

The President of Belarus has given an exclusive interview to Bloomberg Media Holding → 3

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All forty-four wheels...
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Mount Athos sand potent on amazing picturesque canvases
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Darya Domracheva greeted warmly at Minsk National Airport

Moving directly towards her goal

Darya Domracheva's popularity in Belarus and beyond is at an all-time high, following her Big Crystal Globe victory. All those interested in biathlon sports are discussing her recent 'battle' against Kaisa Makarainen at the World Cup, which resulted in Darya's supremacy. → 10

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Very small grains for large loaf

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Partnership with many components

By Vladimir Khromov

Belarus enjoys intensive co-operative ties with Russia's Nizhny Novgorod Region

The strength of our liaisons is well confirmed by the past four visits of the Nizhny Novgorod Region's Governor, Valery Shantsev, to Belarus. The fruit of these labours is evident in trade figures, with mutual turnover now exceeding \$500m. The Nizhny Novgorod Region is ranked 8th among all Russian regions

for trade with our Republic while Belarus is its third highest ranking trade partner. Clearly, both sides are keen to take relations further, as discussed by Mr. Lukashenko and Mr. Shantsev during their meeting.

Owing to regional ties, Belarusian-Russian co-operation is strengthening, as the President and his guest agreed. Our countries have advanced significantly across political, economic and humanitarian spheres since the Union State was launched.



During the meeting

Belarus and the Nizhny Novgorod Region share similar economies, with liaisons in the agro-industrial branch. According to Mr. Shantsev, progress in this area much relies on Belarusian experi-

ence and developments (such as the construction of large milk-commodity complexes). Meanwhile, the Nizhny Novgorod Region is eager to set up production of buses for city transport, working with

Belarusian counterparts.

Speaking of future prospects, Mr. Lukashenko said, "Positive trade dynamics are our major goal. We must find new points of contact and new forms of collaboration, while supporting existing co-operative ties between Belarusian and Nizhny Novgorod industrial enterprises, and developing co-operation in the field of construction of communal housing."

Our bilateral interaction covers far more than trade, including sports, exhibitions,

culture, education and youth policy. Nizhny Novgorod is now preparing to host the 2018 World Football Championship, for which it is able to benefit from Belarus' experience of hosting the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship. Mr. Shantsev notes that co-operation with Belarus is a priority for the Nizhny Novgorod Region's foreign activity and that he will do all he can to encourage growth in turnover, developing measures with Belarus to avoid any decline in this sphere.

Customs has its own reliable instruments

Transit attractiveness among country's major economic resources

By Vasily Kharitonov

Full use of our transit potential depends very much on the efficiency of our customs procedures. These have the power to ease the path of exports, raising the amount of revenue flowing into the budget. Of course, customs officers need to be vigilant in detecting smuggling, promoting the transparency of transit trading routes through Belarus, as discussed by the Belarusian President recently with the State Customs Committee.

The border is a zone of enhanced responsibility, bringing with it many temptations. Unsurprisingly, the President began by telling customs officers about the huge responsibility they bear. As Mr. Lukashenko stresses, instances of corruption and bribery break public trust in the state. The struggle must be uncompromising. The President told the State Customs Committee, "We must create an atmosphere of intolerance to such offences since any case of bribery — even a one-off instance — defaces the whole customs service in the eyes of the public."

From this foundation of honesty, other tasks can be achieved, with the promotion of exports and their diversification standing to the fore.



Fixed inspection unit at Privalka border checkpoint

Of course, this is a task for the whole Government but the State Customs Committee can ensure the speed and comfort of cargo transportation, meeting Belarus' obligations within the Eurasian Economic Union (and fully satisfying its own domestic interests). It can contribute to the development of our eastern trading avenue, actively participating in China's Silk Road Economic Belt project.

Enhancing the budget is a traditional task of the State Customs Committee but the President warned against an excessive show of effort to detect violations, since this might damage our transit image. He believes that op-

timising the system of customs privileges may be the way forward. As the State Customs Committee's Chairman, Yuri Senko, reported, the latter generate up to 35 percent of all customs payments. In this respect, duties are reduced on materials imported for use in domestic production. Mr. Lukashenko has asked that this issue be properly studied, emphasising that privileges should not exceed the economic benefit of the end result.

Belarus' transit attractiveness is among its major economic resources, deserving to be steadily developed. In many respects, this falls under customs' responsibil-

In recent years, much has been done to develop customs infrastructure. As the State Customs Committee asserts, it now not only meets all needs but ensures safety for increased transportation flow

ity: particularly, speed of processing. Customs needs to play its role in promoting investments into major infrastructure projects, dealing with the establishment of modern logistical centres.

In recent years, much has been done to develop

customs infrastructure. As the State Customs Committee asserts, it now not only meets all needs but ensures safety for increased transportation flow. From time to time, queues are registered at border checkpoints, being a problem remaining to be solved. Clearly, forward planning is necessary; if holdbacks appear because of partners, better co-ordination is vital. Infrastructure and quality control are links in a single chain. Such initiatives as the Co-ordination of Border Management and the One Stop Shop have received the President's approval, with the demand that they be realised without delay.

The border must be governed by the law and must present an obstacle to smuggled goods, including low-quality products from third countries, transiting through Eurasian Economic Union member states. Transparency of internal borders should not be viewed as an excuse for complacency among border officers. Recruitment, training and staff motivation to work honestly are essential components in efficiency. At present, salaries are limited but bonuses can be awarded for detection of illegal trafficking from which budget profits are gained.



Exchanged telegrams of congratulations

Chairman of the Supreme State Council of the Union State, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, congratulates President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on the Day of Unity of Peoples of Belarus and Russia

Mr. Lukashenko's telegram states: "Our countries are carrying out consecutive work to form and strengthen the Union State within frameworks which offer new possibilities for maintaining the stable development of our national economies and increasing the well-being of our citizens."

Alexander Lukashenko noted that he highly appreciates Vladimir Putin's huge personal contribution to Belarus-Russia integration processes. He emphasised, "I'm convinced that our confidential and meaningful dialogue on all complex Union State questions will promote their accelerated solution."

President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, also sent a telegram of congratulations, on the occasion of the Day of Unity of Peoples of Belarus and Russia

The Russian leader noted the successful development of relations between our two countries, based on traditions of friendship and our long-held spiritual and cultural closeness. Mr. Putin noted also the efficiency of the Union State as a mechanism of bilateral interaction, the experience of which has led to the creation of a wider integration structure: the Eurasian Economic Union.

The Kremlin states: "The President of Russia highly appreciates the results of the recent session of the Supreme State Council of the Union State, which took place on March 3rd, in Moscow. He has expressed confidence that fulfilment of arrangements will expand all Russia-Belarus communications, as well as the co-ordination of foreign policy, defence and security, in the interests of the people of our two countries, while strengthening the stability and safety of the Eurasian space."

Focus on positive economic trends

By Veniamin Mikheev

Alexander Lukashenko sets goal of macroeconomic stability and balanced economic development

On receiving Prime Minister Andrei Kobyakov and the Chairman of the Board of the National Bank, Pavel Kallaur, the President instructed the Government and the National Bank to maintain eco-

nomical momentum (as seen since Q1, 2015). He emphasised that a certain balance was achieved in the economic situation and the financial sector across the first quarter and is keen to discuss issues likely to emerge in the future.

"The first quarter is over, so I'd like to discuss our coming plans. As I mentioned in appointing new Government members, we need to improve the situation — or at least

preserve the status quo. I do not demand a rise in GDP but we should do our best to avoid decline. We need to hit our planned targets," the Head of State noted.

The PM reported on economic performance across Q1, 2015, including monetary policy and the state of affairs on the foreign currency market. In his words, during this period, National Bank interventions were worth \$40,000, avoiding the

use of gold and foreign currency reserves to support economic entities on the domestic foreign currency market. "We minimised foreign currency interventions to ensure stability for national currency exchange, as far as possible," he said.

Mr. Lukashenko has set the task of further ensuring macroeconomic stability and preserving the balanced development of the Belarusian economy.

Alexander Lukashenko: 'We're a peaceful nation and have no desire to receive threats'

Chatting for over ninety minutes with Bloomberg journalist Ryan Chilcote, Alexander Lukashenko answered almost fifty questions. Read on for key extracts from the interview.

On the situation in Ukraine

Mr. Lukashenko believes that it will be some time before peace is brought to Ukraine. He noted, "I'm fearful that this may be the calm before the storm. Certain trends and facts are evident, showing that there is still a long way to go for Ukraine to achieve peace."

The President is concerned that the USA has lacked open involvement in the process. He underlined, "I believe that, without the Americans, there can be no stability in Ukraine. Meeting recently with representatives of the United States of America, who visited us, I strongly conveyed my view, saying that I didn't know what the Americans wanted here, in Eastern Europe, particularly in Ukraine, but that, if they desire peace and stability, they should immediately engage in this process."

Of course, Russia has a role to play in settling the Ukrainian conflict. Regarding the possible participation of Russia in the conflict in Donbass, Mr. Lukashenko noted, "Russia is not so stupid as to risk sending troops there. It would be wrong to blame Russia for sending its regular troops into this conflict. There are plenty of people in Russia who want to fight in Donbass, either for money or for ideology. Thousands have travelled from Russia and elsewhere but I've been informed that no Belarusian mercenaries are among those fighting."

The President is hopeful that Russia and the USA may work in unity to bring peace to Ukraine. However, he asserts that, if the United States of America provides Ukraine with serious armaments, it could lead to the escalation of the conflict, and would push Russia to respond. Mr. Lukashenko warns that a war could begin since 'neither party trusts the other' and 'many armed people in Ukraine conform neither to the instructions of the President nor to Ukrainian army rules'. He laments, "Their presence also raises the degree of mistrust between the conflicting parties. Not everyone has adhered to the Minsk memorandum on the withdrawal of armaments from the contact zone, which is dangerous since it risks resumption and escalation of conflict. I'm afraid to say that it may lead to the open involvement of other states."

On the ways to solve the crisis

The President has repeatedly advocated peaceful regulation of the Ukrainian conflict, saying, "I believe that we have not yet wasted our opportunities. In order to maintain the integrity and unity of Ukraine, we must implement the Minsk agreements signed by the leadership of Ukraine. It's impossible to avoid contact with the current leaders of the DNR and LNR."

Mr. Lukashenko is convinced that



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those who are party to the Ukrainian conflict must negotiate some form of peace, including discussion of changes to the Constitution. He commented, "Some speak about federalisation and autonomy, while the Ukrainian authorities advocate decentralisation. These clear-cut and essential issues can be entrenched in the Constitution of Ukraine. Decentralisation is good. We need to give special status to these territories, to end conflict. Territories should be restored in order to see the situation improve, sooner or later. This should be done if we want to bring peace and integrity to Ukraine."

On Belarus' foreign policy

The President emphasised that Belarus is an absolutely peace-loving country, having never threatened anyone and with no intention of doing so. He stressed, "If I'd tried to threaten someone, Belarusians would not have elected me President. We are peaceful people and have no desire to receive threats. Why would I need to threaten anyone? Do we want more territory? No. God grant we manage the territory we have! We have only 10 million people, and can freely feed 20-25 million. We need a larger population for the territory we have. Why do I need to threaten anyone? Do I have tremendous military, economic and financial resources to threaten anyone?"

The President tried to explain the West's cautious attitude to our country, saying, "Europeans, and especially Americans (I intend no offense) believe, or at least have done so in the past, that the Belarusian regime, as they call it (our internal state system and our form of government) does not correspond to their views and

ever that nothing is more precious than stability and peace. He stated, "Belarusians well understand that the state should be stable and that peace is our main priority. We may be slightly poorer than others, lacking resources to become wealthy, but we live in a peaceful country, where our children and elderly don't die from shrapnel and bullets. We should all, including myself, in power, do our best, enabling Belarus to remain sovereign and independent even without me and without current generation of politicians who will leave sooner or later. We will do so."

On Belarusian-Russian relations

Mr. Lukashenko commented on the number of Russian politicians who think in an 'imperial' manner, viewing Belarus solely as 'some north-western province'. He underlined, "Our firm answer is that we won't ever be some north-western province, just as we will never enter into conflict with Russia. The Russian leadership has never raised the issue of whether Belarus should become part of Russia. We have been and remain a sovereign, independent state."

The President said that the last time he had discussed this issue with Putin was a year after the last presidential elections in Russia. "I was happy to hear him say that he had no intention of 'subduing or capturing other countries, including Belarus'. 'He told us that we both have our own 'residences' but remain close, like 'brothers, often visiting each other'. That's the sort of discussion we had," stressed Mr. Lukashenko. He is convinced that Russia will never fight Belarus, saying, "The leadership of Russia has no reason to look badly in our direction. The Russian people would not understand such a move and what would be the reason for fighting us? There is none so I doubt that Russia will take up arms against Belarus."

ideas. They've accused us of lacking democracy and say that we've violated human rights, asserting that Belarus needs to 'change'. They tried to 'change' us via various methods but this hasn't worked. They've labelled me as a 'dictator'.

On Western sanctions

The President is convinced that all sanctions are an anachronism, without use, being senseless restrictions — towards our country and now Russia. Mr. Lukashenko notes that modern globalisation prevents sanctions working since, 'If you put pressure on us, the door is open to other states'. He added, "We've been co-operating very effectively, and still do so, with Russia, China, India, and other states in Asia

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and Africa, as well as Latin America. Thank God our relations with the United States are also normalising now. Sanctions are an anachronism; time, which is the chief justice, has proven me right."

On peace

The President noted that, amid recent events in neighbouring states and the wider world, Belarusians have begun to appreciate more than

We continued defending our homeland. We would do the same today, in the same way."

The Head of State noted that the West believes Vladimir Putin to be 'seeking to restore some empire'. However, Mr. Lukashenko emphasised, "He doesn't seek to restore any empire. However, if someone goes too far and starts poking Russia, Putin and the Russians will respond. Tread carefully around Russia as, although Putin has no intention of conquering anyone, he is a contemporary person and understands the dangers of the modern world."

The President accused the Americans and EU and other political centres of being just as 'guilty' of accusations of interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries as Russia. He underlined, "Why did you go to Libya, Iraq, and other places? Do you have vital interests there? So has Russia. It has vital interests in Georgia and in other neighbouring countries. Such behaviour is common to all big states. They somehow believe that to survive in their giant form and to advance their interests elsewhere, they need to dominate others. You cannot accuse Russia alone."

Speaking of relations within the Union, Mr. Lukashenko said that, regardless of Ukrainian events, Belarus-Russia relations haven't changed in any way.

On single currency for the EEU

According to the President, this problem has been 'overblown' and the introduction of a single currency for the Eurasian Economic Union isn't on the current agenda. He commented, "When we three debated the notion of a single currency in Astana, Vladimir Putin asked if experts could discuss the issue. It's no problem — let them talk. However, we didn't debate the introduction of a single currency for some definite time, even remote in nature. This will be the last act of the Eurasian Economic Union, which has enough challenges to face before tackling a single currency."

On economic situation

Unfavourable external factors, including the devaluation of the Russian Rouble, and falling oil and gas prices, have undoubtedly made the situation in Russia more complex and have affected Belarus. The President believes that the situation is difficult, but not crucial. He notes, "It's bad that we were so slow to diversify our economy and exports. We export more than half of what we produce, so we depend on foreign markets. We'd failed to extend beyond the Russian market, and markets of former Soviet Union states, so we now we need to facilitate the process. An inflow of currency would help us to maintain the exchange rate of the Belarusian Rouble, which has now stabilised to a degree."

Very small grains for large loaf

Over a relatively short time, Belarus has secured food security, while achieving \$5bn of agricultural exports. Belarusian products are much appreciated in Russia, Kazakhstan and elsewhere, yet challenges remain, notes Alexander Shpak, the Director of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of System Research in the Agroindustrial Complex.

By Yevgeny Kravtsov

There are certainly prospects for Belarusian rural development and, despite the difficulties associated with a transitory period, Belarus has preserved its large-scale agro-industrial production. This is enabling the country to widely and efficiently introduce the latest scientific and technical achievements, improving competitiveness and increasing food exports annually. Meanwhile, the creation of a large-scale network of agro-towns,

with developed infrastructure, is encouraging people to remain resident in villages. The quality of rural life is continuously enhancing.

Despite evident successes, Belarus' agrarian sector lags behind that of leading European countries, in efficiency and labour productivity.

There are several reasons for this: for many years, purchase prices were low and loans expensive, with just a quarter of state support for the agricultural complex going



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Vitebsk's Moloko JSC wins 2014 Governmental Prize for Quality

directly to economic entities. Their multi-functionality ('inherited' from Soviet times) is not always the most economically feasible method of organisation, with most thriving rather when they concentrate on a niche. Only the most advanced farms tend to successfully combine different aspects of work. Those which are loss-making need to concentrate on their strongest area, modernising relevant equipment and ensuring quality.

Is there a market for in-

creased agro-industrial production?

Demand and prices globally are on the rise, as the Earth's population is increasing at a greater rate than food production (1.4 percent annually against just 0.9 percent for food). The latest UN Food and Agriculture Organisation studies advise raising food production by 60 percent by 2050 — to meet the needs of the planet's 9 billion inhabitants.

In fact, production is only half of the battle, since global

competition is acute and prices must remain competitive. The Belarusian agrarian sector primarily comprises large associations and holdings, producing and processing raw materials. These include agro-companies, farms and branded trade and are a strategic avenue of Belarusian agrarian policy.

However, medium-sized and small agrarian businesses should be encouraged, since they are better able to adjust, allowing them to respond to changing trends without sig-

nificant financial investment. They can embrace niche areas, such as animal breeding, bee-keeping, sheep, and production of goats' milk, mushrooms and grapevine snails. Agro-tourism is also up and coming, usually involving a degree of smallholding agricultural production.

We'd love to see more family farms, preserving our national cultural traditions and the ethos of a healthy rural lifestyle, in addition to prosperous agro-towns and major companies.

Enterprise of big opportunities

Last year, Belkoopvneshtorg Belkoopsoyuza trading company celebrated its 25th anniversary as a major wholesale consumer co-operation company, providing high quality produce at affordable prices



Belkoopvneshtorg Belkoopsoyuza actively works to attract new buyers and suppliers, offering mutually beneficial co-operation, an individual approach and a wide range of products and services to its partners.

Belkoopvneshtorg Belkoopsoyuza works along several avenues:

- wholesale and retail
- public catering
- imports and exports
- production and sale of products made from natural fur
- cargo and passenger transportation

It supplies over 9,500 trading sites across Belarus and, without exaggeration, is enabling our partners to master the whole Belarusian market. Its experienced management heads are driving forward its dynamic development, keeping abreast of sales trends and updating product ranges to meet market needs.



As a well-known manufacturer of natural fur products (GNL trademark) it has its own animal breeding farms, fur production facilities and a network of branded shops: Fur Kingdom. This control of all stages enables the company to offer high quality goods. The enterprise is widely involved in wholesale and retail of semi-finished and ready-made products.

For further information please contact us:
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All forty-four wheels...

Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant confirms ability to produce unique world-class machinery

By Vladimir Yakovlev

Recently, the plant modified its MBRP-24-200-1M upgraded mobile platform for rapid deployment: able to lift up to 200kg to a height of 24m, within 15 minutes. Originally designed for the army, the telescopic mast is perfect for installing communication devices, radio-electronic surveillance and optic-electronic systems. In 2014, the platform was recognised as Belarus' best military export, being in great demand.

The enterprise is now preparing to test another novelty: a chassis already used by the military, which utilises the radiolocation station of the modern S-400 air defence missile system

(part of the Iskander tactical ballistic missile system). With an armoured cabin to offer protection under fire, it is in a class of its own.

So far, no other former USSR enterprise in this segment

of automobile machinery has managed to develop anything similar. The Minsk Plant has orders lined up until 2018, for military purposes and beyond. Its huge 'centipedes' can carry hundreds of tonnes, transport-

ing drilling machinery and other such heavy devices to Russia. This year, eight and ten wheeled traction vehicles and diesel engines meeting EURO-5 international ecological standards are to the fore (the latter produces less pollution, for which foreign customers are willing to pay).

The Minsk Wheeled Tractor Plant was established in Soviet times but retains significance today, as does the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant, based in the city of Baranovichi. Constantly being modernised, it has mastered the repair and remodeling of almost every sort of Russian aircraft, including helicopters, inspiring continued integration with Russian air industry companies.

Sergey Gurulev, the Chairman of the State Military-Industrial Committee, recently spoke of the necessity of liaising with Russia's United Aircraft Corporation JSC. He underlines, "The key goal of this integration is to ensure that the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant produces some air construction elements, for military and civil aviation, including for the Superjet and MS-21."

Last year, a joint concept of co-operation was



At the assembly workshop at Wheeled Tractor Plant

developed for Baranovichi's Aircraft Repair Plant and the Russian Corporation. A technical-and-economic study has been prepared on how best to integrate this major Russian company into a Belarusian JSC but yet lacks approval from the Belarusian President. However, according to Mr. Gurulev, a consolidated Russian-Belarusian joint production programme has been prepared, to run until 2025. Prospects are evident, including mastery of

the maintenance of some Su aircraft, serviced by the Russian army.

Other developments aim to unite the best achievements of high technologies. The State Military-Industrial Committee is developing its own pilotless aircraft, able to conduct reconnaissance of the enemy and produce radio-electronic counteraction. Meanwhile, improved models of the Grif-100, Berkut-1 and Berkut-2 are to be tested.

Only a handful of developed states are yet able to solve such tasks, and double-purpose military machinery remains high on the agenda for Russian and Belarusian defence enterprises. It's logical to unite efforts, with Belarus already taking part in Russia's state defence orders as a mediator or sub-contractor. The establishment of the Union State only offers more possibilities for closer contacts in this strategically important sphere.

More players on the stock exchange

By Mikhail Svetlov

Foreign brokers' participation on Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange to be fixed in legislation

The House of Representatives has adopted, on its first reading, a draft law to introduce amendments and additions to laws governing stock exchange trade. Alexey Kuzmich, the Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives' Standing Commission on Housing Policy and Construction, tells us that foreign residents will be permitted to bid on the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE). He explains, "This is especially acute in view of the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union. Our suppliers will gain new opportunities to supply commodities, while new opportunities will open up on the foreign market." He added that just over 3,000 foreign clients currently take part in BUCE bids (of over 14,000 clients in total), led by Russians, Lithuanians and Poles.

Amendments include the development of exchange logistics, bringing job creation. Trade-in services are also to launch, with acute demand from forestries involved in timber processing. If partners can be found via the exchange, it may reduce costs.

Mr. Kuzmich underlines that it's necessary to develop trade through the exchange. He comments, "At present, only 20 percent of goods are sold via the exchange — very little." Regarding the registration of off-exchange transactions, he notes, "The state is able to analyse over-the-counter trading transactions."

Speaking at the House of Representatives, Trade Minister Valentin Chekanov explains that the first BUCE bids were held on June 2nd, 2005. 100 percent of shares belong to the state while the Trade Ministry controls the work of the joint stock company.



Working scene

Call centre hot line

The first call centres appeared about a quarter of a century ago, with more than 80 percent of American companies and banks now using this convenient option to gather market research and feedback. The tradition also took root in our country.

By Alexander Benkovsky

Several years ago, such a centre was established at the National Bank. The organisation was eager to receive feedback from customers (larger entities and individuals). The 'hot line' proved popular, stirring trepidation among banks, which wondered what truths citizens would share. In fact, most of those who call wish only to ask practical questions: in particular, which banks offer the best saving and borrowing rates.

The National Bank tells us that, last year, its call centre accepted 16,900 calls, with about 10,500 com-

ing from 'ordinary' citizens. The most common subjects discussed were the activity of the regulator, currency transactions, instruments of payment, and the system by which savings are assured. Some wanted to know which banks are subsidiaries of Russian financial establishments, perhaps inspired by news of the financial crisis in Russia.

For some time, a significant number of complaints have related to citizens' obligations in paying loans taken out by relatives. In cases of the borrower losing their employment, the bank will turn to the guarantor of the loan, who has countersigned the contract.

The National Bank notes that increasingly more cases are being recorded of borrowers suddenly becoming insolvent: more than 6,000 such rang the call centre last year, with most requesting information on the structure and operation of the National Bank, as well as currency regulation and control, the reception of foreign currency credits, and the procedure for advance payments.

Approximately 41 percent of calls concerned currency-exchange (purchase and sale of Dollars and Euros) as well as the exchange of damaged banknotes, and of rare



At National Bank's call centre

currencies and coins. Another 20 percent of conversations concerned transactions with jewels, while 19 percent of callers asked for information on National Bank services:

instruments of payment, money transfers, traveller's cheques and transactions with banking payment cards. Some also complained of relations with commercial banks.

Using the Internet to conveniently make an appointment with doctors

Electronic queuing aiming to launch at every Minsk polyclinic by late 2015

By Svetlana Mokhoreva

They polyclinic e-appointment system is to emulate that used by banks, explains Lyudmila Zhilevich, Deputy Head of the Main Department of the Organisation of Medical Care, at the Ministry of Health. She notes that, although it cannot be used in its 'pure form' because patient time with a doctor cannot always be foreseen, it should improve the flow of patients and relieve the anxiety of waiting. Moreover, patients won't distract the doctor by trying to enter an office early and a doctor won't be distracted by questions outside his or her competence.

The electronic queuing system has been trialled at polyclinic #39, in Minsk, where patients 'check in' at a terminal on arrival, selecting the nature of their appointment, before waiting their turn. Another three of the capital's polyclinics are soon to follow suit, with all Minsk polyclinics to join the system by the end of 2015, if finances are permitting.

Online services were introduced some time ago to make the health system more convenient to use, allowing appointments online, as well as phone/online consultations. Doctors can also be booked



Electronic queuing system already operating at new polyclinic #39 in Minsk

for house calls via the current system. "Most polyclinics in Minsk and across the regional centres have websites. About ten of the capital's polyclinics are working online, allowing patients to obtain answers to specific questions, without coming

in to see a doctor," comments Ms. Zhilevich.

Some of the capital's polyclinics invite patients to take part in medical surveys, to help with examinations, and 15 Minsk polyclinics are able to issue electronic prescrip-

tions. Meanwhile, at the 19th and 34th central district and at the 29th city polyclinic, every patient has an electronic card, allowing them to receive laboratory tests and order extracts from medical records, to be received by email.



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ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Sufficient good plans

By Galina Grishkovets

Gomel and Clermont-Ferrand of France agree to expand co-operation

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to France, H.E. Mr. Pavel Latushko, has visited the French city of Clermont-Ferrand (twinned with Gomel since 1977). Meeting Mayor Olivier Bianchi, he conveyed an invitation to visit Gomel for the 16th *Spring in Gomel* international trade fair, scheduled for May 21st-24th.

Mr. Bianchi stressed the importance of historical links between our two cities, alongside cultural and educational contacts. He noted that a French delegation intends to visit Gomel's trade fair and emphasised his own desire to see Gomel city authorities and the regional business community attend a leading European livestock forum, held annually in Clermont-Ferrand, every October.

Mr. Latushko and Mr. Bianchi have agreed to consider various joint economic and cultural projects.

Konstantin Simonov would have been pleased

By Olga Kislyak

Avenue honouring 70th anniversary of Victory to be laid on legendary Buinichi Field, near Mogilev

The Deputy Chairman of Mogilev's City Executive Committee, Andrey Kuntsevich, tells us that 70 linden trees are to be planted, symbolising 70 years of peace, alongside three oaks honouring the three armies responsible for liberating Mogilev. An apple orchard is to be planted by children and their foster parents at the local children's SOS-village. Additionally, a garden is being laid for the use of Great Patriotic War veterans staying at the Regional Hospital of Invalids, nearby.



Mr. Kuntsevich comments, "Apple blossoms symbolise spring, the Victory and rebirth. By May, 9th, our young citizens of Mogilev will have created a scarlet cloth on which they will have embroidered the names of their great-grandfathers who fought in the Great Patriotic War. On the Victory Day, they'll carry the 300m banner through the centre of the city."

Ancient and contemporary city

'Historical' trolley bus 'From Berestie to Brest' now operating on streets of regional centre

By Vladimir Velikhov

Brest's Regional Museum of Local History has launched its carban exhibition trolley bus, as part of events marking Brest as the cultural capital of Belarus. The museum's director, Alexey Mityukov, tells us, "It is our gift to Brest residents and guests, reminding us of the city's 1000-year history. We hope to stir interest and attract visitors to the museum."

The museum on wheels' photo-documentary exhibition is entitled *Our City: Ancient and Modern*. It displays 30 large shots of well-known historical sites, including information on city history, from the 11th century to the present time. In addition, postcards from the 1920s and 1930s are on show, as are drawings, and various archive photos, placed



'Historical' trolley bus

in chronological order (with corresponding modern day shots). There is an audio-guide for those keen to learn more.

Zinaida Kulsha, who created the concept for the exhibition, and who

heads educational projects at the museum, tells us, "This isn't an abstract excursion through the city: it tells the story of everything you see as you go by. We've tried to keep the commentary to within 20 seconds of what passes by, which was no easy task. Our colleagues from the trolleybus park have helped us achieve our goal."

The Chairman of Brest City Executive Committee, Alexander Rogachuk, emphasises, "Our year as cultural capital isn't just about large-scale events; it's important to nurture a cultural environment, encouraging a certain attitude towards the city. Every Brest resident will enjoy our trolley bus, which we plan to operate for a full 12 months, or even longer."

Success is surely 'in the hat'

Minsk resident Marina Dukhan has created more than 200 models of hat, in most fanciful designs

By Inna Gorbatenko

Even Marina Timofeevna's family has forgotten how she looks without a hat: she parades for us in her 'Winter Island', 'Tsarevna Lebed' and 'Eiffel Tower'. The shelves of her apartment studio are filled with wild creations, like fantastic butterflies, firebirds and, even, a sunflower.

I can't help but think you'd have to be brave to dare leave the house wearing such beauty on your head but I take several pictures of myself wearing the fantastic headwear, and post them on Instagram.

"A real woman can create a salad, a scandal and a hat out of nothing," laughs Marina. Her personality is certainly theatrical, taking delight in 'shock' value. In fact, she worked as an actress, costumer, interior designer and decorator for ten years.

Each hat she makes is immediately in demand, with those wishing to purchase her designs growing in number year on year, thanks to Internet promotion, including fashion-blogs. The extravagant models sell just as well as the more classic designs, with clients often wearing them to weddings and



Marina Dukhan

parties. Marina shows me photos in her portfolio. "Here is my friend wearing one of my hats at the prestigious Baden-Baden races," she comments. I feel silent envy at the thought. Of course, hats are de rigueur at such events.

Marina has plenty of advice as to which hats suit which people. Those petite of stature should avoid wide-brimmed hats, as should ladies with short haircuts. However, they come in handy if you need to hide other shortcomings with your hair: Gaius Julius Caesar always wore a laurel wreath, to disguise his baldness.

Marina tells me that a hat may take as little as three hours to create, or three months! She began her beaded and embroidered collection two years ago and now uses metal, plastic and wood to embellish her designs: they are truly works of art.

Friends and relatives help source materials for her, from Spain, America, Latvia and Russia, and Marina travels a great deal. She notes that the British are most fond of hats, with many beautiful and interesting models on sale. She tells me that the famous top hat was originally invented by English haberdasher John Hetherington, who promoted his design by wearing it through the streets of London. "Some women fainted, dogs barked and, when the crowd broke into a run, an errand boy fell and broke his arm!" she exclaims.

As to how many hats are needed for a woman to be happy, Marina admits that one should be enough, but it 'must be worthwhile'.

Regime simplified to allow auroch rendezvous

By Anastasia Shoplya

Foreign citizens able to visit Belovezhskaya Pushcha without visas

Foreigners, wishing to stay at the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, will be able to enter without a visa, remaining for up to three days, according to a decree posted on the National Legal Portal.

The decree aims to enhance access to tourist sites within the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, while promoting trans-border tourism. The visa-free regime will operate through Pererov-Bialowieza border checkpoint, with visitors receiving a special entry document for access to the National Park, with departure through the same channel. Naturally, guests will still be obliged to show their passport on crossing the border. The Council of Ministers aims to bring the system into operation within a couple of months, ready for the summer season.

Grooms and brides grow up

Yelena Kukharevich, Deputy Chairman of the National Statistical Committee, announces that average age of marriage is rising

The average age for women entering their first marriage is now 25.3 years, with their second at the age of 37.6 years. Meanwhile, men, on average, first marry at the age of 27.4 years and begin their next marriage at the age of 40.6 years. Ms. Kukharevich tells us, "Rural grooms tend to be older than urban on first marrying (27.6 years against 27.3 years), while urban brides tend to be older than rural (25.4 years against 24.8 years)."

In 2014, the Republic registered 84,000 marriages: 3,200 less than in 2013. A quarter of all marriages are between men aged 24-26 years and women of 22-24 years. Furthermore, in 92 percent of marriages both parties are residents of Belarus.

Ancient Mstislavl 'ages' by several decades

Professor Igor Marzalyuk, who heads the Department of Archaeology and Special Historical Disciplines at Mogilev's State University (named after A. Kuleshov) tells us that ancient Mstislavl is now thought to have been founded in 1098

The Doctor of Historical Sciences notes that the Belarusian Ministry of Forestry has revised the date (from 1156) using dendrochronology, examining rings found within wooden fragments of an ancient oak road. Prof. Marzalyuk tells us, "We can assert that the whole city was constructed between 1098 and 1101: not only the road but also other wooden constructions. These indicate an earlier origin than 1156, to which annals refer."

Hosts to heartily welcome tourists while offering something interesting

By Olga Varopaeva

Around 500 agro-estates to welcome tourists this season

Belarusian agro-estates are scheduled to have an 'open door' day on May 24th, giving visitors a chance to sample what's on offer via special excursions and presentations of local customs. Foreign tourists are liable to be particularly intrigued.

Meanwhile, Belarusian agro-ecotourism is due to receive promotion at the world's largest international agro-



Agro-estates are currently in fashion

tourism exhibition, in Polish Kielce. Speaking about prospects for agro-

ecotourism in 2015, the Chair of the Board of the Country Escape Belaru-

sian Association of Rural and Eco Tourism, Valeria Klitsounova, notes that

hosts of Belarusian estates are hoping to attract more young people.

Of course, 2015 is the Year of Youth and a new nomination is expected within the *Learn Belarus* contest: 'Best Tourist Product for Youth on an Agro-Estate'.

This year will see agro-estates continue to develop individual attractions and branding, overseen by the International Tourism Chair at the Belarusian State University's International Relations Department (working with the Country Escape organisation).

End of milk quotas 'will hurt small farmers'

Farmers driving tractors pulled into Brussels hours before the ending of milk quotas across the EU

Small farm owners warn that the liberalisation of the milk market will lead to a massive ramp up of production and a drop in prices which would force many of them out of business.

Maria Heubuch, an MEP for the Greens said that if small farmers disappeared 'Europe could see more factory farms with 1,000, 2,000 or even 5,000 cows, merely providing raw materials for the industry'.

German farmer Karl-Otto Vollrath, who joined the protest, predicted, "There'll be no winners whether you have 50 or 500 cows."

Quotas began in 1984 as a response to the so-called EU milk lakes and butter mountains caused by overproduction and many warn of a repeat of those days.

Maria Heubuch predicted that 'yields will continue to rise and prices will continue to fall. Romuald

Schaber, President of the European Milk Board, called for more effective regulation to ensure prices don't remain low. "We demand a responsible market where in times of crisis, production can be



A farmer holds a French flag and a plastic cow during a demonstration

higher. But where the market comes back into balance quickly so that the prices don't become a bottomless pit," Schaber said.

The abolition of milk quotas is being lauded by the food giants, who say they

need to meet the increased demand from the likes of China. Germany and Netherlands are set to increase milk production by as much as 20 percent while Ireland is expecting a 50 percent rise in output by 2020.

advance.

George Kavathas is President of the Confederation of Craftsmen and Merchants, "About 8,500 businesses will close in the first six months of 2015, and more than 20,000 jobs will be lost, both wage earners, the self-employed and the employers."

As the EU considers the package of reforms proposed by Athens in order to receive its next bailout installment. Its an anxious time for Greek business.



Luxury carmakers flock to the New York Auto Show

The New York International Auto Show is on, busily dangling the latest toys from the world's carmakers in front of an avid public keen for some new wheels

New York is the world's number one luxury car market, and that was reflected in the models on show, with several making their debut appearances, including rival big-ticket limousines from Cadillac and Ford. It is also the show where many products destined for the Chinese market are revealed for the first time. Many will

reappear at the Shanghai show next month, the last before the autumn.

While there were debuts for several new SUV and four-wheel drive vehicles, that segment appeared to have cooled as manufacturers refocus on sedans and coupes, and slim down; many models are lighter, and with claimed better fuel consumption. However 'green' cars using renewable energy are creating less of a stir as companies make an effort to improve performance on conventional cars with technological fixes.

Greek economy truly stagnates

As Greece continues to negotiate with its international creditors the six year recession has turned the economic squeeze into a stranglehold

Stagnation is everywhere with shops reducing stock and shoppers keeping hold of every cent of spare cash.

Insecurity is killing trust with the country's business confederation saying foreign suppliers are demanding pre-paid invoices or even cash in



Iron ore price hits new low and trends lower in the market

Iron ore prices have slumped to below 46 Euros a metric ton, and with the price forecast to dip below 36 Euros the commodity looks to be stuck in the bargain basement for some while to come

It follows on the back of last year's price collapse, and is mainly due to overproduction and various factors meaning producers are not cutting supply to bolster the price.

Global consumption will also fall this year for the first time since 2009. Mining shares fell on the news, but they continue to increase output, with supply exceeding demand by 55 million tonnes this year.

For sale — two Brazilian World Cup stadiums

Brazil's Football World Cup dream continues to be the stuff of nightmares

Two stadiums that hosted several games are now up for sale as the owner is mired in a corruption scandal.

Grupo OAS has struggled for months with the impact of a fraud inquiry at state-controlled oil company Petrobras, which undercut the builder's access to financing.

Natal's Dunas arena is being sold off by Grupo OAS which also wants rid of its 50 percent stake in the Fonte Nova arena in Salvador.

Electronic jewellery that changes with your tastes

Hungarian start-up LIBER8 has introduced a piece of wearable jewellery, called 'Tago Arc', that allows users to change its patterns thanks to an integrated e-ink display

The curved e-ink display can be customised with patterns or images from your smartphone library. A specific smartphone app includes a big variety of images for the bracelet.

"You have in the app thousands of designs from artists, from designers. You go in the app, you choose your design that you want, then you touch your smartphone to your bracelet, you click picture transfer and with the picture energy gets transferred on to the bracelet as well, you wait ten seconds and you have the new design on the bracelet," says LIBER8's Reka Kovacs.

That means that the energy transferred from the smartphone is enough to power the low energy consumption e-ink display, so the bracelet needs no power and has no battery. The smartphone communicates with the bracelet via Near Field Communication, a technology very widespread in today's smartphones, enabling devices to establish radio communication with each other by touching them or bringing them into proximity.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



Exhibition of original works by Greek painter Aleksander Kayas at National Art Museum

Honouring the memory of victims and the heroic deeds of nations

By Svetlana Markova

Brest Fortress film screened at UN Headquarters in New York

The joint Belarusian-Russian picture, released in 2010, has enjoyed its New York premiere, organised by the representations of Belarus and Russia, with support from the diplomatic missions of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

The screening was attended not only by the American public but by heads and employees of missions of UN member states, alongside representatives of the UN Secretariat. Belarus' Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Andrei Dapkiunas, gave a welcome address, noting the importance of preserving the memory of victims and the heroic deeds of nations who defeated Fascism — to avoid any repetition of past mistakes or a repeated world tragedy. He stressed the necessity of doubling global community efforts to affirm unity, tolerance and solidarity as ruling principles of international relations.

The screening of films about the Great Patriotic War at the UN Headquarters has been one of many events conducted in New York, dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the end of WW2 — which predetermined the necessity of establishing the UN.

In early May 2015, a solemn session of the UN General Assembly is to take place, dedicated to all WW2 victims. This will feature a photo exhibition, coinciding with the anniversary of the Great Victory, prepared jointly by missions from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. This will be preceded by a symbolic ceremony entitled *Trees of Peace and Unity*, planting saplings at the UN Headquarters. The event is being initiated by Belarus and supported by more than 40 countries, held under the aegis of the UN General Secretariat and the Chairman of the UN General Assembly. All representatives of UN member states are expected to attend.

Mount Athos sand potent on amazing picturesque canvases

National Art Museum hosts *On Mount Athos* exhibition, by Greek artist Aleksander Kayas, showcasing over two dozen striking works

By Victor Mikhailov

Aleksander Kayas is an icon, genre, portrait and landscape painter, a member of the Artists' Union of Northern Greece and the Chamber of Fine Arts of Greece. He was born in Kryoneri — a district of Thessaloniki. From his early years he was interested in painting. One day a well-known Greek iconographer Nikolaos Georgiadis saw the works by Aleksander Kayas and invited him to study the icon painting at his studio. Moreover, outstanding Russian artist Ilya Repin has also influenced



the young artist's creative activity. The icons of the Greek master stand out by an internal spirituality and truthfulness in depiction of saints. From 1972 till 1992, Aleksander Kayas has painted several temples in various Greek cities, including Kastoria, Thessaloniki, Grenev, etc. He fruitfully worked on the Mount Athos. Since 1995, the painter taught at various higher educational institutions in Thessaloniki. From the middle of the 1990s and till today, Alexander Kayas is working in movable painting. The painter has developed a unique technique. He uses the sand from the Mount Athos and mixes it with acrylics. In this way, the master achieves a unique texture in his works. Due to this technique, the canvases of the artist are notable. Monochrome colours and plastic power of Kayas' paintings give a sensation of the involvement in liturgical process represented on a canvas. Even everyday scenes of monastic life involve on-lookers in the atmosphere of church sacraments. The paintings are mostly drawn from nature. Alexander Kayas is the only artist, who was admitted to paint the scenes from the life of the monks on Mount Athos. In 2004, at the General Officers' Club of Thessaloniki the icon master has presented the painting dedicated to Saint Demetrius of Thessaloniki (the size of the work is 35 square metres). The works by Aleksander Kayas are kept in private collections both of Greece and abroad. One of his canvases is placed at the Official Residence of the President of Greece in Athens.

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Bobruisk Pictures presents

By Svetlana Markova

Half hour Spice docudrama focuses on topical issues of drug use, love, disappointments and how to escape a tricky situation

Bobruisk's director Oleg Sanchuk explains, "We need a new angle on the problem, looking through the eyes of youngsters addicted to drug mixtures." He believes that such an approach should help throw light on one of today's most disturbing issues.

Shot by Tvorchesky Potok (Artistic Flow) youth association, the film short explores true life stories of ordinary Bobruisk schoolchildren (played by actors). Some used designer drugs themselves while others report on how it has affected their friends. "Spice is a weapon of mass destruction," states Mr. Sanchuk. "Young people who've experienced this addiction and managed to overcome it are able to catch audiences' attention, arousing fear among their peers that they could face similar consequences. They also offer optimism that you can beat an addiction." The film was shot realistically, on location in flats, streets and courtyards. Although funding was limited, the crew were able to spend a whole month filming, with great enthusiasm. Besides 'invented' scenes with former addicts, the docudrama features interviews with local police. The Head of the Bobruisk City Executive Committee's Interior Affairs Department, Andrey Govorako, notes, "The more actively the public is



Creators of Spice film

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Moving towards her goal



VLADIMIR SHLAPAK

athlon for a while, tell us what has given you most satisfaction so far.

Are you speaking of Olympic medals and the Globe? It's hard for me to say, since the Olympics take place only every four years while a Globe can be won every season.

Are you happy with this season?

I'm pleased with how it finished. There were quite a few moments when I needed to raise my game. One problem was my ski preparation. Moreover, in many races, I had to clench my teeth to stay the distance.

How did you feel on receiving the Globe?

I believe that it's vital to set goals and achieve them, despite all difficulties. As you've seen, much has happened to me this season. I could have lost heart, surrendering without a struggle, but I kept focused on my goal of winning.

It took but an hour for the victorious sportswoman to reach her car from the plane but the emotions evident were worthy of six months of 'ordinary' living.



VLADIMIR SHLAPAK

VLADIMIR SHLAPAK

Welcome from crowds of fans

Always professional, Dasha found time for journalists, as well as friends and family. Having arrived on April Fools' Day, she could not resist joking that her next goal is to perform with her fellow female biathletes at the Rio Olympics as a synchronised swimming team. She smiled, "I think we'll succeed. We just need a trip to the coast to train!"

As you're taking a rest from bi-

By Dmitry Baranovsky

Unsurprisingly, many are eager to discover her feelings, receive her autograph or simply share their admiration. Two buses were needed to bring Darya's fans to Minsk National Airport, where the mood was utterly joyful. Painted in red and green, the crowd bestowed flowers upon its heroine.

Ending with an exclamation mark rather than full stop

Tyumen hosts Race of Champions

By Igor Leshin

Darya Domracheva, the recent winner of the 2015 Big Crystal Globe, has won the biathlon mass start, while Belarus' Nadezhda Skardino took silver. Darya suffered only one miss on the target range, finishing in 15:59.2 minutes, with Belarusian Nadezhda Skardino just 5.5 seconds behind. Italian Karin Oberhofer closed the top three in the Race of Champions, while Domracheva's main World Cup rival, Finnish Kaisa Makarainen, came fourth.

Darya noted her delight in winning the mass start at the Race of Champions for the first time, admitting that she loves skiing at Tyumen

and feels great support and camaraderie from the organisers and fellow athletes. She added that, compared to last year's track, at the indoor Olimpiyskiy Sports Centre, in Minsk, Tyumen's outdoor shooting ranges were more difficult, bringing the added component of the wind.

The Race of Champions ended with mixed relay races, in which Darya Domracheva's pairing with Norwegian Ole Einar Bjørndalen resulted in fourth place. Over eight firing lines (split equally between women and men) Darya managed to hit every target, as did Ole, keeping them among the leaders. Sadly, the Norwegian allowed Slovenia's Jakov Fak to overtake him as they approached the finish line.



Darya and Nadezhda after the race

Brazilian football heads for Belarus

Five Belarusian cities to host 11th AMF Futsal World Championship, from April 17th

By Kirill Karin

The First Deputy Chairman of the Belarusian Futsal Federation, Sergey Safonov, tells us about training for the tournament, prospects for the host team and surprises in store.

"The national team of Belarus is the reigning champion of Europe and ranked fifth globally. We've waited the domestic championship for eight years. Futsal began developing in Belarus during Soviet days and is still doing so, in close contact with Russian futsal. Even the futsal federations of Russia and Belarus appeared almost simultaneously: in the early 1990s. Initially, we organised joint tournaments, holding seminars for coaches and judges with the participation of experts from South America: the homeland of futsal. Today, our friendship with Russian colleagues continues and futsal is gaining a reputation in our country for bringing regular medals from major international tournaments. It is helping us represent our country abroad."

How does futsal relate to regular football?

Unfortunately, relations are dif-

icult. FIFA and the International Futsal Federation don't yet agree on co-operation or joint projects. Such confrontation has brought about indoor soccer, under the aegis of FIFA, in which I see nothing good.

Co-operation would bring more advantages, to both sides.

Who sets the tone in Belarusian futsal today?

Brestvtorchermet, VRZ (Gomel), has twice won the European Champions League. Futsal is quickly developing in Pinsk, based at Polessky State University, and Minsk futsal projects have good prospects. The backbone of the national team resides in Dmitry Kudy, the captain, alongside Konstantin Tyurin, Alexander Koval and Alexey Nalivaiko. All have



National futsal team among favourites of domestic tournament

been with the team for a long time and have made a major contribution to its success. We also have some talented young players who, I hope, will play in the national team and be 'discovered' at the Minsk tournament.

How is the national team preparing for the domestic championship?

Players are training with their clubs, with the 6th final round of

the championship of Belarus already played at Brest's Victoria Sports Complex. It will be hosting Group B matches and two World Championship quarter-finals.

A circle of candidates for the national team was outlined after the Brest matches and training began on April 7th, at Minsk-Arena: the main venue hosting the next World Championship. We'll choose our twelve players there.

Which arenas will be hosting the World Championship?

Minsk's Sports Palace and Minsk-Arena, as well as Brest's Victoria Sports Complex and Pinsk's Polessky State University sports centre. Matches will also be held at Borisov's fitness centre and Molodechno's Ice Palace.

Who are the Belarusian national team's main rivals?

Those from Latin America, who are trendsetters in world futsal; they'll

be hosting the final stage of preparations for the championship in Barcelona. Belarus will play against Brazil and Uruguay in its group, while the finalists of the last World Championship will play in Group C: Colombia (the reigning champion) and Venezuela. We know little about the Argentinian team, which trains behind closed doors, but they'll be playing Russia in the tournament. The first match is planned for April 17th, between Belarus and Brazil.

What are our chances?

Our team's efforts of the past two decades are reaping success and the chance of medals. We'll do our utmost to make our dreams and hopes reality.

Who invented the championship's hedgehog mascot?

Artist Vitaly Ortyukh, who also gave us Auroch Volat, for the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship, hosted by Minsk. In Belarusian, we call him Vozhyk: he gives a 'thumbs-up' when all is well. Mr. Ortyukh has designed the emblem and all the official graphics of the championship, as used on boards and souvenirs.

Usually, such tournaments sell out in Minsk. Will affordable tickets remain available?

We guarantee a thrilling event, with ticket prices, and those for souvenirs, set at modest rates. If you aren't able to attend in person, you can watch most games on Channel 5.

Preliminary groups for the World Futsal Championship 2015:

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| A Belarus, Brazil, Uruguay and Australia (games hosted by Minsk) | B Paraguay, Belgium, Norway and Morocco (Brest) | C Colombia, the Czech Republic, Venezuela and Curaçao (Borisov and Molodechno) | D Argentina, Russia, Slovakia and Kyrgyzstan (Pinsk) |
|---|--|---|---|

Two teams from each group will go through to the quarter-finals, while the semi-finals and finals will be hosted by Minsk-Arena

'Phantom' knocks-out unbeatable Adam Etches

Sergey Khomitsky, aged 40, from Belarus, wins IBF Intercontinental Middleweight Championship belt and tops ratings after defeating British boxer

By Igor Grishin

UK professional boxer Etches attract no fewer fans to his fights than are seen at an average Premier League football match. Before entering the ring to face the Belarusian 'Phantom', Adam boasted that he would deliver his 16th knock-out.

Initially, the championship fight in Sheffield seemed to be going all the Brit's way but, in the fourth round, Sergey delivered a tough right stroke, to the shock of local fans and Sky Sports 1 commentators, bringing him victory with a knock-out.

The IBF Intercontinental Belt is truly prestigious, ranked just below the IBF World Belt. The victory, the result of 20 years of hard work, brings our boxer to the top of the middleweight rankings.

Sergey has several times retired from boxing but has always returned, battling almost every top boxer in the middleweight category. The Belarusian has performed brilliantly during 'home' fights but has been less fortunate 'away', with his rivals' victories sometimes deemed questionable.



Champion fight of Sergey Khomitsky: the 'Phantom' (Left)

A year ago, the Belarusian created his first sensation, by knocking-out British boxing star Frank Buglioni. Afterwards, he met the world's ex-champion, German Robert Stieglitz,

to whom he suffered defeat after the referee ceased the match, saying that Sergey's tape had unraveled. A 'technical knock-out' was awarded.

Pleasingly, Sergey's recent fight

was a triumph. The death of his father several weeks previously almost prompted him to cancel his trip to the UK but he later changed his mind. He has devoted his victory to his father.



Alexandra Gerasimenya and Yevgeny Tsurkin

Swimmers win first tickets for Summer Olympics

By Yegor Glebov

Belarusians win six medals and are first to receive places at Rio de Janeiro's Summer Olympics' Open Swimming Championship (Malaga, Spain)

Belarus' number one swimmer, Alexandra Gerasimenya, has clocked 24.98 seconds in the 50m freestyle, taking gold, and has also won the 100m freestyle. Meanwhile, Yevgeny Tsurkin has claimed gold in the 50m butterfly and silver in the 100m butterfly. Both qualify for a license A to the 2016 Rio Games.

Bronze went to Nikita Tsmg, who renewed Belarus' record in

the 200m backstroke, and to Alina Zmushko, in the 50m breaststroke.

The Belarusian national swimming team is soon to take part in the Belarusian Open Swimming Championship in Brest, from April 14th-18th. The tournament is a licensed event of the International Swimming Federation for the 2016 Olympics and, as such, will attract the globe's strongest contenders. Among them are Pavel Sankovich and Svetlana Khokhlova (now training in the USA).

The national team is also gearing up for the FINA World Championship, due to take place in Kazan, between July 24th and August 9th.

'Bisons' ranked second in Europe

By Igor Leshin

International Ice Hockey Federation publishes annual report on attendance at league matches, placing Dinamo Minsk second, behind Bern Switzerland

Bern is Europe's most attended club for the 14th year, with its matches at the Post Finance Arena in the regular season visited by 16,164 fans. Switzerland's National League A is also ranked European first, with an average attendance of 6,762.

After falling from second to sixth place last year, the Belarusian KHL representative has returned to its former position, thanks to its successful performance in the regular championship, with an average fan attendance at Minsk-Arena of 14,120; 11 matches sold out completely.

The Minskers have pushed German Eisbaren from Berlin (13,018) and Russian SKA from St. Petersburg (12,125) into third and fourth places, followed by German Adler Mannheim (11,320) and Kolner Haie (11,161). After moving to the KHL, Helsinki Jokerit's attendance has grown, moving the team into 7th place. The top ten also includes Swiss Zurich (9,331), Swedish Frolunda (9,087) and KHL's Slovakian

Slovan (8,975).

Some teams have considerably improved their attendance; among them are Djurgarden (Sweden), Lada (Russia) and Olomouc (Czech Republic); each has moved into a more prestigious league. Sochi, making its KHL debut last year, gathers an average of 7,557 fans for each match, playing at the 2014 Olympic arena. Interestingly, ten of the top hundred most attended teams perform in second divisions. The list is headed by Malmö Redhawks (Sweden), with an average of 6,258 fans per match.



At Minsk-Arena

Attendance at European hockey matches has risen: the average among the top 100 European clubs, from 14 countries, is 5,905 — up from 5,830 last year.

Precise adjustment of sights

By Igor Leshin

Belarusian athletes claim four medals at major international shooting tournament Grand Prix Wroclaw, hosted by Poland

Ilya Chergeiko has clinched the 50m small-bore rifle silver, while Vitaly Bubnovich has taken third place in the same discipline. Vitaly brings home two more bronze medals for the Belarusian national team: in the 50m small-bore rifle (prone) the Belarusian was third, behind Czech Tomáš Jeřábek and Polish Bartosz Jasiecki (ranked second and first respectively). London Olympic champion Sergei Martynov was fifth in this event. Meanwhile, in the 10m air rifle, Bubnovich scored 185.7 points, to finish third, behind Hungarian Istvan Peni and Poland's Tomasz Bartnik.

The next tournament involving Belarusian marksmen is scheduled for May 2015, in Czech Plzen.

Stronger than the strongest

By Kirill Karin

Belarusian Alexander Grinkevich-Sudnik sets new world record (under 74kg) at European Classic Powerlifting Championship, hosted by Czech Plzen



Participants of the continental tournament performed without special equipment to determine the strongest across the squat, the bench press and the deadlift. Alexander Grinkevich-Sudnik was first in his category, with a result of 710kg (a new world record): 242.5kg in the squat, 167.5kg in the bench press and 300kg in the deadlift.

Belarusian Alexandra Otchenashko was unrivalled in the lightest weight (under 47kg), winning gold for her total of 335kg. Snezhana Zubko reached similar success, coming first (under 72kg) with a result of 442.5kg.

In the junior competitions, Violetta Kudrevich took gold with 227.5kg, as did Victoria Makarevich, lifting a total of 357.5kg. Meanwhile, Igor Yuzapchuk claimed silver, lifting 555kg.

Artem Filipchenko also earned silver (540kg) while Pavel Pusetsky snatched bronze (350kg). Among the women, Tatiana Damashina and Alexandra Burykina both saw success, while Yekaterina Medvetskaya finished third.

Shot of the week



Palm Sunday at the Convent of the Nativity of the Mother of God, in Grodno

Exhibitions

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street

Until 3rd May. *Mater Dei.*

Iconografia di un Amore

Until 31st May. *Da Vinci Inventions*

Until 8th June. *Christianity and*

Christians in Creative Activity

of Russian and Belarusian

Artists of the Middle of the

19th-early 20th Century

Until 8th June. *Contemporaries*

of Coryphaeuses

Until 31st July. *Art at Finger Tips*

NATIONAL HISTORY

MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 24th April. *Amber —*

A Precious Stone of the Baltic Sea

Until 4th June. *Nikolya*

Chocolate Museum

NATURE AND ECOLOGY

MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 23rd March. *Magic Insects*

Until 9th June. *Exotic World*

WANKOWICZ HOUSE-

MUSEUM

33A Internatsionalnaya Street

Until 25th December. *A Prophet*

of his Time. Adam Mickiewicz.

Illustrations and Medals

CONTEMPORARY ART

CENTRE

3 Nekrasov Street

Until 18th April. *To be Estonian.*

Estonian Associations

Until 18th April. *The Artery*

MIR CINEMA

4A Kozlov Street

Until 30th April. *Childhood*

as a Moment

MTZ HOUSE OF CULTURE

24 Dolgobrodskaya Street

Until 30th April. *Gift for*

Mother: a photo exhibition

Theatres

NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square

10.04. Esmeralda 11.04. Iolanthe

14.04. Rigoletto

15.04. Carmina Burana. Carmen Suite

16.04. La Traviata

BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myashnikov Street

10.04. Sofia Golshanskaya

11.04. Red Riding Hood. Generation NEXT

14.04. Blue Cameo 15.04. Women's Revolt

16.04. Giselle

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street

10.04. Pan Tadeusz 11.04. Office

14.04. Don Juan 15.04. Evening

16.04. Local Cabaret

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street

10.04. Woe from Wit 11.04. Pane Kokhanku

12.04. Wild Strawberries 14.04. Tricks of Khanuma

15.04. A Husband Leaves His Wife

16.04. Love Circle

THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue

10 and 13.04. Pygmalion

14 and 15.04. A Very Simple Story

16.04. Who Laughs Last

REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street

10.04. The Eternal Song

11.04. Three Giselles 14.04. Maybe?

15.04. April Gift to Theatre Amateurs

from the Republican Theatre of Belarusian

Drama: Kupala. Paradise Circles

16.04. April Gift to Theatre Amateurs

from the Republican Theatre of Belarusian

Drama: The Broken Nest

Kaleidoscope of history unveiled

April of decades and centuries past comes to life

April 10th. In 1900, Mayor-General Gavriil Zdanovich was born in the village of Krivoshin of the Lyakhovich District. He was a USSR Hero and a participant of Belarus' liberation campaign, the Stalingrad Battle, and the liberation of Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

April 11th. In 1963, sportsman Igor Basinsky (shooting) was born; he won silver at the 26th and 27th Olympics (1996 and 2000).

April 12th. In 1906, architect Avel Bregman was born. He designed residential houses in Nezavisimosti Avenue and the Belarusian Technological University.

April 13th. In 1888, Lev Rozanov was born — a Belarusian and Russian scientist in the field of physiology. He was among the founders of physiological researches in Belarus.

April 14th. In 1754, a state figure, diplomat and patron — Nikolay Rumyantsev — was born. He collected many books, manuscripts and artefacts at his palace in Gomel.

April 15th. In 1920, Belarusian writer Mikola Rakitny

(Nikolay Novikov) was born in the village of Petritskoe of the Gomel Region. He wrote collections of stories: *Early Spring, Evening Stars, War Happened*, and others.

April 16th. In 1971, tennis player (who took bronze at 25th Olympics) Natalia Zvereva was born in Minsk.



April 10th. In 1938, the first issue of *Znalya Yunosti* (Banner of Youth) newspaper was out.

April 10th. In 1961, Komomolets cinema opened in Minsk.

April 10th. In 1996, the first diamond was mined on the Belarusian territory.

April 11th. In 1923, the Belarusian Society of Air Fleet Friends was established.

April 11th. In 1927, the second BSSR Constitution was adopted (in action until 1937).

April 13th. In 1963, a concert hall of the Belarusian State Philharmonics opened, featuring an organ.

April 11th. In 1944, the Polotsk-Lepel Battle began, with partisans opposing Germans. Later, the Proryv (Breakthrough) Memorial Complex was erected near Ushachi to honour Belarusians' act of bravery.

April 11th. In 2011, Minsk's Oktyabrskaya metro

station suffered from a terrorist attack.

April 12th. In 1948, Belarus joined the World Meteorological Organisation.

April 12th. In 1996, the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve received a Diploma of Europe for its achievements in preservation and scientific studies of flora and fauna.

April 12th. In 1996, the Belarusian Academy of Fine Arts was established — becoming an honourable organisation.

April 12th. In 2002, Minsk's Jewish Community House opened in Minsk.

April 13th. In 1793, Minsk's Bishop Chair was established following a Most High order.

April 13th. In 1928, Minsk's Architectural Road-Construction College merged with the Hydro-technical College to become Minsk's State Polytechnic College.

April 13th. In 1971, the Belarusian Scientific-Research and Design Institute for Rural Construction was founded.

April 13th. In 1992, Belarus and Italy signed a joint declaration on economic affairs in Rome.