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Aleksel Vyazmitinov

Truly winter weather is only a joy for those who decide to spend time actively. In the photo: at the Logoisk ski centre

Skis or snowboard — take your choice!

Popular ski resorts in Belarus have opened the season. This year's winter has been real and snowy since its first day. There is plenty of room to go sledding and tubing. And vacationers flocked to the country's ski centres for a special drive and charge of energy. They are happy with the workload and even on weekdays they receive hundreds of people. People go to Logoisk and Silichi for a dose of fresh air and bright emotions. The local beautiful landscapes, forests and hills appeal to both professionals and amateur skiers and snowboarders. Solnechnaya Dolina, an entertainment ski centre located directly within Minsk, is also full of fans of winter sports. → **11**



Mutually beneficial co-operation for the sake of development and the benefit of peoples

Belarus is ready to lend a strong shoulder to its African partners — this was discussed during the visits of the Belarusian Head of State Aleksandr Lukashenko to Equatorial Guinea and Kenya

At the airport of the capital city of Malabo, the Belarusian leader was met by the Vice President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Not only officials, but also numerous local residents and creative groups were waiting for Aleksandr Lukashenko here. Traditional songs and rousing African dances — the host country did everything to add not only equatorial warmth to Aleksandr Lukashenko's meeting but the atmosphere of sincere friendship and hospitality.

After the official ceremony with the singing of anthems and a company of honour guard, negotiations between the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko and the President of Equatorial Guinea Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo began.

During a conversation in a limited format, the Head of the Belarusian State said that he sees great potential for the development of Equatorial Guinea. Belarus is ready to co-operate, share its experience and technologies in various spheres, and help train personnel.

Later, negotiations took place in an expanded format — with the participation of members of delegations. The Head of the Belarusian State noted that it was his first visit to Central Africa, and he was impressed with what he had seen in this part of the beautiful African continent.

“Beautiful forests, rivers, the Atlantic Ocean with rich fish reserves. These are truly heavenly treasures... You live in paradise. But the greatest treasure of any country is its people. It is equally applicable both to Belarus and to Equatorial Guinea. Kind, hard-working people, who genuinely wish to take care of their native land, people, who are open to new knowledge, experience, people, who truly feel their friends and like-minded persons. Within the last six months we've secured an impressive leap. We've exchanged visits at the top level, created a joint permanent commission on co-operation, held the commission's first session, and substantially invigorated business activity,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, and the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo

The Head of the Belarusian State added that a Belarusian embassy will soon start working in Malabo. An embassy of Equatorial Guinea is expected to open in Belarus by the end of 2024.

“It is a great honour to have such a friend. Belarus is a reliable partner for Equatorial Guinea. We bolster our friendship not only with words but with deeds. We have no differences of opinion in politics. Furthermore, we have no topics we'd rather not discuss. Mutually beneficial, friendly, and even brotherly relations develop dynamically between our countries,” Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

During the negotiations Aleksandr Lukashenko mentioned the rapid advancement of co-operation in healthcare. Belarusian specialists have started training personnel in Equatorial Guinea hospitals.

The President of Belarus mentioned the need to actively use opportunities in the humanitarian sphere — education, science, sport, tourism, and culture — in

order to bring the two nations even closer to each other. The Belarusian side is interested in importing Equatorial Guinea cocoa, tropical vegetables and fruits, in the joint processing of fish products.

“Belarus is ready to become a bridge to Eurasia for your country. We count on reciprocal support within the framework of the African Union and other integration associations. Certainly, we didn't come into your country to offer charity. We cannot do it, and we do not have to do it. But we are not going to profiteer at the expense of your people, your country either. We are no colonisers. We are your friends. As we share technologies in many areas where you need them, we will train your people how to use these technologies,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that Belarusians have come to Equatorial Guinea as friends. He suggested doing everything necessary in order to expand

Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has awarded Aleksandr Lukashenko the Order of Independence of Equatorial Guinea — one of the highest state awards in the country

At the end of the official negotiations and the document signing ceremony, an official reception was held in honour of the President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko on behalf of the President of Equatorial Guinea Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

“The world is changing. It will never be the same. There will never be a return to the way it was. The people of the world are realising this. Most of them have realised that Africa is the future. Africa's time has come. Frankly speaking, it will be very difficult for countries like Equatorial Guinea and Belarus to stand alone in this turbulent world. In order not just to withstand, but to occupy our place in this rapidly changing world, in order not to perish, we must stay close to each other. Only together, walking shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, we will be able to stand ground,” the Belarusian leader said.

co-operation onto other countries of the region, “I would very much like for you and us to do everything so that we could bring the technologies we will introduce here, in Equatorial Guinea to other countries of the African continent. We have to help the countries that desire prosperity for their nations and development for their states. I think it's within our power to realise.”



At the end of the negotiations in Malabo, Presidents Aleksandr Lukashenko and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo signed a roadmap for the development of co-operation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The roadmap was developed taking into account the needs of Equatorial Guinea and is comprehensive in nature. The document covers 15 key areas of interaction, including co-operation projects, supplies of Belarusian machinery and its maintenance, agriculture, healthcare, pharmaceuticals and sales of medical equipment, forestry. The roadmap is designed for implementation in 2024–2026.

A package of documents aimed at developing co-operation in various areas was also signed in the presence of the Heads of State.

Agreements were signed on the promotion and mutual protection of investments, on the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of evasion of income and property taxes, on co-operation and mutual assistance in customs matters.

The parties also signed agreements on co-operation in the field of tourism, on mutual recognition of educational documents, and on co-operation in the field of science and technology. In addition, a number of documents have been concluded at the interdepartmental level, including memorandums of co-operation and mutual understanding.

In total, one and a half dozen bilateral documents were signed.



In his statement following the meeting, the President of Belarus called the negotiations with Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo very meaningful

Belarus focused on what it can offer to Equatorial Guinea, what problems can be resolved taking into account Belarus' experience and knowledge.

"As a result of the visit and negotiations without an exaggeration we started a new stage of Belarus-Equatorial Guinea relations. Within only a year we've done the work many countries take decades to accomplish. This fact very clearly indicates mutual interest and eagerness to advance the partnership to a brand new level," the Belarusian leader stated.

In his words, as far as the practical side is concerned, key avenues were determined where the parties will work hard taking into account Belarus' capabilities and aspirations of African colleagues.

"I would like to note specifically that agreements were reached on realising the first stage of creation of a regional hub for promoting Belarusian goods onto markets of the countries in Central and Western Africa," Aleksandr Lukashenko noted.

Belarus has also offered grants to Equatorial Guinea students for going to medical education institutions in Belarus' territory. Apart from that, the healthcare ministries agreed on organising the retraining of Equatorial Guinea medics in Belarus.

Summing up the negotiations, the Head of the Belarusian State expressed several theses, which he discussed with the leadership of Equatorial Guinea.

"The country should not spend foreign currency on buying the products and goods Equatorial Guinea can make. It is an axiom. I have to say that no, we are not a gigantic country, but we have enough technologies in agriculture, manufacturing sector, and so on in order to take Equatorial Guinea to the next level or two if the country uses them. And we are ready not to simply come and grab a piece of the pie as colonialists did in the past. We are ready to teach people in Equatorial Guinea how to use these technologies as a result of our co-operation. We will pass on what we know how to do to the people of Equatorial Guinea. What the nation of this country knows how to do will be passed on to us. Including goods. It is what this co-operation is all about. We will co-operate in the name of our nations. All the problems Equatorial Guinea needs to deal with right now Belarus had to resolve 30 years ago. We are familiar with all of it," the Belarusian leader said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that right now Equatorial Guinea does not need some high technologies. For instance, this country does not need to launch spacecraft into outer space. The realisation of more down-to-earth but extremely necessary projects is the idea.

The President stated that the documents signed by the parties are of a general nature, but to develop these documents, they have already agreed on 74 specific projects — they will be implemented in the next 2–3 years.

In his speech following the negotiations, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo noted the large number of signed agreements and the seriousness of intentions to implement the agreements, which is demonstrated by Belarus.

"We gained political independence, but economy remains a limiting factor. There are countries that don't want Africa to develop. Countries that bring instability, that invent all kinds of changes in order to exploit our resources. But Africans are waking up. We already see that we have been deceived. We are disappointed. And where we had hope, we will be unable to get anything from our former colonisers," Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo stated.

On the second day of the official visit, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, arrived on the mainland of Equatorial Guinea from the island capital city of Malabo

The aircraft of the Belarusian Head of State landed at the airport of Mengomeyen. Aleksandr Lukashenko was welcomed by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo at the airport. He invited the Belarusian leader to see the new capital of Equatorial Guinea, Ciudad de la Paz, which name is translated from Spanish as the City of Peace.

The Presidents decided to travel around the future capital in one car. During the drive through the future capital, the President of Equatorial Guinea showed the Belarusian Head of State the Afro-American University of Central Africa, the La Paz Oyala Hospital, and the Government House.

The leaders continued their talks over an informal lunch. Despite the less official format Aleksandr Lukashenko and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo continued a serious conversation about the advancement of bilateral co-operation.

The Belarusian Head of State also spoke to the First Lady of Equatorial Guinea Constanca Mangue de Obiang, who had already visited Belarus, and who oversees the medical sector in her country.

Equatorial Guinea is located in Central Africa, on the west coast of the continent. As you know, with the discovery of oil fields in the mid-90s, the economy of Equatorial Guinea underwent dramatic changes. Previously, it was of an agricultural, raw material, plantation nature, but now over 90 percent of state budget revenues come from the oil and gas sector.

The country consists of the continental part and islands in the Gulf of Guinea (total area is about 28 thousand sq. km, including the mainland — 26 thousand sq. km). On the largest island — Bioko — is the capital — the city of Malabo, where Aleksandr Lukashenko arrived the day before and where official negotiations took place with the President of the country Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.

Currently, a project is being implemented in Equatorial Guinea to build a new capital of the country, which is intended to replace Malabo in this status. It is expected that renewable energy sources will play a larger role in urban development.

At the end of the official visit to Equatorial Guinea, Belarus President's aircraft headed for Kenya, with Aleksandr Lukashenko arriving in Nairobi on a working visit



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, and the President of Kenya, William Ruto

The leaders of the countries agreed to meet in early December in Dubai on the sidelines of the World Summit on Climate Change.

At the capital's airport, the Head of the Belarusian State was met by Kenyan Minister of Agriculture and Livestock Development Mithika Linturi. In June, he together with the trade, investment, and industry minister of Kenya came to Belarus in June. During meetings with relevant government agencies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs back then the parties discussed co-operation in agriculture, including the mechanisation and industrialisation of processes, deliveries of machines, vehicles, fertilisers, and personnel training.

Kenyan President William Ruto warmly greeted Aleksandr Lukashenko and said, "We are very glad that you found the time to visit us. I understand that the visit will be brief, but nevertheless it is no less cordial on our part. This is not an official visit. Nevertheless, it gives us the opportunity to plan an official visit. We are very glad that you have found the time to visit us and be with us today."

The Kenyan leader recalled that during the meeting at the global climate summit in Dubai the heads of state agreed on the need to intensify contacts between Belarus and Kenya, "We agreed that we will jointly look at our opportunities and areas where we could co-operate and build relations on the basis that we have created between our two countries."

Aleksandr Lukashenko suggested working out a roadmap to advance co-operation with Kenya, "We agreed in Dubai that we would meet and discuss our first steps to establish trade, economic and closer political relations."

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, it is now necessary to determine avenues of future co-operation and come up with some concrete plan for these avenues,

"If we want to co-operate, then I am sure that we will be able to develop such a plan, a roadmap, as we have done with other countries of the African continent. Mr. President, you have to know that if we come to an agreement, we will quickly go this way. Because your country holds a very important strategic position in Africa.

You determine the policy of the African continent to a large degree. The President of Equatorial Guinea told me about this."

Taking into account the fact that a decision was made at the highest level to intensify bilateral relations, the Head of State suggested that groups of specialists from Belarus and Kenya exchange visits, get to know the countries better to prepare a concrete action plan for the development of co-operation.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also invited his Kenyan counterpart to visit Belarus. "I will be glad to see you at any time. I hope that you will find time to visit Minsk in the first half of next year."

At the end of the tete-a-tete meeting, William Ruto invited his Belarusian colleague to dinner.



Nairobi is the capital and the largest city of Kenya, located near the equator



Andrey Sazonov

We are ready for any scenarios

On the eve of the election campaigns, destructive forces will try to shake up the situation. But the public administration system in the country is capable of reflecting all challenges



The situation in the world is developing rapidly. As Chinese President Xi Jinping said at a meeting with President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko on December 4th, 2023, in Beijing, 'titanic changes are taking place in the modern world'. Under these conditions, we, Belarusians, are entering new election cycles. The events of 2020 showed the full range of indirect non-military methods of the West's struggle against sovereign peoples and states. To ensure that we are fully armed, it is now important for us to see all the trends and scenarios for the future.



Yelaveta Kobetskiaya

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

We will not allow interference in our affairs

It is important to realise that Westerners' scenarios are in no way aimed at ensuring our well-being. No kind of capital is interested in creating benefits and a comfortable life for other nations.

Global and regional capital (Poland, EU, Ukraine, Baltic countries) are focused exclusively on making money at the expense of other peoples, their suffering and disasters.

The President of Belarus at the climate summit in Dubai, considering issues of global environmental security, actually openly stated this. Global elites, satisfying their thirst for profit, are wreaking war and ruin on our planet and nations.

Such aspirations of the 'world rulers' can only be stopped by active co-operation and united efforts of various states interested in preserving and developing traditional values and global peace for all humanity.

It is not for nothing that after the summit in Dubai, our President visits China and discusses global problems and the common destiny of humanity with the top leadership of this country.

The key emphasis on the Chinese side was made in support of Belarus' positions on preventing interference in the internal and external affairs of our republic.

Anti-Belarusian forces do not give up

Such keen attention to the topic of Belarusian sovereignty is due to our President's understanding of the above-mentioned scenarios of Westerners in the upcoming election cycles. It is the latter who will try to exert every possible influence on the course of the elections.

You may ask what these scenarios might be. We will not guess and exaggerate, scaring readers. Let's just note what has already been replicated in the information field in the period from 2020 to 2023. Remember, Polish psychological operations centres told us and showed us how they were training combat units from among supposedly Belarusian volunteers, including women? The latter, with tears in their eyes and in military uniform, told the camera how they (and only they), 'poor Belarusian women', were preparing to liberate Belarus and the Belarusian people from the dictator.

Then there was a video with the brave soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces who wanted to capture Mozyr and Gomel in two weeks. To this should be added the already attempted terrorist attacks in Grodno, on the eve of May 9th, carried out by sabotage at the airfield in Machulishchi.

Of course, the highest military-political leadership of Belarus is well aware and controls the situation in our country and in neighbouring territories. As a result, at the end of 2022, at the direction of the Head of State, public coverage of the materials of the meeting between the President and security forces took place.

Then information was presented about the conduct of an anti-Belarusian information campaign against our country, the intensification of the activities of centres abroad and the formation of terrorist centres in adjacent territories (Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic countries). The actions of destructive forces have nothing to do with peace, good neighbourliness and improving the well-being of ordinary Belarusians. Not at all. All their intentions are focused on extremely aggressive activity and harsh methods of seizing power in Belarus.

You will say: it was a long time ago, at the end of 2022, and now everything is fine, there are no evil intentions, everything is quiet! However, last week a meeting of the 'power bloc' of destructive anti-Belarusian forces took place in Kiev. The main theme is the seizure of power in Belarus by force with the involvement of an extremist formation ('Kalinovsky's regiment') and other militant terrorist groups.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"We have elections of deputies at various levels in February [during a single voting day]. We are already seeing what they [opponents] are up to. There will also be a presidential election a year after the parliamentary elections. We will have such a difficult period. And the Westerners are preparing for it. We are fully aware of it and are ready for any scenarios."

At a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on October 26th, 2023

Be ready for any challenge

Therefore, now we, Belarusians, and especially civil servants, members of election commissions, participants in election campaigns, and security forces should not fall into a state of complacency and expect that they will leave us alone in 2024/2025.

It is important to ensure maximum development of response models to any scenarios of Westerners, conducting so-called stress tests for the stability of the public administration system to any challenges.

You and I are not in some ideal environment where we can sluggishly and leisurely conduct the upcoming elections. No, we are surrounded by extremely aggressive neighbours and their forces.

At the same time, it should be clarified that thanks to the managerial will of our President and the activity of the government, extremely favourable socio-economic conditions for holding elections have now been created. Economic growth rates are high, real wages are rising, inflation is decreasing, business activity is increasing, gold and foreign exchange reserves are increasing, the state budget is in surplus.

The situation would be much worse if Belarus experienced a sharp rise in prices, closure of enterprises, bankruptcies of banks, devaluation of the rouble, high unemployment... Such conditions are always an ideal environment for instilling a spirit of intolerance, hostility, protests and violence. Any destructive, radical ideas of nationalism, fascism, Nazism, terrorism, radical paganism easily enter such soil.

We just observed all this in Ukraine: first they destroyed the national economy, threw people out onto the streets, left them without income, and then introduced into their consciousness all the sophisticated forms of unreality: Bander is a hero, Russia is an enemy, European integration is the best salvation...

On November 11th, 2022, Aleksandr Lukashenko, clearly defined the one and only priority task for us, Belarusians, during a working trip to the Tolochin District,

"If we don't get our act together, we will lose our independence. If everything goes well in our economy, we won't be afraid of any wars, they simply won't happen. Everyone needs to do their own thing now. There will be no food, goods, jobs, salaries, pensions — it will be easy to rock us and plunge us into the abyss of protests, revolutions and civil wars."

Now we have only one scenario: to carry out the election campaign calmly, not to become victims of Western manipulators and to work in our places, to work for the benefit of the state and the people. For parliamentary candidates, party and public leaders — this is active education of the masses, direct dialogue! They must go to the people, otherwise others will come to them.

Unique production: where and how fur coats are made in Belarus

In November, Chairwoman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Natalya Kochanova visited the design centre of GNL (Genuis. National. Lovely) natural fur products of Belkoopsoyuz's Belkoopvneshtorg and talked with employees. She said that as soon as the Council of the Republic received information about problems at the enterprise, she decided to look into the situation personally. The fact is that over the past few years the number of workers here has almost halved, and wages have fallen. But most of all, GNL specialists are worried that the enterprise will be closed altogether, and then the skill sets of the craftswomen, which have been developed over the years, will be lost forever. Our reporters also visited the GNL design centre, met the craftswomen and learned the intricacies of furriery.

Delicate workmanship

“We are professionals of the highest level in this. We have always participated in international competitions, because winning them gives us the opportunity to undergo training in serious laboratories on the latest fur technologies. In 2019, in the Vogue Italy competition, our works were included in the top ten of the world’s strongest furriers. Our collection also made a splash in

Shanghai. Now we are considering proposals from the Chinese side for co-operation; this market is new for us, but there is interest in Belarusian fur products. And this is a fact,” Irina Kozyreva emphasised.

In addition, there is demand in the domestic market. And not only for fur coats, but also for vests, fur mittens, hats and stoles. Production is waste-free. They even adapted to making key chains from the remains of the skins.

“We have built a reputation over many years. They call from stores and ask for our products because they are of the highest quality. In 2017, our company presented the technology for using RFID tags for fur products [electronic product passport] in Grodno at the meeting of prime ministers of the EAEU countries. This innovation contributed to the subsequent adoption of

This team was gathered all over the country. The selection has always been and is serious — not every talented seamstress is suitable, and it will not be possible to simply train a person from the street. Seeing the undertones of fur and the differences in its edges is almost a piece of jewellery. It’s not for nothing that fur is called soft gold.

“I really love working with intarsia technique, there is a lot of creativity in it. Especially when a designer comes up with new models, we all work on them together. It’s nice that we dress people in good quality fur and that they look beautiful in our products,” 7th skill category furrier Nadezhda Alshevskaya, who has been with the team since 2004, says.

raw materials, and they are ready to train young specialists at the enterprise. The team was inspired after the meeting with the speaker of the Council of the Republic — there was hope not only to revive the design centre, but also to develop it, once again conquer with its talent at international competitions and make high-quality products for compatriots. After all, no matter what anyone says about the fashion for eco-fur and so on, natural fur has been and will always be worn.



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By Yulia Demeshko

High level professionals

The head of the department for the production and sale of products made from natural fur, Irina Kozyreva, brought us up to date. The company employs furriers and cutters — and this is a profession that cannot be learned at a college or technical school. Firstly, because it is manual work, secondly, it takes a long time, and thirdly, it is expensive.

“No computer can capture all the nuances of fur colour and edges, because fur is a living material. And if you consider that one product requires about 30 mink skins, then defects in such a matter is a luxury we can’t afford. Our specialists work using the intarsia technique [a type



Daria Titova



Daria Titova



Nadezhda Alshevskaya



They also asked the employees about the story with the well-known Angelika Agurbash. “Of course, it’s a shame that an interesting idea turned into a mean scandal,” they replied. The designers who create fur coats comparable to works of art, as well as the furriers who sewed the products by hand, were simply abandoned. The economic court sided with the enterprise, and the would-be singer went abroad. However, the contribution of fashion designers and designers, like time, cannot be returned...

“The product must be both beautiful and comfortable, only then will it be sold. We also have good classics that are sold in stores, and we also have collectible models.

The collection is released once a year and includes from 20 to 40 fur coats. One product takes at least 2 weeks to sew, and on average about 3–4 weeks.

Therefore, this is quite a long and painstaking work. And if Russians, for example, buy more collectible designer models made from mink, then the Chinese are interested in products made from fox and arctic fox,” the designer of the company, Svetlana Ivanova, emphasised.

Previously, the company produced about 700 fur coats per year, and for a small team of 40 people this figure is excellent, but now they cannot produce in the same volumes. Employees of the design centre claim that there is an abundance of



of inlay]. That is, they don’t just make a solid canvas from skins, but also select the colour combination in such a way that it forms a single picture. The same is with the quality of mink, it should be identical. In the post-Soviet space, few people can work in this technique,” Irina Kozyreva explains.

a law to protect the EAEU fur market from fakes and counterfeits,” the head of the department noted.

For any colour and budget

It is also interesting that the Belarusian team wore costumes that included headdresses made of natural fur at the 2006 Winter Olympics. They were created by the hands of craftsmen who work in the design centre to this day. Yes, the GNL design centre team has employees who have been working hand in hand for more than 20 years.

However, if we talk about collectibles, there will be no analogues in the whole world. The Belarusian collectible model of a fur coat is created only once and is not repeated after that, even at the request of the client.



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The Republic of Belarus is located in the centre of Europe and is one of the 15 largest countries in this part of the world. Belarus is often called a 'blue-eyed country': there are thousands of lakes, rivers and protected forests. But the country is interesting not only for its unique nature. Each region of Belarus has its own modern industrial giants, amazing historical sites and sights.

Belarus consists of six regions: Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Minsk and Mogilev. *The MT* presents the project called *Belarusian Land Treasures* and invites readers on an exciting journey.

Minsk Region is the central and largest region of Belarus with a rich history and powerful industry. Landmarks of the Minsk Region: BELAZ, Nesvizh Castle, Logoisk and Silichi ski resorts. The Khatyn Memorial Complex is also world famous — a symbol of the unconquered spirit and a tribute to the memory of those who died during the Great Patriotic War. And the events of 1812 near the village of Studenka on the territory of the present Minsk Region, where the Napoleonic army was finally defeated when crossing the Berezina, enriched the French language with the expression *C'est la Bérézina* (This is the Berezina), which became a metaphor for complete failure or disaster.



Aleksandr Gorbash



Khatyn Memorial Complex

Darya Titova



In the mine of Belaruskali

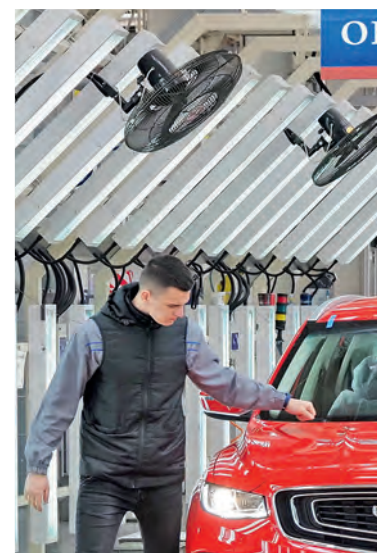


China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone

Aleksandr Kulevsky



Minsk National Airport



Historical insight, interesting facts

The initial settlement of the territory of the Minsk Region, as well as the whole of Belarus, occurred over a long period from 300 to 40 thousand years ago.

In the 12th century, the *Primary Chronicle* recorded the settlement of the territory of the modern Minsk Region by Slavic tribes.

The oldest cities in the Minsk Region: Zaslavl (originally Izyaslavl, 985), Logoisk (1078), Borisov (1102), Slutsk (1116), Kletsk (1127), Kopyl (1274).

For several centuries, the glory of the Minsk land was increased by representatives of many noble families — the Radziwills, Sapiehas, Tyshkeviches, Oginskis, Prushinskis, Vankoviches, Elskis, Chapskis. One of the national relics of the Belarusians, a highly artistic example of decorative and applied art, which has become an integral symbol of Belarus, goes back to the origins of the culture of the region — the Slutsk belts.

Geographical position and population

Minsk Region is the central region. Its area is about 40 thousand square metres.

It is on the territory of the Minsk Region that the geographical centre of Belarus is located near Maryina Gorka, and the highest point of the country — Dzerzhinskaya Mountain (345 m), and the 900-metre mines of Soligorsk.

The region's topography is varied: hills alternate with plains and lowlands.

The number of residents of the Minsk Region as of January 1st, 2023 is 1,462,021 people. The region's major cities are Borisov (136,409 people), Soligorsk (98,590 people), Molodechno (89,268 people), Zhodino (64,000 people) and Slutsk (60,376 people).

Economic development

Minsk Region is a region with highly developed industrial and agricultural potential.

There are more than 4,000 industrial organisations in the Minsk Region; they produce a fifth of the republican volume of industrial products. Potash fertilisers, passenger cars, mining dump trucks, building materials, electronics, furniture, tanned and dressed leather and much more are produced here.

A significant share of industry is concentrated in five cities: Soligorsk, Borisov, Zhodino, Slutsk, Molodechno.

Widely known brands — Belaruskali, BELAZ, the managing company of the

holding company BELAZ, Slutsk Cheese-Making Plant, Gorodeya Sugar Refinery, Slutsk Sugar Refinery Plant, Borisov Plant of Medical Preparations, Belarusian Biotechnology Corporation, BelGee, AluminTechno.

Minsk Region is the largest agricultural region in Belarus. In most areas, meat and dairy farming, poultry farming, and the production of grain, potatoes, flax, sugar beets, vegetables and fruits are developed.

Among the leading agricultural enterprises in the Minsk Region are the Agrokombinat Snov, Agrokombinat Dzerzhinsky, Agrokombinat Zhdanovichi, Ozeritsky-Agro, Veliky Dvor, Gorodeya, Gastellovskoe, Raps.

In 1998, the Minsk FEZ was formed, which includes areas both in the city of Minsk and in the Minsk Region.

The China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone is located on the territory of the region. This is the largest project in the history of bilateral relations between Belarus and China, one of the key platforms of the Silk Road Economic Belt — a grandiose cooperation initiative.

The country's main air harbour, Minsk National Airport, operates near the city of Smolevichi.

Natural wealth and mineral resources

Minsk Region ranks second in the country in terms of the number of reservoirs and watercourses. The watershed between the rivers of the Baltic and Black Seas — the Neman River and the Dnieper River — runs through the territory of the Minsk Region. There are 599 rivers flowing through the region. The Neman River — and Berezina River belong to the category of large rivers, Viliya River, Ptich River and Svisloch River — to the category of medium rivers.

Belarusian Land Treasures

MINSK REGION



Alekssei Vyazmitinov

Found of Glory Memorial Complex



Aleksandr Kulevsky

New BELAZ 7513M hydrogen fuel dump truck



Mary M. Ozolovskaya

BelGee



BELTA

Nesvizh Castle



BELTA

Cheeses of the Slutsk Cheese-Making Plant



Belarusian National Biotechnology Corporation

Sergei Mitsevich



Open-air Museum of Folk Architecture and Life in the village of Ozertso — centre of folk culture

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“Modern Minsk is the biggest political, economic, cultural, and business centre of the country. This is a very beautiful city with sincere and warm atmosphere where everyone wants to live, study, work, and bring up children. Many heroic and tragic pages are inscribed in the history of our capital. But every time, having gone through severe ordeals, the city was restored to become even more magnificent. And today it is proudly called the Hero City.

From message of greetings of the Head of State on the occasion of the 950th anniversary of Minsk on September 9th, 2017

There are 194 lakes in the region. The largest are Naroch Lake, Svir Lake, Myadel Lake, Selyava Lake, Myastro Lake. Most lakes are of glacial origin.

Almost 40 percent of the territory of the Minsk Region is covered with forests. Within the Minsk Region there are: part of the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve, which has been given international status, the Narochansky National Park and a number of specially protected natural areas of republican significance.

Minsk land is rich in such minerals as potassium and rock salts, peat, clay, saponels, sand and gravel materials, iron ore, oil shale, mineral water and others.

Culture and main attractions

The capital region of Belarus is rich in monuments that reflect all the milestones of its centuries-old history. The State List of Historical and Cultural Values includes 680 objects. Including a landmark object of world significance — Architectural, Residential and Cultural Complex of the Radziwill Family at Nesvizh as part of the palace and park ensemble and the complex of the former Jesuit monastery of the 16th-19th centuries, which is included in the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List. Other famous architectural and historical monuments include the complex of the former Bernardine

monastery of the 18th century in the agro-town of Budslav, Myadel District, palace and park ensembles of the 18th-19th centuries in the village of Stankovo, Dzerzhinsky District and the agro-town of Priluki, Minsk Region, associated with the count family of Chapsky. As well as the Church of St. Joseph and the Tyszkiewicz Palace and Park Ensemble of the 18th-19th centuries in Volozhin.

You can also touch history in the Minsk Region at the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Life in the village of Ozertso near the capital, the Museum of Belarusian Folk Art in Raubichi, and the Dudutki Museum Complex of Ancient Folk Crafts.

In the Minsk Region, original traditions are still alive. And the *Carol Tsars* Christmas rite (village of Semezhevo, Kopyl District) and the Budslav Fest, a celebration in honour of the veneration of the image of the Mother of God of Budslav (the agro-town of Budslav, Myadel District) are included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Gender polemics in Western countries are akin to ritual. It must certainly be carried out, but few people worry about its practical value. The voices of feminists are getting louder, the quota for the percentage of Mrs. and Frau in top management is getting higher and higher. Only impartial statistics neutralise the pathetic rhetoric of politicians and public figures. The further west you go, the more modest the real results of the struggle for women's rights. The proportion of American, German, Belgian and Polish women in leadership positions is still not as significant as reports of victory over gender prejudice would like to believe. However, no matter how trivial it may be, the root of the problem lies in the economic plane. In fact, it turns out that gender equality is a costly thing. Unlike Belarus, where women's rights are protected by strong social standards, in Western countries they prefer to save on this expense item.

Belarus leads the world in gender equality



By Tatiana Shchedrenok

Barriers to a career

According to the latest UN data, paradoxical as it may seem, a very modest percentage of European women leaders is not just anywhere, but in the very heart of the EU — in Germany. Less than 30 percent of senior management positions are occupied by women. For comparison, Belarus is ahead by 18 percentage points in this indicator. According to experts at DIW, the German Institute for Economic Research, the main barrier to women's careers is underemployment. Of the total number of full-time employees, representatives of the fair sex make up only about a third. German analysts are, of course, concerned that, given the catastrophic shortage of personnel, the country's labour resources are being used so inefficiently. However, despite numerous declarations about the notorious gender equality, in reality bright slogans work more at the level of 'everyone pays their own bill at the beerhouse'. But, let's say, the path to becoming a manager of large German concerns is closed. After all, part-time, employers reason quite logically, you won't be able to do your best. German society is actually much more conservative

than it seems and is in no hurry to change.

It can hardly be said that the well-known principle *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* [children, kitchen, church in German] which expresses the essence of women's lot in the time of William II, is forgotten. It would seem that the times when it was traditionally believed that the main occupation of German women was 'inconspicuous housework' have sunk into oblivion. However, the legislative innovations of the subsequent century did not really level out the situation. Despite the fact that gender equality is proclaimed in the German Constitution, the balance between work and family in Germany has not yet been established. And it's not about national traditions. German women dream of professional self-realisation on an equal basis with men, as evidenced by statistics. More than half of the total number of university diploma holders are women. German girls obviously do not receive higher education in order to keep the kitchen in order. Gender imbalance is primarily the result of state social policy. And it is clearly not facing the woman and the family.

Between family and work

By law, a German mother is entitled to paid parental leave of just eight months. Why it is so short-lived is explained by the payment structure. Some of them come from the employer's funds. After this period, parents raising children cannot count on benefits. Not many families can afford a 'free' maternity leave. Therefore, most mothers are forced to choose part-time work. And then for years they cannot solve the dilemma of how to torn between family and work.

Kindergartens are in short supply in Germany. In some cases, you have to wait for a place for years. Nurseries 'fill' the needs of only 20 percent of families with children under three years of age. There is a shorter queue for older groups. However, troubles await German parents here too: on the doors of many preschool institutions, as early as three o'clock in the afternoon, or even earlier, you can see a 'Closed' sign. If there are two or more children in a family, the mother gets 'stuck' in a schedule imposed by imperfect social infrastructure for

many years, actually sacrificing herself for the sake of the family.

The issue of paying for preschool institutions is a separate issue. There is no single 'kindergarten' tariff in Germany. The price depends on the share of participation in financing the needs of preschool children of the state. Each federal state has its own amount of state support. Somewhere above, somewhere below. In some cases, the cost for parents reaches up to €800 per month. A decent amount, which cannot be said about the list of services included in it. Often, kindergarten students are only entitled to lunch. Children bring their own breakfast. Many parents are outraged by the discrepancy between the level of payment and the quality of services. But, as they say, there are no options.

Here and there

By the way, in the United States, where the gender issue has long set the teeth on edge even among the most ardent feminists, the state's participation in ensuring 'gender equality' is completely minimalist. The most ascetic approach to supporting families with children today is demonstrated by six small island states in the Pacific Ocean and the United States. The birth of a child in the United States is not considered a good enough reason to provide long-term paid leave. The maximum that the law allows one of the new parents is 12 weeks without pay.

At the federal level, this issue is left to labour market players. Mothers of newborns can count on financial support only if the employer has the good will. Is it any wonder that only a fifth of American women who need it have the opportunity to go on at least a short maternity leave? The authorities of some states are trying to influence the situation. For example, in California, the mother of a baby has the right to take six weeks of paid leave. For America, this is undoubtedly progressed, given that in other states the level of social 'advancement' borders on medieval.

There is no need to talk about the availability of American kindergartens at all. Prices for attending preschool institutions are astronomical — up to more than a thou-

Share of women in leadership positions by country, %	
according to UN data for 2021	
Belarus	47
Poland	43
Estonia	41
US	41
France	38
Ireland	38
Finland	37
UK	37
Lithuania	37
Canada	36
Belgium	35
Norway	34
Spain	33
Switzerland	32
Greece	30
Italy	29
Germany	29
Denmark	28
Netherlands	26

Share of seats held by women in national parliaments, %	
according to UN data for 2023	
Iceland	47.6
Sweden	46.4
Denmark	46.6
Switzerland	41.7
Belarus	40.0
France	37.8
Portugal	36.1
Germany	35.0
UK	34.5
Italy	32.3
Canada	30.6
USA	29.4
Latvia	29.0
Lithuania	28.4

sand dollars. The standard time for a child to stay in kindergarten is from 09:00 to 15:00. For services 'above the norm' there is a double tariff. There's nothing you can do about it: business. It is quite natural that with such a pragmatic approach to 'children's' problems, the childfree philosophy is becoming more and more widespread in the States. On the demographic issue, the federal authorities, of course, can rely on migrants. But they are even more unable to withstand the financial pressure of the American service sector.

The International Labour Organisation, in its Maternity Protection Convention, recommends that women who become mothers be provided with at least 14 weeks of paid leave. In half of the world's countries this recommendation is not implemented, but in Belarus this figure is exceeded many times over. The state guarantees financial support for families with children.

Our country is one of the few that provides fully paid three years of parental leave, regardless of family income and payment of insurance premiums. But state 'guardianship' does not end there. A family capital programme is being implemented. A system of state support for large families during the construction and reconstruction of housing has been built. The state bears significant costs for maintaining preschool children in kindergartens, school meals, medical care, health care and leisure for children, thereby easing the burden on parents. Therefore, it is quite natural that in international rankings of 'gender' achievements, Belarus is invariably ahead of many Western countries.

Belarusians are widely represented both in company management and in government. In short, they can afford to realise their professional potential without compromising their family.

What's most important is the weather at home!

It would seem that common problems should bring us together. However, this only works for ordinary people. In politics, completely different principles and norms apply.

This was confirmed by the 28th UN Climate Change Conference taking place from November 30th to December 12th in the United Arab Emirates. Similar summits have been held annually since 1992, when the famous Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development was signed (and with it a number of other documents), which identified the main problems in the field of global ecology and proposed a set of tools for the gradual resolution of climate change issues.

By political scientist **Aleksei Belyaev**

The bitter truth from the Belarusian President

The President of Belarus was the undisputed headliner of the event this year! In his short but heartfelt speech, Aleksandr Lukashenko, without beating around the bush, directly and without diplomatic subterfuge, outlined a bleak picture of the planetary struggle for the environment.

Noting that the climate is really changing, and nature has posed a global challenge to humanity, the Belarusian leader called for attention to the root cause of this state of affairs. And this root cause is the desire for hegemony and geopolitical superiority of individual states (there is no point in naming them, everyone already knows them). And they prefer to maintain their hegemony in a way as old as time: by inciting conflicts and wars, pitting states and peoples against each other, removing from their path all those who disagree with such an approach. Well, or using an innovative approach and hiding behind a green agenda.

There seems to be a consensus that the problem of environmental and climate change really exists and is not invented by scientists or politicians.

Back in 1997, the famous Kyoto Protocol was adopted, which since 2015 has been transformed into the Paris Climate Agreement. According to the latest document, which was joined by about 190 states, the signatory countries pledged to take measures to reduce warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Unfortunately, according to the latest forecasts of researchers, the level of warming will only reach 2.4 degrees Celsius with strict compliance by all participants in global agreements with their obligations by the end of the century. And this is clearly not enough.



All at sixes and sevens...

Some countries are very sensitive to this issue, such as Belarus, which has located and maintains two nature reserves and four national parks on almost 4 percent of its territory, ensuring biodiversity and limiting the harmful anthropogenic impact on nature.

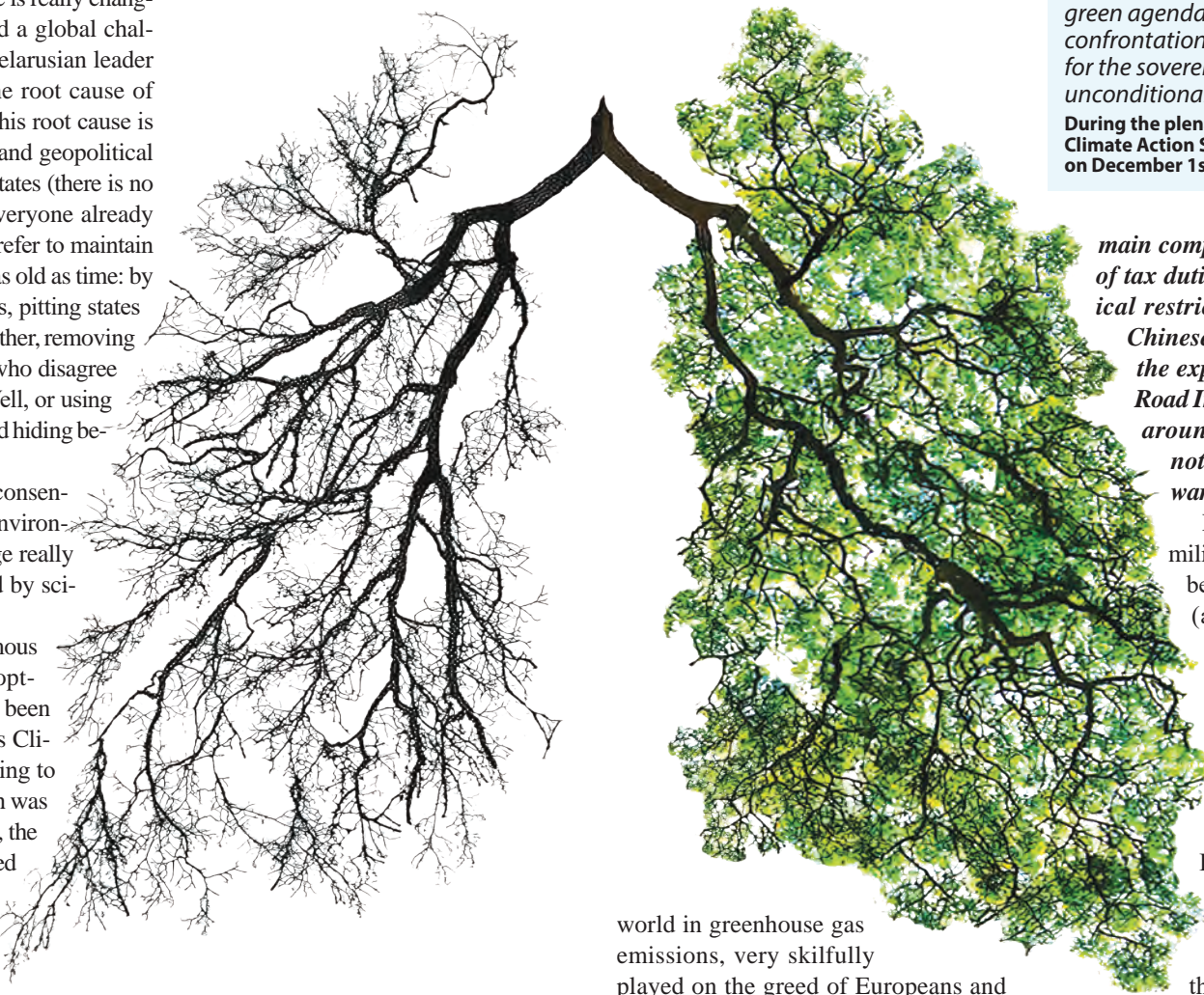
And at the same time, in the Amazon forests, an area equal to approximately eight areas of modern London is illegally cut down every year! One can strive to reduce the amount of hydrocarbons used (oil, gas, coal) in industry and energy by switching to renewable or relatively clean energy sources. The latter includes the energy of both hydrogen and the peaceful atom.

And now Belarus is commissioning the Ostrovets nuclear power plant this year, which will allow our country

they would pay for the process of their expensive 'decarbonisation' and transition to 'clean' energy sources from someone else's pocket.

Remember how the European Union announced with great fanfare in 2019 the introduction of a carbon footprint tax.

At the same time, behind Europe, which was inflamed with unexpected concern for the fate of future generations and their right to breathe clean air, loomed another 'fighter for the environment'. The United States, which ranks second in the



world in greenhouse gas emissions, very skilfully played on the greed of Europeans and exploited their 'thirst for profit, which turns natural resources into personal capital and robs future generations' (quote from Aleksandr Lukashenko).

First, Washington strategists quarrelled European buyers of Russian gas and oil with Moscow, then carried out a brilliant operation (one must admit) to physically destroy transport routes (that's right, this is all about Nord Streams), and also forced the introduction of some kind of restrictive ceiling on Russian oil, because of which it flowed to those countries that were willing to pay the market price.

At the same time, Europe is flooded with much more expensive liquefied gas from North America, and American oil is sold to the EU without any ceilings, at the price set on the stock exchange.

It is not entirely clear, however, why American democratic oil and gas do not leave the same 'carbon footprint' as authoritarian Russian ones, and why they are not subject to additional taxes in connection with this.

When we say 'climate agenda' we mean 'neocolonialism'

Along the way, Washington continues its hybrid confrontation with its

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"Wars are the main source of dirt on our continent. It is also the first for profiteering, which converts natural resources into personal capital and steals from future generations. It attempts to remove the countries, which stand in the way of dominating the entire world and destruction by sucking the land dry. And sometimes everything gets done allegedly for the sake of sustainable development (there is such a UN programme)... Under the Paris Agreement Belarus fully honours its commitments and even exceeds them... It is paradoxical that in response we get new economic sanctions, international trade barriers, and restrictions on access to technologies. And we're not the only ones. It is time to admit that green agenda is meaningless amid confrontation. It demands respect for the sovereignty of countries and unconditional fairness."

During the plenary session of the World Climate Action Summit in Dubai on December 1st, 2023

main competitor, China. The war of tax duties continues, the physical restriction of the volume of Chinese imports, opposition to the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative, political games around Taiwan, threatening not a trade and economic war, but a real war!

For this purpose, a new military alliance has already been prepared — AUKUS (alliance with Australia and Great Britain). Other conflicts unleashed by Washington have also not gone away: Ukraine is burning, Palestine is bleeding, and the entire Middle East is restless. There are currently 55 active conflicts in the world — the highest number since the end of World War II!

In such a situation, the climate agenda, of course, fades into the background. And many 'powers that be' in practice limit themselves to 'expressing concerns' without moving from words to action. Even more, they are using green transition issues to further enslave the countries of the Global South. For the population of Africa (which is about 1.7 billion people), increasing energy consumption and carrying out widespread industrialisation now seem more urgent. This requires cheap hydrocarbon energy.

Otherwise, there will be complete dependence on American and European manufacturers of nuclear power plants, on Western units for converting wind and water energy, on components and specialists. Everything is like in recent times of colonialism.

So the words of President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko about the painful state of the world, that first we need to stop wars, redirect funds to help developing countries, move away from the policy of sanctions and concealment of technology, making the world truly global, sounded almost prophetic. If humanity gets better, the planet will be reborn!

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

He can do miracles



CUISINE

By Valentina Kozlovich

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

"We had a little fight with Winter, so the old lady decided to play pranks - to let in some warmth before the holidays," Santa Claus explains why there is a thaw in mid-December. "But mother moved away, became kinder and again sprinkled snow on the Pushcha."

When it's minus outside, it's hot in the estate of the fairy-tale Belarusian wizard. The winter tourist season has opened in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. The Snow Maiden has arrived. The republican action "Our Children" started on Friday. And on Saturday, colleagues from Kostroma and Veliky Ustyug, Zyuzya Poozersky from the Vitebsk region and Bolotnik from the Berezinsky Nature Reserve, came to visit Santa Claus. The whole of December promises to be full of events - the estate is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Like the national park, the estate of Father Frost welcomes guests all year round - up to 150 thousand people. But the most fabulous atmosphere in the relict forest, where bison live, reigns on the eve of the New Year. By the anniversary, the estate had been spruced up - the shopping arcades and cafes where they serve national



cuisine were thoroughly updated, fabulous wooden sculptures were painted, which should bring color and light to the gray winter days. However, such things don't happen here, Father Frost is convinced:

"In the winter season, the estate sparkles with fairy lights, and there are so many guests that I need assistants." In addition to the granddaughter Snegurochka, this is Mother Winter and our daughters - Vyuga, Stuzha and Metelitsa.

Every year, up to 20 thousand letters arrive

lopes of different colors, which children and adults wrote with pens and felt-tip pens, lie in the chest and are waiting to be read.

Someone needs a new toy, someone asks for a brother or sister. Recently, a boy sent a letter and talked about his father, asked that his spine surgery be performed ahead of schedule - before the holiday - Santa Claus admitted that he could do miracles. "I called the capital's medical center, and they heard me there. The operation was successful, the man is recovering and will be able to go to the New Year's party with his son.

The Snow Maiden adds:

Not a single letter remains unattended. We answer everyone. If you believe in miracles, they happen.

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

"These are hooligans, they always give me away with their screams, you can't get through quietly," complains Santa Claus.

Covered in fluffy snow, the legs of the fir trees, which have grown well over the twenty years of the estate's existence, reach



out to meet us. And the centuries-old knight trees Oak Dubovich and Elm Vyazovich look down on them - is this really age?

Santa Claus looks at the power of the forest centenarians and says that he is still older.

"Sometimes children wonder if I'm mortal." "My life depends on your faith," I answer. When children believe in me, my beard grows longer. And with the loss of faith, the beard will melt like snow, and I will disappear. I hope this never happens.

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

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

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

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



at the wizard's residence. Now the postman brings them in bags. Letters in enve-

Skis or snowboard — take your choice!

Popular ski resorts in Belarus have opened the season

Winter is generous with snow these days. There is plenty of room to go sledding and tubing. And for a special drive and charge of energy, vacationers flocked to ski centres. Logoisk was the first to open to visitors this season. We also took our skis there to find out which winter sport is easier to master, where it's best for extreme skiers, and why they serve 'pizza' right on the slopes?

By Inna Gorbatenko

Both snow and people

On weekdays, Logoisk ski resort is literally visited by about 400 people just for fun. On weekends, this figure rises to 2,000.

The centre now operates a training slope and a fourth track. They are simple — just the thing to remember the skills you forgot over the summer or to master skiing and snowboarding from scratch. Night skiing has already started: on Fridays and Saturdays the slopes are open until two in the morning.

We climb to the top of the slope. There is a lot of snow here. As well as people. Truly winter weather is only a joy for those who decide to spend time actively. Igor came with his family and friends. He declares that in such weather you can't sit at home, but leisure is very uniting. For those who are confident on skis, the slopes are simple, but just right for skiing with children, says Igor, "I put my little one on skis from the age of three so that we could spend time actively together. We've ridden all over the world, and Logoisk ski resort is pretty good, there is something to compare with."

The first visitors highly appreciated the quality of the trail preparation: a lot of 'powder'. This is the name given to freshly fallen natural snow. It's not too dense like its artificial counterpart, so it's easy to roll on.

"Very good snow! We were finally able to go for a ride in early December! And so they usually started only in January," Minsk resident Gennady Zhinkov says, raising his thumb.

Gennady has been skiing for 40 years and says he still feels delighted. It's time to teach my grandson Vanya. The boy, hiding his blush behind a mask, admits that he likes it.

Minsk resident Alena Kravchenko is also a regular on the slopes. She has been skiing for 24 years; for the last ten years she has switched to snowboarding, "It's difficult to compare, the sensations are completely different. I love snowboard-

ing because you can ride it freeride, that is, on untreated snow outside prepared trails. Plus, you can jump. But on skis it is possible to develop greater speed..."

And you can actually develop decent speed. However, falls happen. Two guys in orange vests rush past us. They patrol the trails and provide assistance to those who are injured: they take them directly to the first aid station on a snowmobile in a special sleigh. In the new season (thanks to the Almighty and protective equipment), this sled has not yet been useful to anyone.

Here's where you can find ratracks

From the top of the slope there is a picturesque view — a winter landscape as nature intended it to be. The main source of ambiance is the snow cannon. There are 12 of them, each one can spray about 30 cubic metres of snow in an hour. Then the ratrack comes in — a wide-track tractor for working on snowy slopes. It is well-equipped: blade knives and cutters. It evenly distributes the snow along the slope, compacts it and cuts characteristic grooves — the so-called corduroy. It's not for beauty at all. The play of light and shadows of corduroy gives a clear picture of the surface, making it easier for the eye to judge distance. Riding becomes more confident and safe.

There is enough snow to make the necessary cover to launch several more slopes, Yegor Yatskevich, head of the sales service of the Logoisk ski resort notes, "To start the season, winter resorts foremost need frost, not snow. Preferably minus 5–10 degrees. Then you can spray the required layer in five to seven days."

On the main slope they set up a so-called snow park — additional slides,

turns, various figures and jumps so that extreme sports enthusiasts can take their breath away. For extreme descent there is also a third route, which is very fast.

For lovers of snow tubing, there is a specially equipped track with a lift to enjoy the downhill without any extra physical effort. Its length is 100 metres. This year they made a small bend to extend the pleasure by another 50 metres.

Forces on the rise

A team of professional instructors in great demand! Aleksandr Narushevich barely finds a free minute to exchange a few phrases with us. For five years now he has been teaching beginners how to ski and snowboard, and helps experienced ones with advice,

"In the first lesson we teach how to brake with a 'plough' — to fall correctly, modern children call it 'pizza'. You need to group yourself and fall on your side with your outstretched arm. With this algorithm there is less risk of damaging something. In general, you can start skiing from the age of three, snowboarding only from the age of nine, they are more traumatic... And the method of learning to ski is simpler, especially if you already skate."

According to the instructor, if sports are present in a person's life, then after four hours of training, you can already slide down the slope on your own. Some people don't look for easy ways and try on their own.

At the ski and snowboard rental point there is enough for everyone even during peak loading periods — the stacked racks are proof of this. Renting one set for two hours will cost Br13 on weekdays and Br16 on weekends. An electronic pass to the ski lifts on a weekday for two hours costs Br25, on weekends — Br35.

Winter luxury

The slopes of the Silichi ski resort are not empty these days either. On average, about 7–10 thousand people from all over the country and neighboring countries come here for winter experiences on a weekend. Furthermore, it's not for nothing that this resort was dubbed 'Belarusian Switzerland'. The season started here symbolically on the first day of winter. On December 1st, the most popular tracks (No. 1, No. 3, No. 6) and the training slope opened, a little later, route No. 4 and tubing. They are designed for different skiing levels of vacationers. There are other leisure options for those who do not like skiing and snowboarding. For example, an indoor ice skating rink, it is already operating.

Prices for services in the new season are quite affordable. Renting a ski or snowboard set for two hours on a weekday and a weekend will cost Br20 and Br25, respectively. A two-hour ski-pass on weekdays costs Br30, on weekends — Br40. You can purchase a seasonal ski-pass for Br1,250. Especially for the new season, Silichi ski resort offered guests winter tour systems: SKI LIGHT and SKI PRO, which include a day ski-pass.

Conquer the capital's peaks

The only ski centre located directly within Minsk, Solnechnaya Dolina in the Kurasovshchina microdistrict, has also acquired its own slides.

It can simultaneously accommodate up to 300 people. There are training and main slopes and the Alpine Coaster attraction. You can rent a kit for Br17 on weekdays and 20 on weekends; tubing for an hour costs BR10.

So you can do without the Alps — the relatively mild climate, the absence of the risk of avalanches and modern infrastructure attract tens of thousands of vacationers to ski centres. It is no coincidence that Silichi and Logoisk ski resorts are among the top best resorts in the CIS. Go and judge for yourself.



Aleksei Vyznitsin



Yeizaveta Kobetskaya



Aleksei Vyznitsin



Daryya Titova

Photo of the week

Snowmen often become a pleasant and unexpected surprise that puts people in a good mood

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

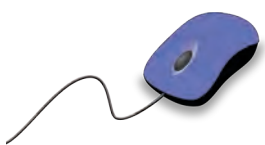


December 8th is International Artist Day. The profession of an artist has existed for thousands of years — even ancient people created pictures of rock painting. Artists were highly respected in Ancient Egypt. Icon painting, frescoes and mosaics were the main areas of art in the Middle Ages. The portrait genre developed during the Renaissance and still remains relevant today.

On December 8th, 1991, an agreement on the collapse of the USSR and the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was signed in Viskuli (Belovezhskaya Pushcha) near Brest. This document went down in history as the Belovezha Accords.



December 9th, 1968, is computer mouse birthday. It was on this day that the American inventor Douglas Engelbart of the Stanford Research Institute demonstrated the world's first computer mouse at a conference on computing technology in



San Francisco. The computer mouse owes its name to the wire — it reminded the inventor of the tail of a real mouse.

December 10th is World Football Day. For many millions of people, football is not just a game, but a way of life. The exact time of the game's origin is unknown. The first mention of football as 'a game of kicking a ball' was found by historians in Chinese sources dating back to the second millennium BC. Playing football allowed Chinese warriors to stay in good physical shape.



On December 10th, 1901, the first Nobel Prize ceremony took place. In 1895, a year before his death, the Swedish inventor and manufacturer Alfred Nobel made a will in which he ordered the creation of a fund, the interest from which should be given in the form of a bonus to those who, during the previous year, had brought the greatest benefit to humanity in the fields of physics, chemistry, physiology and medicine, literature, as well as for special achievements to humanity in the cause of peace.



On December 10th, 1868, the world's first automatic semaphore-type traffic light was installed in London on the square in front of Parliament. The traffic light was invented by John Peake Knight, who was a specialist in railway semaphores. Therefore, the device was very similar to the models used on the railway. It was controlled manually and consisted of two semaphore switches mounted on a six-metre pole.



December 10th is Human Rights Day. On this day in 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The document proclaims individual rights, civil and political rights and freedoms (equality of all before the law, the right of everyone to freedom and personal integrity, freedom of conscience and others). The text of the declaration exists in more than 500 languages, which indicates the universal nature and scope of the Declaration.



December 11th is International Mountain Day. It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly. Mountains cover almost a quarter of the land surface and are home to 15 percent of the population. They

provide a source of livelihood and well-being for more than 1 billion people and are a reserve for many unique species of plants and animals, the source of water for all the main rivers of the Earth.



On December 14th, 1911, Roald Amundsen reached the South Pole. His crew chose a time-tested transportation method — dog sleds. On this day,



Amundsen achieved his goal and hoisted the Norwegian flag over the endless snowy plain. He was a month ahead of Robert Scott's English expedition and became a national hero.

On December 14th, 1503, Nostradamus (Michel de Nottredame) (1503–1566) was born, a French physician and astrologer, physician to Charles IX. He became famous for his astrological almanacs, which he published annually from 1550 to 1566. Each publication contained a prediction for the next year, separate 'horoscopes' for each month, as well as several pages with forecasts for the distant future.

