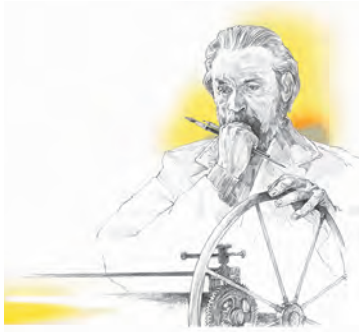




The welfare matrix:
real household
income has increased,
Belarusians
began to earn
and spend more

5



People's Artist Vasily
Sharangovich remained
in the history
of Belarusian art
as the creator
of the national
school of graphics

10

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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Captain Maksim Dashkevich, Commander of the 2nd Honour Guard of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office

Elite of our Armed Forces

They are the calling card of the country's Armed Forces! A height of at least 185 cm, good looks, an athletic build... Only brave guys serve in the Honour Guard of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office. No meeting of foreign delegations at the highest level, no official ceremony with the participation of country leaders is complete without officers and soldiers of this unit. Same as in any military unit, the Honour Guard soldiers are engaged in combat disciplines, and participate in field training exercise and shooting. Yet in addition, they perform exemplary drill techniques with weapons and military rituals when laying wreaths. Their spectacular performances can be seen at parades, and millions of people around the world know their signature goose-step marching.

Two Honour Guard squads and the military band were awarded special prizes of the Belarus' President last December for significant achievements in patriotic education of young people and active participation in socio-political and cultural events.

On the eve of February 23rd — Defender of the Fatherland Day — we will tell you how the Honour Guard soldiers are trained and whether it is easy to serve in a military band. → 6



Belarusians stand for a just world order and indivisible security



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan Hiroyuki Yamamoto presented his credentials to President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko

Japan wishes to continue co-operation

In March 2022, Aleksandr Lukashenko gave an interview to the Japanese TBS TV channel, during which he discussed the bilateral relations between Belarus and Japan. At that time, the Belarusian leader drew attention to the similarity of peoples and economies, and also to similar tragedies in the history of two peoples. Today, the new Japanese ambassador to Belarus, Hiroyuki Yamamoto, who visited our country in 1987, noted the following, "His Majesty the Emperor of Japan wishes to continue bilateral relations." During his new position, the diplomat has been engaged in the development of cultural and humanitarian ties in our country and expects that close exchanges between Belarus and Japan will continue."

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has received the credentials from the ambassadors of eight foreign countries — Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, Japan, Nepal, the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Guinea

"A new stage in your professional life starts today, and I am very glad that you decided to connect it with our country. For our part, we will do our best to make this period leave the best memories, and benefit us," the Head of State stressed. "If you are interested in our experience of public administration, we are ready to share it."

The President drew attention to the fact that Belarus is on the eve of very important and responsible events — the election of deputies at all levels and the formation of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly. A truly landmark event for Belarusians this year will be the celebration of the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from fascism.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also reminded that 2024 was declared the Year of Quality in Belarus, "We proceed from the

fact that improved quality of people's lives is possible on the condition of ensuring security, a just world, a fair distribution of resources and labour results. This can be achieved if we work together, not separately. Only through peace and stability will we be able to guarantee a decent future for our children and grandchildren."

The President emphasised that the principles of respect, equality and justice are at the heart of Belarusian foreign policy. Belarus is ready for dialogue with all countries without exception and on any issues, yet special attention is paid to interaction with those states that want it, with which our country has a lot in common and with which there are no closed topics today.

Addressing the participants of the ceremony, the Head of State said, "We always sincere-

ly welcome friends and partners interested in strengthening relations with our country. This is not just diplomatic etiquette or a fashion statement. Hospitality is one of the main Belarusian brands, which we are very proud of and which we pass on from generation to generation. And the greatest values for Belarusians are peace and harmony, the opportunity to work and develop in peace. That is why we are firmly committed to single and indivisible security. We stand for a new, more just world order, for opportunities for development and a decent future for all peoples, and not just for the so-called golden billion."

Traditionally, the Head of State made important accents on co-operation with each of the countries represented by the diplomats.



AZERBAIJAN

"We greatly value our strategic partnership with Azerbaijan," Aleksandr Lukashenko noted. He expressed special gratitude to Ilham Aliyev for the constructive approach and pointed out the tremendous public support Aliyev received in the presidential elections. The Head of State proposed intensifying efforts to implement the agreements between the leaders of two countries in order to address the issues in the areas of interest.



REPUBLIC OF GUINEA

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, Africa has recently become one of the main focuses of the Belarusian foreign policy. As stated by the President, Belarus is currently actively working on establishing its economic foothold in this continent and expanding its diplomatic presence. "Having certain experience of effective work in this region, we are ready to use it in the Republic of Guinea," the President remarked. "The main drivers are projects in trade and economic areas. This is, first of all, co-operation in the field of agricultural mechanisation, joint mining, infrastructure development, organisation of primary healthcare."



JAPAN

Regarding the relations with Japan, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Belarus seeks to resume full-fledged interaction with Japan. "We are willing to move along the co-operation path as fast and as far as our Japanese partners are ready," the President emphasised. The President reminded that Minsk and Tokyo have unique experience of co-operating in

scientific and humanitarian areas. Yet, bilateral co-operation should go beyond that in order to encompass other areas. "We are ready for this. We think highly of Japan as a high-tech country, where responsible and hardworking people live, just like in Belarus. Let us look for ways for collaboration in this difficult situation," Aleksandr Lukashenko suggested.



KYRGYZSTAN

Speaking about co-operation with Kyrgyzstan, the President drew attention to the fact that this country is both a friend and a reliable partner for Belarus. The bilateral trade volume has been constantly growing in recent years. "Yet, we can do much better," Aleksandr Lukashenko is confident. "We are able to significantly activate trade and economic co-operation, and make our interaction systemic and consistent."



NEPAL

The President pointed out that the time has come to leverage co-operation potential with Nepal more effectively. The Head of State proposed starting with projects on upgrading the agricultural sector, industry and energy complex. "We are ready to share our best practices, expertise and knowledge in science and technology, to train your students in those specialties that you are interested in," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.



SULTANATE OF OMAN

"The relations between Belarus and the Sultanate of Oman have always enjoyed a high level of mutual understanding," stated Aleksandr Lukashenko. "Your country is one of our most important partners in the

Middle East," the President said. "We need to resume our contacts and rekindle our co-operation. You have a wonderful country, I have visited it, and you have wonderful people. Let's work together."

The President expressed readiness to continue a constructive political dialogue and implement joint investment, logistics and industrial projects.



TÜRKIYE

"Türkiye is a long-time strategic partner of Belarus," stated the President. "Minsk and Ankara both prioritise national interests, national security, the importance of the traditional family, preserve historical memory and have many other things in common." Belarus expects Türkiye to put forward proposals and initiatives for implementation to benefit both countries.



UZBEKISTAN

Belarus attaches great importance to co-operation with Uzbekistan since this country is viewed as a strategic partner for Belarus in Central Asia, according to the President. Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed gratitude to President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev for the recent warm welcome and meaningful dialogue, which will result in prompt implementation of new breakthrough projects and interregional contacts. "Mr. Ambassador, I believe that you, as a person who is well familiar with our country, will make a significant contribution to implementing our highest-level agreements and will make use of all your knowledge and experience to strengthen bilateral ties," the Head of State said.

Assistance for Africa's development

Aleksandr Lukashenko had previously spoken about the need to develop a full-fledged long-term strategy for Belarus' co-operation with African countries, "It is necessary to get away from the practice of working in this direction in haste, from visit to visit. We should have a full-fledged long-term co-operation strategy with this promising region."

They really are waiting for us there. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Guinea to Russia and concurrently to Belarus, Niankoye Haba, emphasised that the countries of the African continent need close relations and assistance today in order for Africa to develop. "We really hope that the co-operation of the Republic of Guinea with Belarus will help in this."

The diplomat is confident that close co-operation will be established at the leadership level on both sides in order to work for the benefit of the two peoples. As for the areas that Guinea is interested in developing, agriculture, education, and medicine are priorities.

The Republic of Srpska is grateful to Aleksandr Lukashenko for support, and is ready to intensify co-operation

On February 19th, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held talks with the President of the Republic of Srpska, an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik

Last weekend, the guests already visited Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre for Surgery, Transplantation and Hematology, as well as a number of industrial enterprises of our country. The focus is on the development of bilateral trade relations, increasing co-operation in the fields of industry, healthcare, science and education, and expanding the bilateral legal and contractual framework.

“I have familiarised myself with your work in Belarus during this time. I welcome your endeavours here. The main thing you can be sure of — if any Belarusian technologies or developments in agriculture, industry or healthcare suit your needs, we are always happy to help and support you,” the Belarusian leader assured.

Milorad Dodik, in turn, warmly welcomed the Belarusian Head of State and thanked for the opportunity to meet in person, “I am very glad to meet you. I personally view you as a friend of our people, or — I would rather say — as a brother.”

The President of the Republic of Srpska recalled that

his first meeting with Aleksandr Lukashenko took place in 2000 at the celebration of the 2000th anniversary of Christianity in Jerusalem.

“Despite all the challenges, our friendship continues,” Milorad Dodik noted. “I know that your country is also under pressure and sanctions from the West. In the Republic of Srpska, we did not allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to vote for the sanctions. Of course, it was not easy for us to overcome the pressure from both Brussels and Washington, but we remained consistent in our decision. The entire leadership of the Republic of Srpska is currently under British and American sanctions,” the President of the Republic of Srpska pointed out.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated that Belarus is closely watching the situation in the Balkans, “You know very well my attitude to all the existing issues and to the events that took place in Yugoslavia, when the country was simply dismembered. You know my position and my attitude to your

country in the most difficult times. I mean the time when Serbia was under bombing attacks. You know the way we establish relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Milorad Dodik

We know that sometimes things are not easy for your country, but you resist difficulties with courage. We welcome this. Unfortunately, it is only courage, resilience and strength that can determine the future of a particular country, region, district or territory today. I think that you are standing firm there, representing the interests of Orthodox people, the people who trust and believe you. In this regard, we are on your side, and you can count on us.”

Following the high-level talks, Milorad Dodik told reporters that Belarus and the Republic of Srpska enter a new level of economic collaboration. According to the distinguished guest, the meeting with the Belarusian leader was ‘exceptional’. “It was an opportunity for me to thank Aleksandr Lukashenko for his support and co-operation,” President Dodik said.

The President of the Republic of Srpska, an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly emphasised his gratitude for the assistance of the Belarusian side in the field of healthcare — more than 20 citizens of the republic (including three children) underwent transplants in Belarus.

“We have also talked about new economic co-operation. We are planning to purchase your equipment — electric buses, agricultural machines for a total amount of about \$10m. We will work on these questions in the near future,” Milorad Dodik continued. “Aleksandr Lukashenko was the only leader who supported and understood my people back in 1999. It was

an act of personal courage, and we, Serbs, will never forget it. Your President is a living legend, he is a witness to the difficult times that Belarusians, Russians and Serbs went through. It was a friendly conversation, and we will continue to have similar conversations.”

Milorad Dodik added that he last visited Belarus in 2019. After that, he met with the Belarusian leader at various venues, and the parties always used the opportunity to discuss bilateral co-operation.

The international agenda was also discussed during the current meeting. Regarding it, the Republic of Srpska and Belarus are in a similar situation, as they are experiencing sanctions pressure from the West, as emphasised the leader of the Republic of Srpska. “Therefore, we understand each other without words. There is no need to explain much to each other. President Aleksandr Lukashenko is a rare leader who is familiar with all the details and understands us. And we always talk about mutual assistance.”

People in the countryside deserve the best

The Belarusian Republican Union of Consumer Societies (Belkoopsoyuz) remains the largest trade operator in the country, yet its work can hardly be called satisfactory in recent years. Topical issues were brought to the level of the Head of State more than once, and the Belarusian leader repeatedly gave this structure a new chance and support. The recent general meeting of the Belarusian Republican Union of Consumer Societies with the participation of Aleksandr Lukashenko has become a tough conversation.

The President takes a principled stand — people working on the land should not be in need of anything. Such a giant as Belkoopsoyuz has a special role in this respect, the Head of State stressed,

“The work of Belkoopsoyuz is not only about economic indicators. This is a political issue. Today, every third resident of the country is covered by your services. They are mostly rural residents. And it is for a reason that I reiterate — if we lose the village, we will lose the country. Our people, whom we provide service in the

countryside, deserve the best. In the wake of the current Year of Quality, we simply do not have the moral right to do anything carelessly or let things slide. It is necessary to set concrete goals and achieve them.”

The President clearly outlined a number of problems specific to consumer co-operation, and instructed the Government, personally the Prime Minister, and the State Control Committee to take special control over the implementation of all decisions taken following the meeting.



First. Trade: the state will lend a shoulder, yet people in charge must come up with initiatives, too.

Second. Catering: it is necessary to develop our own brands.

Third. Procurement activity: the growth rate is nothing short of ‘turtle-like’, it is crucial to accelerate.

Fourth. Co-operative industry: the more domestically produced goods are available on the market, the better.

Fifth. Fur farming industry: high added value products must be produced.

ON THE DETENTION OF SABOTEURS ON THE UKRAINIAN BORDER, THE CLAIMS OF OPPONENTS TO THE BELARUSIAN LANDS AND PEOPLE’S SUPPORT

Aleksandr Lukashenko considered it necessary to state his opinion on the specifics of the current moment at the recent event, “You see what is going on around us. Yet, you do not know the full picture. I will give you some general information without going into details. We will provide more information on all these issues soon. Everyone in the West today, with our self-exiled opposition in the vanguard, wants Russia’s defeat in the war with Ukraine.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko quoted from the talks between Belarusian fugitives and some individuals in the West, “Poland has the right to claim the western lands of Belarus. And in case of Russia’s defeat, Belarus will expand its territory at the expense of Russia’s western lands.”

“In other words, they mean that some territories of Smolensk, Bryansk, maybe Pskov Regions will be added to our land while we must cede western Belarus up to Minsk (as you know, there used to be a border) to Poland. This is how the new ‘democratic government holds negotiations’ in the West. Which

of you can agree with this? Maybe somebody could, but I will never agree, under no circumstances. We will fight for our lands till the last breath. Moreover, we do not cause problems for anyone. We do not claim Wilno, or Bialystok Region, or Russian or Ukrainian lands. We have enough land that we got over the course of history. These are our Belarusian lands,” the President emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also announced another fact related to the situation in the Ukrainian direction.

“It was reported to me this morning that several saboteurs were detained on the Ukrainian border today [February 16th, 2024]. Some Ukrainian citizens crawled through the swamps to our border using drones, and brought explosives to commit sabotage operations, primarily on the territory of Russia and Belarus. A counter-terrorism operation has just ended, and you have not even noticed it. And this is good because it should not be your concern. You need to work calmly, do your job. All the saboteurs were detained. There were Belarusians among them, too. Similar facts

take place nearly two or three times a week,” the President noted.

The Head of State underlined that complacency cannot be allowed in such an environment, “It is very important for us — for me as President and for the government — to have the support of our people and to stay united. We are decision-makers. Everything depends on us. If we are united as a monolith, the people will be united as a monolith, too. After all, the overwhelming majority of Belarusians have realised what could have happened and what must not be allowed to happen. Therefore, I keep telling the authorities not to lower their guard so as not to lose the country. If anyone thinks that we will be better off separated and scattered as parts of other countries, they are mistaken. If it had been so good in the 1920–1930-ies [when some regions of Belarus were part of Poland], we would not have fought for our independence. Therefore, let’s do everything to ensure peace on this land.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Electing deputies together

The current election campaign is characterised by high-quality novelty and has a deep meaning



By Maksim Osipov

Candidates have been identified

The results of the registration of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives and local Councils were announced to journalists by Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) Igor Karpenko, “To date, 265 candidates will compete for 110 parliamentary seats in the House of Representatives. Ten of them are under the age of 31. The youngest candidate is 23 years old. 92 candidates are women.”

In addition, the CEC Chairman noted that four pensioners are nominated for deputies of the Parliament, the oldest being 66 years old, as well as one unemployed.

“In general, the competition for a seat in the House of Representatives is 2.4 people per seat,” Igor Karpenko said.

As for the candidates for local Councils of deputies — 18,802 people will run for 12,514 seats.

“This is about 1.5 people per seat. That is, there is a certain competition here,” the head of the Central Election Commission underlined.

Actively, competitively and openly

Thus, competition in the 2024 elections is recorded in every constituency. Two–three people in each constituency have been nominated as candidates for deputies of regional Councils of deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation. Along with that, as many as six candidates have been nominated for the elections to the Minsk City Council of Deputies in one of the constituencies.

As for the election of deputies to the House of Representatives, the competition here will be even more serious. On the whole, from two to four candidates for the deputy mandate have been nominated in each constituency in the regions, while in Minsk, five candidates have been nominated in one of the constituencies, and six candidates in another.

The current election campaign will be held for the first time and will have a serious analytical component.

A scientific expert council at the Central Election Commission has been formed, which will help the CEC to analyse the legislation enforcement during the elections.

ELECTIONS–2024
Single Voting Day
ON THE SINGLE VOTING DAY
ON FEBRUARY 25TH, 2024, BELARUSIANS WILL ELECT

110 deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus

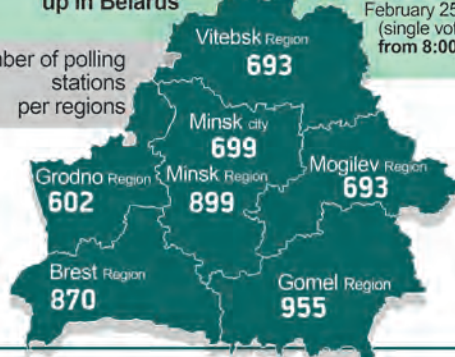


12,514 deputies of local Councils of deputies of the 29th convocation (at all three territorial levels: primary, basic and regional)

5,411 polling stations have been set up in Belarus

Opening hours:
February 20–24 (early voting)
from 12:00 to 19:00
February 25
(single voting day)
from 8:00 to 20:00

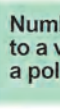
Number of polling stations per regions



In Minsk city — two ballots:
— to elect a deputy of the House of Representatives
— to elect a deputy of the Minsk City Council of Deputies



In regional and district centres — three ballots:
— to elect a deputy of the House of Representatives
— to elect a deputy of the regional Council of deputies
— to elect a deputy of the city or district Council of deputies



Number of ballots given to a voter at a polling station



In a rural area — four ballots:
— to elect a deputy of the House of Representatives
— to elect a deputy of the regional Council of deputies
— to elect a deputy of the district Council of deputies
— to elect a deputy of the rural or settlement Council of deputies

Source: Belarus' CEC.

© Infographic



High level of election campaign organisation

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) observation mission is monitoring preparations for the upcoming elections of deputies to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the eighth convocation (scheduled for February 25th, 2024) at the invitation of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it has published an interim report on its observations.

As of February 19th, 228 observers representing the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the CIS, the Col-

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“Following Russia’s example, we have also established a constitutionally unified voting day. On this day, deputies of the parliament and local councils will be elected. We have preserved regional, district, and rural councils, as it was in Soviet times. And on March 17th, presidential elections will be held in Russia. The period is not easy, but as you can see, it is passing quietly. I am confident that we will approach these dates calmly and will conduct these events just as calmly.”

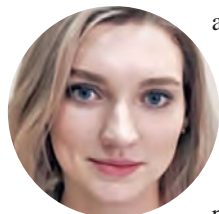
At the meeting of the Union State Supreme State Council in St. Petersburg, on January 29th, 2024

lective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia, the Standing Committee of the Union State, and the Executive Committee of the CIS have been accredited to the mission.

According to the mission, the Central and lower election commissions are taking the necessary measures to prepare and hold the elections at a high organisational level and in strict accordance with the country’s legislation. Candidates have equal conditions for campaigning. Electoral commissions of all levels and the media provide comprehensive information support for the election campaign.

The observers had to be accredited by February 20th — that is, before the start of early voting. As of February 19th, more than 37 thousand national and about 300 international observers from the CIS, the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly, the CSTO and the SCO have been accredited.

The First Secretary of the Liozno District Committee of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union, a member of the Youth Parliament under the Liozno District Council of Deputies, Varvara Kozlova, notes there should be no question about whether or not to vote.



“Participating in such an important process is a guarantee of protecting the rights and interests of each individual. Those who ignore voting forfeit this protection.”

As a young citizen of the Republic of Belarus, Varvara understands that the main advantage of youth participation in elections is the opportunity to influence events in their country.

“As youth, we must vote for a candidate to influence the political process, develop our civic responsibility and patriotic feelings, and, of course, increase our political literacy.”

Varvara believes that only through active participation in such key moments can one achieve the realisation of their interests and desires. She gives a specific example. Last September, the Liozno District deputies helped renovate the playground equipment at the Praleska kindergarten in the village of Liozno. Government officials listen to the requests and wishes of voters and do everything they can to ensure a decent standard of living for them.

Belarus’ youth reflect on the importance of voting and traits of good deputy

Every Belarusian has the opportunity to make their mark on their country’s history by casting their vote for a candidate on February 25th. Members of the Youth Parliament on their criteria for choosing new leaders and why young people should participate in this important event.

People elect a deputy to represent their interests and, if necessary, defend them, notes Polina Vilkevich, a member of the Youth Parliament under the Shchuchin District Council of Deputies. To perform their duties effectively, they undoubtedly need a number of qualities.



“The foundation of such an important and honourable position is honesty and integrity. A deputy’s work involves making decisions that can affect people’s lives. They must be prepared to take responsibility for their actions. Deputies must also have professional knowledge and experience in the area they represent, whether it’s legislation, economy, education, etc.”

Polina adds that deputies need to have communica-

tion skills, as they will have to interact with people and understand their problems, so empathy is essential. They must be able to listen to people, give rational advice, and help. Of course, a true deputy knows how to work as part of a team with other deputies and members of the executive branch and is ready for co-operation and compromise to achieve common goals.

A deputy should be proactive and not wait for appointments to find out what the voters’ concerns are.

“For example, this summer, a family of farmers from the village of Dembrovo needed to have their roof replaced, but they didn’t have enough money. The local deputy noticed this and provided assistance. Thanks to the deputies, the road in the village of Starovshchina was also repaired. I think such actions speak louder than words about local government officials,” Polina concludes.

The welfare matrix

Belarusians began to earn and spend more

The economic performance of any state is assessed by a number of key parameters. Obviously, everyone has heard about a GDP indicator. Yet, there is one more equally important criterion — real disposable household income. The Head of State has emphasised that, despite external pressure, all measures are taken in the country to ensure the growth of salaries and pensions. After all, the basis of the policy pursued in the country is a person.

By Vladislav Sychevich

As they say, everything is learned in comparison. It is enough to turn to history and recall how much we earned in the early 1990-ies, and then look into the latest payroll sheet. Thus, the level of low-income households in Belarus has decreased almost 10 times compared with 1995 — from 38.4 to 3.9 percent. This is one of the lowest rates not only in the CIS, but also among the European Union countries. The real money income of Belarusian citizens has increased 8.5 times during this period, while actual earnings have increased more than 11 times. The real money income of the population increased by 6.1 percent over last January — November alone, compared to the same level in 2022. An increase in the average salary and pensions was ensured, as well. This was primarily facilitated by the measures aimed to support the economy, normalise the situation on the labour market, stabilise prices in the consumer market and reduce inflation. The country's GDP at purchasing power parity per capita rose from 20.3 thousand dollars in ruble equivalent in 2020 to 25.2 thousand in 2023.

The logic is simple — stable economy and positive dynamics ensure higher salary growth and budget replenishment. This, in turn, directly affects the increase in pensions and other social transfers.

The economic growth was balanced last year and achieved a higher level than initially planned. Along with that, three main tasks were solved — an outstripping growth in household incomes, low inflation and employment of the population.

In order to increase real wages, the base rate for employees of state-funded organisations was raised twice last year, according to Galina Korzh, Head of Department for Income and Living Standards Forecasts at the Economy Research Institute of the Ministry of Economy. "In addition, the salary level in industry was positively influenced by financial and economic activities of various organisations in the real sector — gross value added increased as well as profitability of

RELIABLE FORECASTS

The Eurasian Development Bank has recently published a review that predicts further wage growth in Belarus. The rationale for such a forecast is an increase in the base rate, which affects wages in the public sector. The rate has increased by 6.4 percent since January 1st, 2024. Another factor that will stimulate wage growth is a high demand for labour. EDB analysts have noted that the salary growth rate in nominal terms remains high. The authors of the review reminded that in December 2023, the annual increase was 18.6 percent.

sales. Another type of income for the population is pensions. They were raised twice last year, too. Property income is not an insignificant part of income, either. To a greater extent, we are talking about interest on deposits. Attractive conditions for storing deposits in national currency allowed citizens to get good additional income."

DIRECT SPEECH

Deputy Minister of Economy Andrei Kartun,

"The implementation of production and export programmes will ensure an increase in real disposable household income by 3.5 percent in 2024. There are two key directions here. In the real sector, it is planned to focus on low-wage enterprises. Its level must reach at least 85 percent of the industry average. Salary growth in the economy is planned to be at the level of 10–12 percent. Pension growth will be provided by almost 15 percent. The pension and salary ratio in January – November 2023 amounted to 37.5 percent. In the current year, we will strive to reach 38–39 percent, and by the end of the five-year period — 40 percent."

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"In our country, everyone who wants to work and can work — works and earns. Everyone gains as much as they can earn. The salary must be earned. This is a fair approach."

From the Address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, on March 31st, 2023



How much we earn

The nominal accrued average salary in December 2023 was 2,271 rubles.

- This indicator has grown by almost 300 rubles over the month.
- The average salary of Belarusians rose by 586.1 rubles over 2023.
- The highest paid workers in December were in the information and communications sector. Their earnings amounted to 6590.9 rubles.

Structure of household consumption expenditure:

- food products and non-alcoholic beverages — 36.09 %
- transport — 10.16 %
- housing services, water, electricity, gas and other fuels — 9.7 %
- information and communication — 7.28 %
- clothing and shoes — 6.45 %
- healthcare — 5.94 %
- personal care, social protection and other personal goods and services — 5.78 %
- household items, household appliances, routine maintenance of residential premises — 5.74 %
- recreation, sports, culture — 3.89 %
- hotels, cafes, restaurants — 3.17 %
- education — 0.98 %
- insurance and financial services — 0.40 %

What we spend money on

The growth in household income level has a positive effect on retail trade in the country. According to Belstat, every resident of Belarus spent an average of almost 23 rubles per day last year. In 2022, the average check was just a little over 20 rubles. In total, the one-day retail trade turnover in the republic also increased over the past year — it amounted to 76.4 billion rubles. This figure is 8.5 percent more than it was a year earlier.

Furthermore, Belarusians left 5+ billion rubles in cafes and restaurants last year.

What they began to spend less money on is buying foreign currency. According to the National Bank, the citizens of the country actively sold it last year. Thus, 'green' currency is going out of fashion, as the saying goes.

TO THE POINT

The size of the minimum subsistence budget [MSB] has been increased since February. The average MSB per capita rose by 10.6 percent compared to its value established on November 1st, 2023, and amounted to 406.74 rubles. The growth of this social criterion is primarily due to a change in the qualitative composition of the minimum set of food products included in the subsistence minimum.

ECONOMY

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Surely each of us has seen the performances of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office honour guard — if not live, at least on TV or on the Internet. Handsome guys in full uniform — perfectly pressed tunics and snow-white gloves — march at celebrations and lay wreaths at the memorial in Victory Square with amazing synchronicity. The music accompaniment of the honour guard military band of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office gives a special ceremonial flair to their procession. Our correspondents have found out who can be recruited to serve in this elite unit and how soldiers achieve impeccable military bearing.

We have learned how honour guard soldiers are trained and whether it is easy to serve in a military band, as well as congratulated them on a special Presidential award to cultural and artistic figures

What an honour!

By Viktoria Derzhanovich

Shoulder to shoulder

It is not easy to join the guard of honour team — only tall and healthy enough soldiers can be selected to become guard of honour members. It is no less difficult to master the art of military bearing. After all, behind a spectacular five- to seven-minute performance on the parade square lie many days and hours of hard drills that instill a sense of confidence in soldiers and teach them to stay calm and composed. You need to practise for six hours a day in order to learn to march like soldiers of the honour guard, according to Captain Maksim Dashkevich, Commander of the 2nd Honour Guard of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office. "Most of the unit consists of army conscripts. It takes an average of three to four months to train recruits. We start with an individual drill, during which the guys practise techniques in place and comprehend various subtleties. The emphasis is on the movement of hands — they rise higher because the soldiers march with a carbine — pace and step height. After that we complicate the task by working as part of squads and platoons," our interlocutor explained.

Various devices are used in the training of recruits, such as models of wreaths, weights on hands and legs for practising marching movements. Many guys slouch at first, so wooden T-shaped devices help them correct their posture. Two lessons are usually enough for a soldier to straighten his shoulders, learn to control his body and stop having a 'question mark' posture. The captain as-



Yelizaveta Kobetskaya



bntu.by



The special Presidential Prize to cultural and artistic figures was awarded to the 1st and 2nd squads and the military band of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office honour guard for significant achievements in patriotic education of young people, active participation in socio-political and cultural events.



Aleksandr Kulevsky

sured, "Success is 99 percent dependent on the desire of the serviceman. At the same time, we pay no less attention to combat training than other units — soldiers of the honour guard will be able to perform any combat task on a par with other military personnel."

The face of the Belarusian army

The military personnel of this unit are rightfully called the face of the Belarusian army. After all, they provide all the most important events with the participation of the Head of State, meet foreign delegations, accompany funeral farewell ceremonies with statesmen, and represent our country at socio-political and cultural meetings abroad. This year, it will be possible to see the honour guard performance on July 3rd at the solemn parade in Minsk, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi invaders. The preparation of the parade square concert has

already begun. The performance will feature the display of number 3 by soldiers as one of its elements. Maksim Dashkevich revealed some details, "We will also demonstrate complicated elements with carbine rotation, a programme block called 'domino' where soldiers converge into one figure and perform movements in sync."

The special mission of military personnel is patriotic education of young people. It is one thing when boys can see the honour guard's performances at celebrations, and it is another thing when they visit the unit, according to the commander. "School students often visit us as part of an excursion — they are interested in talking with soldiers, exploring the daily routine here, seeing how trainings take place, what kind of uniforms and weapons we have. Military personnel also hold on-site meetings in educational institutions," he pointed out.

With a lyre on the shield

The indispensable companion of the honour guard at all significant performances is the honour guard military band of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office. The basis of its repertoire consists of the National Anthem of Belarus and anthems of other states, ceremonial music, musical compositions on military-patriotic themes, as well as masterpieces of Belarusian and foreign music. The bandmaster, Head of the Minsk Military Commandant's Office military

band Captain Ilya Kupreev told us, "All our musicians pass the way from music school in childhood to college and university. It was the same for me, too. I graduated from music school specialising in saxophone, entered the Mogilev State College of Arts, after which I continued my studies at the Institute of Military Bandmasters at the Military University in Moscow — this is a unique higher educational establishment in the world where such specialists are trained. There are exceptions, though. Our drummer, Ensign Denis Fastenkov, studied in college with a degree in microelectronics, took drum lessons in his spare time and joined our team to serve under contract. The backbone of our team was formed long ago — there are musicians who have been playing in it for 20 years. Along with that, there are a lot of young people, too."

Military musicians are a special caste, because they have to combine two seemingly incompatible things, Ilya Kupreev is convinced, "On the one hand, it is the army with its rigid framework and discipline; on the other hand, it is music and creativity."

Here, we should give credit to our servicemen — they manage to successfully combine these concepts. During the service, they get a good chance to improve their endurance — unlike civilian orchestras, they mostly play in the open air, in any weather. Even in winter, in the cold.

Dual-use information

Victory is achieved not only through weapons, but also through words

Tanks, cannons and missiles pose a deadly threat, just like they did in the last century. Yet, in terms of its destructive power (not to sound too cynical), they are losing their positions in the global confrontation. The key danger already lies in the digital world. The main risks include cyber threats, fakes and artificial intelligence, which partially ensures the first two positions from the technological perspective. This area has long been under careful consideration of the military and special services responsible for national security.

In Belarus, the draft National Security Concept and the draft Military Doctrine will be submitted to the Belarusian People's Congress for approval. Anatoly Belous, a corresponding member of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, talked about some aspects of modern 'invisible wars'.



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"Cyberattacks are on the rise around the world. This may not be so typical for our country, yet facts have taken place. Strategically important facilities, government agencies, enterprises, and the banking system are subject to cyberattacks in the first place. That means that they target the vital infrastructure of any state, including ours. This is one of the elements of hybrid warfare, a very dangerous one. The purpose is to cause maximum damage to the economy and eventually destabilise society. It is true not only about Belarus, but also about any country chosen for an attack."

At a meeting on cybersecurity, on October 25th, 2022



By Vladimir Volchkov

On a new round

Quite a few liberal idealists (they are still encountered today) believed that after achieving nuclear parity, an era of co-operation between great powers would begin. Since their confrontation leads to the self-destruction of human civilisation, there will only be local scale armed conflicts should they arise. It turned out to be a dystopia. The confrontation has not disappeared, but has moved into a new sphere — a digital, information and psychological one.

Starting from the end of the last century, the centre of the struggle began to shift into cyberspace. First, total war has become impossible in the nuclear era. Secondly, conventional weapons that also deploy digital and various high-tech devices are becoming prohibitively expensive. The price of the latest generation tank already exceeds ten million dollars, of an airplane — hundreds of millions, of aircraft carriers and cruisers — billions. Thirdly, relatively cheap yet effective means of destruction appear. Fourth, the concept of asymmetric conflicts and 'pure wars', which largely served as a basis for Western doctrines, is falling apart. Rich countries did not exclude their participation in local military operations. It was under the condition of complete and fundamental superiority over the enemy, though, when it is possible to hit the targets remotely, without coming into direct contact, and avoiding large human losses.

Fighting in an invisible space

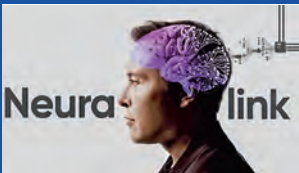
According to Anatoly Belous, Americans were the first to seriously address the issue of dominance in cyberspace. The activation began back in the 90-ies of the last century. It would seem that the Cold War had ended, the Soviet threat had disappeared. Moreover, it was a great time to develop new technologies for dominating the world since there was no real opposition to the United States in those years.

China was just beginning its ascent to economic power and to the status of one of the poles in the global world. The post-Soviet space was going through painful disintegration processes and a deep economic crisis. Europeans were carried away by ideas à la Francis Fukuyama, who believed that the history of wars, conquests and confrontation would end with the victory of liberal concepts.

I suppose that pragmatic and cynical Americans did not believe in this theory in the first place. Therefore, they quickly and purposefully got down to developing

MIND GAMES

Elon Musk has recently announced on his account, on his own social network, about the first implantation of a neurochip into human brain. *Neuralink*, Musk's startup company, is engaged in such developments. The device is a receiver capsule that is attached behind the ear and connected to the brain with filamentous electrodes, the number of which reaches 1.5 thousand. As stated by the developers, the device will allow you to control your phone or computer, and through them almost any device, with just the power of thought. However, the regulatory authorities have quite a few questions for Neuralink with regard to animal cruelty — allegedly botched animal testing caused suffering and deaths of a lot of animals. Strangely enough, Musk was given permission to test his brain chip on humans. As they say on the sidelines, the businessman was in a hurry and ready to take risks in order to become the first to penetrate deep into the human brain. Another question is — how will such experiments and mind games end?!



technologies for conquering a new generation. Luckily, in the conditions of monopolarity, it was possible for them to rearm calmly and systematically. Specialised structures and units were created in the Pentagon and intelligence agencies.

Anatoly Belous provided an example of a new type of weapon — *blogging*.

Fake accounts dedicated to a certain topic were created in the information space. Interestingly enough, the topic could be unfriendly or completely consistent with the official position of the adversary.

Such blogs gather both supporters and opponents of certain ideas and become an inexhaustible source of intelligence information on the socio-political situation in the country.

Social networks that have entangled the whole world allow creating and sending viral messages distorting reality, in a concentrated way.

A few hours (!) after the start of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in 2008, photos of houses destroyed by shells appeared in the information space. The result of Georgian strikes on Tskhinvali was served up as the consequence of the Russian troops' actions. Thus, the attacker immediately turned into a victim in the public consciousness. An even tougher confrontation in the information space is underway today — around the conflict in Ukraine, Gaza, incidents in the Middle East and the Red Sea.

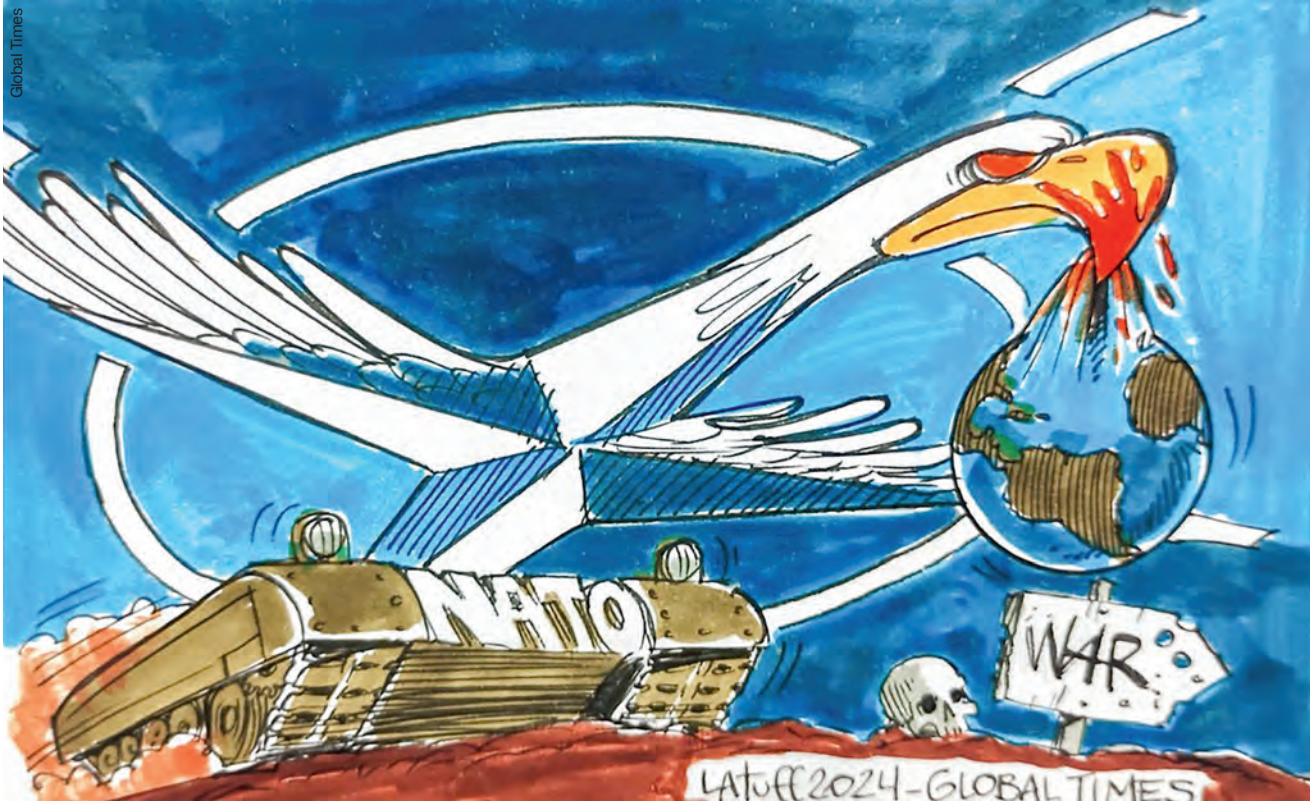
Digital shield and sword

"We live in the post-truth era," Anatoly Belous stated. "Once, the media was accused of one-sidedness of information. Then, fakes began to appear. Now, they are deepfakes, which can present completely fictional events as true, with realistic-looking visualisation that appears to be authentic. Modern technical means allow doing this. The era of information wars has come. And in the near future, this confrontation will only intensify."

Despite that, Anatoly Belous urged people not to panic.



SECURITY



NATO needs conflicts to continue military funding

NATO needs conflicts to continue military funding and has no plans to end the bloodshed; the latest evidence is NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg’s statement that the West must be prepared for ‘decades-long confrontation’ with Russia, the *Global Times* reports

In particular, the West does not seek war with Russia, but should still ‘prepare ourselves for a confrontation that could last decades’, Stoltenberg told German newspaper *Welt Am Sonntag* in an interview.

The declaration — the West does not seek war with Russia — is as hypocritical as the US, which keeps bombing here and there while saying it does not seek conflict. “What Stoltenberg said, in essence, is a call for war mobilisation, an attempt to hype up a war-like atmosphere

to further strengthen NATO’s interests gained during the Russia–Ukraine conflict,” Shen Yi, a Professor at Fudan University, told the *Global Times*.

Just two days before Stoltenberg’s remarks were published, Russian President Vladimir Putin articulated in his first interview with a Western media outlet in two years: ‘we are ready to talk’.

Meanwhile, NATO needs to secure its significance of existence. After the fall of the former Soviet Union, there were constant doubts about the existence and

function of NATO. It thus keeps seeking new enemies for itself. Russia, as NATO’s current enemy, has thus become the cornerstone of NATO’s presence today.

Then it is about money. The organisation is like an undertaker, or a store owner of coffin and casket, which makes no money in peacetime. As an undertaker, NATO needs conflict, bloodshed for earnings. So it spreads fear and panic in order to ensure its member countries continue to contribute military funding, experts said.

First fatality from the newly discovered virus

Alaska health officials reported that a man died in January after contracting a virus known as Alaskapox

The disease was first discovered in a person living near Fairbanks, Alaska, in 2015, and there have been several known infections since then. But officials believe that last month’s case is the first fatality from the newly discovered virus — as well as the first known case outside the state’s interior — and authorities are now urging doctors across the state to be on the lookout for signs of the disease.

Alaskapox is a type of orthopoxvirus that infects mammals, including humans, and causes skin lesions. Other orthopoxviruses include the now-eradicated smallpox virus as well as mpox, which was previously known as monkeypox and experienced an outbreak of thousands of cases worldwide in 2022.

“Orthopoxviruses are zoonotic viruses, meaning that they circulate primarily within animal populations with spill over into humans occasionally,” said Centres for Disease Control and Prevention epidemiologist Julia Rogers.

The patient who was hospitalised and later died was an ‘elderly man’ who lived alone and was immunocompromised from cancer treatment, which ‘likely contributed’ to the severity of his illness, officials say. The man also told health officials that he gardened in his backyard and took care of a stray cat, which hunted small animals nearby and would frequently scratch him. The cat tested negative for orthopoxvirus.

Rogers, the epidemiologist, said she expects Alaskapox infections to remain rare.



‘Flying brigades’ to control food transit in Poland

Poland’s Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Michal Kolodziejczak said on Polish television that the country had tightened control over the transit of Ukrainian food products through its territory and organised special ‘flying brigades’ for this purpose

“We have strengthened the activities of the National Tax Administration and the Road Transport Inspectorate. We have two flying teams of the Road Transport Inspectorate — created to respond to information from Polish farmers that these goods are being transported across the country, must leave the country, but there is a serious suspicion that they will remain,” Kolodziejczak said.

He underlined that he personally controlled the sealing of cargoes with Ukrainian goods at the border.

Poland–Ukraine relations deteriorated after the embargo on the Ukrainian grain transportation was introduced. On September 15th, 2023, the European Commission decided not to extend restrictions on the import of four types of Ukrainian agricultural products heading to nearby countries, but obliged Kiev to introduce export control measures. Later, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland unilaterally extended the ban. Currently, Ukrainian grain is allowed to be imported into Poland only in transit to third countries.

Red Sea crisis threatens Britain’s tea supply

Britons could face a shortage of certain tea varieties, a beloved beverage in the nation, due to shipping disruptions in the Red Sea, warned the supermarket industry

The British Retail Consortium noted ‘temporary disruption’ to some black tea products, with delays reported for flavoured variants. While major supermarket chains currently display sufficient stock on their websites, the duration of Red Sea shipping disruptions will determine if empty shelves become a reality across Europe.

This marks the first food-related warning amid disruptions caused by Iran-aligned Houthi militia attacks on ships in the Red Sea. Given that Britain imports over half of its tea from Kenya and India via the Red Sea route, the impact of these

disruptions is significant.

Tea, shipped to the UK for processing and packaging, contributes to Britain’s status as the 10th largest tea exporter globally. Andrew Opie, Director of Food and Sustainability at the British Retail Consortium, assured minimal consumer impact, citing retailers’ readiness to handle potential challenges.

With the alternative route around South Africa’s Cape of Good Hope adding significant transit time, the Red Sea route remains crucial for timely deliveries. The Red Sea crisis also created shipping back-ups at several major European ports.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Minority vs majority

Historically, Western countries have adopted the role of international teachers of democracy. The reason is not that, according to the famous classic of the European bureaucracy Josep Borrell, ‘Europe is a garden and the rest of the world is a jungle’, but that they look down on the world. However, as is often the case, foreign teachers fail to see the beam in their own eye, although they try to scrutinise it in someone else’s.

By Piotr Petrovsky,
political expert

Divide and conquer

The Western liberal system — and this is the most accurate name for what they impose on us under the guise of democracy — was formed only after the Second World War. Capitalist countries were faced with the task of dividing society into groups for more effective manipulation of mass consciousness. Thus, the ‘middle class’ was singled out from the majority. Its loyalty to the system was premised on relative well-being and financial dependence.

However, from the beginning of the 21st century, especially after the crisis of 2008–2009, the system of the Western social contract began to collapse. The standard of living, thanks to which Western citizens agreed to the liberal democracy of minorities, went down abruptly. Along with that, political rights in a veiled form not only remained limited, but even were gradually shrinking.

Over the past few decades, the current generation has turned out to be the first in the West to live not better, but worse compared to their parents. Branko Milanović, a lead economist in the World Bank’s research department, has developed an ‘elephant chart’, which shows that middle-class incomes have grown at the slowest rate over the past decade. In contrast, the standard of living in the countries the West has labelled as ‘non-democratic’ has increased significantly. These countries manage to implement decisions promptly, which ensures accelerated economic development and growth.

Behind-the-scenes arrangements

The liberal system involves the dispersion of powers between different branches of government so that an average citizen often has no one to ask for the decisions made in the country. Presidents, parliaments, governments and kings simply shift responsibility onto each other and explain all this with the notorious system of ‘checks and balances’.

Moreover, a huge number of important personnel appointments in Western countries do not take place directly by the people through elections but in a bureaucratic way, far from being democratic. Such practices are expanding every year.

The EU institutions are particularly closed from the majority of Europeans. Although the European Parliament is made up of elected deputies, the European Commission is headed by an appointed chairperson, whereas it is the most important EU’s executive body that proposes and implements laws, budgets and regulations. This state of affairs directly contradicts the idea that power in democracies should be exercised by an elected parliament or by a popularly elected leader.

The deep state is against
The structure of the liberal system is so sophisticated that it allows preventing or sabotaging reforms and changes in case an inconvenient candidate comes to power.

Donald Trump is a telling example of this. His presidency had a lot of expectations, yet the system of the American deep state actually outplayed the famous businessman.

First, the state’s red tape rebelled against Trump. Some cases were conspicuous by their comic side, when official documents were taken out of the White House administration and information was ‘leaked’ for internal use. Those leaks became a headache for Donald Trump.

Second, elite groups brought confusion and mess to Donald Trump’s fulfillment of his election promises by a fairly simple and devious method of making all sorts of accusations, launching impeachment proceedings, and manipulating Congress.

They were clearly wearing down Trump’s team.

Thirdly, the organised harassment of ‘mighty Donald’ by the mainstream media, turning him into a toxic politician, blocking all his attempts to convey his messages to US citizens, spiced things up.

Accusations of extremism against any political forces that criticise the liberal system add even more fuel to the fire. Thus, German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck did not rule out the possibility of launching a ban procedure against the *Alternative for Germany* (AfG) opposition party in connection with an alleged secret meeting of representatives of conservative circles, including AfG members, held in November 2023. According to him, “The security authorities also have to act systematically, collect evidence, closely monitor subdivisions, individuals, events and statements to make sure an application would not fail before the Federal Constitutional Court. Consistent punishment of crimes, robustness and even severity in accordance with our laws are also absolutely necessary.”

Growing distrust

According to the Ipsos 2023 study, 7 out of 10 Americans who took part in the poll noted that the level of democracy in the United States had fallen over the past few years. The same point of view regarding democracy in France is shared by 73 percent of French respondents. At the same time, 6 out of 10 British residents indicated that the democratic system in the United Kingdom is now ‘functioning worse than five years ago’.

The same study has revealed that, when answering the question ‘How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?’, only 28 percent of Britons, 24 percent of Italians and 29 percent of French people said they were satisfied with the situation. In addition, people are convinced that the economy and financial system serve exceptionally rich and influential citizens. The number of supporters of this point of view in Italy makes 72 percent, in the UK — 71, in France — 69, in the USA — 67. In other words, people believe that the authorities of their countries are more focused on the interests of the rich and powerful.

The research conducted by the Policy Institute at King’s College London shows that the vast majority of the UK population thinks that politics in the country does not serve the

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“It is noteworthy that western countries cover the monopoly, as well as their maniacal desire to prevent the creation of a multipolar world with the slogan of the struggle for democracy. There is nothing behind this ‘democracy’. There is no democracy there. Thank God, we have already made sure of that. You have seen how they act in America and what they are trying to promote here.”

During the 52nd meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Security Agencies and Special Services, on June 1st, 2023

interests of the people. Only 17 percent of its residents say they are ‘highly satisfied’ with how the political system is functioning these days. That is, the great majority does not believe that the UK is a truly democratic country.

Request for a strong leader

Citizens of the countries that Western propaganda tends to call ‘beacons of democracy’ do not consider their political systems to be such. Imposing principles that the interests of minorities are above the interests of the majority, reproaching other countries for being non-democratic while exerting strong pressure on public opinion and civil institutions in their Western countries, increased deterioration of the socio-economic situation accompanied with calls to endure it in the name of democracy have led to a banal situation of the growing general distrust.

A fair request for a real democratic majority arises. This is confirmed by research by Christopher Claassen, a political scientist at the University of Glasgow, published in the academic American Political Science Review journal. Based on the data from 135 countries, people around the world view democracy as majority rule. The obsession of Western elites with protecting minority rights results in deep disappointment in the liberal democratic system. Against this background, a request for a strong leader who will defend the interests of the majority becomes especially clear.



Dreams about Belarus

He used to say the following about himself, “I have always stood firmly on my native land, which, after the God-given time, will take me into its dark embrace. But I will always, as Yanka Kupala’s poem goes, ‘have dreams about Belarus.’”

People’s Artist Vasily Sharangovich remained in the history of Belarusian art as the creator of the national school of graphics and as a book illustrator, whose works have raised more than one generation of readers. We got acquainted with his works as children — starting with the famous illustrations for *The Adventures of Buratino*, sold in millions of copies across the USSR, and then continued our acquaintance finding the illustrator’s name in the works of classics and contemporaries.

In memory of the People’s Artist of Belarus, Vasily Sharangovich

By Irina Ovsepyan

Vasily Sharangovich was the namesake of his uncle, Vasily Fomich, a revolutionary and second secretary of the Communist Party of Belarus. The Sharangovich are all relatives, and their roots are in Myadel Region, in the village of Kochany, where this family has lived for centuries. It was here in January 1939 that the future People’s Artist of Belarus was born, in the family of a skilled village blacksmith.

Vasily Sharangovich inherited willingness to do any job, even the most difficult one, from his father. Maybe that is the reason why specifically graphics subsequently appeared in his life — this is an area of art that requires the ability to handle printing plates and printing presses, acids for etching — all that is alien to gentle fingers of sophisticated painters. However, all of us have the nature of both parents, father and mother, and it was the mother’s poetic and creative nature that had a decisive influence on the fate of Vasily Sharangovich. It was his mother, Nina Vasilyevna, who taught her son to paint. She did needlework and made bouquets, remembered dozens of Adam Mickiewicz’s poems by heart from school and could paint beautifully in rare leisure hours. After all, what kind of rest could a village hostess in charge of all household chores have?

The first pictures that impressed Sharangovich were illustrations in the ABC book presented at the end of the war by a passing partisan, then reproductions of paintings in the *Ogonyok* magazine that his neighbours, rural teachers, were subscribed to. So the novice painter diligently redrew them. After a seven-year school, Sharangovich went to finish his studies in Myadel. Mathematics teacher Gennady Ostrovsky turned out to be an amateur artist, and he became Sharangovich’s first teacher. The two of them wandered around the neighbourhood, painting from nature. It was Ostrovsky who insisted that the student should definitely enter the Minsk Art School. He took him to the capital of the republic: first of all, they submitted the documents, and then went to the art gallery.

During all his years of study, the artist was looking for where to earn money. He visited the Bolshoi Theatre as a background actor going on stage in performances and reviewing the entire repertoire. He was also a life model for senior painter students. Sharangovich was living with his poor



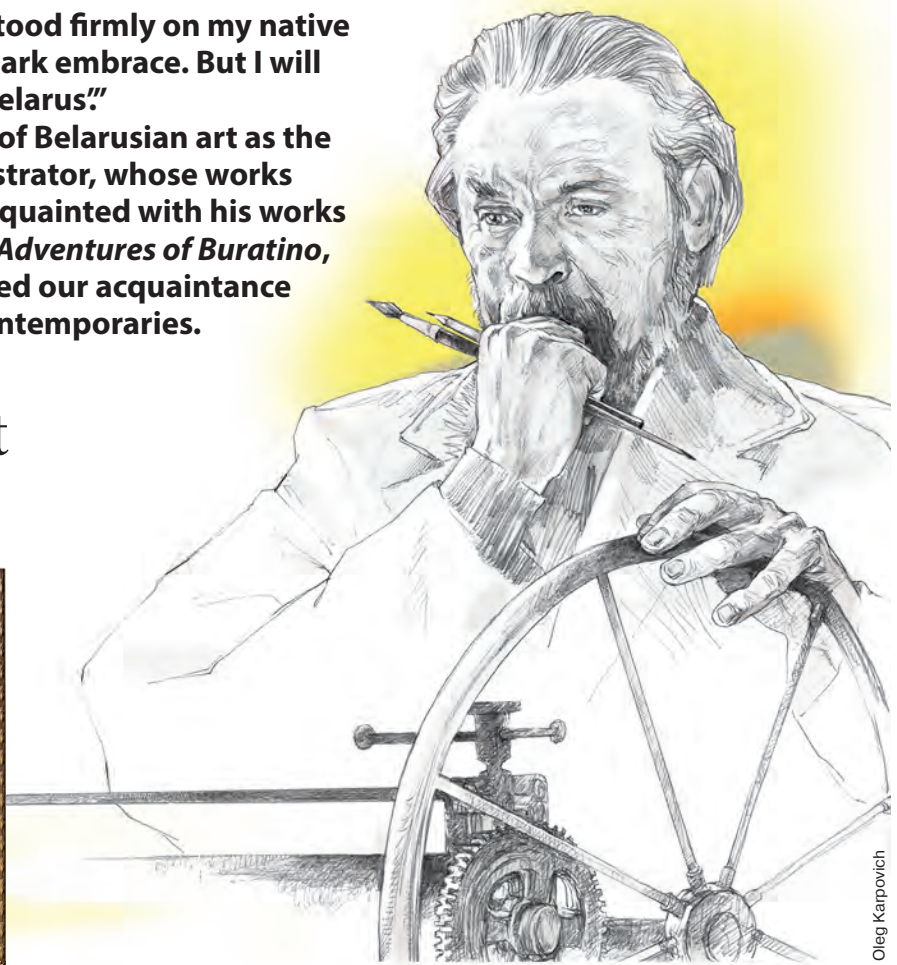
THE ART OF GRAPHICS

Vasily Sharangovich’s works are kept in the National Art Museum, the Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War, the Ministry of Culture of Russia, the collections of the Belarusian Union of Artists and the Union of Artists of Russia, in the museums of Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas, in private collections. In 2018, a personal gallery of the People’s Artist was opened in Naroch.



classmates in the attic when he fell in love with Galina, a student of the Belarusian State University Faculty of Philology, the daughter of the first secretary of Dubrovensky district party committee. For several years, he pretended to be a prosperous gallant cavalier, no worse than a city one. He lived with her all his life afterwards.

After graduating from college with a red diploma, Sharangovich entered the Belarusian Theatre and Art Institute, the newly formed department of graphics. Graphic artists had previously been trained throughout the USSR only in Leningrad, and the need for them was huge. Graphics meant



posters, fonts, flyers, lively cartoons, and book design... Therefore, the faculty that opened in Minsk attracted applicants from all republics of the Soviet Union.

“In 1962, in the first semester of the second year, I did a composition work on the topic ‘Illustrations for the *The Last Meeting* story by Yanka Bryl’, and it seems to me now that this predetermined my future fate in some way,” Vasily Sharangovich wrote in his memoirs. “During the semester, I completed a number of illustrations in the technique of two-colour lithography, and my work aroused certain interest, especially from our teacher Nikolai Gutiev, who was also the head of the editorial office of the Belarus Publishing House at that time...”

On the recommendation of Nikolai Gutsiev, the young artist was offered to illustrate a book by Ivan Muraveika in the Belarus publishing house and was paid a substantial fee for this work — one thousand rubles. Another man would have lived in a big way, but Sharangovich, out of the peasant habit, saved money for a rainy day, except for he finally got a decent suit for himself. After that, he worked on the design for the book of poems by Nil Gilevich *The Green Island*, then he got an offer to co-operate with the magazines *Maladost* and *Vyasyolka*, where artists were always needed.

It was Sharangovich who was the first Belarusian artist to illustrate *Vilna Communards* novel by Maksim Gorky. Being a passionate reader in love with his native language, he created illustrations for books by Yakub Kolas and Yanka

Kupala, Zmitrok Byadulya and Vladimir Korotkevich. Over the decades of work — more than 70 books! Yet, Sharangovich did not live by books alone, though his easel graphics grew out of his reading circle. For example, in the *Narochansky Land* series of linocuts the artist immortalised his fellow villagers and loved ones, while the *Memory of Fiery Villages* series resulted from the work on the *Confession of the Heart* book by poet Anton Belevich, dedicated to the Khatyn tragedy, and readings by Yanka Bryl and Ales Adamovich.

Childhood memories disturbed his soul. The artist remembered how the village where his mother’s relatives lived was burned. He remembered the terrible black lumps — all that remained of people burned alive. He remembered the thick smell clogging the throat and nose over the ashes. For the rest of his life, he could not stand it when street cleaners were burning fallen leaves in autumn.

In 1967, Sharangovich received an offer to become a teacher at his native institute. Afterwards, he headed the graphics department there. Later, he became a rector, a professor, and raised a whole galaxy of talented students. He twice refused to become Minister — Minister of Culture and Minister of Education. It was enough for him to be a rector. Most of all he was afraid that administrative work and social burden would take away from him the main thing — the opportunity to be an artist and do what he loved. In the 1990-ies, he flatly refused to immigrate to the United States, although they promised him mountains of gold, huge income and a personal mansion there.

Over the years of his tireless work, he raised the prestige of graphics to an unprecedented height. The competition to enter this department was crazy — young artists were eager to learn from Sharangovich, who in a casual and humble way, stood on a par with the best masters of the era. After all, who had given time and effort to graphics before him? They are Fernand Léger, Marc Chagall, who barely flashed across the Belarusian sky and bloomed like an exotic flower in Paris, Pablo Picasso — the real titans. Next to them, in the same row, the son of the Belarusian blacksmith, Vasily Sharangovich has remained forever.

The puck belongs in the goal

The President’s team won the fifth match in a row in the Republican Hockey League

The stands of the Minsk Olympic Arena, as always, were filled to capacity, and the decibels of public attention to what was happening on the ice spoke for themselves — the audience cheered loudly and emotionally all together — bright, lively and prolific hockey did not let anyone get bored for a minute

By Sergey Kanashits

The squad of the Head of State beat the team of Grodno Region with a score of 10:4. Aleksandr Lukashenko scored two assists. One of the best forwards in the history of Bela-russian hockey, Andrei Kostitsyn scored a hat-trick, while Nikolai Lukashenko scored two goal shots. The match kept everyone on the edge of their seats. At the beginning of the first pe-riod, the guests were more active — they did not lose courage in the face of a formidable opponent and

created quite a few dangerous moments. However, the hosts played cat and mouse with their rivals, first letting them feel free and then turning on a predatory instinct at the right moment to score a goal. Artyom Karkotsky from the winners’ team and Maksim Skiba from the guests’ team were recognised as the best players of the match. They were awarded prizes by the bronze medallist of the 2004 Olympics, eight-time world champion in track cycling and honoured master of sports, Natallia Tsyinskaya. Traditionally, the audience could enjoy



spectacular performances by popular singers during the match breaks. The most active fans took part in exciting contests right on the ice rink; the winners won prizes from the Presidential Sports Club. This time, as always, the audience was not left without a shower of gifts as the players of the President’s

team poured plush toys upon faithful hockey fans. In other matches of the day, the Minsk Region team defeated hockey players from Gomel Region — 9:1, and the representatives of Vitebsk Region in a stubborn struggle turned out to be stronger than the national team of Mogilev Region — 6:5.



In the fight — Iryna Kurachkina (left)

The 2024 European Wrestling Championships that just finished in Bucharest became one of the most successful tournaments for our team — two gold, one silver and four bronze medals! The top athletes of the women’s national team, the winners of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Vanesa Kaladzinskaya and Iryna Kurachkina demonstrated the best and the most scintillating performances. We can confidently say that both of them had no equals among the best representatives of European wrestling and were hands-down winners. In case you do not believe the words, check out the numbers: 32:3 and 37:6 — it was with these total scores that the Belarusian beauties defeated all their rivals. Remarkably enough, both Vanesa and Iryna made a hat-trick that was pleasant in all respects — from now on, they are three-time champions of the continent! Another prize-winner of the 2020 Olympics, Magomedkhabib Kadimagomedov, stopped a step away from the gold medal. In the final, he fought with another neutral athlete, the current world champion from Russia, Akhmed Usmanov, but alas, he lost in an exciting and very spectacular battle with the 6:9 score. Alesia Hetmanava and Veranika Ivanova returned home with bronze medals, as well as two representatives of Greco-Roman wrestling Kiryl Maskevich and Abubakar Khaslakhana. Bravo!

The 2024 European Weightlifting Championships has come to an end in Sofia. Our weightlifters reached the finish line with a solid catch — in the double event, Evgeny Tikhontsov won the gold medal, Suzanna Volodko claimed a silver medal, and Pavel Khodasevich won

bronze. Petr Asayonak and Yulian Kurlovich clinched small bronze medals in the clean and jerk, and Yuliya Gulina secured a small silver medal in the snatch.

Let us move from the European-scale events to the global ones. The World Aquatics Championships held in Doha is over. Our athletes are not coming back empty-handed, either. Moreover, they have delighted us with historical achievements. The representatives of Belarus had never won medals in synchronised swimming before. Now, this page has been turned over as remarkable Vasilina Khandoshka won bronze in the solo programme. Belarusian swimmers also gave us joy a few times — the last one was quite a long time ago, though — with their awards from the international swimming pool of the world forum. Up until Saturday, no one managed to swim up to the podium in Doha despite being rather close. Ilya Shymanovich took 6th place in the 100 metre breaststroke and 10th in the 50 metre breaststroke; Alina Zmushka became 4th in the 200 metre breaststroke and 6th in the distance twice as short — both of them received an Olympic licence.

It is Anastasiya Shkurdai who managed to hit the jackpot in her last distance at the championship. She swam 200 metres



Anastasiya Shkurdai

Mind-blowing weekend

Belarusian athletes made a lot of noise last weekend

Just awesome! There is no other way to describe the performance of our athletes at the largest international competitions. Belarusians are gradually allowed to participate in top tournaments, although still in a neutral status, and our guys are taking full advantage of their chance. The athletes of the Belarusian national team decided not to squeeze modestly through a slightly opened narrow crack due to political sanctions, but kicked the door wide open.

on her back like a rocket and was the third to touch the pool side. Right there, however, she had to face shameful discrimination — the Belarusian was invited neither to the podium of honour after the finish line, nor to the flash zone interview — neutral athletes do not have this right. Yet, no one can take away the legitimately earned medal from the Belarusian. Well done!

The FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2024 in Dubai, where the Belarusian national team performs under its own flag and without any discrimination, looks like a ray of light in the dark political realm that has absorbed

sports. And you should have seen their performance! The charges of Nicolas Alvarado started the group tournament with two brilliant victories, one by one breaking the resistance of the Senegal team that took fourth place at the last World Cup — 6:4, and Japan, a silver medalist of the last championship — 3:1. Thus, not only did our guys secure a place in the playoffs ahead of schedule, but they will also enter the quarterfinals from the first place in the group! This is the third consecutive participation in the final round of the world championship for the Belarusian national team, and it is for the first time that it has managed to overcome the barrier of the preliminary stage. The Tuesday’s match against the Colombian team had the status of a training match for Belarusians, with the main thoughts focused on the upcoming quarterfinal match. Indeed, can anything stop the highly-skilled masters who are on the roll and believe in themselves?



Goalkeeper Mikhail Avgustov and the rest of the Belarusian team dealt a defeat to the silver medalists of last year’s championship, the Japanese



Anna Kasper

Photo of the week

Young people take an active part in the elections

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On February 24th, 1466, the official history of lotteries in Europe began. The raffle was arranged in Bruges (Belgium) by the widow of the

artist Jan van Eyck. Special dice for drawing lots were found as far back as ancient Assyrian and Egyptian graves. In Russian, the word 'lottery' appeared in the early 18th century. Following the word, the lottery came to Russia. Starting from the royal court, it spread wider. Nowadays, lotteries do not lose their popularity.

On February 24th, 1582, Pope Gregory XIII issued a papal bull on the transition to a new, astronomically more accurate calendar, which became known as the 'Gregorian' in contrast to the former, 'Julian', introduced back in 45 BC by Julius Caesar. The Gregorian calendar gives a much better approximation to the tropical year.



February 24th, 1938 is the date when the world's first toothbrush with artificial synthetic fiber was produced. Devices like a toothbrush were used by the peoples of Asia, Africa, and South America in the 4-3 centuries BC. The first written mention of a toothbrush is found in the English press in the middle

of the 17th century. Early brushes had natural bristles. Nowadays, such products are practically not produced — synthetic fiber is much more hygienic and easier to process.



On February 24th, 1974, the Republican Centre for Olympic Training in Winter Sports Raubichi was opened. This facility is designed for training and competitions in biathlon, cross-country skiing and Nordic combined, ski jumping, slalom, speed skating, freestyle skiing, snowboarding. It is the main training centre for Belarusian athletes and national teams in winter sports. Raubichi annually hosts national competitions.

On February 25th, 1919, the Central Executive Committee of the BSSR resolved to establish the Belarusian State University. The organisational work on its opening was delayed due to the temporary occupation of Minsk. On October 30th, 1921, a solemn meeting was held to mark the beginning of classes.

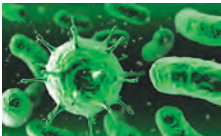


On February 26th, 1935, Scottish physicist Robert Watson Watt demonstrated the first radar — a system for detecting air, sea, and ground objects. The invention of a new



experiments on radio communication between ships, discovered the phenomenon of radio waves reflection from the ship.

On February 26th, 1878, the term 'microbe' was introduced into scientific circulation. Microorganisms is the name of a collective group of living organisms that are too small to be visible to the naked eye. Ilya Mechnikov was one of the founders of the world and Russian microbiology. The term 'microbe' was coined by French philologist Emile Littré (fr. microbe, from the Greek μικρός — small and βίος — life).



February 27th is International Polar Bear Day. It was established on the initiative of Polar Bears International, an American non-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation of the dwindling polar bear population. Polar bears can only be found in the Arctic, near the North Pole. The polar bear is listed in the International Red Book.



On February 27th, 1997, the successful cloning of a mammal was announced. Embryologist and genetic engineer Ian Wilmut (Scotland) published an article in the issue of the English *Nature* journal, where he talked about the successful experiment on cloning Dolly the sheep.

February 27th, 1887 is the date of birth of Pyotr Nesterov, a Russian military pilot, the founder of aerobatics, a legend of Russian aviation and a talented aircraft designer. In 1913, he performed the 'dead loop' for the first time in the world, later called the 'Nesterov loop'. He is the author of many original ideas and projects that were significantly ahead of their time. Nesterov died on September 8th, 1914 in an air battle during the First World War, becoming the first pilot to use an aerial ramming attack and shoot down an enemy aircraft in the practice of combat aviation.



On February 28th, 1913, Danish physicist Niels Bohr proposed a planetary model of atomic structure. The Bohr model, which assumes that electrons move around the atomic nucleus similar to the planets orbiting the Sun, made it possible to explain the chemical and optical properties of atoms. In 1922, Niels Bohr was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for this work.

