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Anton Stepanishchev

Students at Polotsk's State University, Kristina Parkhomchuk, Aleksandr Kozlov and Karina Zabello, are participants in the Polotsk Archaeological Team students' scientific society

Gaudeamus igitur

Every year on January 25th, students, including those in Belarus, celebrate their second holiday. After International Students' Day held in November, Tatiana's Day in January is no less valued by students all around the world. It was on this day in 1755 that the Empress Yelizaveta Petrovna signed a decree for the opening of a university in Moscow. Since then, Tatiana's Day, January 25th, when believers remember the Holy Martyr Tatiana, has become an official university holiday, and the patron saint of students.



Forest is our fortune



By Dmitry Umpirovich

A competent approach

The President spoke about the efficient approaches for the work of forestry representatives in the context of good results and indicators achieved last year by the woodworking industry. "After all, the forest is a source of raw material for that. You seem to have done a good job in addressing the waste processing problems and tasks that I set for you. We have had a lot of bark beetles in recent years, we had to cut down a lot of trees for preventive action," he said.

Hit the gas

Low-quality timber is actually in demand both abroad and in the domestic market, and a proper business plan is the key. "We have installed pellet plants and started producing the most valuable fuel. As you report, everything is contracted, and all these enterprises have turned in a profit. There will always be a demand for these products which are profitable

Forestry industry under President's control

The pandemic and other challenges of the past year have failed to shake the position of forestry in the country's economy. Furthermore, in terms of revenue and exports, the industry actually produced a historic high last year, thereby giving the expression 'forest is our fortune' a new meaning. At the Palace of Independence, where Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Subbotin and Forestry Minister Vitaly Drozhzha came to report, the talk focused not only on the results but also on new prospects.

Aleksandr Lukashenko described the current situation as follows, "The industry is working steadily, despite the difficult situation with the pandemic... I'm also pleased to notice that you are bringing in twice as much income as you have received in money for development. This is a very good indicator. This is what we dreamt about 15-20 years ago."

DIRECT SPEECH

Aleksandr Lukashenko on the country's forest wealth:

Forests, which are the most valuable renewable resource, cover about 40 percent of Belarus' territory. This makes up almost half of the latter. Since Belarus became an independent state, the forest area has been expanded by almost 1m hectares. This suggests that we are not exploiters and that we cherish our God-given natural resources. The volume of root and branch wood has reached almost 2bn cubic metres, which is great! The share of mature and ancient forests has exceeded 20 percent of total stock. Importantly, we've restored what was lost in the times of the Soviet Union when all commercial timber was taken out of the country by train. It was chopped, transported, shipped to Germany or Romania and returned to Belarus in the form of furniture. Back then, the share of mature forests was 3 percent, while now it amounts to 20 percent.

for us. Why should this low-quality wood rot in the forest? We will process it into firewood and sell it with high profitability. Europe is buying today, and not only Europe. We ourselves need to cover the demand to replace natural gas for heat-

ing. Why should we burn an imported resource, while this huge supply is under our feet? I support wholeheartedly your proposal that we need to determine in the future how much of this firewood will be harvested, in pellets and wood chips for

domestic needs. We must heat houses, villages, agricultural towns, cities with firewood. We have enough of this renewable resource. In this way, we can reduce the consumption of natural gas, for which we pay a considerable amount of money."

"We will calculate the feasibility of the decision to switch from gas to wood chips, pellets, briquettes and so on, and appropriate decisions will be made," Minister Vitaly Drozhzha later told reporters.

Trees are grown here

The Minister invited the Head of State to visit a new greenhouse complex at the Republican Forest Selection and Seed Centre, which has already been appreciated by Russian partners. "Completely advanced technologies for growing planting material are found there. We are already going further than before, growing planting material and creating 50 percent of Belarusian forests with selective planting material. Geneticists and breeders are already working on this task," he said.

Investments for development

The President's meetings with Government leaders are already a well-established practice. These focus on the discussion of decisions and draft documents that are submitted to the Head of State for consideration; there are four decrees and one law on this occasion, relating to the formation of a 2021 investment programme and the implementation of some of the most significant projects. In addition, the issues of improving the economic entities' activities, the development of the electric power industry and agro-ecotourism were proposed for consideration. Before beginning the conversation, Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded participants of the fundamental fact, "My approaches to most issues are well known. When discussing the proposed topics, expediency, economic efficiency and social justice should be at the forefront."

Topical proposals

The Head of State called all the issues proposed for discussion unambiguously relevant, meaning they all required prompt decisions. "Otherwise, we'll slow down the development of a specific sector of the economy, which would mean

a change of pace overall. This should not happen, there should also be no mistakes made."

The President added that he had not immediately signed a state investment programme for the first time, stressing that it might be comprised of too many social projects. "How accurate and ideal is this list?" Aleksandr Lukashenko asked. "Are there no excesses in it? Is the financing of each facility justified?"

The Head of State also raised similar questions regarding a number of commercial projects, "There is no free money, especially for the areas that should generate income independently. Any delay in their implementation means financial losses for which someone will be forced to pay. It's important to finish what has begun. If this is not possible, then we must postpone it for at least another year since the next year is uncertain to say the least. Nobody in the Government is able to tell me what the year will entail. Therefore, we shouldn't take risks."

As for the update on legislation regarding the activity of economic entities, this includes the provisions that, through financial recovery measures, will improve the economic condition of enterprises, attract additional capital and encourage managers to ensure effective development. Re-

garding this the President made an important comment, "We have conceptually decided on privatisation; and this has been accepted by our people. You are welcome to have full freedom on private property development, or private-state partnerships. However, do not touch the work which has been done by the people!"



A working scene at the meeting

Benefits are in place where they are needed

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted the dynamic development of agro-ecotourism, stating that, in recent years, a virtually new sector of the economy has emerged thanks to the conditions that have been created. In 14 years, the number of agro-ecotourism facilities have increased 80 times (from 34 to almost 3,000) and, in 2020, they welcomed over 500,000 guests. The President emphasised, "Tourism services have become very popular among our guests and Belaru-

sians. The Government proposes to extend the current conditions for eco-farmsteads and to maintain concessional lending until 2030... We need to support it. As we set all programme plans for a maximum of five years, let's limit ourselves to five years..."

The Government was tasked to study the functioning of

agro-farmsteads, investigating their activity is worthy of the credit they are given.

Harsh measures for failure to pay taxes

The topic of the complete and timely payment of taxes was also on the agenda and Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke about the need to introduce the most stringent measures for their lack of payment. The corresponding actions in developed democracies could act as an example and the Head of State said, "They have tough tax regulations and punish harshly

for non-payment of taxes. In our country, we have entire sectors hiding in the shadows, and we seem to have no issues with that."

As the Economy Minister, Aleksandr Chervyakov, noted, the country's GDP annually fails to reach 12-18 percent due to illegal business schemes.

Projects to ensure reward

Despite the economic focus of the meeting, the social aspect was also high on the agenda. The construction of facilities in this area, as well as engineering infrastructure, is a priority of the state investment programme. On the one hand, such facilities are key to the development of human capital, and the creation of conditions for business, on the other.

Aleksandr Chervyakov noted, "We are getting the opportunity to review and leave in the state programme those projects that will soon show a decent return."

As the Minister explained, the return stands for creation of new jobs, receipt of taxes to local budgets and support in the underperforming areas. He added that resources should be concentrated in the areas which are of special interest: healthcare, transport infrastructure, energy and land reclamation. These will receive the main bulk of the funding.

Based on materials of sb.by

Technologies for new opportunities

Belarus' President approved introduction of biometric documents, but asked for refining of some points



The issues regarding the introduction of biometric documents in Belarus were discussed at a meeting with the Head of State. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the work in this field has been in progress for a long time, stating, “The Government and its officials are reporting that everything is ready: information systems have been created, necessary equipment has been purchased and awareness-building activities with our population have been conducted. We are theoretically ready to start handing out ID cards and new passports from tomorrow, but we need to develop the necessary legal regulations and sign a corresponding decree. Naturally, if we introduce something new into society and the economy, the appropriate legal and regulatory documents are needed.”

The President stressed that this innovation is expected to affect everyone, but Belarusians should get additional opportunities rather than problems thanks to this technology. “As I’m informed, the introduction of

REFERENCE

Since 2016, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation and the Finance Ministry have been working on the development of biometric documents and the establishment of the Belarusian Integrated Service and Calculation System (BISRS). This large-scale project requires modernisation and integration of information resources of all state bodies for its implementation. New documents will be produced in the Interior Ministry’s Centre of Biometric Documents Personalisation on the basis of Cryptotech RUE of Goznak.

biometric passports will give an impetus to the development of electronic services, facilitate certain procedures and increase the degree of protection from fake documents,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said, adding, “The fact that we are promoting the development of electronic services is good but, judging by the latest events, I



strongly doubt that it will make us more protected from fake documents. Therefore, for various reasons, I have decided to discuss this matter with the participation of a wide range of interested developers, for this draft decree which should regulate the application of biometric documents in general, and passports in particular... We shouldn’t lose sight of the difficulties that the people and organisations may face when obtaining new documents and subsequently using them.”

According to the President, it is also important that all organisational and technical aspects are taken into account, “Will we not create obstacles for the implementation of people’s rights? Will we manage to ensure the protection of their personal data? All these issues should be thoroughly analysed before the introduction of the new documents”. The Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Communications and Informatisation have been authorised to co-ordinate the process.

As a result of the discussion, Aleksandr Lukashenko generally approved the introduction of biometric documents in the country, but some points required further analysis and refinement. The date from which such documents will be issued has not yet been determined; it will be proposed to the President in the draft decree when all the factors are taken into account.

After the meeting, Interior Minister Ivan Kubrakov told reporters that the Interior Ministry system is ready for the issuing of biometric passports, but the Head of State raised additional issues that need to be worked out. One of the proposals is to finalise the biometric passport intended for travel abroad, for use within the country.

As for the issue of personal data protection, it is organised at a high level, the Minister emphasised.

Based on materials of sb.by

The secrets and achievements of diplomacy

The *Diplomacy Secrets and Achievements* exhibition of the Presidential Library of Belarus — timed to coincide with the Diplomats’ Day — has opened at the Foreign Ministry. Belarus’ Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei spoke at the ceremony, congratulating his colleagues on their professional holiday.

By Anna Kosar

According to the Minister, the past year was difficult for Belarusian diplomacy, especially in connection with the epidemiological situation. However, despite this, the Foreign Ministry managed to implement many important projects.

Vladimir Makei noted that the exhibition is unique, clearly demonstrating the retrospective and current trends in the foreign policy of Belarus. “The exhibits reflect the activities of the Republic in the international arena as a sovereign state pursuing an independent foreign policy, from a pragmatic position of protecting national interests, while also providing a real contribution to solving glob-

al and regional problems. I’d like to thank the entire staff of the Presidential Library for the opportunity to look into our history and to feel the deep roots of the traditions of Belarusian diplomacy through these artifacts,” he noted.

The exhibition presents materials from the archive of old printed and rare editions, covering the origins of diplomatic relations in Belarus, starting from the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The later period of the development of Belarusian diplomacy, starting from 1727, is reflected in the pages of the multivolume work, entitled *Documents and Materials on the History of Belarus* (editions of 1936, 1940, 1953).

Furthermore, rare editions are also of great interest: *The Collection of Consular Reports, Issue III* (1898), *The Collection of Secret Documents from the Archives of the Former Foreign Minister* (1917), *10 Years of Soviet Diplomacy* (1927), *International Relations in the Era of Imperialism* (1938), and *The Collection of Existing Treaties, Agreements and Conventions Concluded by Foreign States, Issue IX* (1938).

The event also displays autobiographical data about Belarusian diplomats from the time of the USSR and diplomatic documentation from the First and Second World Wars, alongside literature that comprehensively reflects modern trends in Belarus’ foreign policy.



People at the centre of attention



A happy family, strong regions and a smart country: authors of the draft social and economic development programme of Belarus until 2025 explain the strategic directions of this important document

By Polina Konoga, Maksim Osipov, Vasily Gedroits, Vladimir Volchkov

In a digital format

A detailed description of the main goals of the draft social and economic development programme was presented by Economy Minister Aleksandr Chervyakov. Its developers identified four priorities: a happy family, strong regions, a smart country and the state as a partner.

At the same time, the Minister stressed that the state would continue to maintain its social orientation, focusing on the growth of citizens' well-being, "The key focus will be attributed to the population's income, employment, prices, housing affordability and high-tech services in healthcare and education."

It is planned that the GDP growth over the five-year period will reach 21.5 percent. The real disposable income of people will increase by 20 percent, investment — by 22 percent. Exports of goods and services will exceed \$50bn in 2025.

Another feature of the draft programme was outlined by the Minister as follows, "In the economy, we will continue to develop the industrial potential in traditional branches, industry and agriculture, though on a new technological and digital basis. The third feature envisages the formation of new high-tech industries and enterprises."

Seven digital industry platforms are planned to be created for the digital transformation of the Belarusian economy; these will embrace such branches as mechanical engineering, communications, transport and education. These standard platforms will become the basis for the introduction of digital technologies to the industrial and social spheres.

Medicine in the regions will also become more high-tech in the upcoming five-year period.

Regional development

In the draft programme, a separate section is devoted to regional development and, as Aleksandr Chervyakov explained, "It aims to reduce differences in the level and quality of life of people in our regions. Regional centres and cities with the population of more than 80,000 people are to become centres of development. They will be the locations for industrial sites prepared according to the 'last mile' principle, with ready-made engineering infrastructure. In small and medium-sized cities and rural areas, we will focus on the in-depth processing of local resources, agricultural products, and the establishment of enterprises on this basis."

Corporate approach

In Belarus, a new organisational structure with state corporations based on the integration of production chains from the raw material producer to the final product is planned.

"Primarily, this will make it possible to combine resources and cut costs, to solve issues related to the financial recovery of some organisations in a new way, to increase the return on state assets, but first of all, by improving their management system. The ultimate goal is to build a rational scheme of interaction between enterprises in order to create and sell not just a product but a complete product complex, to join the markets of systems and machines, as well as the systems of warranty and post-warranty service.

fective employment, sustainable income growth and taking care of the older generation. The priority is a happy family."

Stimulating the birth rate and strengthening the institution of a traditional family will also be important priorities. The family capital programme, which has already proved its effectiveness, will continue to develop. According to Irina Kostevich, there are a number of proposals for using the capital ahead of schedule.

In addition, there will be incentives for the birth of second and subsequent

the construction of individual housing without the availability of engineering and transport infrastructure will help solve the problem of mass long-term construction.

One of the housing policy directions will be the development of satellite cities and the principle of reverse migration of population to small and medium-sized cities.

All new housing will be energy efficient. The commissioning of multi-apartment residential buildings using electric energy for water heating and cooking will make up at least 30 percent of the total volume of housing built by the end of the five-year period.

It is planned to expand the availability of housing for rental, stimulating its volume through market mechanisms, including the attraction of private capital.

The Minister also drew attention to an important point,

"Housing prices will be given close attention. The average cost of a square metre, built with state support, will not exceed the average salary in the country in the 5-year period. This set parameter has remained stable for the last 4 years. As a result, the level of residential space will be at least 28.5 square metres per person by 2025."

The realisation of the housing policy will take place through the development of areas with an emphasis on creating environmentally friendly living conditions, a comfortable living environment, the preservation of existing natural complexes, as well as the development of a barrier-free environment.

'Green' construction

Implementation of the principles of 'green' construction will be carried out by the development of appropriate national standards, and the voluntary certification of construction and facilities according to these standards, which will reduce the burden of the construction process and constructed facilities on the environment. It will be realised through the introduction of new information technologies that will make it possible to create a unified environment for interaction between state agencies, investors, local authorities, operating, construction and other organisations. This approach is realised through a state construction portal which will start functioning this year.

According to the Minister, these measures will not only reduce the project implementation time and improve quality, but also increase the investment appeal of the construction industry, as well as create better opportunities to enter foreign markets for Belarusian construction products.

'Green' technologies that contribute to the sustainable development of industry and reduce the burden on the environment will not pass by the construction materials industry.

Belarus' goals and priorities in 2021-2025

Belarus' main development goal in 2021-2025 is to ensure social stability and increase the well-being of citizens by means of ensuring qualitative economic growth, building up social capital, creating comfortable conditions for life, work and self-fulfillment.



The key tasks are to reduce the dependence of economic growth on hydrocarbons, to increase export potential with the help of high-tech goods, to launch a new investment cycle.

The programme is expected to yield the following main results:



GDP growth in real terms in 2025 - at least 1.2 times



increasing life expectancy to 76.5 years;



capital investment growth by more than 1.2 times;



increase in the export of goods and services - over \$50 billion in 2025;



increase in the real disposable income of people by 1.2 times, including an increase in pensions above the inflation rate;



increase in industrial productivity by 1.3 times.

To achieve these goals, the country's development will be based on key priorities:



HAPPY FAMILY



STRONG REGIONS



SMART COUNTRY



STATE AS A PARTNER

* Hereinafter - as from 2020

Source: Draft social and economic development programme of the Republic of Belarus for 2021-2025

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In the new five-year period, cluster creation is planned: this innovation will unite science, private business and large companies in order to create an innovative product.

A happy family is a priority

Strengthening the family institution, promoting employment, decent salaries and active longevity are the main areas for Belarus' social and economic development in the coming five years. The Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Irina Kostevich, tells us more, "The focus is on the people and the level and quality of their lives. The main directions are defined. These include strengthening the demographic potential, promoting ef-

fective employment, sustainable income growth and taking care of the older generation. The priority is a happy family."

Housing: new and affordable

In the new five-year period, more attention will be paid to the construction of individual housing. According to the Minister of Architecture and Construction, Ruslan Parkhamovich, a complex of individual houses is planned to be constructed by one developer, including to streamline and improve the architectural appearance of settlements. The establishment of a moratorium on the allocation of land plots to citizens for

Far reaching plans



On the way to the IZVESTINSKOE deposit

Oil Company Yangpur JSC, Belorusneft's northern asset, to increase gas extraction up to 1m cubic metres a year which would be enough to satisfy domestic demand

As Belorusneft's press service has announced, in 2020, Yangpur extracted 215,000 tonnes of oil and over 870m cubic metres of associated gas and natural gas, the largest volume on record since the company's opening. Despite pandemic-related complications, the company operated successfully last year and plans to increase its record high figures.

Yangpur's Director, Aleksandr Polyakov, says the company works scrupulously in all the assets and areas, including prospective work, development and the selection of necessary technologies. The combination produces the desired positive effect. In 2020, the company arranged a geological exploration of the Zapadno-Izvestinskaya area, geotechnical work at the Osenneye field and other fields.

The company's gas division demonstrated the fastest growth in 2020: where natural gas extraction tripled. In turn, the Metelnoye oil, gas and condensate field, which was discovered in 2015, accounted for the bulk of the output.

According to Mr. Polyakov, it usually takes about seven years to complete geological exploration, reservoir testing, appraisal, drilling and well development, design documentation, land acquisition, gas field construction, and, finally, build a connection

to a Gazprom pipeline. "Lots has been done. We worked step by step and ahead of schedule. We promptly prepared and approved design documents. We sometimes took risks, but it is difficult to produce commercial results

of the Metelnoye field. It made it possible to sell an extra 1m cubic metres of natural gas per day to the Gazprom system.

At present, the Metelnoye oil, gas and condensate field operates 11 wells, producing 3m

development technologies, while work on a feasibility study of infrastructure construction is in progress.

Mr. Polyakov explains, "Our daily extraction potential is 3.5m cubic metres of natural gas. Ex-

diesel fuel both via long-term direct contracts and via the St. Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange. It's a new scheme for Belarusian oil companies, but many aspects have already been tried and tested. Since 2016, the company has been participating in exchanges as a trader to sell natural gas and oil products. Over this period, Yangpur sold over 1bn cubic metres of its own natural gas. New forms of trade are being explored and the volume of gas sales is growing steadily, doubling in 2020. It is certain that Yangpur is becoming a more noticeable player in this market."

Specialists describe the Oil Company Yangpur as the driver of growth of Belorusneft's daughter enterprises in Western Siberia. The northern company can already be compared to Belorusneft's oil and gas extracting enterprise Rechitsaneft in Belarus. "One of the strategic goals is to exceed the extraction of hydrocarbons in Belarus by 2026. Furthermore, we are about to explore the Yuzhno-Tydeotinsky licensed site, which was bought a year ago. There are plans to buy other areas adjacent to Yangpur's assets," the press service added.

Based on materials of belta.by



The main volume is ensured by the Metelnoye oil, gas and condensate field discovered in 2015

without them," he adds.

The infrastructure was also built rapidly. A gas field was commissioned in 2019 and the third natural gas treatment process line has already been built, in addition to a gas well condensate stabilisation installation at the second line and infrastructure at the third well cluster. The latter produces the bulk of the output

cubic metres of natural gas daily and over 240 tonnes of gas condensate. While the main major gas and gas condensate deposits have already been successfully commissioned, last year was the first time an oil deposit was found at the Metelnoye field. The facility produces 20 tonnes of oil daily. Specialists are busy selecting proper drilling-out and

traction is not a problem now, but the output capacity of the gas pipelines is, as well as access to the Gazprom system which limits gas transportation volume. Our potential is being evaluated, by how much we can increase our share in the Gazprom system."

Yangpur also reported good sales last year. "The company sells oil, gas condensate, gas and

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus' chairmanship period in Eurasian Economic Union hailed as fruitful



Iya Malkina, Aide to the Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), said during a briefing, "The tasks were ambitious, and despite unavoidable challenges, most of the points on the plan to implement the policies of Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko were fulfilled during this year."

Iya Malkina highlighted the adoption of several documents for the transition to a uniform or common policy in agriculture, energy, transport, the study of the possibility of using anti-dumping and compensatory and special measures to protect the economic interests of manufacturers in the EAEU. Based on the results of Belarus' chairmanship in the EAEU, by 2025, the EEC Board, together with the member states, will develop and approve more than 30 documents from the EAEU bodies.

Belarus is ready to completely produce its own electric vehicle

This was announced by the Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences, Vladimir Gusakov, commenting on the draft comprehensive programme for the development of electric transport for 2021-2025.



"We are now ready, with investments, to create our own electric vehicle based on our own developments," said Vladimir Gusakov.

According to the official, several models of batteries are being tested for the Belarusian electric vehicle: lithium-ion, graphene-lead and graphene. "Lithium-ion batteries are very expensive; in passenger cars the battery makes up half the cost of the car and possibly more. Furthermore, lithium will rise in price due to the fact that supplies are limited and are mainly concentrated in China and a few other countries," he explained.

Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park and National Airport Minsk sign a memorandum of co-operation in the field of logistics

The parties will jointly work on interfacing air transport with rail and road transport within the Park's logistics zone. The agreement also provides interaction on the construction of transport and logistics infrastructure with the attraction of investments. Moreover, among the main areas of collaboration are the organisation



of transport links and the arrangement of the docking zone between the territories of the Park and the airport.

The parties take into account partner interests in the implementation of projects. The Great Stone and the airport have an interconnected power supply and road networks. It is planned that a railway line will pass through the Great Stone which will connect Minsk and the airport.

A new bird species for Belarus spotted near Grodno: the Caroline duck

"Severe frosts and a large amount of snow, in this weather you can see bird species that are usually rare in our country. Many birds try to stay near open water reservoirs; it's easier to spot rare birds there. Sometimes there are surprises: i.e. a Caroline duck was observed on the Nieman River in January for the first time. In neighbouring Lithuania and Poland, such birds have been repeatedly seen in the wild, but for Belarus this is the first," said the APB-BirdLife Belarus public organisation.

The Caroline duck is a North American species found in zoos and private collections in Europe. Originally from Amer-



ica, these birds have so far only reached Iceland. All other encounters with these birds in the wild on the Eurasian continent are considered to be sightings of those escaped from captivity.

Glorious history remembered

By Olga Korneeva

The restoration work on the monument began in June 2020 according to the project of the Union State *Overhaul, Restoration and Museumisation of the Structures of the Brest Fortress* and was carried out in two stages. At first, specialists proceeded to directly restore the fort, starting with the cleaning of the left side of the rear barracks, the walls, facades and ventilation ducts. In order to create an exhibition, heating was installed and the roof of the barracks was waterproofed. Old windows and doors were replaced by new ones.

After the completion of the first stage of work, the next phase was launched: the creation of an exhibition in the renovated building. Previously, several of the towers housed temporary exhibitions reflecting the history of the fort. Now everything is organised on a larger scale: the new exposition occupies six halls.

Another museum has been set up in Brest Fortress, located in the rear barracks. The new exhibition spans six halls. The first one details the history of fortifications on Belarusian territory. The second is dedicated to Brest Fortress in the fortification system on the western borders of the Russian Empire while the third room describes the modernisation of the citadel over the Bug River in the early 20th century and the construction of two forts.

“Three more halls are a historical reconstruction. They clearly show how the premises of the fort, residential areas for soldiers, the office, the armoury and the washroom looked at the beginning of the 20th century, when the sixth company of the Brest-Lithuanian fortress artillery was stationed there. Part of the exhibition is located outside the barracks extending to the rear caponier, a central pass and a powder cellar,” explains Aleksandr Korkotadze, who leads the Fort No. 5 branch of the Brest Fortress. “The restoration was carried out in such a way as to disturb the authenticity of the fort as little as possible. For example, there is a two-storey caponier here. There are no others like that in the Brest Fortress, this is why it’s unique. Furthermore, this is the first fortification site in Belarus to become a museum.”

Fort No. 5 is one of the best-preserved forts in the Brest Fortress, located about 3.5km from the core of the memorial complex.

“Fort No. 5 will continue to chronicle the multifaceted and majestic his-



Pavel Bogush

tory of the Brest Fortress. It will become another symbol of memory, respect and the deep recognition for the immortal feats of the Soviet soldiers who passed through the hard times of war and won the Great Victory,” said the Culture Minister, Anatoly Markevich. “Today we live under a peaceful sky, but we always remember the lessons from the most brutal war in the history of the country and mankind. The glorious history of this place will never be forgotten.”



BELTA



Pavel Bogush

The restoration of Fort No. 5 completed the three-year programme of activities for the Union State at the Brest Fortress. “During this time, nine sites have been restored, with three museum expositions being opened. Lots of hard work has been done. I

have no doubt that this is not the end, but a marker of the good deeds that our generation should do in memory of the defenders of the Fatherland,” emphasised the Director of the Brest Hero-Fortress Memorial, Grigory Bysyuk.

This year is special for the legendary citadel above the River Bug. June marks 80 years since the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. In September, the 50th anniversary of the memorial complex will be celebrated while November will see the 65th anniversary of the Brest Fortress Defence Museum.

A fun-filled interactive museum devoted to the Grodno Region’s history and nature will soon be launched at the former Palace of Textile Workers’ Culture in the regional centre. The project for the future exhibition has already been presented.

From the palace to the museum



grodno.in

The building of the former Palace of Textile Workers’ Culture

By Irina Sergeeva

The building of the former Palace of Textile Workers’ Culture, in Sovetskaya Square, is known not only to Grodno citizens but also visitors to the city. It was constructed in the 1950s and the

external reconstruction was recently completed. Grodnograzhdanproekt Institute is now overseeing the design and estimate documentation to ensure adaptation of the building for a museum.

Specialists at the Grodno State Historical and Archaeological Museum

have developed a concept for the future exhibition; it will reflect the history and nature of the Grodno Region. The Belarusian Union of Artists has presented the museum’s art project.

“It will not be a boring museum. Along with the unique exhibits, inter-

active zones will be organised — using touch screens and modern technologies. The proposed concept will be of interest to residents of the city and visiting tourists, adults and children,” believe staff of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee’s Culture Department.



kultura.grodno.by

A project of Grodno Region’s flora and fauna hall



A project of nature exhibition hall

Some say that people who believe in fairy tales will one day find themselves in one. In Glubokoe, the fairy tale is being created by the people: *Lyalka. Bai*, brainchild of the local Centre of Children and Youth and winner of the Republican contest of innovative projects, is a clear example.



Yekaterina Kurdo and Lyubov Ragilo, among the authors of the *Lyalka. Bai* project, have created dolls which are able to sing and talk

Anton Stepanishchev

INSIDE

Toys with a touch of Belarus

An unusual project from Glubokoe is likely to become a successful brand for the country



Anton Stepanishchev

By Anna Naumova

A creative idea

The name was perfectly chosen: the Decorative Design association, led by Irina Pachkovskaya, and the Alisa model fashion theatre proposed to make and sell handmade dolls that speak and sing in Belarusian. Oksana Shpakova, the Director of the *Lyalka. Bai* project and methodologist at the Centre of Children and Youth, recalls, “The idea began during the summer, at an educational holiday camp. While making the souvenirs, we had an idea: what if we gave our dolls a voice? We decided that while there are a lot of toys with sound effects today, there are none with our native language: we’ll be the first to change this. Through fairy tales, songs and lullabies, we want to introduce children to our national folklore, to help them develop their musical ear and creative abilities.”

There are many reasons for Ms. Shpakova’s determination: the Belarusian Innovation Fund has selected *Lyalka. Bai* for further development into a business, allocating an impressive sum of over 15,000 Roubles for the expansion of the project.

Zoya Kostyukevich, the Director of the Centre of Children and Youth, plans to use the money for this purpose. She explains, “We are in need of sewing machines, an overlocker and a cutting table. For our idea to bring in profit, we have thoroughly prepared in advance. We wrote out a business plan and thought about where and how to promote our dolls. They are not simply cute: they are educational toys that will

speak, Ms. Shpakova says, “Inside the dolls are portable speakers that are easy to control from a mobile phone. For example, the mother could be busy, and Veselinka can be keeping the baby thoroughly entertained.”

For convenience, the song can be switched off via Bluetooth, or any educational material from the Internet can be played remotely. She added that an experiment had been held recently, “Thanks to an electrician from the local electricity company, Sergei Kuzmich, Splyusha will work using a new mechanism. We can now bring it to life with a single touch, by simply pressing a button.”

More than one generation is familiar

The *Lyalka. Bai* project has already managed to make a name for itself at the Republican *100 Ideas for Belarus* youth contest. The traditional and innovative dolls from Glubokoe were a great attraction. Ms. Shpakova is thankful to the Glubokoe District Executive Committee’s Education Department and the Vitebsk Regional Committee of the BRSM for this, whose support helped promote the dolls. “We presented them at the Youth Brand Day as a part of the *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk* festival and at a regional forum of the BRSM,” she says. This year, the project has been given new prospects, with a Belarus-style house, similar to the one used by Barbie.

It’s always exciting to show *Lyalka. Bai*, explain the young seamstresses at the Centre of Children and Youth: Yekaterina Kurdo, Yulia Atopkina, Oksana Rudak and Lyubov Ragilo. Yulia and Oksana are classmates and friends, who may come to find the project a little more beneficial than others. The 11th grade pupils dream of becoming elementary school teachers and they will hopefully one day be able to surprise children with their Belarusian dolls.

BY THE WAY

The Centre of Children and Youth in the Glubokoe District is rich in talent. Another of its residents’ projects, the *Traditions for the Future* collection of clothes, was selected for the *100 Ideas for Belarus* competition, results of which are yet to be announced. The patterns, based on artist Yazep Drozdovich’s motifs, are blossom on modern clothes. Thanks to this, students and teachers of the Centre have once again reminded of their famous countryman, one of the key figures in Belarusian culture and arts.



help organise creative classes in the kindergarten and elementary schools. Furthermore, these dolls would make an original present, for example, for foreign visitors.”

Colourful characters

Elements of the ornamentation on the doll’s outfits and, of course, the fairy tales and songs remind the customer of Belarus. Glubokoe’s artists are now offering to become involved with the three dolls, giving each an original name and a special character. Grandfather Bayun, who tells Belarusian fairy tales, is a wealth of folk wisdom. Quiet Splyusha, who falls asleep to a lullaby, has her eyes closed, while beautiful Veselinka is a true scamp, always ready to sing something joyful and lively.

In explaining what makes the dolls

with the melody that gave the toy its name: it’s ‘Kalykhanka’ [a lullaby] with the lines ‘...on dew shining splyush-stars are going out...’. When selecting tunes for *Lyalka. Bai*, several problems arose: there aren’t many children’s songs in Belarusian. Ms. Kostyukevich adds, “In the future, when we launch the commercial production of our dolls, we’d like them to sing using the voices of children from our vocal club.”

A similar idea has already been used when recording Veselinka’s more adventurous stories: the doll tells children about a tour around several sites in the Glubokoe District. The stories are amazing: one example describes the unusual monument to Baron Munchausen on a cannon, and the sculpture of the region’s most popular fruit, the cherry.

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US President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden watch fireworks from the White House after his inauguration as the 46th President of the United States



Members of the National Guard patrol near the US Capitol building

Without Trump and with unprecedented security measures

Joe Biden has been sworn in as the 46th US President, ending one of the most dramatic political transitions in American history

Some 25,000 National Guards were protecting the inauguration ceremony. Troops in riot gear lined the sidewalks, but there were no crowds. Armoured vehicles and concrete barriers blocked empty streets. Miles of fencing cordoned off many of the nation's most familiar landmarks.

Joe Biden was safely sworn in as President in a Washington on edge, two weeks after rioters loyal to former US President Donald Trump besieged the Capitol.

Law enforcement officials contended not only with the potential for outside threats but also with rising concerns about an insider attack. Officials monitored members of far-right extremist and militia groups, increasingly concerned about the risk they could stream into Washington and spark violent confrontations, a law enforcement official said.

In his inaugural address, Joe Biden said it was a day of 'history and hope'. "My whole soul is in putting America

back together again," he added. Highlighting a message of unity after the turbulent Trump years, he promised to be a President 'for all Americans' — including those who voted against him.

Mr. Trump left the White House for the last time as President shortly after 08:00. He boarded a helicopter, flew to the nearby Andrews Air Force base, and has arrived in Florida. He is the first President not to attend his successor's inauguration since 1869. Meanwhile,

Donald Trump has vowed he will be 'back in some form' after departing the White House for the final time as President.

Before leaving the White House, Donald Trump left a note for Joe Biden, a spokesman said, following one small bit of traditional protocol related to the peaceful transfer of power that Mr. Trump had otherwise eschewed. He has declined to mention Mr. Biden's name even as he wished the incoming administration luck on his way out of office.

Among those attending the ceremony were three of his predecessors: Barack Obama — under whom Mr. Biden served for eight years as vice-president — Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The ceremony included musical performances by Lady Gaga — who sang the national anthem — as well as Jennifer Lopez and Garth Brooks. Jennifer Lopez hit the inauguration stage in true J. Lo fashion: in a showstopping, high-glam look.

'Super bullet maglev' train

China has revealed a prototype for a new high-speed maglev train that is capable of reaching speeds of 620kph

The train runs on high-temperature superconducting power that makes it look as if the train is floating along the magnetised tracks.

The sleek 21m-long prototype was unveiled to media in the city of Chengdu, Sichuan Province. In addition, university researchers constructed 165m of track to demonstrate how the train would look and feel in transit.

Professor He Chuan, the Vice President of Southwest Jiaotong University, which worked on the prototype, said the train could be 'operational' within 3-10 years. He added, "Sichuan has rich rare earth resources, which is very beneficial to our construction of permanent magnet tracks, thus promoting the faster development of experiments."

China is home to the world's largest high-speed rail network, which stretches over 37,000km, and the fastest commercially operating train — the Shanghai maglev.



Series of disasters in Indonesia

Indonesia grapples with earthquake, flooding, landslides and fallout from Sriwijaya Air crash

The death toll from a powerful earthquake on Sulawesi island has jumped to 77, authorities said, with thousands left homeless as rescuers raced to find anyone still alive under mountains of rubble.

Meanwhile, flooding in South Kalimantan has killed more than a dozen people and displaced tens of thousands. Rescue workers are still looking for several missing and feared buried under the mud several days after landslides tore through a village in West Java.

Moreover, divers continue to search for victims and crucial data in the wreckage of Sriwijaya Air flight 182, which crashed in the Java Sea on January 9th, with 62 people on board.

Meanwhile, two volcanoes on the most populous island, Java, are spewing ash into the air, with hundreds of people evacuated from the slopes of Mount Merapi in recent weeks.

The string of grim events comes just a few weeks into 2021 and at a time when Indonesia is reporting record daily increases of Covid-19 cases while it embarks on a mass vaccination programme.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Shapes with character of iron

By Inna Gorbatenko

Attention to detail

Mighty and graceful aurochs wouldn't leave anyone indifferent. This giant, who is almost 2m tall and weighs 600-700kg, can be seen majestically strolling through Belovezhskaya Pushcha but, thanks to Vladimir Kanonik, it can also be met in Minsk's 17 Masyukovshchina Lane.

We are standing near a huge auroch sculpture which has long been a favourite object for photo shoots. The animal looks real! If we look closely, it's possible to see that the object is made of car parts.

"Any material that an artist takes comes to life," Vladimir Kanonik believes. "I'm a graphic artist by training and began with this. About 15 years ago, I began working with metal. When asked what the most difficult part about working with this material is, I answer that it is to create dynamic and emotional compositions so that they don't look like objects frozen in time but seem alive. In reality, my work is a combination of the work of an artist and an engineer."

The two-tonne auroch looks very majestic and monumental. While we are talking to the artist, some drivers who stop at the fuelling station, acknowledge the sculpture's realism and pause to take a photo with this metal giant.

The weather is windy today but the auroch is unmoving. "Its frame is installed on the foundation and then laid with paving slabs, which gives the impression that the auroch is slowly walking along the pavement. The construction is strong and stable. There have been no accidents with it," the sculptor explains.

However, there have been incidents involving some unscrupulous passers-by; they were so impressed with the object that decided to take a part or two from it. With this in mind, once a year, Vladimir Kanonik visits all his sculptures (there are about 30 of them now) and restores the 'victims' of vandals.

Cooler than Tony Stark's

The workshop where the artist gives life to his works is located on the outskirts of Fanipol. Here, together with Vladimir Kanonik, a team of five employees work. The artist seeks to make the country more beautiful by turning scrap metal into works of art.

"This might be a pile of iron junk for a layman, but I view this as a future art object. In my work, I use iron, bolts, nuts, spare parts of cars. We work as a well-co-ordinated team, so everything is made quickly. Most of the objects are made for the Belorusneft network of fuelling stations. Do you know how long it takes to create one object? No more than two months!" Vladimir says.

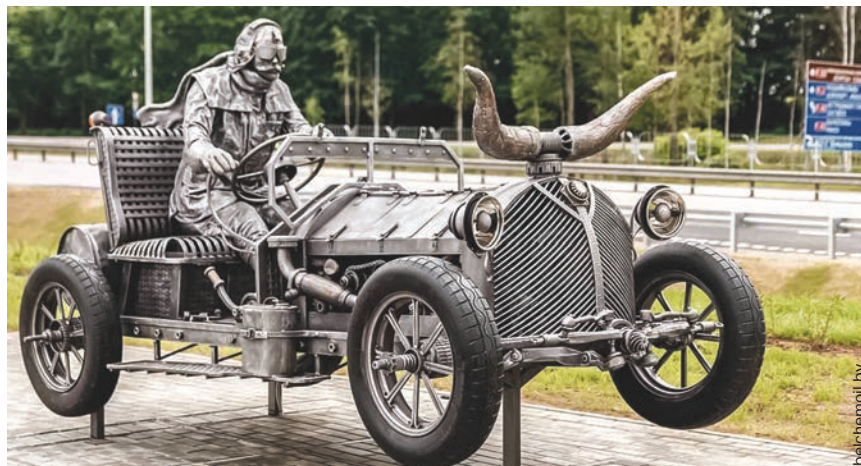
It all started with a stylised retro cabriolet with a real horn in Minsk's Sukharevo residential district. It is made to look like the car has stopped to fill up at an early 20th century pump. As soon as it appeared, the sculpture was immediately praised, and the process then continued. At present, Vladimir Kanonik's installations can be found in large and small cities countrywide: in parks, at fuelling stations and squares. Among his works is 'Pegasus' which has been popular with newlyweds for wedding photo shoots.

What should be done with an old scrap car? It seems wrong to sell it for a penny or simply throw it away as scrap metal. Vladimir Kanonik found an original way to give a second lease of life to a red Zhiguli car. In the skilful hands of the artist and his team, this legend of the Soviet automobile industry was reincarnated as a robot transformer which is not inferior in size



Vitaly Pivovarchik

Vladimir Kanonik, a well-known Belarusian artist from Fanipol, has been transforming car parts into artistic objects for 15 years. It is difficult to calculate how many of them have received a new life: the artist has turned old spare parts into recognisable figures from our history and legends. Vladimir's unusual works are impressive in scale and have already become the country's icons.



belchenoil.by

to the main character of the eponymous Hollywood film *Optimus Prime*. Instead of a skeleton it has doors and a roof, instead of lungs, headlights. The grandiose art object almost the height of two storeys was assembled in the open air as there wasn't enough space for it inside the workshop. The robot now energises citizens.

Furthermore, it seemed easy to create an elegant pair of lovers out of brutal metal. At present, the sweet couple meet motorists at the entrance to Minsk from Logoisk. There's the impression that the hair and clothes of the young man and girl are being moved by the wind. It's an amazingly delicate work in metal!

Ideas from the horn of plenty

Vladimir Kanonik's works attract tourists from all around the country, and even world celebrities. To date, Hollywood stars Steven Seagal and Dolph Lundgren have been pictured with his sculptures.

"Each of my installations is somehow tied to the area," Vladimir explains how ideas are born. "For example, in Nesvizh, a city with a rich history, the idea of a knight with a sword was born. In Minsk's Svislochskaya Street, there is a mermaid who, according to urban legends, was named Svisloch. In Slutsk, my 'Pegasus' is installed; this mythical animal is de-



pikabou

icted on the city's coat of arms and is considered one of its heraldic symbols."

Recently, a spectacular mountain dwarf appeared in Soligorsk, by a fuelling station. The installation almost immediately broke the Internet.

Speaking of his plans, Vladimir Kanonik admits he'll continue following the key themes in his work: roadside objects can and should serve as Belarus' tourist attractions, promoting the relationship with its national identity. The artist has plenty of ideas and, this year, his installations will appear at roadside service facilities in Kobrin and Borovlyany. The artist has revealed no details so far and we all are waiting for a surprise.



nett.by



Vitaly Pivovarchik



A monument to Izyaslav — the founder of the city of Zaslavl



Balls are still held by the descendants of medieval beauties near St. Sophia Cathedral's walls

Ancient attractions of Belarusian cities



The first stone building in Chagall's homeland was the Holy Annunciation Church

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Finding a bride in Polotsk

This is the place where it all began. Every schoolchild knows that Polotsk is the cradle of our statehood and culture. Even in the *Tale of Bygone Years* it is told how the Ruriks reigned on the local throne, and were distinguished by their powers and love of freedom.

It is interesting that it was from Polotsk that the wives of many ancient Russian princes came: from the infamous Rogneda, who was married to Yaropolk, but by the will of fate became the wife of Vladimir, to Aleksandra Bryachislavna, the beloved wife of Aleksandr Nevsky. Beautiful women still live in Polotsk and it is best to look for them on the old Nizhne-Pokrovskaya Street, next to which the main sights of the city are located: St. Sophia Cathedral on the steep bank of the Dvina River, the original house where Peter the Great stayed, the Museum of Local Lore and the Museum of Book Printing. Even if you can't find a bride, amazing cultural discoveries are definitely guaranteed!

Drawing wisdom from the Turov Gospel

A thousand years ago, the tiny town of Turov was one of the main centres of Christianity

in Ancient Rus. Located between Kiev and Polotsk, it occupied an enviable place on the banks of the Pripyat River. Not only was money abundant here, but also the brightest minds of their time. Already in the middle of the 12th century, several monasteries and at least 85 churches were founded in the principality. That is why many philosophers came from this place, while the Turov Gospel, written in a charter on parchment in chestnut ink, is rightfully considered the most ancient Belarusian book.

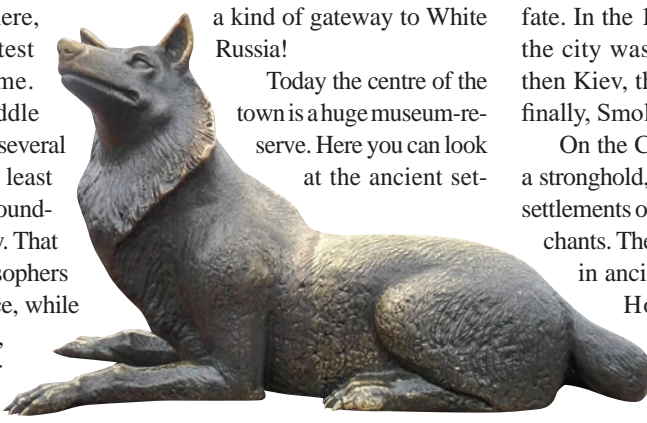
These places of worship today amaze tourists with their wonders. In the old part of the city at the end of the 20th century, stone crosses literally began to grow from the ground. Another wonder is two 2m crosses, which, according to the legend, sailed against the current to Turov from Kiev, and are now kept in the Orthodox Church of All Saints.

Returning to medieval Zaslavl

Zaslavl was a gift from Prince Vladimir to his eldest son Izyaslav. Despite the thousand-year history, the name of the town cannot be found on any railway timetable:

the station here is called Belarus. Why? Until 1939, Zaslavl was the first stop for trains running from Europe to the Soviet Union: a kind of gateway to White Russia!

Today the centre of the town is a huge museum-reserve. Here you can look at the ancient set-



In ancient times, the hunt would lure the beast with a howl, while nowadays a monument has been erected to the predator

tlement of Zamechek, hide in Val with military fortifications, unravel the secrets of pagan and early

Christian mounds and quench your thirst with crystal-clear water from ancient springs. For a complete immersion into medieval life, go to the Ethnographic Museum. A mill, a smithy, and authentic log huts fully convey the old Belarusian spirit. Meanwhile, children will definitely enjoy themselves in the Museum of Mythology and Forest: Domo-voy (Brownie), Vodyanoy (Water Spirit), Leshy (Forest Spirit) and Vurdalak (Werewolf) always come out to meet the little visitors.

Going ashore in Vitebsk

According to the legend, the city of Chagall's paintings was founded by Princess Olga in the middle of the 10th century. She chose an excellent place: on the most important trade route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks'. This predetermined its fate. In the 11th-12th centuries, the city was taken by Polotsk, then Kiev, then Chernigov, and finally, Smolensk princes.

On the Castle Hill there was a stronghold, and at its foot were settlements of craftsmen and merchants. The only stone building in ancient Vitebsk was the Holy Annunciation Church. Today, in the city centre, you can only see its reconstruction. Nevertheless, the Castle

Hill often surprises archaeologists in the form of amazing artefacts, such as a birch-bark letter

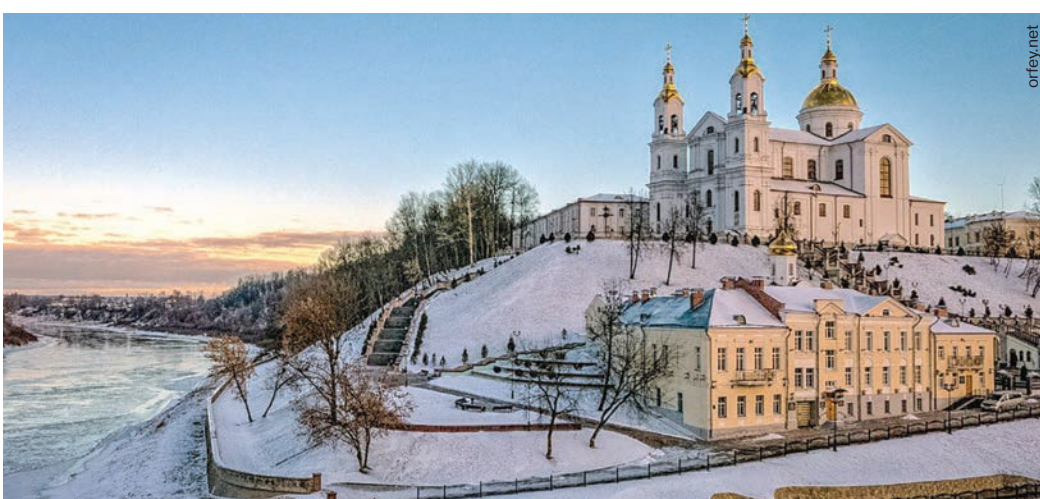
dating to the turn of the 13th-14th centuries. Its condition is perfect, and the text is as follows: 'From Stepan to Nezhil. If you sold the clothes, buy me barley for 6 Hryvnia. If you haven't sold anything yet, send me these things themselves. If you have sold it, please, buy me barley'. The medieval message is available in the Regional Museum of Local Lore.

Enrolling in the partisans in Volkovysk

According to the legend, the inhabitants of this place were real wolves. Even the ancient Greek historian Herodotus wrote that every inhabitant of the lands between the Dnieper and the Danube rivers turned into a wolf for several days. Those in the neighbouring principalities were afraid of evil spirits, which is why they didn't go to Volkovysk during the war. However, another legend is closer to reality: the local hunt master howled realistically like a wolf, and this is how they would lure the beast.

However, the forests here were always dark and dense, there are many swamps in the area too. It is not surprising that, in 1812, when Napoleon moved to Moscow, the first partisans met him near Volkovysk. The dashing hussars, led by Piotr Bagration, howled like wolves and ambushed men in the forest. In short, they didn't allow the French to rest, day or night.

Today, there is a bronze sculpture of Volkovysk's guardian beast on the city's central square.



According to the legend, the city of Vitebsk was founded by Princess Olga in the mid-10th century

Once again clouds are gathering over the long-suffering Games in Tokyo and their cancellation is cautiously being discussed with the public, as if in an attempt to test out their possible reaction. In reality, the prospect of hosting the Games this summer doesn't look promising, no matter the scenario.

By Dmitry Komashko

A new wave of close-to-Olympics chitchat was launched by *The Times* newspaper after publishing the statements of 'a Japanese Government member'. The name of this official who voiced the unfortunate information was not mentioned, for understandable reasons. As the publication explained, though the country's leadership had come to a definite agreement that the Games should be cancelled, there's little understanding of how this could be realised. There are plenty of factors, including huge financial losses and the characteristics of Asian culture which always aim to save face at any cost. "No one wants to be the first say so, but all agree that it will be almost impossible to organise the Olympics in conditions where Japan has entered a state of emergency due to the second wave of coronavirus. All are increasingly focused on how to somehow save the Games in Tokyo for the nearest available date: 2032," a source in the Japanese Government explained.

Last year, the International Olympic Committee President, Thomas Bach, tried to keep the Olympics on the international calendar until the last moment, despite a growing number of coronavirus cases and the scale of restrictions imposed around the world. He later made an effort to find a compromise in negotiations with sponsors and minimise the already impressive scale of monetary penalties. After last year's postponement, the Olympics in Japan have already risen in cost by \$2bn, while the total losses from another postponement, for 2032, could be counted in tens of billions of Dollars. The figures are huge and these would be supplemented with losses caused by broken contracts with sponsors. Furthermore, to date now, the IOC has already suffered significant financial losses. Unsurprisingly, against the background of the already launched general vaccination programme against coronavirus, which is expected to be complete by early summer in Europe, the IOC is likely to postpone making such a difficult decision regarding the abolition of the event until the last minute.

Mr. Bach has recently denied the infor-

Clouds over Tokyo

Olympics in Japan again under threat of cancellation



mation covered by the media and said that the IOC has no Plan B for this case, "We have at this moment, no reason whatsoever to believe that the Olympic Games in Tokyo will not open on the 23rd of July. We have no alternative scenarios. The Organising Committee and the IOC are determined to make the Games safe and successful."

However, the IOC President assumes that the number of spectators in the stands will be reduced and additional restrictive measures for participants will be introduced, taking into account the current competitions, including championships, that confirm the effectiveness of such restrictions. Furthermore, Japan's Prime

Minister Yoshihide Suga previously noted that he expects the Olympics would become 'proof of the victory of humanity over the coronavirus'. Japan's Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, Manabu Sakai, echoed Mr. Bach, saying that the Japanese Government rejected the information. It's difficult to say whether Mr. Sakai's statement was a consequence of the fact that the attempt to probe details for the upcoming event failed. However, right now, according to the official, preparations for the competition are underway. "The authorities are monitoring the situation around the world, and the decision to hold or cancel the Games will be made

after receiving more objective and complete information," he said.

Everyone is also watching the actions of another major sports organisation, the UEFA. A little earlier, from June-July, it plans to hold another large-scale sports tournament: the European Football Championship. It has also changed its schedule, being postponed to 2021. Now it could also change its format. This has also been said very cautiously, as in the case of the Olympics, understanding the severity of the possible consequences. The fact that the championship could be held not in 12 cities and 11 countries, as originally expected, but only in one, was mentioned recently not by the UEFA President, Aleksander Čeferin, but the Chairman of Executive Board of FC Bayern München AG, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. According to him, the decision on the reformatting of the European Championship will be made in early March. At the same time, this will be extremely unpleasant news for the countries where everything had been prepared to host the European Football Championship matches last year. Clearly, there are no official comments yet, as well as a lack of clarity about which country will host the whole tournament (and all the problems which come with it). According to the President of the Swiss Football Association, Dominique Blanc, Turkey, the United Kingdom (although this is hardly possible in the light of the measures introduced in the country against a new strain of coronavirus) and Russia could be considered as hosts of the event. At the same time, Mr. Blanc made it clear that many members of the European football leadership still do not have much confidence that the championship will take place at all, while the current statements are attempts to 'throw the bait' and watch how the public and sponsors will react to the message about the cancellation. The UEFA denies such assumptions so far, saying, "We have no comments on this topic. The UEFA can confirm that, together with all 12 host cities of the tournament, it is working on four possible scenarios for the admission of fans: full stands, of 50-100 percent occupancy, 20-30 percent occupancy and some matches without spectators." However, confidence is waning now that the 2021 international sports calendar, which promised to be saturated with top events, may not meet its goals.

Succession of victories

The Belarusian President's hockey team have celebrated its fourth victory in a row as part of the 14th Republican ice hockey competitions among amateur teams for the prizes of the President's Sports Club

By Arina Novikova

On the ice of Minsk Olympic Arena, the Presidential squad defeated the Gomel Region's hockey players — 9:4 (5:1, 3:2, 1:1). The match started unexpectedly: in the second minute of the opening period, the guests took the lead after an accurate shot by Yevgeny Dubkov. After missing the puck, the hosts began playing more actively to take the lead by the break — 5:1.

Goals were scored by Mikhail Grabovsky, Konstantin Koltsov, Andrei Bashko (assisted by Aleksandr Lukashenko), Pavel Volchek and Andrei Mikhalev. In the second twenty-minute period, Denis Kurdeko, Oleg Antonenko and Artem Karkotsky hit the Gomel team's goal three more times, while opponents Vladislav Perevoznikov and Igor Ruf scored twice. In the final period of the match, Oleg Antonenko scored a double, while the last point was put by the

guest striker, Yuri Shklyarov.

Aleksandr Polishchuk (Gomel Region) and Konstantin Durnov (the President's team) were acknowledged as the best players of the match.

In the first match of the season, the President's team defeated the Vitebsk Region's squad — 8:2, and then proved stronger than the representatives of the Grodno Region — 8:3. Later, it defeated opponents from the Mogilev Region — 6:2.





BELTA

Photo
of the
week

Swans spend the winter season on the Krinitza reservoir near Minsk

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



January 28th is International Data Privacy Day, established in 2007 at the initiative of the Council of Europe on the day of the signing of the Convention for the

Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data on January 28th, 1981. It has been effective since October 1st, 1985. Proposals are currently being developed to update the Convention in order to raise the level of data protection standards not only in Europe, but worldwide.

On January 29th, 1991, the Academy of Management under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus was founded, a state higher educational institution for the training, retraining and advanced training of personnel of



government bodies, leading personnel and specialists in the national economy. The activities of the institution are aimed at forming a national school of public administration. The structure of the Academy includes 3 institutes, with a large Theory and Practice of Public Administration Research Institute.

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On January 30th, 1921, Ivan Shamyakin was born (in the village of Korma, Dobrush District, Gomel Region) — a People's Writer of Belarus (1972), academician of the



National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (1994) and Hero of Socialist Labour (1981). He is the author of many famous short stories, novellas, novels: *The Heart on the Open Palm, Restless Happiness, Telamones and Caryatides, Glory to Maria* and others. His works have been translated into many languages. He was a laureate of the USSR State Prize (1951), the Yalub Kolas Literary Prize (1959), the State Prize of Belarus (1968 and 1982), and the Union State Prize (2002). He died in 2004.

On January 31st, 1926, Mikhail Mitskevich was born in Minsk, a Belarusian scientist in the field of metal processing technology, Doctor of Technical Sciences (1985), master of sports in clay pigeon shooting (1956). He is the son of Yakub Kolas. He is the author of scientific papers on electrophysical methods of material processing, including on the scientific



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foundations of the electro-erosion method. He was a laureate of the State Prize of Belarus (1980). He died in 2020.

January 31st is the Day of Belarusian Science in the Republic of Belarus. The country's leading research and scientific centre is the National Academy of Sciences, founded in 1928. Today it unites



highly qualified scientists of various specialties in research, science and production, as well as design and implementation organisations. The National Academy of Sciences employs more than 18,000 researchers, technicians, support and maintenance personnel, including many doctors and candidates of science.

January 31st is International Internet-Free Day, celebrated by the global Internet community annually on the last Sunday of January. Over the decade, the number of Internet users has increased, according to some sources, 5 times, up to 3 billion people. The main goal of this holiday is to completely distract people from computers and the global network for at least one day, in order to spend the day exclusively in the 'real'



world, communicating with other people live or devoting it to one's own favourite hobby.

February 2nd is Day of the Defeat of the Nazi Troops by Soviet Troops in the Battle of Stalingrad (1943). The plans of the German-fascist command, in the summer of 1942 during WWII, were to defeat Soviet troops in the south of the USSR. On July 17th, 1942, the first stage of the Battle of Stalingrad began: on the defensive. On November 19th, 1942, Soviet troops launched a counter-offensive near Stalingrad. On January 31st, 1943, the commander of the grouping of German troops Friedrich Paulus surrendered. The 200 heroic days of the defence of Stalingrad went down in history as the most bloody and cruel of the war. More than a million Soviet soldiers and officers were killed or wounded. The Battle of Stalingrad was the largest land battle in WWII and one of the turning points in the course of the hostilities, after which German troops finally lost their strategic lead.



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