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INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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The Last Bell ceremony at Vitebsk's secondary school No. 15. Irina Khomich, a graduate of 11th grade.

## It is just the beginning

The bright and large-scale school farewell event with the ceremonial ringing of the *Last Bell* took place for Belarusian graduates last week. Sweet memories of the school years will forever remain in the hearts of former students. More than 11,000 graduates of the capital city and their classroom teachers grandly celebrated the end of the school year at the city *Last Bell* festival.

In total, over 55,000 young people have graduated from 11th grades this year, and over 108,000 students from 9th grades. Soon, graduates will have to go through serious tests — school-leaving exams and the entrance campaign to universities are ahead. We wish young people at the beginning of their adult journey to choose a profession to their liking, to work in good faith for the benefit of their hometown and country, to be honest and decent people, loving parents and worthy citizens of Belarus.





# Minsk and Moscow remain committed to strengthening integration

The hours-long talks between President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko and President of Russia Vladimir Putin have confirmed that the relations between the two countries are fraternal and aimed at strategic partnership

## The Russian head of state arrived in Belarus on a two-day official visit, in the course of which the leaders of the two countries worked and talked for 14 hours

The first round of talks between the leaders of the two countries was held on Thursday, May 23rd, upon Vladimir Putin's arrival in Minsk. Aleksandr Lukashenko personally met his Russian counterpart at the airport, where closer to midnight, the presidents outlined the negotiation agenda in the presence of journalists and declared their intention to primarily discuss security issues, including joint exercises on the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons.

On Friday, May 24th, the presidents mainly discussed economic topics. Vladimir Putin arrived at the Palace of Independence in the afternoon, immediately after the wreath-laying ceremony at the Victory Monument. The distinguished guest was solemnly greeted by a military orchestra, the performance of the anthems of the two countries, the march of the honour guard company. After the traditional joint photographing ceremony, a conversation took place in a narrow format. Aleksandr Lukashenko outlined the agenda, "As we agreed, we always have two parts — security and economic issues. Today is just an opportunity to hear what has already been done in connection with our instructions."

Vladimir Putin thanked his Belarusian counterpart for the invitation and added that the leaders of the two countries were in constant contact and in touch with each other, "We have an opportunity now to assess what has been done, what is happening now and what should be done in the near future, to outline concrete joint steps for our movement forward, for the development of our states."

The Russian President noted the importance of common historical memory, including everything related to the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War, and also offered to evaluate what has been done in the Union State over 25 years, "In general, I think we are doing a good job, if we talk about the economy. The results of economic development speak for themselves. I want to congratulate you on this, too. Belarus is confidently moving forward, it firmly stands on its feet, the economy is developing."

Before the start of the official talks at the Palace of Independence, Vladimir Putin laid a wreath at the Victory Monument and drove through the capital. Russia's president shared his impressions of what he had seen, "I have driven through the city, looked around. The city is in a very good condition, it looks beautiful. First of all, I want to congratulate the city authorities on this." The Russian leader added that before leaving for Minsk, he was informed about the state of affairs in specific areas of work, and expressed his opinion, "In my opinion, there are no unresolved issues. If something needs to be additionally agreed upon, we will certainly do it during the negotiations."

In fact, the leaders of the two countries had agreed to hold a meeting in Minsk back at the beginning of May at solemn events in Moscow. The plan also envisaged a meeting with the participation of government members and a thorough discussion of all issues of interest.



Opening the extended part of the negotiations, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised,

***"Despite everything, Minsk and Moscow remain committed to strengthening integration. We support each other and we will further support each other in all directions. Moreover, our projects have already gone beyond the earth's surface."***

During the talks, Aleksandr Lukashenko specified in detail a number of areas that the parties should pay special attention to.

### Industry

The Belarusian leader underscored that in this area, the two countries plan to continue specific work on the implementation of joint import-substituting projects in microelectronics, mechanical engineering, machine tool construction, military-technical co-operation, "In other words, these are the areas that ensure the achievement of the goals of technological sovereignty and economic security of our states."

All decisions at the presidential level have been made, and governments must implement them in a short time. First of all, according to Aleksandr Lukashenko, it is necessary to promptly finalise the formation of a unified industrial policy of the Union State.

***"Both sides will benefit from this. Many of Belarusian and Russian assembly lines run on each other's components. There should be no protective measures against partners at the legislative level. As we agreed, we need to protect ourselves from those who have imposed sanctions against us, and also from those who do not contribute to the development of the two states," the Head of State emphasised.***

### Energy industry

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to the fact, "It is necessary to finalise the terms of oil and gas supplies to Belarus. We have been discussing this for several years, and today Vladimir Vladimirovich has made the appropriate decision. I think the governments will finalise the agreements in this area in the coming days. We have analysed all the nuances in detail."

Belarus is also ready to continue working with Russian companies in the field of nuclear energy. The experience of the Belarusian NPP construction has opened up new opportunities for further development of these technologies, training of qualified personnel and even joint construction of such facilities in third countries.

The Russian President confirmed that during the narrow format negotiations, the existing issues of co-operation between Belarus and Russia in the field of energy have been resolved, "There are certain agreements. I have no doubt that all of them will be implemented."

### Transport and logistics

According to the President of Belarus, a lot has been done in this direction, but the needs of enterprises are growing every day, "We need more serious investments in the development of railway infrastructure, renewal of rolling stock, increase in carrying capacity, and financial support for our air carriers. Measures are needed to increase the workload of Belarusian and Russian airports, joint projects that will make communication between our regions easier and more accessible."

The Russian President was convinced, "We need to restore and create new supply chains — both between ourselves and to

help each other in order to ensure the uninterrupted operation of our enterprises, including those oriented to the markets of our countries and to the markets of third countries that want to work with us. There are quite a lot of such states."

### Public procurement

Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out the interest of Belarusian companies in working more closely with Russian state corporations. The Head of State told Vladimir Putin, "I think you will agree with my thesis that within the Union State, we should not limit ourselves by closing our countries off from each other in our common market. Moreover, the situation has shown that we can only rely on ourselves in this world in terms of long-term co-operation."

### Potential of regions

Interregional co-operation has always been the engine of integration. Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked that in recent years we had taken a fresh look at regional co-operation and appreciated its potential. After all, it is collaboration between the regions of Belarus and Russia that has provided a significant increase in mutual trade, "Belarus and its regions are currently co-operating with almost all subjects of the Russian Federation, and exports of products are growing."

The Belarusian leader recalled that the 11th Forum of the Regions of Belarus and Russia will take place in Vitebsk, Polotsk and Novopolotsk on June 27th-28th, and invited Vladimir Putin, members of the Government of the Russian Federation, governors, and heads of Russian enterprises to participate in the forum.

"Thank you very much for the invitation," Vladimir Putin replied. "We will certainly take advantage of this and will support this area of our co-operation, because a significant trade volume is concentrated at the regional level, in the regional dimension."

The trade volume between Belarus and Russia in 2023 amounted to about \$48.7 billion, which is 6.3 percent higher compared to 2022. Mutual trade continued to grow in the first quarter of 2024. The volume of trade turnover has reached \$12.08 billion — plus 4.2 percent compared to the same period in 2023. Russia remains the main trade and economic partner for Belarus. In the first quarter of 2024, it accounted for about 60 percent of the total value of Belarus' foreign trade and 57.5 percent (\$1.63 billion) of foreign investments attracted to our country.



## Following the talks, the presidents made statements to the media

Aleksandr Lukashenko called the meetings in a narrow and expanded format fruitful. The Belarusian Head of State noted, “First of all, I am grateful to the President of Russia for finding time in his extremely busy schedule to pay an official visit to Belarus today. Thanks

ensure our import independence and technological sovereignty. Ultimately, this means the security of our states,” Aleksandr Lukashenko clarified.

The President was confident that the new Russian government will preserve continuity in terms of work related to Belarus–Russia collaboration, and stressed, “There are no unsolvable problems in the relations between our

during the negotiations, they talked a lot about the international agenda, the problems of security in the world and the region against the backdrop of the unprecedented level of tension that everyone has to deal with,

**“Our approaches absolutely coincide in this regard. We will not deviate from the chosen path of creating a fair multipolar world order.”**

Russia’s President agreed with his Belarusian counterpart that the negotiations were very productive. In general, he noted the successful development of the Union State. The Russian leader drew attention to the fact that bilateral trade was steadily growing from year to year. In this aspect, he noted, “Over 90 percent of all payments in Russian–Belarusian commercial transactions are

pleted — the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. The station is operating at full capacity. We are determined to continue helping our Belarusian friends develop their own nuclear industry, as well as strengthen co-operation in related high-tech sectors: digitalisation, nuclear medicine, and the creation of energy storage systems.”

The President of Russia noted the growth in the volume of rail cargo transportation from Belarus through the Russian territory, “In 2023, this figure more than doubled, exceeding 14 million tonnes. Our joint plans are to further increase the transit of Belarusian goods through Russia.”

The head of the Russian state announced plans that would please both Russians and Belarusians who often visit the union country, “In the near future, it is planned to cancel roaming service on the territory of the Union State, that is, mobile communications for all subscribers in the two countries will be fully provided in the home network mode.”

According to Vladimir Putin, taking into account the tense situation on the external borders of the Union State, the creation of a single defence space was discussed in detail during the talks. The presidents reviewed the progress in the implementation of the instructions given by the heads of states on holding simultaneous exercises in Russia and Belarus to practise the skills of using non-strategic nuclear weapons. The leaders of the two countries also discussed the further co-ordination of actions in the international arena.



to this, today we have managed to thoroughly discuss a large list of issues on Belarus–Russia co-operation, primarily in the economic sector.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to an important trend,

**“The Belarusian-Russian relations have recently demonstrated impressive progress. The level of interaction and trust between our countries in all areas is truly unprecedented. We can confidently state that the economies of Belarus and Russia are steadily developing despite various obstacles.”**

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, Belarus aims to further develop the nuclear industry based on Russian technologies. The presidents discussed in detail the issues of industrial co-operation, the development of mechanical engineering and machine tool construction, and microelectronics.

“We need this, first of all, for building up import-substituting industries, which help us

countries, there are those that have been postponed and require closer attention and deeper study. We can honestly admit that we have resolved all issues by now, and there are no unresolved problems. I am sure that we will work in the same way in the future.”

In this context, the parties discussed the formation of a unified industrial policy within the framework of the Union State.

Considerable attention was paid during the negotiations to the development of the transport and logistics sector. The presidents agreed that serious additional investments were required in this very promising industry. “In recent years, we have taken a fresh look at regional co-operation and appreciated its potential. Belarus and its regions are co-operating today, without exaggeration, with almost all subjects of the Russian Federation, with exports on a constant rise,” Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out.

The President of Belarus drew attention to the fact that

Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed gratitude to Vladimir Putin for detailed information on the results of his visit to China, “Belarus also aims to develop an all-weather and comprehensive partnership with Beijing. Belarus–China relations are significantly improving from year to year. We hope that we will join this influential international organisation at the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) summit in Astana in July.”

### Fraternal peoples, reliable allies

In turn, Vladimir Putin, when summing up the results of the talks, drew attention to the fact that his trip to Belarus became one of the first foreign visits after the presidential election and inauguration, and after the formation of the government of the Russian Federation, “By paying this visit, I would like to emphasise the importance that Russia attaches to fraternal ties with our closest neighbour, a reliable ally and a truly strategic partner.”

made in our national currencies. This means that mutual trade and investment are protected from the influence of third countries and negative trends in the global currency markets.”

Vladimir Putin called energy a priority sector of bilateral interaction, “Russia traditionally supplies oil and gas to Belarus on very favourable, preferential terms. In November 2023, the largest joint project was successfully com-



Russian President Vladimir Putin laid a wreath at the Victory Monument in Minsk before the start of negotiations at the Palace of Independence

# Interesting details of Putin’s official visit to Belarus and his talks with Lukashenko revealed

**The recent official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Belarus lasted exactly 25 hours, of which the Russian leader spent 14 hours with Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko. The heads of state worked and communicated together during official events and in an informal home environment.**

As noted by the Pul Pervogo Telegram channel, immediately upon Vladimir Putin’s arrival and after a brief meeting with the media at the airport, Aleksandr Lukashenko invited his colleague for an informal dinner (which lasted almost four hours) to a village near Minsk.

The central day of the visit began with the laying of flowers on Victory Square in Minsk, followed by negotiations at the Palace of Independence. The heads of state were discussing the basic issues in a narrow format for almost two hours, and then the expanded format followed — and the leaders focused on prospects, innovations, and joint import substitution projects. Interestingly, between the narrow and expanded formats, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin

held a one-on-one conversation in the Belarusian President’s workroom.

After communicating with the media and leaving the delegation members at the Palace of Independence to have lunch, the presidents went to have dinner in an informal setting at Aleksandr Lukashenko’s house. The menu was available. The distinguished guest was treated to dishes of exclusively folk, village cuisine — pancakes, rustic roasted potato slices, machanka (stew of pork ribs and sausage) with pancakes, mushroom and cold beetroot soups, Belarusian lard, and the President’s special dish: Molodost [youth] salad. It is also reported that pickled mushrooms from Belovezhskaya Pushcha and homemade salceson were especially ap-

preciated. The bread baked right at the Belarusian President’s house was also offered to the guest. The leaders drank tea with twiglets, hot curd balls and Kobrin ice cream. The dessert also included strawberries from Aleksandr Lukashenko’s greenhouse and honey.

The presidents continued a thorough discussion of various issues in home environment. They agreed on further meetings and co-operation in general. The President of Russia, in turn, invited his Belarusian counterpart to pay a visit.

At the end of the visit, Aleksandr Lukashenko personally accompanied Vladimir Putin to the airport.

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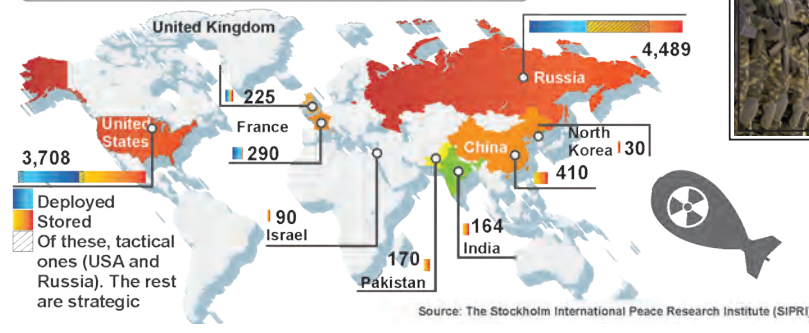
# Defence factor



Working out the deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons by Belarus is an adequate response to the West's transferring the economy to military rails and escalation of tension in the region

The clear loss of the NATO countries that have put a stake on conflict escalation in Ukraine forces Washington, London and Paris to take extreme measures — to unleash a military hysteria and bring the planet to the point of no return, that is a third world war. The collective West led by neo-fascists cannot forgive us the Victory of 1945 and is obsessed with the idea of revenge. Why is it doomed to fail? And how do nuclear deterrence forces allow us to ensure peace and order on the Belarusian land?

**World nuclear arsenals**  
Number of nuclear warheads as of January 2023



## The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

*"In this regard, today I would like to once again address the peoples of the near and far abroad from this rostrum on behalf of the peace-loving Belarusian people — and the situation is pushing for this — it is necessary to stop those mad politicians, not to give them a chance to turn all life on the planet into ashes."*

From a speech at a solemn meeting on the occasion of Victory Day, on May 7th, 2024

By **Aleksei Avdonin,**  
analyst at Belarusian Institute for Strategic Research (BISR)

### Conceiving an ammo plan

European Commissioner for the Internal Market Thierry Breton declared at the opening of the EU-Ukraine Defence Industries Forum held on May 6th, 2024 in Brussels that the EU was currently producing one million artillery shells and was expected to produce two million per year starting from the following year. Breton openly expressed the opinion that the EU should shift its arms industry to a 'war economy mode'. "I am pushing for defence industries in Europe to enter a war economy mode, so they can produce faster and more, with the aim of continuing to support Ukraine, now and in the long term," the EU official added.

The other day, the restless and belligerent Head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borrell, made some loud statements again, "Weapons and ammunition for Ukraine must be produced faster and more efficiently, preferably on the territory of Ukraine itself." The Head of Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dmitry Kuleba, when speaking to representatives of the EU defence industries, stated that Europe had already entered a new arms race and in order to win it, it was imperative to switch the economy of EU countries to military rails. According to him, there is no turning back.

**Turning to specific proposals, the Ukrainian Minister urged to bring EU weapons to a single standard, since today, the weapons of one country do not fit the shells manufactured in another country. "Currently, French-made shells fit only French-made weapons, German-made shells only fit German-made weapons, and Polish-made ones only fit Polish-made guns," he noted. In addition, Dmitry Kuleba advocated the introduction of planning in arms industry, as well as investments in Ukrainian industry and production.**

It can be stated that the EU is turning into a military alliance. This spring, the European Commission proposed spending €1.5 billion to put the economies of EU countries on a military track by jointly purchasing weapons and military equipment from defence companies, which is expected to encourage them to boost production and develop new technologies.

### Growing competition

The current militarisation of Europe is exacerbated by the bellicose rhetoric of the United States suggesting that NATO troops may enter Ukraine in case of defeat of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Before that, French President Emmanuel Macron had come up with the idea of sending NATO troops into Ukraine if Kiev was defeated. In December 2023,

a senior White House official admitted at a briefing for the U.S. media that Russia had been able to put the economy on a war footing by refocusing industry on the production of weapons and military hardware that were needed to continue the fight.

Back in February 2023, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) stated that the U.S. military-industrial complex was 'not ready to face military confrontation between great powers'. HASC Chairman Mike Rogers remarked that the U.S. industry was heavily dependent on rare earth metals imported from China that play a key role in many weapon systems. In such circumstances, it is impossible to combat the Celestial Empire in the conflict over Taiwan.

It is noteworthy that in its February 2022 report, the United States National Defence Industry Association (NDIA) gave the U.S. defence industrial base an overall failing grade, rating its capacity at 69 points out of 100, which is a 'Mediocre C' grade. The weak link in the U.S. military-industrial complex is the destroyed production chains that limit the possibilities for expanding military products. According to HASC, 3 million people worked at the enterprises of the U.S. military-industrial complex in 1985, whereas in 2021 — only 1.1 million. In particular, its shipbuilding industry can no longer cope with government orders being able to produce only one nuclear-powered attack submarine in 2025, a drop from the two-per-year pace of recent years. In contrast, China produces 10 times more.

### IN THE ABSENCE OF BACKUP OPTION

After the end of the Cold War, a lot of contractors of the U.S. military-industrial complex went bankrupt and laid off thousands of qualified specialists. The U.S. Navy Vice Admiral, William Galinis, paid attention at an American Society of Naval Engineers conference to a shrinking gap between wages at naval shipyards and 'some of the fast food restaurants', which limited the possibility to hire competent workers.

In 2022, when battles on the territory of Ukraine were in full swing, leading American

corporations opened thousands of job vacancies but did not manage to fill them in full. Thus, Raytheon Technologies hoped to attract more than 6,000 employees, Northrop Grumman — 5,800, and Lockheed Martin — over 5,600.

The problems of the U.S. military-industrial complex were reflected in the report of the American Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). It revealed that the United States lacked arsenal and adequate surge capacity, which would make it extremely difficult for the United States to sustain a protracted conflict with

Russia, let alone with China over the Taiwan issue.

According to calculations, in just three weeks of fighting, Washington will spend over 5,000 long-range missiles, and the supply of anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles is projected to run out in a week. This is in addition to the fact that the U.S. military-industrial complex will be able to produce the same amount of weapons in only 1.5-2 years. In other words, in the event of large-scale hostilities, the U.S. army is going to face the threat of shell starvation.

### ERROR CORRECTION

Our country will no longer allow the mistakes of the Cold War period, when the entire economy of the USSR worked for the military component to the detriment of civilian products. The depletion of our national economies will not happen. Along with that, Belarus is doing everything to strengthen its military potential, including through the development of the domestic military-industrial complex. Thus, in the event of any armed provocations by the West, Belarus will have enough forces and resources — weapons, military hardware, ammunition — to repel an enemy attack. On the eve of Victory Day, Russia and Belarus gave a clear signal to the West about the high level of readiness and determination to use tactical nuclear weapons in case of direct aggression against our country. Aleksandr Lukashenko announced launching of the next stage of response measures. The General Staffs of Belarus' and Russia's Armed Forces have envisaged the inspection of the forces and means of a joint regional grouping of troops. During the inspection, the troops will deliver special munitions to missile and Air Force units, mount them on launchers and aircraft. The West got absorbed in playing — in an attempt to hold the position of the hegemon, it has thrown its cap over the windmill and approached the red lines. Through joint nuclear exercises, Belarus and Russia have put the collective West in its place and given a signal to the whole world to stop the escalation. In fact, the positions of NATO countries are weakened, their military economy is on the wane, and the whole warmongering rhetoric is based on elements of bluff and audacity. Many people have come to realise the worthlessness of Washington, London, Brussels and Paris. Belarus plays a key historical role in the current geopolitical situation, and this time [as opposed to the 1941-1945 Nazi Germany's occupation and genocide of the USSR], we will allow neither the occupation nor the devastation of our lands. We are ready to respond to aggression should it happen.



# Novelties that came off the assembly line



Up to 30,000 units per year — a new car production project has been implemented in Belarus

By Vladislav Sychevich

The first Belarus-made VGV Sinotruk cars have rolled off the assembly line of the Unison Plant. These are seven-seater family vehicles at the price of a compact crossover. According to Aleksei Vaganov, a representative of Unison shareholders, it is planned to produce about 30,000 cars per year. “We launched this project a year ago following the agreements reached by the President of Belarus during his state visit to China in March 2023. Sinotruk (CNHTC) is the second largest car manufacturer in China, employing about 150,000 people. They have experience of co-operation with our country. They work in the field of heavy engineering and have already implemented successful projects in Belarus — for example, Weichai. The technical project was certified in six months. This is a fairly short period. The vehicle has a competitive price, which will allow reaching the production volume of 25-30 thousand vehicles per year in a year. This task was set by the Head of State,” Aleksei Vaganov shared the details.



The first batch of cars was assembled by Belarusian and Chinese qualified specialists, whose tasks also included the transfer of their knowledge and skills to local workers. In the future, the company plans to launch the production of a range of other VGV Sinotruk models, including an all-wheel drive pickup truck, as well as the manufacture of electric vehicles. “As for localisation, welding, painting, gear box assembly and other elements will be carried out locally,” Aleksei Vaganov added.

“BELGEE is now known not only in our country, but also abroad. We have made great progress in the development of production in terms of in-depth localisa-

Aleksey Vyazmitinov



tion and the manufacture of our own vehicle. In this regard, the Unison Plant fits harmoniously into the concept of expanding passenger car production capacities in Belarus,” Belarus’ First Deputy Minister of Industry Aleksandr Ogorodnikov pointed out. “Localisation today is a mandatory condition for any company with which we build a business. We discussed with our Chinese partners not just the assembly of cars, but deep localisation. I am sure that the production facilities that we see here will not be the only ones.”

The main market for Belarus-made vehicles is Belarus and the Russian Federation. Negotiations are currently underway with other EAEU member states.

“We chose Belarus to implement this project because it was meant to be,” commented Dong Cai, Director General of

China National Heavy Duty Truck Group Co. Ltd (Sinotruk VGV). “We expect to continuously deepen our co-operation. As for production volumes, everything will depend on the market. The decision to localise the production of our vehicles in Belarus is an important step in our desire to increase production capacity. The Unison Plant has enough production facilities, and everything suits us. Moreover, this enterprise enjoys the support of the Government of Belarus, and is a reliable partner. Also, communication between the teams on both sides is quite successful. We are very pleased with the co-operation. The maintenance and promotion of cars is fully entrusted to the Belarusian side, because we believe that it is local dealers who should be engaged in promotion to ensure the fastest entry into the market.”

## Development trend

The Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) has noted the accelerated growth of the Belarusian economy

**The EDB has analysed the positive trends in our country’s economy in its weekly macroeconomic review**

In particular, EDB analysts have drawn attention to the fact that Belarusian GDP grew by 5.1 percent year-on-year in four months of 2024 after 4.1 percent in the first quarter. “Industry provided almost half of the GDP growth, having increased output by 7.7 percent year-on-year in January–April after 6.5 percent in January–March,” experts stated. “The growth in agriculture amounted to 6.9 percent year-on-year in January–April after 5.7 percent in January–March.” Analysts also pay attention to the more than twofold increase in investments, which reached 10

percent year-on-year in January–April after 4.8 percent in January–March. According to EDB experts, a high level of final consumption also provided support — retail turnover increased by 12.1 percent year-on-year after 13.1 percent. There is another positive trend that has come to the attention of the bank’s specialists. “The decline in the information technology industry is slowing down, which will reduce the negative contribution to the GDP formation. Housing construction is demonstrating recovery, as well,” the EDB macro review notes.



Vyury Mozoliev

## Record figure

**The exports of goods by resident companies of the Belarusian free economic zones (FEZ) exceeded \$2 billion in January–March 2024**

**According to the results of three months of 2024, the indicators of FEZ residents showed positive dynamics, as reported by the press service of Belarus’ Economy Ministry**



FREE ECONOMIC ZONES

The economic department of the country has explained that enterprises paid 32.2 percent more taxes to the state budget, and increased investment volumes by 28.8 percent. The average monthly salary of employees increased by more than 22 percent, revenue — by 17.6, production out-

put — by 16.6, net profit — by 11 percent. “Exports of goods in the first quarter of 2024 increased by 3.5 percent compared to the same period in 2023. At the same time, the volume of exports amounted to \$2.1 billion, which is a record figure for the first quarter of the year for the entire

period of FEZ operation,” Belarus’ Ministry of Economy added.

In particular, the enterprises significantly bolstered the supply volume of their products to Asian countries: to Kazakhstan — by 1.1 times, to India — by 1.2, to Tajikistan — by 1.3, to China —

by 1.5, to Türkiye — by 1.6, to Turkmenistan — by 2.1, to Iraq — by 4.5.

The Ministry has also noted that FEZ residents continue to have a considerable impact on regional indicators, forming up to 50 percent of export volumes in a number of Belarus’ regions. The leaders in terms of exports are Minsk Free Economic Zone, as well as the FEZ of Gomel and Mogilev regions.

By the way, over the past period of the year, the composition of FEZ residents has been replenished with ten new enterprises with plans to create over 500 new jobs. Thus, new investors are planning to implement projects in metalworking, machine building, chemical and polymer industries, production of charging infrastructure for electric transport, and more.



# The notion that 'China exports its overcapacity' is a complete fallacy

The statement that 'China exports excess production capacity' is false and does not correspond to the basic principles of the economy

Some unscrupulous politicians and the media in the United States as well as certain Western countries, when focusing on the powerful momentum of the rapid development of China's new energy sector, have recently started to jointly inflate the smear narrative of China's so-called 'overcapacity' stacked against new energy vehicles, photovoltaic products and lithium batteries exported from China, which reflects the growing anxiety of these people. Being concerned about the fact that they 'cannot overtake China', they have decided to hit it with a label stating that 'China's overcapacity is damaging the world', thereby trying to distort and discredit economic relations between the People's Republic of China and the world, and to maintain its monopoly status in the global production and supply chain. However, whether from the standpoint of the principles of a market economy and the law of value, or from the standpoint of analysing the global division of labour and the situation on the international market, the statement that 'China exports excess production capacity' is false.



By Xie Xiaoyong,  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus

## 'Chinese threat' version in a new package

First, it is necessary to understand correctly what 'overcapacity' is. In the context of economic globalisation, it is important to look at the issue of production capacity objectively and dialectically from a market-oriented and global perspective, as well as based on economic patterns.

From an in-depth perspective, the volume of production capacity is determined by the ratio between supply and demand in the market. The balance between supply and demand is relative, and imbalances are commonplace. The global market share occupied by one country or the export product volume in a particular industry is largely the result of the fact that countries leverage their comparative competitive advantages and carry out mutually beneficial co-operation. The corresponding indicators cannot be bluntly used as a criterion for assessing the availability of excess industrial capacity.

More than 200 years ago, Adam Smith explained in his book *The Wealth of Nations* that international trade allows countries to achieve a division of labour and co-operation, thereby increasing production efficiency and economic development. Today, in contrast, some Western countries define 'overcapacity' as production capacity that exceeds domestic demand, which not only contradicts the well-known truths of the economy but also does not correspond to objective facts. If countries manufacture products only to meet the needs of their own domestic market, where will global trade come from? According to this logic, can we say that 80 percent of the chips produced by the United States and vehicles produced by Germany that are exported are also 'excess production capacity'?

*In fact, the theory of 'China's overcapacity' does not correspond to the basic principles of the economy, nor does it stand up to logical analysis. It is safe to say that this version of the 'Chinese threat theory' in a new package exposes the lag in the green industry development in the United States and Western countries, as well as the lack of ability in promoting low-carbon transformation.*

This kind of approach to trade and economic issues, such as production capacity, based on pan-politicisation and evil generalisation of the security concept contradicts the laws of the economy and the general trend of globalisation, exacerbates the risk of fragmentation of global economy and harms global prosperity and stable development.

## For mutual benefit

Secondly, there is no problem of large-scale and permanent 'overcapacity' in China. China does not export the so-called 'excess production capacity'.

In recent years, China has been actively pursuing the supply-side structural reform and has been decisively reducing production capacity in iron and steel, and other industries. In 2023, there was a quarterly increase in China's capacity utilisation rate, amounting to 74.3, 74.5, 75.6 and 75.9 percent in four quarters, respectively, which is generally within the normal range. The capacity utilisation rate in the automotive industry is also showing an upward trend and is approaching the threshold value of 80 percent.

Recently, some people from the United States and Europe, as well as Western media, have been constantly inflating the problem of alleged 'excess production capacity' in China's new energy

industry, distorting objective information about the state of development of China's new energy industry and deliberately diverting the opinion of the international community from the right path. In fact, the real situation is as follows: the products of China's relevant industry are mainly supplied to the domestic market and are not exported in large volumes abroad, while exports to the United States are generally limited. Thus, in 2023, the production volume and sales of new energy vehicles in China amounted to 9.587 million and 9.495 million units, respectively, where sales in the domestic market stood at 87.3 percent, exports abroad — only 12.7 percent, and exports to the United States — 13,000 units, which makes as little as 0.82 percent. In 2023, the average selling price of Chinese electric vehicles in Europe exceeded €31,000, which is higher than the selling price in the domestic market. Therefore, the problem of the alleged 'price distortion' does not exist.

Another example is photovoltaic products. In 2023, the production volume of photovoltaic modules in China was 499 gigawatts, while the export volume to the United States was only 0.5 percent of the total exports of photovoltaic modules in China.

*In fact, China's exports of photovoltaic and lithium batteries, as well as other new energy products will help developing countries join the international production chain in the new energy industry and eventually achieve the goal of mutual benefit and win-win results, i.e. make the 'cake' of development bigger instead of vying for an extra share from others.*

## Competitive advantages

Thirdly, China's advantages in the new energy sector are the embodiment of advantages in areas such as technology, market and production chain, and not the result of the non-existent so-called 'unfair competition'.

After decades of intense development of China's new energy industry, its current competitive edges are entirely based on the advantages of vast market demand, a complete industrial system, rich human resources, many years of technological upgrading and innovations in environmentally friendly and clean production methods, as a result of huge investments in research and innovation by enterprises, as well as the result of tireless efforts of entrepreneurs.

The combination of the above factors has made it possible to reduce production costs and boost China's global competitiveness. This is due to sufficient market competition, and not the alleged 'subsidies' or unfair competition, which is the case in the United States and Europe. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), adopted by the United States in 2022, provides tax incentives of up to \$7,500 for buyers of new energy vehicles. The European Union has also continued to ease restrictions on subsidies in recent years — from March 2020 to the end of 2022, the European Commission approved over 1,000 state subsidy programmes for 27 participating countries totalling €3.8 trillion.

*The West intends, by distorting the facts and condemning China's 'overcapacity', 'dumping' and 'unfair competition' in the manufacture of new energy products, to indulge the interests of its own manufacturers in order to hide the facts that their own products are uncompetitive in environmental terms and that the 'surcharge for environmental friendliness' is too high, planning thereby to further curb the export benefits of environmentally clean Chinese products.*

However, the recognition and choice of Chinese products by global consumers remains unchanged. No matter how hard the Western media try, nothing will change the fact that Chinese new energy products retain a competitive advantage worldwide.



## Environmental aspect

Fourth, China's exports of new energy products make an important contribution to combating climate change and promoting green transformation.

Currently, the situation with global climate change is becoming more serious, and the relevance of promoting green transformation continues to grow. The development of new energy industries and the introduction of new energy products is an important prerequisite for responding to the existing and emerging challenges, and implementing green development. However, along with that, the current global capacity for the manufacture of new energy products is far from meeting market demand. According to estimates by the International Energy Agency (IEA), the global demand for new energy vehicles, as an example, will reach 45 million units in 2030, which is 4.5 times more than in 2022, while the global demand for new photovoltaic installations will reach 820 gigawatts, which is approximately 4 times more than in 2022. As countries are actively developing the artificial intelligence industry, they also need basic support from new power generation and energy storage facilities.

The advancement of China's new energy industry has made a great contribution to the global response to climate change and to green and low-carbon transformation.

*As part of the green investment co-operation within the Belt and Road Initiative, China has helped developing countries located along the routes to build clean energy infrastructure through photovoltaic, wind energy and other projects. In terms of export sales of new energy vehicles, China ranks first in the world. Not only did this not harm the markets of the importing countries, but this further advanced the process of transition to cleaner transport and more environmentally friendly consumption in these countries. It can be stated that all countries of the world are inseparable from China's new energy products.*

In the context of the current conditions of economic and trade globalisation, the comprehensive use of the comparative advantages of all countries, the joint promotion of a global green production and supply chain, the rejection of trade protectionism and creation of green trade barriers are fundamental measures in compliance with the global process of green transformation.







## Bee boxes burnt in New Zealand

**Beekeepers say New Zealand needs a new approach to a hive-destroying disease that is leaving those affected out of pocket, uncompensated and devastated**

Honey producer Springbank Honey of North Canterbury was ordered to burn more than 10,000 of its beehives and beekeeping equipment after American Foulbrood (AFB) was identified through spore testing.

AFB is a bacterial disease spread by spores that could be viable for up to 40 years. It is considered one of the most widespread and destructive honey bee brood diseases in the world.

The family-owned honey business, operating near Rangiora in North Canterbury, runs 3,000 organic beehives and processes honey too. Co-owner Steven Brown said burning thousands of beehives had left the family 'devastated'.

Mr. Brown said it would cost around \$2m to replace it all, made more difficult by the fact that there was no compensation or insurance available for beekeepers.

Burning the hives was more painful when other countries used tools like vaccines, antibiotics and sterilisation — measures prohibited in New Zealand and in some export markets.



## 'Day of shame' for UK

**An infected blood scandal in Britain was no accident but the fault of doctors and a succession of governments that led to 3,000 deaths and thousands more contracting hepatitis or HIV, a recent public inquiry reported**

Inquiry chair Brian Langstaff said more than 30,000 people received infected blood and blood products in the 1970s and 1980s from Britain's state-funded National Health Service, destroying lives, dreams and families.

The government hid the truth to 'save face and to save expense', he said, adding that the cover-up was 'more subtle, more pervasive and more chilling in its implications' than any orchestrated conspiracy plot.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said it was 'a day of shame for the British state'.

"I want to make a wholehearted unequivocal apology for this terrible injustice," he told Parliament and promised full compensation to those affected.

The families of victims and survivors had sought justice for years and Langstaff, who led a six-year inquiry, said the scale

of what happened was both horrifying and astonishing.

In some cases, blood products made from donations from US prisoners or other high-risk groups paid to donate were used on children, infecting them with HIV or hepatitis C, long after the risks were known.

Other victims were used in medical trials without their knowledge or consent. Those who contracted HIV were often shunned by their communities.

"This disaster was not an accident," said Langstaff to a standing ovation from campaigners. "The infections happened because those in authority — doctors, the blood services and successive governments — did not put patient safety first."

The use of infected blood has resulted in thousands of victims in the United States, France, Canada and other countries.



The British government agreed in 2022 to make an interim payment of 100,000 pounds (\$126,990) to some of those affected.

Clive Smith, the Chair of the Haemophilia Society, said the scandal had rocked faith in the medical establishment. "[It] really challenges the trust that we put in people to look after us, to do their best and to protect us," he told reporters.



## Mount Fuji view to be blocked

**The Japanese town of Fujikawaguchiko has erected a giant black net to block views of Mount Fuji, a reaction to the town's huge popularity on Instagram and other social media platforms**

A town in Japan has got so fed up with tourists that they have built a huge fence blocking the view of the attraction they are coming for — the famous Mount Fuji.

The 20m long and 2.5m high fence is covered with a black mesh net, not the most social media-friendly backdrop to the selfies that visitors flock here for.

Fujikawaguchiko is known to offer some of the best views of the iconic Japanese mountain. But locals have had enough of tourists blocking pavements

and stopping traffic to get the perfect shot.

A particularly popular photo location was outside a Lawson convenience store, from where a photograph taken at a particular angle would make it seem as if Mt. Fuji was sitting atop the shop's roof. The tourists, mostly foreigners, even dubbed the spot 'Mt. Fuji Lawson'.

The town began to get an influx of tourists as post-pandemic travel increased and the Japanese yen weakened, meaning people from other countries can get more for their money there.

## Severe turbulence has hit Singapore Airlines flight

**One person has died aboard and another has died at a Thai hospital after Singapore Airlines flight SQ 321 from London to Singapore encountered severe turbulence**

The plane was diverted to Bangkok and made an emergency landing at Suvarnabhumi Airport, where emergency crews rushed to help injured passengers amid stormy weather.

Seventy-one people with injuries were treated at Samitivej Srinakarin Hospital in Bangkok, including twenty passengers who were in intensive care. Nine underwent surgery, while five more were awaiting surgery.

"Singapore Airlines offers its deep-

est condolences to the family of the deceased," the airline said.

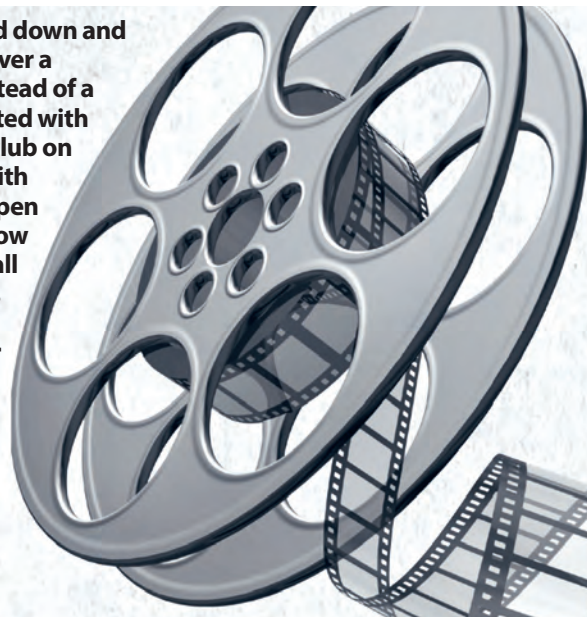
Starting with an incident on an Alaska Airlines flight — when a door blew out shortly after takeoff — the Boeing planes have been increasingly malfunctioning across airlines, leading to multiple investigations and rising concerns. Terrified passengers scrambled to escape tyre explodes on 737 landing in Türkiye — 24 hours after nose gear failure caused 767 to slam into runway.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



The dubious fanfare of *Eurovision 2024* has died down and brought down the curtain on any discussions over a possible joint path with the collective West. Instead of a worthy vocal contest, the audience was presented with a transvestite show, like the one in some nightclub on the outskirts of Amsterdam, soaked through with politics. The Overton window was flung wide open and flapping windswept. Anyone wondering how and why all of this became possible should recall that historically, any sexual revolution — this is exactly what our ‘Western partners’ are trying to impose on society — is a standard harbinger of an attempt at global breakdown. So, what are they planning to break? The answer is obvious — the existing way of life with a traditional family, religious morality and such ‘obsolete’ values as national interests. By the way, Hollywood has been the main ringleader in this process for many years, while Europe, deprived of sovereignty, simply follows in the wake.



Society must be corrupted and fragmented into permanently offended minorities — this is the only sure way to make it absolutely manageable

# Dictatorship of minorities

## BEWILDERMENT INSTEAD OF DELIGHT

The Oscar nomination rules adopted in the autumn of 2020 have come into force this year. They completely block the access of the ‘wrong’ cinema to the coveted golden statuettes and premium hype. Even Leonardo DiCaprio, who for many years played quite successfully in the league of new tolerance, has recently admitted, “There are some dark ages coming up”.

The fact that the dictatorship of minorities is slowly but surely becoming the dominant paradigm in Hollywood is not the news. Now, however, this is officially enshrined in the rules of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which has for many years dictated its will on a planetary scale. Hollywood as a propaganda factory has existed since the Second World War, when the confrontation between the United States and the USSR as two global civilisational poles finally took shape. The propaganda quality and orientation has since undergone significant changes — such that today’s audience is more often bewildered than delighted.

**Anyway, it is too early to rejoice at your own resistance. What is being done is aimed not at middle-aged or senior citizens, but at reformatting the consciousness of young people and adolescents. It is they who are destined to become adherents of the coming new way of life, on a global scale.**

By Irina Ovsepyan

## New standards

Let us turn to the official Oscar resources: the new standards have been introduced ‘to encourage equitable hiring practices and representation on and off screen in order to better reflect the diversity of the film community’. The trend is supported by the Producers Guild of America (PGA). The Representation and Inclusion Standards for Oscars relate to the cast, storyline and subject matter of films and behaviour of characters, the overall crew composition and the existence of film companies in general. To put it briefly, the indispensable presence of representatives of the ‘disadvantaged’ categories must now be ensured everywhere — from on-screen actors to off-screen interns bringing towels and water. Firstly, this refers to ‘underrepresented’ racial and ethnic groups. At least one of the lead or significant supporting actors must be a representative of the specified groups. Secondly, LGBTQ+ minorities and some other categories of citizens are recognised as underrepresented and requiring special preferences in the film industry. They are entitled to at least (!) 30 percent of the roles in any film competing for awards today.

In other words, no project that has failed to take an oath to this political correctness will be admitted to the contenders for the Best Picture nomination. Special terms — colour blind casting and gender blind casting — are meant to emphasise the selection of actors regardless of their race or gender.

**Are you still unhappy about the black mermaid in the Disney’s animated feature film or the black female 007? Forget it. James Bond may soon become a gay Indian, and princess Ariel — an Aboriginal woman from Vanuatu with Down syndrome and will want to have not legs instead of a fish tail, but a sex-reassignment surgery.**

It is not about racism or stigmatisation but about the fact that for the sake of propaganda clichés, film studios sacrifice all criteria of professional

work. Let us turn to the official website of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and its protection of ‘underrepresented’ categories. All of them must be included in the team of a film project aspiring to receive the top award as casting directors, composers, directors, hairdressers, make-up artists, sound engineers, screenwriters and so on in an amount of at least 30 percent of the film’s crew.

**He who was nothing shall become everything. This means that compliance with professional standards can become increasingly difficult. Obviously, neither qualifications nor talent depend on skin colour or gender, yet it is going to be impossible to reject the candidacy of a ‘racially underrepresented’ contender, an aggressive feminist or a gender-fluid individual, even if the applicant is completely incompetent. The new cultural censors from the film industry are keenly monitoring such situations. Therefore, the maxim ‘Mediocrity will break through on their own’ becomes universal — if you want to avoid social death, follow the rules and work with what you have.**

In practice, this translates into the birth of ‘masterpieces’ that fail at the box office — such as *The Little Mermaid* (by the way, despite the poor box-office performance by Hollywood standards, Walt Disney is planning to continue the trend),

*Cinderella* with a genderless fairy godmother portrayed by Billy Porter, a bearded black man, *Thor* with the inexplicable charm of the Afro-Scandinavian gods, the *Pearl Harbour* action movie stuffed with historical mistakes like a sunflower with seeds, which actually turned into agitprop of Hirohito’s militaristic Japan... The multiracial hobbits and elves from Puerto Rico in Amazon’s *Lord of the Rings* series did not arouse enthusiasm among viewers, either — hiding millions of dislikes on YouTube did not help.



## ALTERNATIVE AGENDA

Despite the telling economic indicators and a cool response by the audience, the politically correct meat grinder continues to work, grinding the old into the new. Thus, Walt Disney Productions currently exists exclusively on remakes of its old animated feature films. They are not alone: the American film industry has taken an openly parasitic position. The inability to create new things is the reverse side of the requirement for scripts that should be ideologically verified. Therefore, when Columbia Pictures released an American remake of a Sweden’s Oscar-nominated film *A Man Called Ove*, and a new Hollywood hegemon — a transgender teenager — appeared at the fifteenth minute in shot with the sad hero of Tom Hanks, watching it further made no sense.

The alternative agenda, sexual deviations, dictatorship under the guise of inclusion, and green themes are promoted by the US Democratic Party in defiance of the Republicans who are based on conservative values. The film industry traditionally lies in the sphere of interests of the Democrats, who have favoured show business for generations, whereas the Republicans most often choose the real sector of the economy. The investments of the Democratic Party representatives in the film business reliably determine the current agenda — the Democrats control ideology through cinema, pouring money into the creation of the corresponding product. As a result, cinematic art as well as the economy and common sense have to give in and wait their turn in the background. **Director Frank Darabont, who shot the iconic *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Green Mile*, spoke about it bluntly, “My kind of filmmaking might be a little bit quaint these days. I am absolutely certain that I could not make *The Shawshank Redemption* today. I do not think I could get *The Green Mile* or *The Majestic* made today. I cannot even begin to imagine the studio meddling that would have happened with a movie like *The Shawshank Redemption*.”**

According to the master, there is little value in such a movie. Along with that, it should be remembered that Darabont is 65 years old. Like many, he is a representative of the older generation of filmmakers. The new politically correct Hollywood is looking forward to the extinction of the old dinosaurs of cinema, while their replacement is being forged under the eagle eye of film academics according to the current Oscar circulars.





# Fascinating water-based trips

Belarus boasts a range of amazingly interwoven waterways that can be used to get to ancient cities and enticing forests. What are the best places to sail a yacht under the starry sky? Where can you take a river cruise? What are the kayaking preparation tips? Let us lift the veil on these and other questions.

Kayaking, a river tram, a floating hotel — water tourism in Belarus offers a lot of exciting activities to attract visitors

## DIRECT SPEECH

**Dmitry Chumakevich, Director of State Water Transport Administration,**

“The motor ship *Belaya Rus* has become the most popular, the first and so far the only river cruise ship of its kind in our country. It cruises along three fascinating routes from Brest to Mozyr and in the opposite direction, including 15 cities and 24 sites to visit. Another unique place for water tourism is the floating hotel *Polesie* located on the Pripyat River in Turov. Every year, holidaymakers get an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of nature and relax during pleasure rides to various cities of the country from Brest to Vitebsk. Thus, the Augustovsky Canal in Grodno Region was visited by 130,000 people last year. Water-based recreational activities include

water trips on the motor ships *Olga Solomova* and *Neman*, motor boat rides with sluicing or without at option, catamaran and boat rental, kayaking. Farmsteads have appeared along the coast. It is planned to

open new recreation areas and tourist routes this year. There will be more catering outlets, and quad biking as one of the novelties. Trips on the motor ship *Svisloch* along Komsomolskoye Lake are available in the capital city. The motor boats *Friends* and *Filibuster*, which are also called river trams, plying the Drozdy reservoir became the novelty of the last year. One of the promising routes along the Svisloch River is provided within the borders of Minsk and Minsk Region with the possibility of arranging through traffic of water transport 18 kilometres long, with the prospect of reaching the Zaslavskoye reservoir. It is assumed that an environmentally friendly mode of transport — electric riverboats — will run along the river, which will enable to transport people with maximum comfort. Houseboats equipped with steam baths, where recreation is organised both for owners and tourists, have been particularly popular in recent years. If there is a wish to implement a water related business idea, it is imperative to comply with the legislation norms regulating navigation on the country's inland waterways.”



By Kristina Khilko

## Sail through the Sea of Herodotus

You can plunge into the pristine Belarusian nature and admire the unusual landscapes by going kayaking. The most suitable river for beginners is the Isloch — a narrow but fast and winding river that carries its waters through the picturesque Nalibokskaya Pushcha [forest reserve]. A detailed safety briefing will be held at the starting point: Be sure to put on a life jacket, do not stand up while kayaking or rock the kayak. You will encounter wild river beaches and steep banks on the way. An unforgettable experience is guaranteed! Simple water routes are suitable for everyone, including children. Requests for kayaking tours are accepted two weeks in advance. The price depends on the complexity and duration of the route. Thus, the price for a three-hour kayaking trip starts from Br50, a day water trip is twice as expensive, and a three-day one costs about Br270. Kayaking along the Sea of Herodotus on the Pripyat River floodplain is popular in spring. The eight-kilometre route takes about three hours.

## Kilometres of impressions

Valery Malashko, Chairman of the Standing Commission on Health, Physical Culture, Family and Youth Policy of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly, is confident that the tourism industry stimulates the service sector development and can become a driving force of regional development, “There are about 20,000 rivers in Belarus, their total length is more than 90,000 kilometres. Kayaking, rafting, sailing and yachting are becoming more in-demand. It is important that all these activities take place in compliance with all safety measures and environmental requirements. Those who are engaged in water related business must undergo training and have relevant experience in organising and conducting water-based trips.”

Valery Malashko has noted that kayaking along the picturesque waterways of Belarus — the Neman, the Vilia, the Sozh, the Svisloch and other rivers — contributes to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, acquaintance with nature, and the study of the history of a particular region.

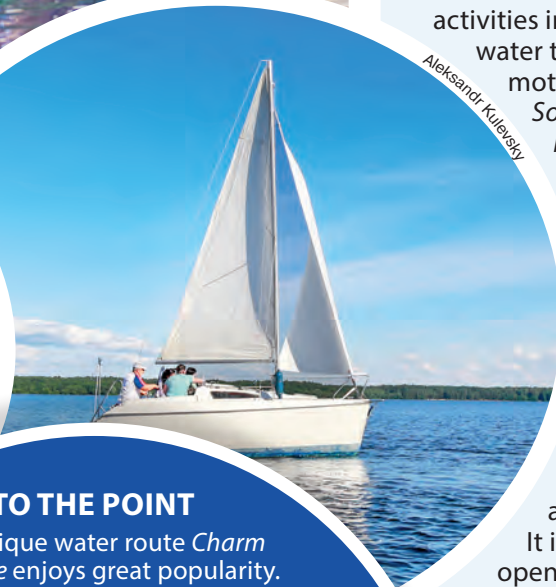
According to Filipp Guly, Chairman of the Board of the Republican Union of Tourism Industry (RUTI), when putting a spotlight on holidays within the country, it is important to raise infrastructure to a certain level. This includes an opportunity to book an on-line parking lot in a convenient place with prepared platforms for camping or glamping tents, to order firewood or food for an additional fee, to follow direction signs to find eco- and bike trails, to buy souvenirs and to rent the necessary gear. Banks and leasing companies should be provided with conditions for preferential loan programmes to allow purchasing equipment for active pastime. The issue of personnel training and professional development requires special attention. All these prerequisites will help local entrepreneurs and farmsteads create jobs and attract revenue to district budgets, while local authorities will be able to claim the resort tax collection.

“In order to arrange all of this, it is necessary to develop a clear concept — a master plan where all participants see their role and the general concept, and the investor understands what product and investment conditions they are offered. This can be formalised in a special development strategy for active recreation on waterways and related cluster systems. Tourism is an interdisciplinary phenomenon and, therefore, encompasses areas of responsibility of various ministries, departments, and organisations. In this regard, it is vital to bring the solutions down to a common denominator. This matter

## TO THE POINT

The unique water route *Charm of Polesie* enjoys great popularity. Passengers are offered an 8-day all-inclusive cruise vacation, with visits to the Brest Fortress, the Pripyatsky National Park, Zamkovaya Mountain, as well as the ancient cities of Turov and Pinsk en route. All seats are booked for the summer, and the nearest available dates are only in autumn. The price starts from Br1,900. Renting a snow-white sailing yacht *Dolce Vita* on the Minsk Sea [aka the Zaslavskoye reservoir, an artificially created body of water] for one hour for a company of up to 10 people will cost Br250. You can also take a yacht trip under the starry sky on the Naroch River. An hourly rent — from Br120. A one-day SUP board trip on Braslav Lakes will cost half as much. The price for hour-long relaxation on a catamaran along the Svisloch River starts from Br15.

requires a large-scale, responsible and serious approach with balanced decisions, powers and competencies. I think, taking into account the April meeting between the prime ministers of Belarus and Russia, we will adopt effective practices of tourism development from our neighbours,” Filipp Guly specified. The RUTI Chairman of the Board remarked that Russia has shipbuilders capable of producing shallow-draft ships for Belarusian technical requirements, “Since last year, a Russian cruise operator has been successfully organising tours for us along the Pripyat River. Four–five cruise ships can be simultaneously located on the section connecting Pinsk and Mozyr. There are prospects for development. Another thing is that cruises on our rivers are more oriented toward visitors to Belarus. At the same time, modern vessels are warm and comfortable, and tours are held until ice forms on the rivers. This can be a good alternative to regional hotels in the off-season — from December to March, and for corporate events in November and April.”





# Prospects for the season

## Growing ambitions in biathlon



Hanna Sola and Oleg Ryzhenkov

**Biathletes have got back from vacation and started preparing for the new season. Despite the fact that there is still a lot of time before it starts, the plans for the competitive year have already been outlined. Since the International Biathlon Union has not yet changed its decision regarding the return of Russian and Belarusian athletes to the world stage, the entire focus is on the internal and joint competitions of 'shooting skiers' of the two countries.**

By Tatiana Pastushenko

According to the recently made statement by the Belarusian Biathlon Federation, Belarusian biathletes have opened the first training camp in the Raubichi sports complex. The men's team consists of Anton Smolski, Dmytro Lazouski, Mikita Labastau, Ilya Auseyenka, Ivan Tulatsin, Stsiapan Danilau, Pavel Belko and Maksim Varabey. The women's team consists of Dzinara Smolskaya, Hanna Sola, Iryna Leshchanka, Darya Kudayeva, Alena Kulak, Hanna Pestsiarava and Alina Zaitsava. Head coach of the Belarusian national team Oleg Ryzhenkov has shared some plans, "Our men's team is completely staffed, and its composition remains unchanged. We will certainly keep an eye on the youth, too. As for women, a new team is being formed with the prospect of competing at the Olympics not even in 2026, but in 2030. We are looking at a lot of young biathletes, and include the most promising ones, in our opinion, in the team — those who have already proven themselves at competitions. In addition, we select younger biathletes that will also be trained



The training programme of Dzinara and Anton Smolski includes a variety of sports

according to the national team programme. We need to make decisions with an eye toward the future now in order to form a strong and combat-ready squad for the future."

Kseniia Shneider, a 24-year-old Russian, is also training with the Belarusian team. Maksim Varabey's fiancée has decided to move to Belarus and plans to perform as part of the Belarusian national team.

**"Kseniia will definitely not be superfluous in our team," Oleg Ryzhenkov expressed his opinion. "She will strengthen the squad that is preparing for the competitions, as well as the team of four for the relay race."**

What is the exact situation with the competitions?

"We will probably not participate in all the starts. We will skip some of them and will prepare for more important tournaments, such as the stage of the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup, which will be held in Sochi in February. This will be one of the main starts," Ryzhenkov explained. "Of course, we will pay special attention to the home stage of the Commonwealth Cup in Raubichi, expected to take place in January. Another important start is going to be the

Russian Championship, scheduled for the end of March."

It is possible that the calendar will not be limited to the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup, the stages of the Russian Cup and the Russian Championship. Discussions are currently underway on the possibility of continuing the competitions within the International Biathlon Club League (IBCL). The project organised by the Regional Biathlon Club of Moscow Region in liaison with the Belarusian Biathlon Club was launched for the first time in 2023. Before the start of the new season, 'shooting skiers' held four races in Khanty-Mansiysk, where they contended not only for victory but also for solid prize money totalling P8 million. Preparing for the first IBCL Cup, the organisers announced that the future of the project would depend on the result of the first edition. The debut proved to be a success, so they are planning not only to resume but also to expand it in the new competitive year. Aleksei Nuzhdov, Head of the Regional Biathlon Club of Moscow Region, has recently revealed, "We wanted to organise four stages in 2024. We have co-ordinated that with the Russian Biathlon Union so as to smoothly align the calendars. The approval process is underway now. The Russian Biathlon Union has provided us with such a busy calendar that so far there is physically not enough space to hold four stages. We hope to find a consensus, though."

According to Oleg Ryzhenkov, the IBCL Cup presents interesting competitions that may become in the future one of the viable options for biathlon development on the world stage. "There are club competitions in many sports. Perhaps they will also be introduced in our sport over time. It was interesting for the athletes to participate in the IBCL Cup. This is a great competitive practice. The commercial component of the tournament is important, too."

In the near future, Belarusian athletes will continue to train at Raubichi. They are scheduled to have a training camp at middle altitudes in July and August, after which they will have another training session at the main biathlon complex of the country. It is probable that in September, athletes from the two countries will open the competition season at the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup on roller skis.

# Riding a ball

## Neman Grodno is the winner of the Belarusian Football Cup

**Final matches rarely happen to be spectacular. The nature of the decisive battle leaves its heavy imprint on both teams — the cost of error is too high and caution in actions always prevails over ease of play. Instead of the dashing music of attack, a gloomy alarm bell of defence is usually heard. The final match of the National Cup was no exception.**

By Sergei Kanashits

The duel between Isloch and Neman did not surprise with bright colours, although this match cannot be called a boring one, either. This is not only thanks to the players but also to the fans — impressive support groups arrived in Zhodino from Minsk and Grodno, which turned the usually dull atmosphere of Belarusian football into something like a festive event.

The stronger team won. There is no doubt about this, even among the most devoted and desperate fans of Isloch. Neman looked more solid, more active, more accurate and more confident in all components of the game and throughout the entire match. Only once in their history had Grodno football players raised the national cup over their heads. The memorable event happened as many as 31 years ago, at the dawn of sovereign football, when Vedrich from Rechitsa was defeated in the final. Since then — not a chance. There were exits to the decisive stage, but tough luck followed the team each time. The same situation was in the Belarusian championship, where they managed to hit the podium but never to become champi-



ons. This season, therefore, may become a breakthrough for Neman. Grodno residents have already secured the cup for their club museum. Now, presumably, they will aim, with good reason and in all seriousness, at winning the gold awards of the championship. After all, who would dare to say today that Neman stands no chance of winning this race?

Yegor Zubovich and Pavel Savitskiy are the two main Grodno jokers. It was their goals that brought victory over Is-



BELTA

### DIRECT SPEECH

**Igor Kovalevich, head coach of Neman,**

*"The real men played for Neman in this match. The flow of the Neman River would have stopped sooner than we would have lost to Isloch. For two years in a row, we were very close to winning the Cup. We waited patiently — and this moment has come. Despite all the machinations created by the federation, we have rightfully won the trophy."*

loch. Ilya Kukharchik, a midfielder who has joined the ranks of Neman only this season, also became a direct participant in the episodes that led to the goals. This nimble footballer can be easily called the finals MVP, and this is perhaps the main surprise. The 27-year-old trainee of the Baranovichi football school had neither a big name nor significant achievements till that moment, having spent most of his career playing for his hometown team and for Belshina from Bobruisk permanently

balancing between the highest and the first leagues. This time, however, not only did he manage to keep his wits about him in a serious battle, but he also did great when fighting for the ball, playing in defence and attack, and acting reasonably, tenaciously and quickly. In a word, he nailed it!

What about Isloch? Isloch really wanted to win but could not. No matter what you say, two dangerous moments during the whole match are clearly not enough to seriously count on winning the National Cup.



Yegor Vermalitskiy



## Photo of the week

**On May 28th, Belarus celebrated Border Guards' Day — a holiday of courage, duty and honour. After all, protecting the borders of our Homeland is the task for real men! In the photo: Conscript soldier Stanislav Kovalenko and shepherd Hara, Vitebsk Region, Bigosovo border outpost.**

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**May 30th, 1934** is the date of birth of Aleksei Leonov (1934-2019), Soviet pilot cosmonaut, Major General of Air Force Reserve, twice Hero of the Soviet Union. On March 18th, 1965, he flew into space on the Voskhod 2 spacecraft together with Pavel Belyaev, and made history by becoming the first human to step into outer space. He also participated in the world's first international space flight Apollo-Soyuz on July 15th-21st, 1975 as commander of the Soyuz-19 spacecraft.

**May 30th** is the International Day of Potato. Potatoes are a well-known food crop cultivated for thousands of years, which originates from the Andes region in South America. The potato came to Europe in the 16th century, after which it spread all over the world. Potatoes are one of the most important and beloved staple foods for mankind. For Belarusians, potatoes have long become a second bread and a national symbol. Belarus ranks first in the world in terms of potato production and consumption per capita.



**May 31st** is World No Tobacco Day. Its ultimate goal is to help protect present and future generations not only from the devastating

health consequences but also from social, environmental and economic disasters associated with tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke.



**On May 31st, 1859**, the clock installed on London's Big Ben Tower, which is part of the architectural complex of the Palace of Westminster, went into operation. The dials on Big Ben face four sides of the world. Throughout its history, Big Ben has become not only a symbol of time but also one of the most recognisable symbols of Great Britain.

**May 31st, 1868** is the birthday of cycling, when the first 2,000-metre bicycle race was organised in the alleys of the park in the Paris suburb of Saint-Cloud. Today, the most prestigious cycling race is the Tour de France, which has been held since 1903. Cycling attracts with its dynamism and accessibility. This is one of the most environmentally friendly, healthy and interesting sports.



**On May 31st, 1891**, the construction of the Great Siberian Railway (aka the Trans-Siberian Railway) began. The starting point of the

Trans-Siberian Railway is the Yaroslavsky railway station in Moscow, and the terminal is the railway station in Vladivostok. The total length of the Trans-Siberian Railway is 9,288.2 km. The construction of a large-scale railway system marked a qualitatively new stage in the economic development of Siberia and the Far East.



**June 1st** is International Children's Day, one of the oldest international holidays. The decision to hold it was made in 1925 at the World Conference for the Well-being of Children in Geneva, Switzerland. This day is a reminder to society of the need to protect the rights of children worldwide, ensure that all children have a happy and healthy childhood, have access to education and their favourite activities, and in the future become wonderful parents and worthy citizens of their country.

**June 2nd, 1955** marks the birthday of the Baikonur Cosmodrome. The construction of the first stage of the cosmodrome was completed in record time, and already in May 1957, the first launch of the R-7 intercontinental ballistic missile designed by Sergei Korolev was carried out from the test site. The first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth was launched from Baikonur on October 4th, 1957, and the first spacecraft with a man on board — in 1961.



**June 3rd, 1785** is known as the parachute's birthday. On that day, François Blanchard demonstrated the parachute he had designed. Today, the field of application of parachute systems is very wide. Personal or assault parachutes are used for airdrops, rescue of people and as sports equipment. There are different varieties of parachutes — cargo, braking, spacecraft parachutes and others.



**June 5th** is the Memory Day of Saint Euphrosyne of Polotsk, Belarusian educator, Princess of Polotsk, philanthropist and founder of women's and men's monasteries. She became the first Belarusian woman to be canonised and is considered one of the heavenly intercessors of Belarus. The opening of the first educational institutions and libraries, the creation of a school of architecture and painting, and the development of crafts are associated with her name.

**June 5th** is World Environment Day. This day aims to inspire every person to contribute to environmental protection.

