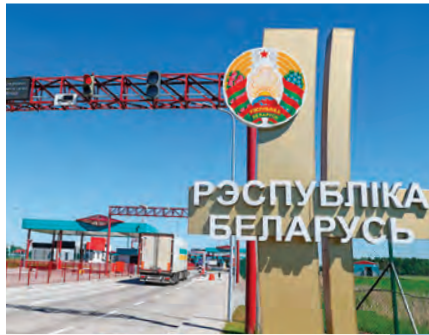




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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

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Andrey Sazonov

Captivating history lessons once impressed Sergei Arkhipov so much that now he ignites the love of the teaching profession in children's hearts. The young teacher is a military instructor, a historian and a class teacher at secondary school No. 15 in Mogilev.

Passionate about the profession

One of the major professional holidays — Teacher's Day — was celebrated in Belarus last weekend. Every family has a connection to education, whether through a schoolchild, a student, or someone who has chosen teaching as a profession. Everyone, undoubtedly, keeps in their memory the teacher, the respect for whom they carry throughout their lives. The teaching profession in Belarus is treated with special awe. Teachers, in close conjunction with the family, help raise children, participate in shaping moral and spiritual values of young Belarusians, putting into their minds not only knowledge but also attitude to life, other people and the history of their country.

The President of the Republic of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has congratulated the country's teaching staff on their professional holiday. The Head of State called it a truly national holiday celebrated by people of the noblest, most responsible and respected profession in the world that continues a thousand-year history of selfless devotion and mentorship.

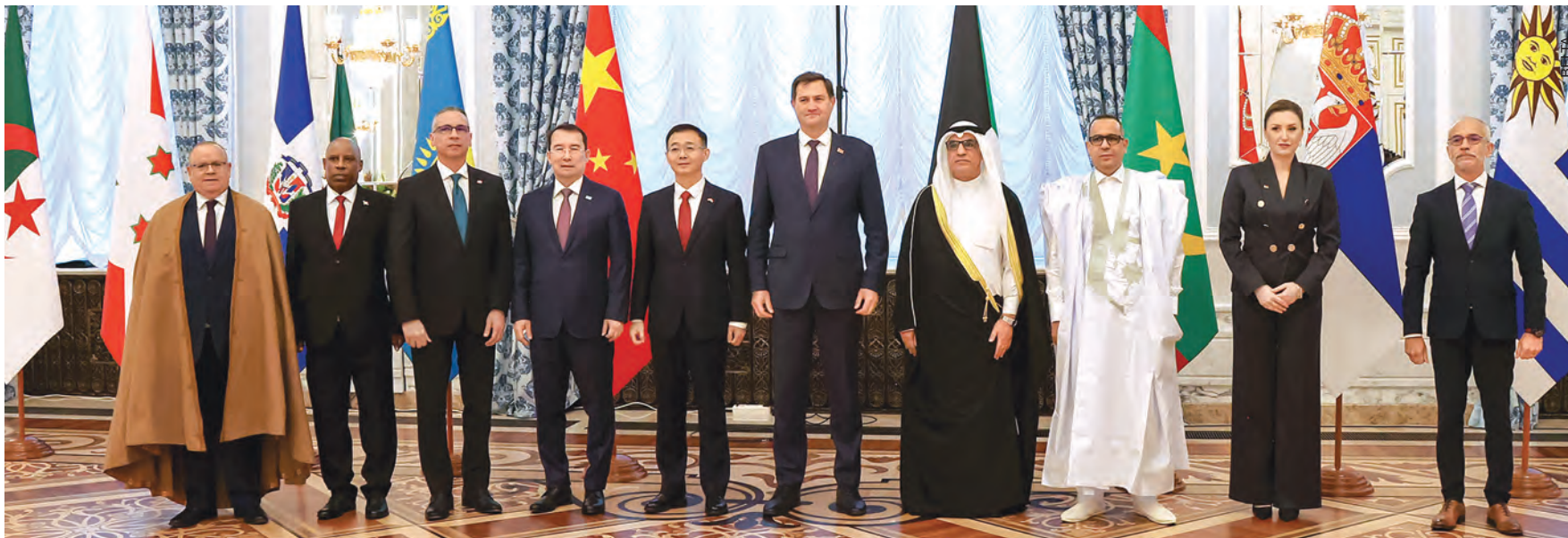
The President expressed gratitude to everyone — teachers, professors, veterans of teaching — for their dedication to their calling, kind and attentive attitude to the younger generation, high professionalism and preservation of the best traditions of domestic education. "I am convinced that by successfully introducing the most advanced technologies into education and upbringing, by enhancing the prestige and importance of the education system, you will ensure that the principle of the sanctity of schools and teachers will become the main guideline for everyone — students, parents, teachers," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.



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“There are no unfriendly nations or second-class countries for us”

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has received credentials from ambassadors of nine countries — the ceremony took place in the Palace of Independence



The ambassadors of China, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Algeria, Mauritania, Burundi, Kuwait, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay handed over their credentials to the Belarusian Head of State.

The President expressed hope that the diplomats had already had the opportunity to see Minsk and its tourist attractions, talk to people and learn the history of Belarus.

“There are no unfriendly nations or second-class countries for us. I know that Belarusians are also treated with

hospitality and warmth all over the world,” the Head of State stressed.

The President noted with regret that peaceful, prosperous and sovereign Belarus causes irritation with some Western politicians, which turns into prejudice.

“They consider it normal to have their one-sided outdated perception of the world order where there are first and second-class people. If someone disagrees with their point of view, they impose sanctions and various restrictions. Minsk has been facing such injustice for

many years, practically throughout the entire sovereign history,” the President remarked. “Nevertheless, we take the courage to pursue independent domestic and foreign policies. We always defend our position based on international law and justice.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated that Belarus is often accused groundlessly — for example, of facilitating illegal migration. In this regard, the Head of State recalled that Belarus suppresses illegal migration and combats transnational crime in accordance with its international obliga-

tions and available opportunities.

“If any migration-related problems occur, it is not our fault. These problems emerge when some countries invite migrants to come over to them. We take care of people who were forced to flee their countries and seek asylum in the European Union. We do all this without anyone’s help, while being under the pressure of illegal sanctions,” the President pointed out.

“The next reason for external attacks on Belarus will be, obviously, the upcoming

Presidential election campaign, and those attacks on Belarus have already started. The opponents have probably launched their work on plans to ‘overthrow the regime’ and ask for millions of US dollars in grants for these useless purposes. They do this every five years. I would like to immediately disappoint those masterminds: we have never let anyone undermine the stability in the country or plunge it into chaos, and we will never let this happen,” the Belarusian leader underscored.

People’s Republic of China

The Head of State emphasised that China has always been and remains the most important, reliable and special trade, economic and political partner for Belarus. “Minsk and Beijing have achieved an unprecedentedly high level of trust-based co-operation,” the Belarusian leader stated. The President noted that amid global political tension, Belarus and China managed to advance bilateral relations to the level of all-weather and comprehensive strategic partnership. Despite the crises in the global economy, the parties achieved a new record in trade last year.

“I would like to give special credit to my dear friend, Chairman of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping, for the constructive approach to co-operation. I want to convey my best regards to him. We are looking forward to hosting him in Belarus at any time convenient for him,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Kazakhstan

The President called Kazakhstan an important, time-tested friend, strategic partner and ally for Belarus. The Head of State remarked that the two countries have common interests practically in all areas. According to the President, billion-dollar trade and successful projects in industry suggest that bilateral co-operation is on the up.

Aleksandr Lukashenko once again expressed his gratitude to the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, for the all-round support for Belarus during Kazakhstan’s chairmanship in the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO).

Serbia

The President noted that Belarus has a long history of friendly relations with Serbia. These relations are rooted in history and spiritual ties between the two fraternal peoples.

The Head of State emphasised his interest in intensifying Belarus-Serbia co-operation across the board, including expanding contacts, scaling up mutually beneficial co-operation in industry, agriculture, healthcare, and high technology.



Algeria

Aleksandr Lukashenko highlighted Belarus’ readiness for active co-operation in the manufacturing industry, food security and high technology with Algeria. “I am confident that our equipment, like combine harvesters, tractors, trucks, and grain storage facilities will be useful for the Algerian economy. I also hope that our fruitful joint work on international platforms will continue,” the Belarusian leader said.

Mauritania

The Head of State was particularly pleased to welcome the ambassador of Mauritania — the country presiding over the African Union.

“This year, Belarus and Mauritania mark the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations. I sincerely congratulate you on this significant date. I believe we should step up our contacts,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko. “We need to come up with two or three big mutually beneficial projects and begin implementing them,” the Head of State remarked.

Burundi

The President of Belarus noted his interest in developing friendly relations with Burundi. Belarus attaches particular importance to the economic component of bilateral relations.

“Considering Burundi’s focus on developing agriculture and the mining industry, we can supply a wide range of engineering products, including trucks, quarry trucks and agricultural machines. In addition, Belarus can offer various educational and training programmes for students from Burundi,” Aleksandr Lukashenko suggested.

Kuwait

Kuwait is an important partner for Belarus in the Middle East, the Head of State observed. “We highly appreciate your country’s commitment to a peaceful settlement of conflicts and crises — you are deeply involved in this, as is Belarus — as well as humanitarian efforts in the international arena. This



is aligned with our peace initiatives to begin a broad international dialogue on security principles and guarantees,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The Head of State voiced Belarus’ readiness to make every effort to build trade, economic and investment partnerships in all areas.

Dominican Republic

Belarus views the Dominican Republic as a promising partner in Central America and the Caribbean, the President noted. The Belarusian leader called economy the most important and mutually beneficial vector in bilateral relations. “We are open to any forms of co-operation,” the Head of State assured and proposed to start with the development of an effective contractual and legal framework.

Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed confidence that the agreement on mutual visa abolition that is in the works now will not only reinvigorate tourism, but will also serve as an important impetus for the intensification of bilateral relations.

Uruguay

“We are very closely monitoring the development of Uruguay. I am confident that the successful conduct of the upcoming Presidential election in October this year will solidify the achievements of your country. Belarus will always support the choice of the Uruguayan people,” the President said.

The Head of State pointed to Belarus’ interest in intensifying co-operation with Uruguay in politics and economy, which could be facilitated by signing an agreement on mutual visa abolition. “We count on the ambassador’s active role in building effective and trusting contacts,” the Belarusian leader said.

At the end of the ceremony, the President emphasised that Belarus is always glad to see old friends and new partners interested in strengthening and developing relations with our country. “I know for sure: distance is not a problem for true friendship. We are open to new ideas and the most ambitious projects. I am absolutely convinced that your stay on our land will be comfortable, your work will be productive, and our co-operation will be mutually beneficial,” said Aleksandr Lukashenko.



A good mix of interstate and personal relations

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has met with Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Ali Asadov



“Despite various developments in the international arena, when it comes to our relations, you and my very close friend and brother Ilham Heydarovich [Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan] should know that no topics are off-limits for Belarus and Azerbaijan. We do not violate any norms of international law, our friendship is not aimed against third countries, we work in the interests of our peoples,” the Head of State emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko remarked that friendly relations between the two countries had been established during Heydar Aliyev’s presidency, “We were on very good terms, we always found common ground and

were supportive of each other. I often tell Ilham Heydarovich, the incumbent President: thank God that we have managed to maintain the same level of relations as we had with your father.”

“Therefore, you are very welcome in Belarus. You are not a stranger to us, you represent a friendly nation,” added Aleksandr Lukashenko. The President stressed that Azerbaijan is one of Belarus’ closest friends along with Russia.

The Belarusian Head of State reiterated the need to implement the agreements reached during Aleksandr

Lukashenko’s state visit to Azerbaijan in May 2024. The President had discussed this topic, with a focus on economic aspects of bilateral relations, the day before with Prime Minister of Belarus Roman Golovchenko, “There are no problems. Yet, he wished that things were done faster. It is good that the prime minister understands that today it is necessary to move faster, because such is the time.”

“If during your visit to Belarus we find a way to take it up a notch, we will definitely do it. As presidents, we will not

interfere with your work, we will not hinder it,” the Belarusian leader assured.

Aleksandr Lukashenko went on saying that Belarus and Azerbaijan support each other on international platforms. **“We have no problems, we back each other, have supported and will support each other. I am very grateful to the government of Azerbaijan and the President for the enormous support they provide us. Our relations represent a good mix of interstate and personal relations. Our personal relations are woven into the fabric of interstate**

relations, and this benefits our relations,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised. “Tell us what we can do for Azerbaijan, and we will do everything. It has been this way and it will remain so going forward. I am sure that Azerbaijan will do everything it can for us, too, because it has always been like that.”

Ali Asadov thanked the President for the opportunity to meet. “This is a great honour for me and our delegation,” he said.

The prime minister conveyed greetings and best wishes from Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to Aleksandr Lukashenko, “He tasked me to convey friendly and fraternal greetings.”

The prime minister renewed the Azerbaijani President’s invitation to Aleksandr Lukashenko to attend the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) that is due to take place in Baku in November.

“Since Ilham invites us, we will surely come,” the Belarusian leader said.

“We attach great importance to your personal participation, as it will give this conference a special status,” Ali Asadov underlined.

Belarus attaches great importance to co-operation with the IAEA

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has met with Director General of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi in Minsk

“The Belarusian people and I are very impressed by your active work and the work of the organisation recently. We often see you. We are familiar with your statements and findings. We very positively assess your work related to the security and safety of nuclear power plants, especially those that have found themselves in the war zone — Zaporozhye NPP and Kursk NPP,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President recalled that Belarus has been the IAEA member since the organisation was established. According to the Belarusian leader, our country always pays special attention to co-operation with the IAEA.

“This is primarily due to the fact that we have become a nuclear power — we have built a nuclear power plant,” the Head of State explained.

“I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this is the most modern and, hopefully, safest nuclear power plant in the world. We built it, figuratively speaking, from scratch. We had no specialists, no experience, and no knowledge of operating a nuclear power plant. Yet, we learnt and trained specialists in time.”

“We received great assistance from the Russian Federation and the IAEA,” Aleksandr Lukashenko noted. “Our plant is safe, and the experience that we have accumulated in Belarus will be useful for the organisation anywhere in the world,” the Belarusian leader stressed.

The President assumed that more speculations concerning the BelNPP will be generated in the future, “You can see it on the example of Lithuania — they are overly concerned about our NPP and anything that is happening in Belarus in general. But this is politics, let’s not talk about it. You should know that we are committed to security and peace. We will do our utmost in order to ensure regional nuclear safety. Please rest assured. We are rational people and we do not rush into any kind of adventures.”

The President added that he had raised the topic for a reason, citing the recent statements made in Ukraine that ‘Lukashenko wanted to seize the Chernobyl plant’.

“I just cannot understand the idea behind such statements. Why may Lukashenko need the Chernobyl plant? We have suffered a lot after the explosion of this nuclear power plant, which we did not build, did not maintain and did not blow up.

A quarter of the Belarusian land suffered the most. We are still doing our best to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. I would like to assure you that this is a complete nonsense, which surprised me a lot. We cannot even imagine that we may have to ‘seize’ the Chernobyl plant and take responsibility for it. There is no such necessity on the part of Belarus. Believe me, the same is true on the part of Russia. There will never be such a need,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

IAEA CHIEF: COMMITMENT TO ENSURING NUCLEAR SAFETY MANIFESTED IN BELARUS AT TOP LEVEL



Rafael Grossi

The commitment to ensuring nuclear safety in Belarus is manifested at top level, as noted by Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi during his meeting with President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Rafael Grossi thanked the Belarusian leader for the hospitality and warm welcome, noting that it is a great honour for him to be in our country with his team and discuss a range of topical issues.

“I remember my first visit to Minsk twelve years ago, when there was nothing in Ostrovets yet. Today, it is with great pleasure that we can see that both power units of the nuclear power plant are operating. I am particularly pleased that the most serious commitment to ensuring nuclear safety is manifested at top level — in this case at the level of the Head of State,” Rafael Grossi remarked.

According to the IAEA Director General, this speaks volumes. “First of all, this speaks about the

professionalism that your country possesses on the long road to becoming a power producing nuclear energy. I would like to note that the nuclear power plant construction project had many issues and challenges from the very beginning. In this case, Belarus is an example of how a country can work with the agency, how it can closely liaise with experts and missions of our organisation. This demonstrates your country’s openness to this issue.”

Rafael Grossi underscored that he had a very important meeting with the President of Belarus, “We have discussed a range of crucial issues in a frank and trust-based atmosphere. They primarily concerned the situation in the region, including the conflict in Ukraine, as well as the challenges and dangers that this situation entails.”

As noted by Mr. Grossi, the further work programme of the agency’s director general in Belarus was discussed with the President. The IAEA Director General stressed that neither he personally nor the agency as a whole had any concerns or doubts about Belarus. “It is important for us that the countries we work with — in this context, Belarus — do everything according to the regulations and recommendations,” he stated.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Topic continued on page 4

Provocation as a method

On ensuring nuclear safety and debunking fake news

In order to distract attention from the business-like and respectful dialogue between Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, Kiev followed a command of its Western curators and launched a silly provocation — spreading fake news that Minsk and Moscow were allegedly going to seize the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Let's figure out who needed it, and why it is important to unmask scoundrels and liars.

By Anton Popov

Absurd news by CIPsO

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi has recently paid an official visit to Belarus. During his meeting with the Belarusian leader, the prospects for the development of peaceful nuclear energy have been discussed. Aleksandr Lukashenko has also debunked the fake news created on the eve of their conversation that Minsk and Moscow were allegedly going to seize the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

The escalation of the situation around Belarus has become a bad habit for the Ukrainian media and officials. Although the Belarusian authorities have repeatedly stated that they are not going to invade anywhere and have not made a single unfriendly move towards Kiev, Ukraine continues — with obsessive persistence — trying to provoke Minsk or blacken it in the eyes of the international community.

Provocations on the part of Belarus' southern neighbour emerge as if on command at a strictly verified moment, as if a puppeteer overseas is pulling a string.

Belarus seems to be a bur in the throat of the Kiev regime and its masters, especially after the failed colour revolution. The West would not mind organising an intervention into Belarus or at least kindling the fire of civil confrontation in the republic, but such thoughts are turning into the category of a sort of science fiction, since tactical nuclear weapons have returned to the country. Against this background, it has nothing to do but get engaged into sneaky dirty tricks.

The fake that Belarus' President debunked on October 1st looks like a typical work of Ukraine's Centre for Information and Psychological Operations (CIPsO). Let's omit the general absurdity of the fake news — after all, the long-stopped nuclear power plant would become a burdensome useless asset for Minsk or Moscow if captured, and such an action would also run counter to Minsk's peaceful policy pursued over the years — and think of the purpose for this 'news' launch into the media space.

It is obviously a propaganda operation aimed at both the internal Ukrainian audience and external players. Moreover, the CIPsO already has experience in

this regard: regular shelling of the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant and attempts by the Armed Forces of Ukraine to attack the Kursk nuclear power plant are always accompanied by mantras about self-shootings and Russia's provocations.

Notably, the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant is being systematically shelled. Not so long ago, on September 29th, a transformer responsible for life support systems was destroyed in the satellite city of Energodar by a direct hit of a Ukrainian projectile. Earlier, on August 11th, drones hit a cooling tower directly on the territory of the station, causing a large fire.

From the foreign political angle, the attempts to discredit Belarus have a specific purpose — to destroy the country's international authority and prevent it from playing its role in establishing lasting peace in the region.

However, given the degree of inadequacy of the Kiev regime, it cannot be ruled out that, by doing this, the CIPsO is trying to cover up plans for a Ukrainian provocation at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in order to accuse Belarus and Russia of nuclear terrorism against the background of the failures of the Armed Forces of Ukraine at the front and the obviously weak results of Zelensky's tour to the United States.

Incidentally, a powerful peace track can be built around the topic of nuclear power plant safety in the conflict zone, and the International Atomic Energy Agency and its head personally would play an important role in its promotion. Russia, definitely, adheres to the ideas of nuclear safety, and there are people in Ukraine who understand the danger of Zelensky's provocations. Moreover, Rafael Grossi is in constant contact with both warring parties, which many heads of international organisations cannot boast of.

Awareness comes with time

The IAEA Director General's positive assessment of the work of the Belarusian nuclear power plant can be viewed as another ground to recall the destructive campaign unleashed by Belarus' closest neighbours in the West and their hand-fed fugitive extremists. From a number of critics, only Lithuania continues its hopeless campaign against progress at present.

The Soviet Union built one of the best nuclear power plants in the world in its Baltic republic —

WHAT EFFECT THE BELARUSIAN NPP HAS HAD ON THE BELARUSIAN ECONOMY

- Belarus has completely abandoned the import of electric energy.
- The country's dependence on imported natural gas has been reduced.
- Since the first power unit of the Belarusian NPP was connected to the unified power grid on November 3rd, 2020, the station has generated a total of over 35bn kWh, which made it possible to replace over 9bn m³ of natural gas.
- An environmental effect has also been obtained — due to the operation of the Belarusian NPP, greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by more than 15m tonnes.
- In 2023, the total volume of electricity consumption in the country increased by 2.5bn kWh and reached a record high of 41.1bn kWh.
- The pace of construction of new electrified housing has grown significantly in Belarus.
- Energy-intensive industries are developing dynamically.
- Belarus has established an extensive network of charging stations for electric vehicles.

Ignalina NPP. In 1993, which was a record year for Lithuania's nuclear power industry, the station produced 12.26 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, which accounted for 88.1 percent of all electricity generated in the country. However, the European Union, which post-Soviet Lithuania was so desperate to join, ordered the nuclear power plant to be closed. That was done under the pretext that the Ignalina facility used the same reactors as the Chernobyl NPP and, accordingly, did not meet European nuclear safety standards.

Eventually, the station was stopped at the end of 2009, and Lithuania was accepted into the European Union, albeit with a permanent energy crisis. Yet, phantom pains still torment the Lithuanian leadership that so unwisely squandered the Soviet legacy. It is especially painful for them to see the example of Belarus — the country did not have its own nuclear power plant in Soviet times, but built a facility after becoming a sovereign state. At present, Belarus is rapidly moving along the path of nuclear progress, while Vilnius can do nothing but kick itself, occasionally snarl at Minsk and calculate the losses incurred by the Ignalina NPP closure. By the way, what can be said about the security of this challenging process?

Another reason for the endless whining of the Lithuanian authorities is rooted in the desire to play the card of the Belarusian NPP during the elections. The scheme is simple: first, the population is intimidated by prospects of a nuclear apocalypse due to the Belarusian station through the media and official statements, and then a certain candidate comes and promises that he

will be able to avert the threat. It definitely sounds extremely wild for a Belarusian voter, but the vaunted European democracy works exactly like that.

In turn, Poland has quieted down in its criticism. It is not surprising, because Warsaw itself has decided to join the club of peaceful nuclear powers. As informed by Polish Finance Minister Andrzej Domański, the country will allocate \$1.19bn next year for the construction of a domestic nuclear power plant in Pomeranian Voivodeship. It will have three power units and be built by the US companies Westinghouse and Bechtel together with Polish subcontractors, although initially it was about the participation of South Korean nuclear engineers.

The choice of the company that will build the country's first nuclear power plant says a lot about the Polish authorities. Westinghouse is far from the best option today, but Washington has apparently given Warsaw no right to make a choice. Otherwise, the latter would hardly have been made in favour of those engaged in the construction of the Vogtle nuclear power plant in Georgia — the process then took ten years and cost many times more than indicated in the estimates. It bears recalling that the project to build two stations in South Carolina was curtailed for the same reasons.

Nuclear power plants are the most promising and environmentally friendly way to generate electricity today. The future lies with the peaceful atom, no matter who says the opposite. It is gratifying that Belarus is dynamically developing in this direction, ensuring the prosperity of generations of our descendants.

OPINION

Aleksei Belyaev, Dean of Journalism Department at the Belarusian State University, political expert, on the air of Budni (Weekdays) talk show on Alfa Radio,

"I think it [fake news of Belarus' intention to seize the Chernobyl nuclear power plant] is the work of Ukrainian propaganda, Ukrainian centres of psychological operations, which are trying to present Belarus as an aggressor and enemy of humankind, creating another horror story for its population. Today we see that many states, including those that previously advocated conflict with Russia, have started talking about the need for reconciliation. The radicals in Ukraine cannot allow Belarus to become a platform for this, so they are trying in every possible way to cast a shadow on our country, to present it as a monster that should be completely excluded from international relations — although this is absolutely contrary to the real steps taken by Belarus to ensure security in our region and in the world as a whole."



IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi during a visit to the Belarusian NPP, on October 1st, 2024

Reducing costs by 40 percent: the first cargo has arrived in Belarus via the Northern Sea Route (NSR)

Going our own way

The market for transportation and logistics services has recently undergone a significant transformation. Geopolitical processes and sanction restrictions have led to the disruption of traditional supply chains and to the reshaping of logistics, becoming a new growth point for Belarus and Russia. Due to Western policies, the ports of Ukraine and the Baltic States, through which Belarusian goods were previously delivered, are now inaccessible to our country. Consequently, alternative routes — particularly the Northern Sea Route — are being actively explored. Given the advantages and speed of cargo transit to Asian countries, primarily China, the prospects on this route appear quite promising.



By Vladislav Sychevich

First cargo arrived

September 30th, 2024 went down in the country's history as the date when the first cargo arrived via the Northern Sea Transit Corridor (NSTC). A batch of goods intended for Belarusian business entities was shipped from the port of Shanghai in August 2024. The container ship passed through the seas of the Arctic Ocean, bypassing the territory of the Russian Federation via the NSR, and arrived at the port in Saint Petersburg, from where it was transported by road to the Mogilev-Beltamozhservice transport and logistics centre. The transit time was 35 days, as noted by Anton Prokhotsky, leading logistics specialist in the department of transportation and expedition services at Beltamozhservice, "In August, the container was loaded onto the vessel and began its movement on the route Shanghai — Saint Petersburg. Subsequently, the container was transferred to our vehicle and arrived at the distribution centre. The main advantage is the timeframe. It has been reduced by 1.5 times. We are passing through the maritime territory of Russia. All this reduces financial costs."

It should be noted that the logistics operator worked out the technical capabilities for the delivery of export and import goods between Belarus and the People's Republic of China using the NSTC infrastructure at the beginning of the year. This intermodal delivery method can become an alternative to the existing Southern Sea Route, which runs through the ports of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and lasts about two months. The NSTC capabilities have been used by Belarusian enterprises for the first time, and the current trial shipment has launched a new logistics service that, despite the navigation period, will be in demand by businesses, as pointed out by Aleksandr Skachkovsky, First Deputy General Director at Beltamozhservice, "The trial batch is cargo for a Belarusian enterprise. It is expected that this route will be in demand in the future. Any business entity can deliver any product to the territory of China and from China



FOR REFERENCE

The Northern Sea Route is a shipping route that runs along the northern shores of Russia across the seas of the Arctic Ocean — the Barents, the Kara, the Laptev, the East Siberian, the Chukchi, and the Bering — connecting the ports of the Russian Federation in Europe and the Far East, as well as the mouths of navigable Siberian rivers to make an integrated transport system. The NSR length from the Kara Gates near the Novaya Zemlya archipelago to Providence Bay near the Bering Strait is 5,600 kilometres. It was opened for international shipping in 1991. In 2023, the cargo turnover along the Northern Sea Route increased to a record 36.3 million tonnes, which is seven percent more than in 2022.

OPINION

Valery Bainev, Doctor of Economic Sciences, "The economic war declared by the West against Belarus has led to a complicated, or rather blocked, exit for our goods from the Baltic Sea today. Western countries hoped that this would paralyse Belarusian exports. However, they significantly miscalculated. Apparently, they did not study geography well. They forgot about the existence of the Northern Sea Route, which is quite promising. We can see the efforts being made by the Russian Federation to enhance navigation along the NSR. An icebreaker fleet is being built, and navigation is being developed. Thanks to this, the delivery of Belarusian goods to Southeast Asian countries and the People's Republic of China will be much quicker and cheaper. Overall, Belarus' access to the Arctic Ocean and the creation of its own port facilities there will eventually provide serious support for strengthening trade relations with Asia, while the expertise of our industrial specialists will improve the infrastructure of the trade route. True, the route navigates through the seas of the Arctic Ocean, which are covered in ice during the cold season. Yet, with the use of icebreakers, vessels will operate year-round."

to Belarus via this route. The navigation period lasts more than six months, while the use of icebreakers will allow for year-round operation. Economic entities will be able to plan their deliveries systematically through the infrastructure of the Russian ports in St. Petersburg and Arkhangelsk. This indicates stability, and stability means development. Container ships can simultaneously carry up to 5,000 containers."

Obvious advantages

Today, Europe and Asia are connected by only two maritime routes: through the Suez Canal and across the northern seas. The distance from Murmansk to Shanghai is 7,000 nautical miles, while the route via the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal is 12,500 nautical miles. Experts have calculated that under favourable conditions, the journey from Europe to China via the Northern Sea

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, "It is very important for us to seriously develop the Northern Sea Route. We have tried to supply our goods in small quantities via this route, particularly to the People's Republic of China and the Russian Far East. This is a very beneficial route for us." During a meeting with the Governor of Russia's Arkhangelsk Region, Alexander Tsybulsky, on April 22nd, 2024



Route will take 25 days, and the vessel will consume approximately 600 tonnes of fuel. The alternative route will take more than a month and require 900 tonnes of fuel — this is more expensive than the route through the Arctic, on average by \$1 million.

Secondly, the Northern Sea Route is much more convenient than the route through the Suez Canal due to the absence of fees for passing through the canal. Another benefit is that it has no queues. In addition, it is maximally safe and allows for the delivery of various types of goods. All these features make the NSR appealing for Belarus, as well. "The Northern Sea Route is one of the promising transport corridors. It allows for a 40 percent reduction in time costs when delivering goods from the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Belarus and vice versa, compared to the traditional southern route," concluded Aleksandr Skachkovsky.

Consistently moving forward

What science will be like in the near future and how to increase the introduction of Belarusian innovations in production

In recent years, the importance of the scientific sphere in Belarus has increased significantly. Today, scientists are expected not only to carry out fundamental research but also to ensure a close connection with production. On the one hand, this suggests an excellent incentive for an action; on the other hand, it comes with huge responsibility entrusted to scientific organisations. Yelena Presnyakova, Head of the Centre for Innovation and Investment Policy at the Institute of Economics under Belarus' National Academy of Sciences (NAS), has shared her opinion on what science will be like in the near future, how to improve its practical orientation, and what tasks need to be solved.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"The main thing is that domestic science should boost the country's economy. That is, there must be a concrete result, tangible for the state and for the people."

At a meeting with the working group to analyse the activities of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences, on July 30th, 2024

By Vera Arteaga

Advantages of the Soviet heritage

The largest number of scientific organisations — 78 — is currently concentrated in Belarus' National Academy of Sciences. The second place on this list — 23 organisations — is occupied by the Industry Ministry. More than seven thousand people are engaged in research and development in each of these departments. Incidentally, the NAS compares favourably with the academies of sciences in Eastern European countries, including Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Hungary, in terms of the number of scientific developments and the co-operation with sectors of the economy, as noted by the scientist.

"Currently, the National Academy of Sciences operates like a scientific and production corporation that unites both science and production," Yelena Presnyakova pointed out. "It is important to note that within the framework of state sectoral and regional scientific and technical programmes and events, 392 innovations were developed last year alone, including 35 items of equipment, 48 technologies, 282 medicines and much more."

According to the scientist, the principle of the scientific and production corporation behind the NAS is an absolute advantage of the socio-economic model of our country. The Russian Academy of Sciences is also moving along this path.

Yelena Presnyakova has recounted that there is a lot of debate in academic circles today as to which path our Belarusian science should follow. Should we form our own sci-



Yuriy Bakarenko

entific schools, or can we follow the path of our closest neighbours? "In my opinion, our experience is of great value and is a priority for Belarus," our interlocutor is convinced. "The most important thing that we ensure is the preservation and continuity of scientific schools. Several very large scientific schools in various branches of science — including physics, economics, and chemistry of new materials — have been preserved in Belarus, which allows us to occupy leading positions on the global stage as a whole, as well as in certain branches of science."

Developments are in demand

The specialist is sure that the latest developments made by scientists of Belarus' NAS are in the top of the world trends. These include new materials, artificial intelligence, robotics, microelectronics, and electric transport. Thus, the B.I. Stepanov Institute of Physics is developing an optical system that is successfully supplied outside the country. The Institute of Chemistry of New Materials under the NAS has developed nanocatalysts that belong to the sixth technological order and can be in demand by enterprises of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries to accelerate various chemical reactions. The United Institute of Informatics Problems (UIIP) is creating an artificial intelligence platform that is in line with international-level platforms in terms of quality. Belarus' National Academy of Sciences is involved in the creation of an electric vehicle, and is also working to develop a sodium-graphene battery.

Notably, today the gap between developments and their introduction into production has shortened — many novelties are in demand by industrial organisations and have been successfully implemented.

Joining efforts

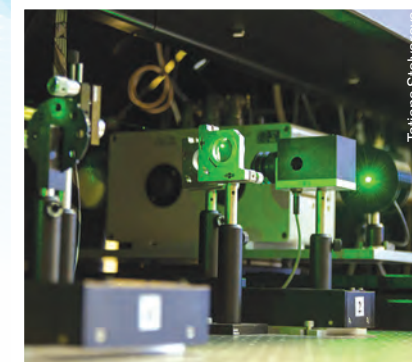
Taking into account that Belarus is not a big country, it is better to develop science in collaboration — first of all, with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Fortunately, such interaction has been established. In particular, this refers to the adoption of a unified industrial policy



Aleksandr Gorobash



Aleksandr Kulevsky



Tatiana Stolyarova

with Russia. Within the framework of the Union State, the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation are united by a number of agreements, including the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development of the Union State, which was approved in January 2024. During the recent visit of the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Li Qiang, Belarus and China agreed on the wide co-operation, including in the field of science and technology. Admittedly, scientists from the two countries had done a lot together before, and the Great Stone Industrial Park features a number of joint Chinese-Belarusian structures, such as the China-Belarus Innovation Centre for Industrial Technologies.

The question of the future of the Belarusian science is actively discussed in the scientific community today. Is it necessary to strengthen the National Academy of Sciences or to focus on the formation of state corporations within the framework of sectoral science, where manufacturing enterprises will be the centres?

Indeed, the major enterprises of the country nowadays have powerful research and practical centres that carry out a significant amount of specialised research and development. Such structures exist at JSC

Minsk Automobile Plant — Managing Company of BELAVTOMAZ Holding, OJSC Minsk Tractor Works, BELAZ JSC — Management Company of BELAZ-HOLDING, Amkodor JSC — Holding Managing Company, and more. Thus, Gomselmash JSC — Belarusian manufacturer of agricultural machinery — boasts its own research and technical centre of combine harvester manufacture. Certain industrial giants even have the status of scientific organisations. The Belarusian Steel Works (BMZ) — Management Company of BMK Holding houses a research centre and an industry laboratory for pathology and steel wire production technologies. In addition, the enterprise has signed co-operation agreements with the Academy of Sciences, with a joint industry laboratory put in place. Also, research and technical centres operate on the basis of JSC Holding Managing Company Minsk Motor Plant (MMZ), Mogilevliftmash JSC, Minsk Electrotechnical Plant named after V. I. Kozlov, INTEGRAL JSC, Horizont Holding, and Planar JSC. "As we can see, research structures are integrated into the system of industrial enterprises that make up the core of mechanical engineering today," underscored Yelena Presnyakova. "Thanks to their work, the enterprises' products are competitive both in Belarus and abroad."

Quantum leap

According to Yelena Presnyakova, in order to make the quantum leap expected from the Belarusian science, it is necessary to take into account the value of the competencies possessed by all scientific organisations in the country. However, it is primarily required to determine priorities, focusing on strategic complex projects that could become landmark for Belarus, so as to make a breakthrough in technology.

The interlocutor has observed that the lack of the right to take risk when conducting research in new fields of knowledge, which are among the world's top promising areas, remains a sore subject for scientific organisations. "We have only started to build up our competencies on this topic, which encompasses genetics, microelectronics, new materials. Therefore, in order for scientists to make bolder scientific experiments, conduct more ambitious research, they must be fully protected by the state from possible failures," Yelena Presnyakova is convinced. "In this regard, we see the formation of a technological venture financing system as a promising measure for the development of top technologies."



Yelena Kobelkova

SCIENCE

Rest at its best

Belarus' Ministry of Sports and Tourism has shared the initial results of the expanded visa-free regime and the investment potential of the industry

The high season in domestic tourism has passed at the appropriate level — this is perhaps the most succinct way to characterise the period from May to September, when the demand for leisure activities in the country traditionally increases among both Belarusians and foreigners. Consequently, there is a growing economic benefit for the state while citizens are increasingly discovering their homeland, finding opportunities for rest and recovery. The President has repeatedly emphasised the necessity of such a trend. What destinations and sites were at the peak of popularity? What new trends have experts noticed? Irina Voronovich, Director of Tourism Department at Belarus' Ministry of Sports and Tourism, has spoken about this and much more.

By Maria Druk

Summer was hot

— How would you characterise the summer season in the industry?

— Undoubtedly, it has pleasantly surprised us. We see that interest in domestic tourism among Belarusians remains strong, and the flow of foreign guests is increasing. Hotel operators in Minsk, regional centres, and major cities, representatives of popular attractions in the country, national parks, farmsteads, and sanatoriums report high occupancy rates. On our part, we focused on leisure options during the third national tourist campaign Travel! Experience! Get inspired! Let me remind everyone that this year, it started at the beginning of June and lasted for a week. More than 1,200 sites opened their doors for tourists, welcoming over 61,400 guests.

We have noticed that camping, kayaking trips, and biking tours are in high demand during the summer season — our climate is favourable for these activities. Therefore, we frequently provided suggestions for active leisure points and routes through the Telegram channel of the National Tourism Agency. In particular, in 2024, each month is dedicated to a specific type of tourism. July was dedicated to active tourism, with each week focused on a particular direction — kayaking, hiking, and biking tours.

We have noted an increased interest in expanding the number of camping sites. This format of outdoor leisure — camping in nature — has remained popular for the past three years, not only among the older generation but also among youth and families with children. The desire to minimise environmental damage caused by those unfamiliar with the nuances of choosing camping spots has also prompted infrastructure development in designated areas. Furthermore, due to the abnormal heat in summer, many regions in the country had bans and restrictions on forest visits, automatically reducing the number of locations available for leisure, forcing some trips to be cut short. Incidentally, according to available information, there were 50 camping sites in Belarus last year: four in Brest Region, 18 in Vitebsk Region, three in Grodno Region, 21 in Minsk Region, three in Mogilev Region, and one in Minsk.

Moreover, wellness retreats in sanatoriums traditionally rank high in demand — the accommodations are quickly booked out for the autumn-winter season, alongside stays at agro-ecological farmsteads and visits to eco-trails.

— Could you tell us who travels around the country most frequently?

— I can say that domestic tourism is becoming younger. Active citizens with increasing frequency embark on trips, often in their own cars, with their families or friends. As a rule, they plan their routes independently. Fortunately, information is readily available online, including on the websites of local executive committees and the National Tourism Agency. Additionally, the website belarus.travel provides information about the country's tourism potential. It also includes a route planner that creates itineraries and suggests sites to visit along the way, as well as places to eat and stay overnight.

Furthermore, there is a developing network of tourist information centres to assist all travellers. They aim to offer options for leisure activities based on tourists' interests and duration of stay, as well as to help organise their trips.

We have noticed that today, organised tourism accounts for only 7-8 percent of the total tourist flow. Fifteen years ago, it was the opposite: individual tourists made up 7-8 percent of the overall tourist traffic. The pandemic has reshaped this structure, creating numerous ways to plan trips without leaving home. Additionally, we should not overlook the fact that in other countries, organised tourism prevails partly due to safety concerns and complications in arranging independent travel due to various reasons whereas Belarus does not have such a problem. Both locals and foreigners know that, if necessary, they can always ask local residents for tips or assistance.

Guests are welcome here

— What intermediate results has inbound tourism shown?

— The number of visits to our country and amounts of money that tourists spend here are growing. **Thus, from January to July of this year, the export of tourism services increased by 27 percent compared to the first seven months of 2023.** The primary country for exporting tourism services of the Republic of Belarus from January to July was Russia, contributing 28 percent more than in the same period last year. Türkiye came in second, with a growth of 16 percent. China takes third place, showing a 28 percent increase compared to 2023. Following are Latvia, the UAE, Azerbaijan, the UK, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Poland. We understand that the export of tourism services only accounts for a portion of guests' spending. According to the 'Trips' category, which more broadly assesses tourist expenses, the export of tourism services amounted to \$606 million last year. Over the past seven months of this year, we have seen a 24 percent increase.

At the same time, we see that Uzbekistan, for example, has moved from 10th to 8th place in the 'narrow' export

FOR REFERENCE

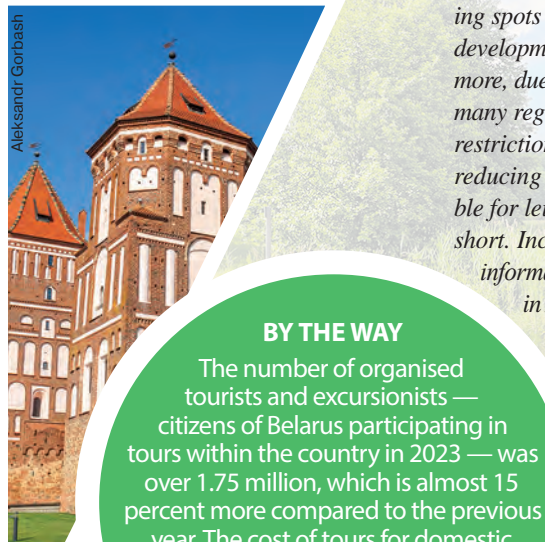
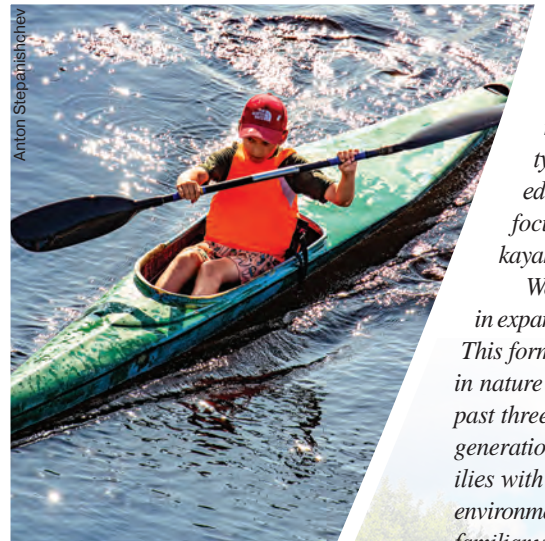
The export of tourism services in 2023 amounted to \$206.7 million — 16 percent more compared to 2022

of tourism services compared to last year. There are prospects for further growth.

— Since 2022, a visa-free regime has been in place for Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland, and on July 19th, the visa waiver was expanded to include 35 more EU countries. Has the tourism industry felt the first changes?

— We have been working under this regulation for only two months, and according to Belarus' State Border Committee, over 5,900 foreigners from the expanded visa-free countries list have visited our country during this time. Many tourists are coming from Germany, Estonia, Italy, the United Kingdom, and France. Where are they headed? Primarily to our health resorts and medical institutions. Shopping tours are popular — there are plenty of tips on the Internet about what products, clothes, and footwear to bring back, what cafes and restaurants to visit, and what sights to see. Many come to us to enjoy peace and tranquillity, to relax, recharge, and explore what they have not seen before. Eco-tourism is in demand, along with hunting tourism, particularly photo hunting during bird migration season, agro-ecotourism, and gastronomic tourism.

The policy of openness and peace pursued in Belarus will undoubtedly contribute to forming a positive image of our country, reflecting on the economy of the regions and aiding in the creation of new jobs. Investors pay attention to where foreigners are going and what our citizens are interested in, assessing prospects and being more willing to invest their money in the construction or modernisation of hotels, cafes, museums, and manors. We see that tourist flows are now going deep into the country — and this trend is only expected to grow.



BY THE WAY
The number of organised tourists and excursionists — citizens of Belarus participating in tours within the country in 2023 — was over 1.75 million, which is almost 15 percent more compared to the previous year. The cost of tours for domestic tourism paid for by tourists and excursionists last year exceeded Br96.47 million marking a 35.4 percent increase compared to 2022.



TOURISM

Will Switzerland abandon its 200-year-old principles in favour of NATO?

By Anton Popov

Born to fight does not reap, nor does it plough

In the minds of most people today, neutrality is Switzerland's calling card. However, it has not always been this way. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the country's name was inextricably linked with mercenary activities and external expansion. Thousands of residents of Swiss cantons left their homeland to fight both under their own banners and to join the ranks of condottieri. The emergence of disciplined Swiss pikemen on the battlefield hastened the swan song of European chivalry and opened a new chapter in the blood-written treatise on the art of war.

For a long time, mercenary service was a significant source of revenue for land-locked Switzerland.

The defeat of the Swiss army under the Duke of Milan, Massimiliano Sforza, in the Battle of Marignano in 1515 prompted reflections on the neutral status of the cantons. However, more than a century was required for the concept to take the form we know today, and in 1815, the Congress of Vienna recognised Swiss neutrality at the international level. In 1848, the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation enshrined the country's transition to political neutrality. In 1874, an amendment prohibiting the recruitment of Swiss citizens by foreign states definitively put an end to mercenary service.

Neutrality with nuances

Switzerland's neutrality during the Second World War sparks intense debate. Officially, Bern did not join any of the coalitions, did not supply arms, and did not allow its citizens to enlist in the armies of warring nations. After France's capitulation, Switzerland found itself under the threat of a German invasion. The leadership of the Third Reich even approved Operation *Tannenbaum* — a plan in which a powerful Wehrmacht group was to seize the mountainous country,

Neutrality at stake

A working group under the Swiss Defence Ministry has presented a high-profile report it has been working on since July last year. The global press has immediately dubbed it as 'bombshell', and for good reason — the authors have proposed nothing less than to reconsider the concept of neutrality towards deepening military co-operation with NATO and the EU. The reason for this is allegedly the 'sharp deterioration of the situation in Europe'. The document is advisory in nature; however, the Swiss government has already announced that it will take the experts' conclusions into account in the new national security strategy, which is set to be adopted next year.

focusing on the rapid occupation of industrial zones. This raises one of the main controversies of the Second World War: why didn't Hitler give the order to advance? Swiss historians are convinced that Germans were halted by the *National Redoubt* plan. This plan aimed not to contain the enemy at the borders but to create conditions under which the occupation of the country would be unprofitable. It was envisaged that bridges and roads throughout Switzerland would be rendered unusable, and units defending in the mountains would fight to the last.

However, it is likely that Hitler was guided solely by rational considerations. Firstly, of the four Alpine mountain passes between Germany and Italy, only Austria's Brenner Pass was controlled by the Third Reich, while the others were located in Switzerland, and in the event of war, German-Italian logistics would inevitably have suffered a serious blow. Secondly, given the increasingly severe economic constraints, the Führer required an enhancement of the financial base, and Switzerland could facilitate the exchange of reichsmarks for gold and precious metals.

By August 1940, the parties reached an agreement — Bern granted Berlin most-favoured-nation treatment for the transit of German goods, including military supplies, and committed to assist in the conversion of reichsmarks in response to Germans' withdrawal of troops from the Swiss borders. Formally, Switzerland's neutrality was maintained, but, as they say, there is a nuance.

Banks on blood

It is worth mentioning the situation with deposits in Swiss banks during the pre-war and wartime years. As early as 1934, the country saw the introduction of anonymous numbered accounts, which German Jews began to use striving to safeguard their savings from the Nazis' grabby hands. However, it was not only the victims who stored their savings there — investigations conducted after the Second World War revealed that many accounts in Swiss banks could belong to Nazi criminals. The heirs of the unfortunate Jews and the few survivors who attempted to trace their deposits faced the firm stance of the bankers: no documents — no money.

Considering what was happening in Europe during the Holocaust, it is not hard to guess that the applicants had no documents, based on which their requests were denied.

Devil of changes

The current debate around Switzerland's neutrality is the most serious one in the last 200 years and can potentially lead to historic changes in Bern's policy. There is no talk of its immediate NATO membership, although — as demonstrated by the examples of Finland and Sweden — the alliance can use any pretext to absorb a new country.

Until 2022, the idea of violating the two-hundred-year-old principles, hard-won through the blood of many generations of Swiss, found no support from either the authorities or the public. Bern had no need to enter into military political alliances: the

country has a strong army, and the peculiarities of its legislation allow for the rapid mobilisation of one and a half million reservists. Moreover, Switzerland has built an extensive network of bomb shelters capable of accommodating nine million people, while the population of the Swiss Confederation is 8.7 million.

The current President of the Swiss Confederation, Viola Amherd, has become one of the main proponents of the idea of abandoning neutrality.

While serving as the head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports, she announced in May 2022 in Washington her intention to strengthen co-operation with NATO. Less than a year later, she became the first of Switzerland's federal ministers to participate in a NATO summit in Brussels. At that time, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that Switzerland had requested permission to take part in military exercises under NATO's auspices. Finally, the first person invited to meet with Amherd upon her assuming the presidency was Zelensky, who was promised full support in organising a 'peace' conference.

In expectation of a storm

The actions of the authorities indicate that the plan to abandon neutrality has already been launched. Switzerland has joined EU sanctions against Russia and even keeps expanding and aligning itself with European sanctions lists. As of the end of last year, 5.8 billion Swiss francs on the accounts of Russian businessmen and enterprises, as well as an additional 7.24 billion belonging to the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, were frozen in the country. In Russia, this has led to the reasonable assertion that Switzerland can no longer be considered a neutral country.

The influence of the Swiss military industrial sector on the country's politics is increasing. The thing is that the principles enshrined in the Swiss Federal Constitution prohibit the sale of weapons to warring nations and their supply from third countries. As a result, Swiss defence corporations have started to lose profit: in 2023, arms exports from the Confederation plummeted by 27 percent compared to 2022.

The traces of the arms lobby are evident in the aforementioned report from defence ministry experts, who recommend urgently increasing military spending to one percent of GDP from the current 0.76 percent.

Switzerland's involvement in NATO is a logical move by the West in preparation for a major war. The United States and its allies in Europe are interested in securing stable access to transalpine logistics — much like Hitler did 80 years ago — as well as in gaining the support of the local arms industry, and incorporating the Swiss army into the ranks of potential participants in a campaign to the East.



TO THE POINT

At the end of last summer, Bern joined two of the EU's military projects: a military Schengen to simplify the transfer of military equipment and troops across the European territory, and Cyber Ranges Federation to enable the Swiss army to train in cyber defence alongside NATO and EU specialists. Recently, a delegation from Bern has worked closely with the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA). Switzerland has also joined the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) — a continental integrated air defence system.

Plague prepared to strike

US biolabs pose a threat to the whole world



The development of genetics is directly related to ensuring biological safety, fighting infections and maintaining the sanitary and epidemiological situation at the proper level. What threats exist in this area?

By **Aleksandr Tikhansky**,
military political analyst,
Candidate of Sociological Sciences

Secret cargo

In an effort to dominate the global arena, the United States is constantly expanding the development of bioweapons and largely neglects international prohibitions in this area. Since the early 2000s, Washington has intensified its activities in the post-Soviet countries, where, under the guise of solving humanitarian problems, it collects samples of pathogens of particularly dangerous infections typical of these regions — anthrax, plague, tularemia.

There are over 50 US biolabs near the Union State borders, more than 30 were funded in Ukraine, whereas their number around the world amounts to 336 in 30 countries. The US carries out the development of bioweapon components there, as well as tests methods for destabilising the epidemiological situation in various regions.

Based on the analysis of information that was previously provided by the United States in response to questions from the states parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), the very fact of the export of biomaterials from the territory of Ukraine has been confirmed. Since this year, the United States has been actively using Moldova and Romania to transport such secret cargo. This information has been recently shared by Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, Chief of Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Protection Troops (NCBPT) of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. According to him, such logistical tactics make it possible to hide the final recipient and divert suspicion from the US authorities and their respective programme.

The US delegation in Geneva at the meeting of the BTWC states parties also admitted Washington's biological research on low-income citizens and patients of psychiatric hospitals in Ukraine. It has become known that the Pentagon intends, within the shortest time possible, to relocate the programmes unfinished in Ukraine to other post-Soviet countries as well as to

Eastern European states, such as Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. The expansion of the network of dreadful laboratories, on the basis of which it is possible to create and store bioweapon components, undoubtedly poses a threat to the military security of Belarus and Russia.

Contagious moment

Back in 1999, the then CIA director, George Tenet, set the task of creating ethnicity-specific pathogens that would act on concrete nations, and personally supervised this direction until his resignation in 2004. The work in this area is still ongoing, outside the USA — where the national legislation of the United States does not apply.

Experts have already noted that the activities of American clandestine laboratories are accompanied by a deterioration in the epidemiological situation of particularly dangerous infections as well as by the emergence of diseases atypical for a particular region.

Thus, since 2010, Russian territories bordering Ukraine have recorded an increase in the incidence of brucellosis, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF), West Nile fever, African swine fever as well as an uncharacteristic expansion of the ranges of various disease vectors at a time.

There is also information about the development by Americans of technical means of delivery and use of bioweapons based on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). Thus, the US Patent and Trademark Office has issued a document for a UAV to spread infected insects in the air. In particular, it is indicated that with the help of this drone, enemy troops can be destroyed or disabled without risk to US military personnel.

In addition, the media has in the possession a request from Ukraine to the Turkish manufacturer of Bayraktar UAV dated December 15th, 2021 on the possibility of equipping this UAV with aerosol spraying systems and mechanisms with a capacity of over 20 litres. This suggests that, with a drone flight range of even up to 300 km, there is a real threat of large-scale use of biological weapons on the territory of Belarus and Russia.

SCARY RESEARCH

It has become known from the captured Ukrainian military and from the captured documents that Americans conducted research on Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, plague, and tularemia in Ukraine. Judging by the nature of the work, this is exactly what a group of Nazi doctors were convicted of at the Nuremberg trials in 1946 — the so-called involuntary research. One of the results of the international tribunal is that ten murderous doctors were sentenced to death by hanging, while others received long prison terms. However, US scientists are now doing virtually the same thing. After all, they test their latest discoveries on a specific gene pool.

TO THE POINT

In March 2022, the then US Deputy Secretary of State, Victoria Nuland, admitted while speaking during her testimony at a hearing in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that Ukraine has facilities for carrying out biological research. According to her, the US Department of State is 'quite concerned that Russian troops may seek to gain control of them' and is, therefore, working with the Ukrainian side to ensure that Kiev can 'prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach'.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"We need to co-operate and remember: no matter what muscles and military potential we build up, no matter what technologies we develop, we are not stronger than nature. The pandemic has already put everyone in their place. What will happen next? What else can come out of the biological laboratories scattered throughout the Eurasian space?"

At a solemn meeting in honour of Independence Day, on June 30th, 2023

Curbing threats

Now Americans want to get their structures, whose activities have become the subject of international investigation, out of harm's way. According to available information, the functions of the customer of military biological programmes in the Central Asian region have been transferred to civilian specialised organisations. Yet, they will still be controlled by military services.

Taking into account the degree of current threats and the unprecedented level of confrontation with the NATO bloc, Belarus and Russia signed an intergovernmental memorandum of understanding on biosafety last year. The document is aimed, among other things, at stopping threats in this area.

We have every reason to assume that components of biological weapons are being created in the immediate vicinity of Belarus and Russia, on the territory of Ukraine. Based on this, the issue of countering this threat has been included in the new text of Belarus' National Security Concept.

Minsk and Moscow are currently focused on the peaceful application of genetics-related technologies in order to improve the quality of life of citizens, strengthen their well-being and ensure economic development of both countries. New varieties of wheat and potatoes have been developed, prototypes of diagnostic devices for medicine have been obtained, and medicines for oncological diseases are being created. Therefore, there is also a peaceful way of developing biotechnologies, and this one is, obviously, more preferable.

Great resettlement

Belarusian flora and fauna stand at a crossroads — not all species of plants and animals can survive climate change

The climate in Belarus is changing, and it has been for several decades. Scientists believe that by the middle of the 21st century, the average annual temperature in our latitudes will increase by another 1.5 degrees. This is the most optimistic forecast. It is not just people who feel uncomfortable in the conditions of global warming. We have consulted specialists from the Scientific and Practical Centre for Bioresources of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences to find out which representatives of flora and fauna we have already lost, and who is next in line.

By Aleksandr Nesterov

No birds singing here

Endangered or completely vanished species of the animal and plant world mainly inhabit the pages of the Red Data Book. By the way, its fifth edition is currently being prepared for release. While the losses among mammals due to climate change are relatively small (touch wood!), the situation with birds is worse. This is sad; we often see our feathered friends, know and love many of them. “We propose to include the Western European subspecies of capercaillie, the turtle dove, and the boreal owl in the next edition of the Red Data Book,” shared Ivan Bogdanovich, a research fellow from the centre’s ornithology laboratory. “The main problem for the latter two species is the loss of habitats. **The turtle dove** is a typical representative of old broadleaf forests, while **the boreal owl** is a coniferous forest species that nests in old pine forests, in hollows.”

For comfortable habitation, pine forests need to be over 50 years old. This is where Belarus faces a problem — bark beetles that have proliferated recently favour precisely these mature stands of trees. The disaster zone is in the southern regions of the country, where the effects of climate change are felt most acutely.

On the wings of drought

Belarusian swamps are also suffering greatly from climate change. While air temperature rises, the amount of precipitation remains virtually unchanged, leading some local inhabitants to the brink of extinction. These include butterflies, among which specialists mention **the Frigga fritillary and the Freja fritillary**. “For the last ten years, neither my colleagues nor I have found a single specimen of these species,” lamented Anatoly Kulak, a leading researcher from the terrestrial invertebrates laboratory. “They have likely gone extinct due to warming.”

According to the expert, fritillaries are a good indicator of the health of raised bogs. Meanwhile, changes in the country’s forests are signalled by beetles. For instance, a reduction in old-growth forests is evidenced

SPRUCE TREES IN SOUTHERN BELARUS ARE EXPECTED TO DECREASE SOON

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection anticipates that due to climate change, the habitat of one of the most common forest trees in Belarus — spruce — will shift to the northernmost part of the country in the near future. This was stated by Aleksandr Dragun, First Deputy Forestry Minister. At the same time, the Ministry claimed that they managed to deal with the issue of the decline in pine plantations and the pests affecting pine forests. As a result, the population of these adversaries has decreased significantly and is now under control.

by deadwood inhabitants — **the Lacon lepidopterus click beetle** and **the Ampedus sanguineus reddish-brown click beetle**. They have already become extinct in many places across Europe. Fortunately, they still exist in Belarus, although scientists have serious concerns about the future of the last large populations.

There is, however, a counterexample.

The Zerynthia polyxena is one of the most beautiful day-flying butterflies in Europe. It only inhabits Gomel Region in Belarus, settling down around the perimeters of major rivers where the only food plant for this species — **Aristolochia**, aka Dutchman’s pipe — grows. Due to mild winters, snow accumulation is insufficient, and spring river floods are generally quite manageable. Thus, polyxena’s habitats (the butterfly emerges in early May) are not inundated with water, and local populations can intermingle, which positively affects the species.



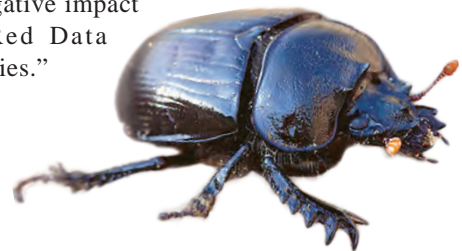
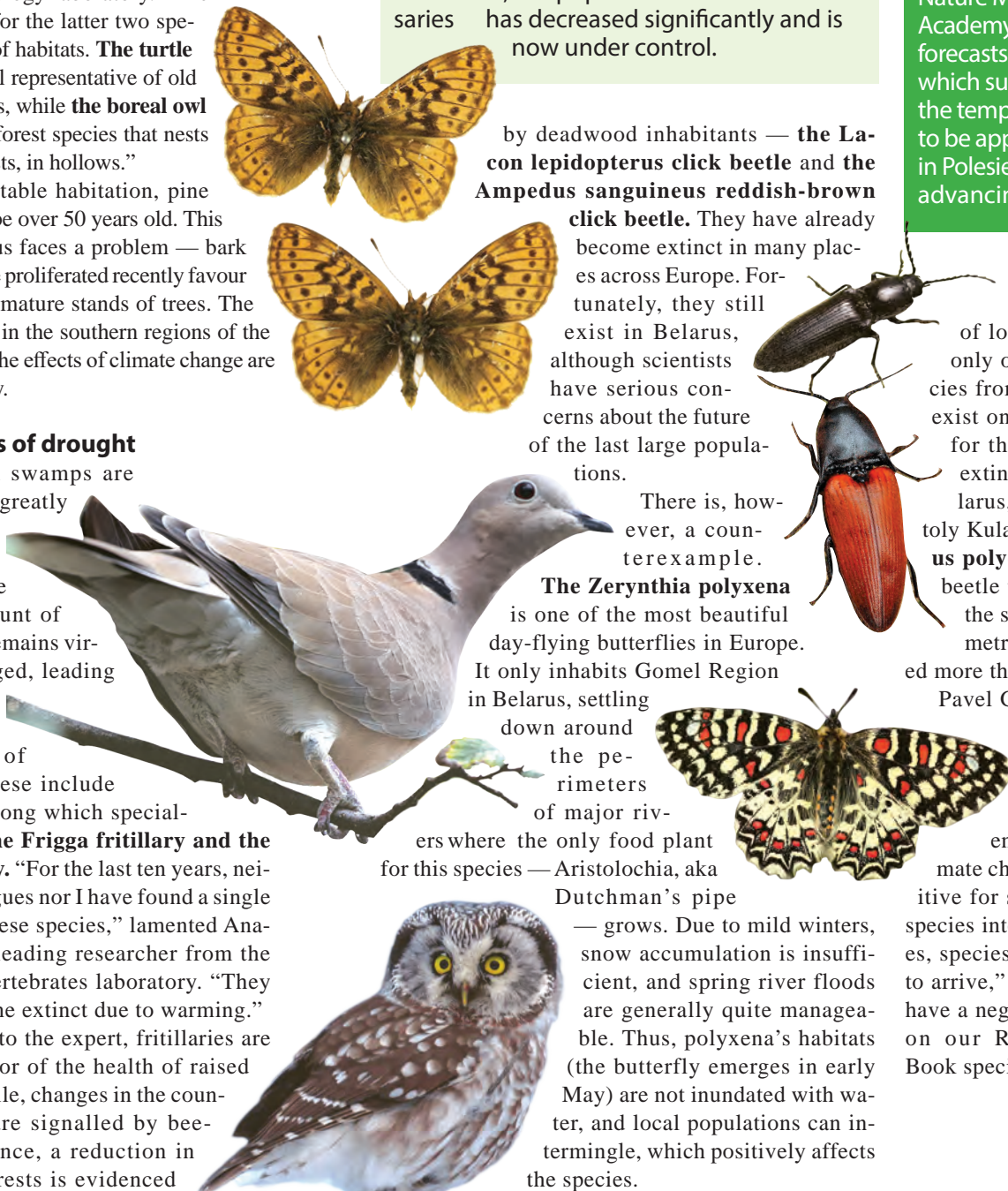
TO THE POINT

According to Belarusian scientists, temperature rises will continue regardless of greenhouse gas concentrations. The Institute of Nature Management of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences has calculations and forecasts for each region up to the year 2050, which suggest that by the years 2030 to 2040, the temperature in Vitebsk Region is expected to be approximately the same as it is currently in Polesie [Gomel Region]. Global warming is advancing at a rapid pace.

Rarities and uninvited guests

Experts are also monitoring the fate of local species known in the country from only one or two habitats. These are relict species from ancient geological eras that currently exist on our territory in conditions non-typical for them. “These species have already gone extinct across vast territories adjacent to Belarus, while we still have them,” noted Anatoly Kulak. “One such species is **the Ceratophyus polyceros earth-boring scarab beetle** — a beetle that spends most of its life as a larva in the sandy dunes of Polesie at a depth of 1.5-2 metres. The nearest known habitats are located more than 500 kilometres away from Belarus.”

Pavel Geshtovt, Deputy Director for Scientific and Innovative Work at the Scientific and Practical Centre for Bioresources of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences, drew the attention of nature enthusiasts to another consequence of climate change that does not seem particularly positive for scientists — the invasion of non-native species into the country. “When the climate changes, species that previously did not live here begin to arrive,” the specialist remarked. “They can also have a negative impact on our Red Data Book species.”



Silver worth its weight in gold

By Sergei Kanashits

Yauheni Zalaty was born in September 1999 in a small town of Krasnopolye in Mogilev Region. Yauheni has always been an athletic guy, yet the road to triumph was not easy for him. Training hard and working fingers to the bone is a common thing for rowers. However, treachery and backstabbing are painful for everyone, regardless of their character or profession. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its accomplices among the sports federations — at the behest of Western moguls — keep suffocating Belarusian athletes with sanctions and hitting them with suspensions from international competitions. The recent Olympics in Paris were no exception and demonstrated that honest Olympism, once revived from the ashes of antiquity by Pierre de Coubertin, has returned to ashes. Nevertheless, 17 Belarusian athletes managed to break through to Paris and competed there under a neutral status, despite all the barriers and obstacles. Four returned home with medals. Yauheni Zalaty captured silver in the men's single sculls — the most prestigious class of rowing. The athlete learnt that he had been allowed to compete in the Olympics just two and a half weeks before the start. "Until the

Belarusian athlete Yauheni Zalaty on the value of silver won at the 2024 Olympics in Paris



Yauheni Zalaty

last moment, there was no certainty that I would get to Paris," recalled Yauheni. "I know that a lot of reports were written about me to the IOC, demanding that I be barred from the Olympics, emphasising that I am a serviceman. Yet, we believed and kept training. It was not in vain."

Yauheni Zalaty arrived in Paris without his boat and was forced to compete in a rented one, which he had to hire right at the Olympic rowing canal. His own boat, which he had used for training and to which he was accustomed, was not allowed through by Polish customs, despite official letters and requests from the IOC. That was not the end, though. Due to a broken-down bus transporting rowers from the Olympic Village to the rowing canal, Zalaty was running late for the final race, which was ultimately postponed. For a third of the decisive distance, Yauheni was hopelessly behind, coming last, and it seemed that any thoughts of a medal were out of the question. But suddenly, he produced an unbelievable burst of speed and finished second!

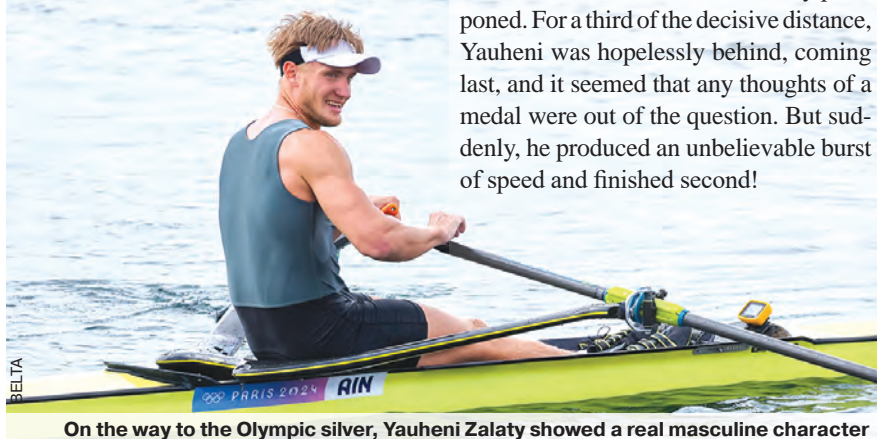
Moreover, right during the Olympics, Yauheni became a father and, not having time to unpack his suitcases after returning home, he rushed to the maternity hospital to meet his happy wife and their baby son.

Yauheni Zalaty's story is worthy of being filmed. Even more drama and genuine sincerity is added by another detail that has remained out of the spotlight. It is a moment of immense friendship, support, and unity — the powerful triad that makes us unafraid of any sanctions or discrimination. Concurrently with the competitions in Paris, the Russian Rowing Championship was taking place in Moscow — at the same time and during the same period. The organisers scheduled the final race to coincide minute by minute with those in Paris, so that the athletes could feel the Olympic spirit and compare their results with those of the world's best athletes. This happened in all the races, except for the men's single sculls, for which Yauheni was late due to a broken-down bus in distant Paris, and which was ultimately postponed to a later time. In Moscow, the race went ahead and concluded smoothly, allowing all the rowers and numerous spectators — including the Belarusian national team — to follow the twists and turns of the Paris final race in real-time on a large screen right at the rowing channel

and wholeheartedly cheer for Zalaty. When Yauheni learnt how much support he had, he was very touched and impressed, "It is incredibly joyful to see the atmosphere that reigned at the stadium, how sincerely Belarusians and Russians cheered for me together. A true union! We have always stood shoulder to shoulder, supporting each other and finding kind words. I am sure that together we can overcome any adversity. When I picked up my phone after the Olympic finish, I was pleasantly surprised by the huge number of warm messages from fans. Strangers thanked me for this silver medal. Although we competed under a neutral status, the opponents and spectators knew that we are from Belarus. I often receive messages on social media, even from Americans, who are looking forward to seeing me at the Olympics in Los Angeles. So ordinary people understand everything and are always happy to see us."

"Just four years ago, I would not have believed that I would become an Olympic medallist, although I dreamt of it since childhood," the Belarusian athlete shared. "Now I have won the first silver medal in men's rowing in the history of Belarus. I am grateful to the country's leadership for their support. Overall, state support for sports here is significant. We have an excellent training base, wonderful coaches, and ample equipment — more than enough. Belarus is a great country for me. Maybe I was not completely convincing in proving this — after all, silver is not gold — but I tried and did my best. In the future, I will strive to win a treble — gold at the European Championships, World Championships, and the Olympic Games — for my beloved Belarus!"

As they say, the surname carries responsibility.



On the way to the Olympic silver, Yauheni Zalaty showed a real masculine character

Without Japanese sponsors

Three major global companies have severed ties with the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

By Kirill Knyazev

Firstly, tech giant Panasonic announced the termination of its sponsorship with the IOC, and now Toyota Motor Corporation and tyre manufacturer Bridgestone have followed suit. All three Japanese companies were among the top sponsors of the Olympic movement.

Akio Toyoda, president of Toyota, was particularly outspoken about the issue during a meeting with US dealerships, "We have decided not to extend our sponsorship with the IOC after Paris because, honestly, I am not

sure they [IOC] are truly focused on putting athletes first." He expressed concern that the Olympics are 'losing their essence', deviating from what he believes should be their primary purpose — dedication to the sport and the inspiring stories of the athletes. "The Olympics are becoming increasingly political," Toyoda added. This remark not



Before the Tokyo Olympics, representatives from Toyota, the Japanese NOC, and IOC President Thomas Bach showed alignment. However, a series of scandals surrounding the Games — including the corruption scandal of the 2020 Olympics and political issues during the 2024 Olympics — compelled partners to part ways.

FOR REFERENCE
The IOC's income for the last four-year cycle, ending with the Tokyo Games, amounted to \$7.6bn. The IOC's major sponsors paid more than \$2bn during that period. Data for the cycle concluding with the Paris Olympics is not yet available.

only captures the essence of his criticism but also highlights the fact that the world's largest sporting event, once solely competitive in nature, has turned into a platform for political manoeuvring and selfish interests.

The sponsorship deal worth \$835m, initially deemed perfect, was signed back in 2015, when Toyota entered

into a 10-year agreement with the IOC, cementing its role as one of the main financial sponsors of the Olympics. However, rumours of a potential split had been circulating since May, and as is clear today, they were certainly not unfounded.

Tyre manufacturer Bridgestone has also announced that it will not extend its agreement with the IOC after the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. "The decision comes after an evaluation of the company's evolving corporate strategy



and its recommitment to more endemic global motorsports platforms," stated the Japanese firm. Bridgestone was a sponsor of the Olympic Games since 2014. The financial terms of the agreement were not disclosed; however, according to Japanese media, the amount of sponsorship fees paid by Bridgestone was \$35m annually.

Previously, Panasonic ceased its sponsorship of the Olympic Games. The company did not explain why it chose to end its co-operation with the IOC, but stated that it was related to 'continual reviews of how sponsorship should evolve'. The Panasonic Group first became an official worldwide partner of the Olympics in 1987, supporting the Games with its technologies, products, and services.

According to *JapanToday*, following the departures of Toyota, Bridgestone, and Panasonic — that were among the 15 companies that had signed a premium partnership agreement with the IOC under the TOP (The Olympic Partner) programme, which represented the highest category of sponsorship — the IOC has been left without Japanese sponsors. This appears to be more than a mere coincidence.

SPORT

The Minsk Times
Thursday
October 10
2024

11

Photo of the week



Anton Stepanishchey

Start of Dazhynki-2024 — district holidays honouring agricultural village workers — was given in Beshenkovichi, Vitebsk Region

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



October 10th, 1929 marks the birth of Marat Kazei — a young Belarusian partisan, Hero of the Soviet Union. During the Great Patriotic War, he fought in a partisan unit. On May 11th, 1944, while carrying out a combat mission near the village of Khoromitskiye in Uzda District, Marat Kazei was surrounded by punitive forces. He continued to fire until the last bullet, and then detonated a grenade, blowing himself and several Nazis.

On October 11th, we celebrate World Egg Day — a holiday for all lovers of egg dishes, be they omelettes, baked egg puddings, or sunny-side up eggs. Eggs are the most versatile food product. They contain high-quality protein and a plethora of essential nutrients, including vital vitamins and minerals. Eggs are popular in the cuisine of all countries and cultures, largely due to the diverse ways they can be consumed.



On October 12th, 1931, the statue of Christ the Redeemer was ceremoniously inaugurated in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, becoming the city's main attraction. The statue, standing 30 metres tall,

is perched atop Corcovado Mountain, over 700 metres above sea level. The sculptural depiction of Christ, with arms outstretched and embracing the entire city, embodies compassion alongside joyful pride.

October 13th, 1929 marks the commencement of regular tram service in Minsk. A solemn meeting at the tram ring near Privokzalnaya Square was held to commemorate this event. Electric trams first operated on the route from the Tovarnaya station to the Komarovka Market. Shortly thereafter, rail transport expanded to a second route — from the Railway Station to Svobody Square. Although regular buses were already running in Minsk by that time, trams quickly became extremely popular among passengers.



On October 13th, 1884, Greenwich was officially established as the prime meridian. At the International Meridian Conference in Washington, the decision was made to introduce time zones around the globe. The meridian running through Greenwich, a district of London, was selected as the world's prime meridian. A unified global time system did not exist until the end of the 19th century.

October 14th is celebrated as Mother's Day in the Republic of Belarus. This date is timed to coincide with the important Orthodox feast of the Protection of the Holy Virgin. The origins of Mother's Day lie in the deep respect for mothers. Throughout one's life, the warmest feelings and cherished, unforgettable memories are often associated with the image of a mother. She imparts the first lessons in morality, spirituality, kindness, and tolerance. The significance of this celebration in strengthening family values is undeniable.



October 15th, 1814 is the date of birth of Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) — a great Russian poet and prose-writer. Lermontov's creative work marked a new flourishing in Russian literature and had a significant influence on the prominent Russian writers and poets of the 19th and 20th centuries. His poetry has been a rich source for opera, symphonic, and romance compositions, with many of his verses becoming popular folk songs.



On October 15th, 1964, the world's largest international oil pipeline traversing Belarus — *Druzhba* — began operations. This was one of the most grandiose projects of the

last century, designed to transport oil from the fields of the Soviet Union to Eastern European countries. The construction of the oil pipeline system took four years, although some sections became operational earlier. In 1974, a second line of the pipeline — *Druzhba-2* — was constructed.



On October 15th, 1984, the Belarusian Steel Works [BMZ] was inaugurated, marking the launch of the electric arc-furnace melting shop

and the production of its first heat of steel. Today, BMZ is a high-tech enterprise in the metallurgical sector that structurally consists of interconnected production lines — steelmaking, rolling, pipe, metalware, and infrastructure shops. The plant's products are in demand in many countries around the globe.

October 16th is known as World Food Day, established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). The main goal of this day is to raise awareness about the global food issue and to analyse what needs to be done to tackle the pressing problem of eradicating hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

