*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
27-29, 31.12 and 03-05.01. Gala-concert of Belarusian Bolshoi Theatre's stars
08.01. *Firebird*
09.01. *Ball-Masquerade*
10.01. *Swan Lake*

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
27.12. *King Lear*
28.12 and 05.01. *Paulinka*
29.12 and 02-03.01. *Kalyady Night*
04.01. *Local Cabaret*
08.01. *First / Evening*
09.01. *People on Marshes*
10.01. *Two Souls*

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
27-29.12 and 03-05.01. *New Year Travel to Paris*
03.01. *Mad Woman*
04.01. *Adam's Jokes*
05.01. *Wisdom Measurer*
08.01. *Three Giselles*
09.01. *Gender Tricks*
10.01. *Doctor Raus' Career*

CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street
27 and 28.12. *Clinic*
04.01. *Corporate*
03.01. *Her New Year Wish*

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Masherov Avenue
27.12. *Mixed Feelings*
28.12. *Nobody Promised Easy Life*
29.12 and 02.01. *Midnight Robbery*
03 and 04.01. *In Search of True Self*
05.01. *Nutcracker*
06.01. *The Same Place Next Year*
08.01. *Macropulos' Means*
09.01. *Jubilee / Proposal*
10.01. *A Very Simple Story*

MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
27.12. *Wedding in Malinovka*
28.12. *Swan Lake*
29.12. *Hello, I'm Charlie's Aunt!..*
30.12. *Nutcracker*
31.12. *Cinema-Hit-Style New Year*
03.01. *Cherry Orchid*
04.01. *Women's Revolt*
05.01. *A Thousand and One Night*
09.01. *Giselle*
10.01. *Tristan and Isolde*

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
30.12. *Jubilee*
31.12. *Happy New Year!*
04.01. *About Fedot-Archer*
05.01. *The Fool*
08.01. *Zhmurik / Warsaw Melody*
09.01. *A Man from Podolsk / Bigamist*
10.01. *Trickster Club*