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First summer shift opens at Zubrenok national children's educational and health centre

Childhood is the happiest time

World Children's Day is celebrated annually on the first day of summer. This tradition is about 70 years old. In Belarus, the protection of children's rights and interests is one of the state's priorities. Almost 1,900,000 young Belarusians under the age of 18 live in our country. Our state helps everyone who has taken the responsibility to give birth and raise a child, but pays special attention to the protection of children left without parental care. Any child symbolises sincerity and purity, while childhood is the most carefree and happiest time which we always remember with warmth and nostalgia.



A good result is the strongest argument

The work of the economy, further counteraction of the spread of coronavirus and preparation for the Presidential election: the Head of State held a meeting on pressing socio-economic and political issues

By Dmitry Kryat

There are points of growth

The President sees the possibility of a speedy recovery in the national economy after the fall. The decline is due to global causes: the closure of countries and world markets because of the pandemic. That is why two tasks have been particularly relevant for Belarus recently: ensuring the work of the economy and curing people. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, "Due to the hysteria that unfolded in the mass media, which has made the most severe impact on people and through people on the economy, the heads of state of the entire planet have taken serious decisions to close down their countries (read: close the economy)."

The relevant situation, including that of Belarus' main partners, could not but affect its economic development. The President noted,

"Our economy is export-oriented. Therefore, there has been a certain decline in the economy. The decline is acceptable, tolerable, though. This suggests that if the opening of the countries is even more intense than at present (and the process has already begun, no one will stop it, because people are outraged, they do not want to sit in isolation), then we will be able to quickly restore our economy."

Moreover, the Head of State added that even in the current situation, many industries, such as agriculture, construction, IT and a number of others, are delivering growth.

Difficult time

Aleksandr Lukashenko has called the current times one of the most difficult during his Presidential career. And this is due not so much to specific problems as to the external background that accompanied them, "You know that because of certain circumstances and the path that we chose during treatment, we were the only ones in the world with this policy and with these results. That cannot but cause doubts and questions: well, it cannot be that Belarusians could get through this stage alone. I'm not saying that it is over... Everything is clear: we have tough power, the President said and everything is being done. Nevertheless, we did not forbid anything. We just cherished people, treated them and so on... However, the pressure was very serious."

Epidemical situation is better

The President made special emphasis on this. In this area, there have indeed been positive trends and Aleksandr

Lukashenko drew attention of the meeting participants to it,

"I have repeated it often this month: if the situation continues to improve, we think that, with God's help, we will have prevailed over this disease."

"It all started in Vitebsk. Now Vitebsk has one of the smallest number of new cases. This is backed by the fact that we have already started to clean up and disinfect hospitals we previously prepared as a reserve," he added.

According to the Head of State, a similar situation is seen in Minsk, stabilisation of the incidence rate and even a slight decrease is being observed in the Minsk Region, while the Mogilev Region is also seeing an improving situation.

"If so, then we will only have two areas, the Brest and Gomel regions, which we must control. They entered this process



The meeting was attended by Head of the Belarus President Property Management Directorate — Viktor Sheiman, Chair of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly — Natalia Kochanova, Head of the Belarus President Administration — Igor Sergeyenko, and Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus — Mikhail Orda

later than anyone else, and experts say that they will be released later than everyone."

The President noted that he is informed of relevant issues and problems on a daily basis, in the morning and in the evening. Therefore, the situation is completely under control,

"There are enough beds. There are fewer severe cases. It seems, the virus has weakened, its virulence has decreased. God willing. However, we should keep in mind the second wave. No one has yet proven that it will follow, but we need to be ready. No one knows when it will strike. If it's in the autumn or winter, then I hope we will be prepared properly. Perhaps, this peril will us pass by. Nevertheless, there is no relaxing yet."

Signature collection — analysis of topics that concern people

Working directly with people during the collection of signatures is a good opportunity to study the mood of citizens and to learn about issues of concern to

them. The President drew special attention of the meeting participants to this fact, noting, "Honestly speaking, although I stay on top of the situation in the country (I get reports on how this political pre-election process is going, amongst other things), I didn't pay much attention to the pre-election campaign because I had other things on my mind. You all saw that there were a bunch of problems we had to deal with. And there will be many more yet. It will be difficult for me to get involved in this pre-election process. Although I think that anything we do is the pre-election process." Addressing the Head of the Belarus President Administration, Igor Sergeyenko, and the Chair of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly, Natalia Kochanova, Aleksandr Lukashenko asked once again to convey to all officials the following message,

"We're taking an exam. An exam for the nation. Not only me but all of us, the entire government system. We should demonstrate our ability to manage the state. People should draw the relevant conclusions. One always has to run faster right before the finish line. This is why we have to properly organise this final stage of our five-year term. So that people will understand who they are dealing with and can compare our proposals with those of our alternative candidates."

Aleksandr Lukashenko especially stressed that it is up to every citizen to decide whether they should sign the list or not. No pressure is allowed.

Election must be held properly

This is an indispensable requirement of the Head of State. Addressing the participants of the meeting, he stressed, "We should arrange this election properly not because I want to look lily white. The election should be held

as it is supposed to. People are watching us. We have not emerged out of the blue like some of the other candidates. They were sitting behind the scenes and now they've all come out and promise to money for all sorts of things... We've gone through this. In Belarus money should be earned, there is no other way. The more you work, the more you earn. No one will hand money from above."

Giving battle to fake news

Aleksandr Lukashenko requires decisive counteraction against insinuations thrown in the information space. He pointed out that, "I have noticed that the so-called fake channels, TV channels and the like have been snapping at the authorities at every occasion recently. They are trying to cause a scandal over underpaid money in some specific organisation, be it money for doctors or teachers and so on."

The President stressed that those who publish fakes do not care, for example, about doctors. They just want to create hype,

"These doctors are not the most important thing for them. The main thing is to hype up the story. This is not our way. But we have to be patient. We will deal with them. I have already told you: when the time comes, we will take action against them."

However, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that people should speak their minds, "A journalist, if he or she is a journalist, a blogger or someone else should write honestly, present the information in an objective manner rather than seek to exaggerate. If you give untrue information, you should be held responsible for that."

The new composition of the Government

Aleksandr Lukashenko intends to form a new Government before the election. He explained it this way,

"We always, after registering as the candidate for President, the incumbent President, announced a new composition of the Government before the election. It was a matter of principle so that people could see with whom we would work."

"Therefore, we need to prepare a new composition of the Government, to resolve the issue in the form of how the new Government will be formed before the election: either it resigns itself, or the President resigns. We need to think about it, but so that people understand that we are not moving away from this principle. Prior to the Presidential election, the final composition of the Government will be formed," he added.

All procedures completed

Belarus and the European Union have completed all procedures for the visa facilitation and readmission agreements to come into force

agreements will begin to operate on July 1st," the Foreign Ministry press secretary, Anatoly Glaz, said.

Belarus ratified the agreements back in April. The agreement on visa facilitation provides for reducing visa fees for Belarusians from 80 to 35 Euros. The decision to issue a visa or not will be made within ten days (30 days if additional background checks are required).

Many groups of Belarusian nationals will be able to get the visa free of charge and apply for multiple-entry visas with a long period of validity in a simplified order.

The cost of Belarusian visas for EU citizens will also drop to 35 Euros. Apart from that, the list of justifications for issuing free visas for non-commercial purposes will be expanded. The duration of stay of foreigners in Belarus will be dou-

bled from 90 days per year to 180 days.

Once the readmission agreement comes into force, Belarus and the European Union will have to readmit their own citizens, third-country nationals and stateless persons who do not meet or no longer meet the requirements to legally stay in each other's territory.

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The EU member states have approved agreements on visa facilitation and readmission between the EU and Belarus. Later, the Foreign Ministry received an official notification from the European Union on the completion of internal procedures for ratification of the agreements. "Accordingly, all the procedures have been completed. The

A brand familiar to everyone



The Head of State attended the Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ), where he personally found out about company developments, the range of manufactured modern equipment and the technological process of tractor assembly, while also talking with representatives of the labour team. Remarkably, this visit coincided with an anniversary: the plant was celebrating 74 years since the date of its foundation. Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised the particular importance of the enterprise, which is one of the calling cards of Belarus,

“First of all, I want to wish you all a happy birthday. This is a beautiful factory, the face of our country, this is a brand.”

Innovations and jobs

The President noted the correctness of the decision made in the country not to stop production in the current situation, “The rich West is already seeing wild unemployment. Thank God that we avoided this and did not close.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko was informed about the work of both the parent com-

pany and others included in the company — as well as plans for the development of production and ongoing developments, including in the field of precision farming. According to the Director General of MTZ, Vitaly Vovk, the company is moving forward, enabling them to develop an unmanned tractor by 2030.

The President drew attention to the fact that it is important not only to produce products, but also to do it efficiently, then there will be no problems with sales. The conversation also tackled the development of industries abroad. The Head of State was shown samples of the equipment being manufactured: in particular, new engines with an exhaust gas purification system manufactured for MTZ at the Minsk Motor Plant, energy-saturated and heavy duty tractors, alongside snow compaction and ice-filling machines.

The Head of State also visited the tractor assembly building, where he was informed about the production of various kinds of components manufactured at the enterprise under the import substitution programme.

On the 74th anniversary of the founding of the Minsk Tractor Works, Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the enterprise and talked with its employees

About principles

In a conversation with MTZ employees, Aleksandr Lukashenko shared his life principles. One of them is to always tell the truth, whatever it may be.

“Say whatever you think. But know what is the truth and do not insult anyone. Never insult anyone. Criticise me and others but do not insult me personally. The second thing is do not lie,” the Head of State said. “This is my principle: the truth, whatever it may be. Because you are promising (elections will be held, for example), and people will then think that he has promised something, and where is it... Here are two principles that I follow today,” noted the President.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also spoke about his position regarding the sale of state property. Some people are now offering to sell off state-owned enterprises and to direct the earned money for reforms. He underlined that general privatisation is not his policy, although he himself is not against the sale of state property. But

state property cannot be sold just like that: factories were created by teams of people, previous generations.

“The work of those who are no longer with us is invested here. How can we take it and sell it? For the sake of what, why?” the President asked. “Let’s try to work hard ourselves, so that the goods that you produce are in demand. The only requirement for you: if you will work poorly you will be poor, because the competition for your goods is enormous, you know that.”

In the end, the staff of the Minsk Tractor Works presented the President with a model of the BELARUS-4522 tractor. The tractor power of this model is 450HP and it is being currently tested at the factory. This will be the most powerful tractor manufactured by the Minsk Tractor Works. The presented model, said Aleksandr Lukashenko, will take pride of place in the Independence Palace.

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Minsk Tractor Works JSC is one of the ten global manufacturers of such equipment. About 90 percent of its tractors are exported. More than 15,000 people work at the plant, with another 7,500 people being employed in the company’s enterprises.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 10,000 tractors have been produced (33 percent up against 2019), export volumes have been maintained at the level of the previous year and exceeded \$120m for the holding. The company is carrying out systematic work to modernise its tractor range, aimed at improving operator comfort and setting up the production of tractors of the Stage V environmental standard for EU states. The development strategy of MTZ Holding until 2030 was developed and approved, which includes the development of production capabilities in Belarus and abroad.



Veljko Kovacevic

Highly appreciated

Outgoing Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Serbia to Belarus — Veljko Kovacevic — has made a big contribution to the development of bilateral co-operation with Belarus, said President Aleksandr Lukashenko as he met with the Ambassador

Veljko Kovacevic said at the beginning of the meeting, “Your finding time to receive me for a farewell visit is a great honour for me.” Aleksandr Lukashenko responded, “It may be a farewell visit as an ambassador. You can always come to Belarus as a visitor,” adding, “An increasing number of ambassadors are becoming our friends.”

The President also expressed his opinion about the participation of the Ambassador of Slovakia to Belarus, Jozef Migas, in the Victory Day celebrations in Minsk on May 9th which had ambiguous consequences for the diplomat. “You may know what the Ambassador of Slovakia did. It was a truly laudable gesture. Frankly speaking, I do not fully understand the position of the official Slovak leadership which allegedly criticised his action, dismissed the Ambassador or are considering his resignation,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The Head of State recalled that the Ambassador of Slovakia was raised in the family of a patriot, his father fought against the Nazis, was a partisan, and the diplomat spoke about it many times. “How can you criticise this?” asked the Belarusian leader. In his opinion, it is inadmissible to punish a person for such things. “This is the same as if the Serbian Ambassador came to a similar event and then would have been punished. We are a close people. How can this be right? We fought against Nazism to-

gether and today we are absolutely against it,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The Head of State explained, “That is why we are paying so much attention to the appointment of ambassadors, we want them to be our friends. We understand that any ambassador will watch over the interests of their country first. The ambassador working in Belarus should cement relations with Belarus.”

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, Belarus is interested in maintaining good relations with Serbia, and an ambassador should do his best to help establish these. “Therefore, I want you to tell my friend, the President of Serbia, that he needs to find an ambassador who will be as good as you were,” the Head of State concluded.

Addressing the President, Veljko Kovacevic said, “What you and the former president of Serbia, [Tomislav] Nikolic and the current President — Aleksandar Vucic — have done to bolster and advance Belarus-Serbia relations is of historic importance.”

Serbia is the only European country Belarus has signed a free trade agreement and a visa-free travel agreement with. In 2019, Belarus-Serbia trade totalled \$148.6m (100.4 percent rise against 2018), with exports accounting for \$80.6m and imports — for \$68m.

Importance of consolidation



The Ministerial Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) was held in the format of a video conference — attended by the Belarusian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei

The two sides exchanged views on the state of development of the international and regional situation and its impact on the security of the CSTO member states in the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, discussed the development of the CSTO peacekeeping component and its integration into the UN peacekeeping system, as well as the prospects for co-operation between the CSTO and the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation.

In his speech, Vladimir Makei gave an assessment of the current situation in the field of international and regional security. He stressed the importance of solidarity, partnership and joint consolidated actions of states and international organisations in order to effectively combat security challenges and threats, including in the biological sphere. He drew attention to the relevance of Belarusian initiatives that have a unifying potential and are aimed at building confidence and reducing tension in the military and political sphere: launching a broad dialogue to strengthen the architecture of international security and stability, forming a ‘digital

good-neighbour’ belt, and developing a declaration on the non-deployment of medium-and shorter-range missiles.

During the meeting, the foreign ministers of the CSTO member states adopted a statement on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War in order to prevent such catastrophes in the future. They called on the world community to take joint actions aimed at preserving the historical truth about the struggle to liberate the world from Nazism, stopping attempts to insult the memory of the fallen, condemning any form of ideology of hatred, extremism, discrimination on ethnic, racial or religious grounds. They also adopted a statement of commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, a statement of solidarity and mutual assistance in the fight against coronavirus infection (COVID-19) and a statement of support for the UN Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as approved a number of decisions aimed at improving the effectiveness of the CSTO.

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First class pellets



Pellet plant near Borisov

Vladimir Shlapak

By Maria Druk

Six months of work and almost \$7m of investment have yielded results: the pellet plant near Borisov was launched in early May. Since then, the first batch of over 700 tonnes of products has already been exported, to generate \$72,000. Overall, the plant's capacity envisages annual production of about 30,000 tonnes of pellets per year.

This production in the Borisov experimental forestry was established following the President's order: a year ago, there was an urgent issue of processing the remaining wood in the country, including that of low quality. One of the most effective solutions to this problem was the construction of pellet plants. The Forestry Ministry identified six sites near which potential raw material zones are located. Work has already been completed on four of them and the enterprises are in operation. The launch of two more sites is expected in the near future. The delays are due to the fact that there was no previous experience in designing pellet plants in

The total capacity of the six plants reaches 156,000 tonnes of pellets per year

Belarus until recently and only after the work was completed did it become obvious that the organisation hired could not cope with the task. It was necessary to urgently look for a replacement and start the project again from scratch. In addition, the commissioning work was delayed a little due to COVID-19 and closed borders: foreign specialists engaged in setting up equipment weren't able to arrive immediately. Catching up is in full swing now — owing to three-shift work.

"We'll finish the task by the set time," said Forestry Minister Vitaly Drozhzha.

The establishment of six pellet plants cost almost \$34m (equivalent) and it's now possible to additionally include up to 350,000 cubic metres of low quality wood and more than 120,000 cubic metres of saw-mill waste. The output will make 156,000



The Forestry Ministry has no doubt that pellets will enjoy high demand

tonnes of fuel pellets per year. By selling them, judging by the current price dynamics, forestry enterprises will be able to generate about \$20m in foreign currency revenue.

The Forestry Ministry has no doubt that there will be a demand for pellets: there are already contracts for the entire amount. They will continue to develop, because the annual volume of consumption of such products in the world exceeds 40m tonnes. The most active buyers are located in Western Europe. However, in the future, Asia will join.

Following Presidential instruction, the Forestry Ministry is building six plants for the production of wood fuel pellets to improve the efficiency of the use of forest resources. Four of these enterprises have already been launched on sites at the Klichev, Pruzhany, Novogrudok and Borisov experimental forestry enterprises. In the future, they will be joined by facilities in Zhitkovichi and Mozyr.

There is another benefit from construction of such factories: 75 people will be employed countrywide to receive good salaries. It is not surprising that, in some cases, the number of applicants exceeds the number of open vacancies several times over.

Interestingly, the Forestry Ministry has also acquired a seventh fuel plant, outside the plan: in the Kopyl experimental forestry. A non-operation facility producing straw pellets was bought out there to be revamped. As a result, the production capacity is about 15,000 tonnes per year.

According to Vitaly Drozhzha, the construction of pellet plants is a promising area, "This enables us to raise the entire unclaimed volume of raw materials, create a closed cycle of processing at each production and strengthen the financial condition of businesses. In the next two years, we will create another 5-7 plants with the same total capacity. Work is already underway to select regions and equipment suppliers and contracts are being signed with design organisations."

By Olga Korneeva

It is much easier to buy new clothes, choose a new refrigerator or buy products in an online store. Spending time on personal visits to a hypermarket and searching for the right thing is not the most pleasant occupation. Of course, for some people shopping is an integral part of life and a kind of ritual. However, 'salvation' is offered for those whose mood worsens when facing many shelves and crowds of customers and who start to panic in such a situation.

At present, e-commerce is actively developing — facilitated by the economic situation in the country, the desire of business owners to reduce costs and the growth of competition. As a result, entrepreneurs looking for new consumers, are coming up with marketing events and PR campaigns.

The number of online stores is growing rapidly. Inna Gavrilchik, the Head of the Consumer Protection and Advertising Control Department at the Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, said at a press conference that 23,289 online stores are now on Belarus' trade register and, over the past five years, their number has increased by almost 11,000. Most likely, due to the current growth of Internet delivery and sales, their turnover will increase significantly, but these figures will be discussed a little later. The balance of power between legal entities and individual entrepreneurs is approximately the same in terms of the number

Online trading

Number of online stores in Belarus almost doubled over the past five years

of online stores. As for the distribution of online stores by region, the leading positions are taken by the capital, second place is occupied by the Minsk Region — followed by the Brest Region.

seller's responsibilities and determine what data the consumer is entitled to. The website of an online store must contain information about the seller: its name, legal address, contact phone numbers



The advantages of online shopping are obvious: it is an opportunity to make a purchase without leaving home, in a short time to find out about a wide range of products offered on a number of thematic sites and, finally, to pay electronically. Online sales rules clearly define the

and working hours. In addition, the seller must post detailed information about the product, including its name, as well as information about the manufacturer, supplier, location, country of origin, price, payment and delivery terms.

Online stores try to make online pur-

chasing as comfortable and safe as possible for customers and have long used the technology of placing an order for the purchase of goods through the virtual 'basket': you select the product, put it in the basket, enter your data, specify the method of delivery, payment, additional services and — this way — the purchase history is formed and the buyer becomes protected. If it is necessary to return the goods or submit claims for faults, the consumer can easily prove who bought the goods, the cost of the goods at the time of sale and what information was provided by the seller.

The prospects for the development of e-commerce in Belarus are very promising. Social distancing in a complex epidemiological situation encourages online trading, and the acquired experience of doing business in crisis conditions is very valuable. There is everything necessary for the rapid development of e-commerce today: high-quality Internet services throughout the country, the growing digital literacy of the population, the economy inherent in Belarusians in the conduct of commercial matters, the compactness of the Republic — making it possible to deliver goods to any point in the country within a day. Belarus does not, in fact, lag behind global trends: online sales cover the world wide web more and more and the popularity of e-trading around the world is constantly growing. In some countries, such as China and the United States, at least 50 percent of all sales are online, with deals exceeding trillions of Dollars per hundreds of tonnes of cargo.

Happy birthday, deposits!

Oil-bearing sites in the Gomel Region confirm their prospects

New oil deposits have been discovered in the Gomel Region's Khoyniki District: as geologists note, in the central structural zone of the Pripyat trough

By Ruslan Proleskovsky

The first point of the route — the Izbynsk oil field — is located not far from the Rechitsa-Khoyniki highway. Drillers work the usual shifts and works can only be suspended here in the event of extremely adverse weather conditions. However, this rarely happens.

The well drilled here has confirmed the industrial oil content at a depth of 4,400 metres. This happened on the first Sunday of April, when Belarusian geologists celebrated their professional holiday. It's impossible to come up with a better gift!

“To date, this field has received an oil inflow with of 150 tonnes per day,” explains Piotr Povzhik, the Deputy General Director for Geology at Belorusneft. “At the same time, laboratory studies have shown excellent technological characteristics. The oil found here is light, has a high yield of light fractions with low sulphur content and viscosity. In general, this is a very significant result enabling us to continue working in this region. We have made sure that we are moving in the right direction.”

Even more extensive work has been carried out in the North-Omelkovshchina field located nearby. Noise coming from a drilling rig more than 60 metres high can be heard far away. A little further away there are trailers: the life of the drillers is equipped for the maximum possible comfort for field conditions. The well, with a backwall of about 3,000 metres, has been drilled since the beginning of April.

“The work is going faster than planned, we are well ahead of schedule,” Viktor Arkhipenko, the Head of the Svetlogorsk Drilling Department, says. “This speed is achieved thanks to the use of modern tools and high-performance

Oil discovered on the territory of Izbynsk field is light and has a high yield of light fractions with low sulphur content and viscosity



North-Omelkovshchina oil field in the Khoyniki District (from left to right): assistant drillers Dmitry Nazarenko, Ivan Meleshkin, Dmitry Prodanets, and driller Dmitry Kolotsey



pumping equipment. In addition, a number of tests were carried out in productive deposits, and good results were obtained. The field has confirmed its prospects, and I hope we will drill more wells here.”

According to preliminary estimates, the total reserve of deposits at the two fields exceeds 2.5m tonnes of oil. Apparently, this is not the limit. In the coming years, about a dozen more explorative wells are planned to be drilled in the Khoyniki District.

Recent times have been very busy for the geological operation of Belorusneft. The discovery of new deposits increases the prospects for the entire central structural zone of the Pripyat trough. In order to fully assess its resource potential, prospecting and exploration will continue in the coming years.

Belarusian oil is concentrated in the Pripyat oil and gas basin, which covers an

area of 27,000 square kilometres. The main area of deposits is located in the northern and central part of the trough: in the Rechitsa and Svetlogorsk districts. However, the situation may change. Now, for example, the southern zone is of interest, namely the Yelsk District where a new deposit was also discovered recently. Its potential is estimated at 20-30m tonnes of recoverable resources.

Exploration is a costly and lengthy process. It takes an average of three years from the beginning of field design to the drilling of exploration wells. Specific dates depend on the area and geological and physical conditions of the region — especially if the search is conducted in a remote, swampy or wooded area.

As of today, 79 oil fields have been discovered in Belarus, most of which are under development. By the end of the year, it is planned to produce 1,710,000 tonnes of valuable hydrocarbon raw materials. Simultaneously, a programme aimed at the search for new deposits — the major project in recent decades — is being carried out.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus receives IAEA equipment to assess the radiological threats associated with forest fires

The International Atomic Energy Agency has provided our country with equipment to assess the radiological threats associated with forest fires. The mobile



laboratory is equipped with instruments and tools for the radiation monitoring of air and the environment. It will help Belarus promptly respond to radiological threats due to forest fires in the Chernobyl exclusion zone. The mobile laboratory is capable of off-road operations. It is equipped with a portable air sampling device, a handheld gamma-spectrometer, a radiation monitor for environmental sample measurements, a soil sampling kit, personal protection garments, navigation and communication tools, an electric generator and a workplace with a computer and other appliances.

3rd Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine to be held in October

The plans were announced as part of the *Ukraine-Belarus: Economic Co-operation at Time of Global Challenges* online meeting organised by the chambers of commerce and industry of the two countries. The participants discussed topical issues of bilateral trade and economic co-operation, restrictions that have arisen due to the epidemiological situation, and anti-crisis measures taken to minimise the consequences of the decline in business ac-



tivity in the countries. Belarus is among the five major economic partners of Ukraine and, last year, the trade turnover — according to Ukrainian statistics — reached \$5.5bn. Imports of Belarusian goods to the Ukrainian market increased to almost \$3.7bn.

Belarus to revise national sustainable development strategy through 2035 in light of COVID-19

Implementation of joint projects and prospects for co-operation between Belarus and the UN were the focus of a video conference featuring the Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Republic, the National Co-ordinator for the Sustainable Development Goals — Anatoly Isachenko, the UN Resident Co-ordinator in Belarus — Joanna Kazana-Wisniowiecki, and members of the UN mission to Belarus. “The strategy has already been drawn up, but in view of the current global challenges, we will need to finalise some points,” Anatoly Isachenko stressed.

During the conference, it was noted that the results of achieving the SDGs in Belarus are tangible and significant and they are viewed positively by the international community.

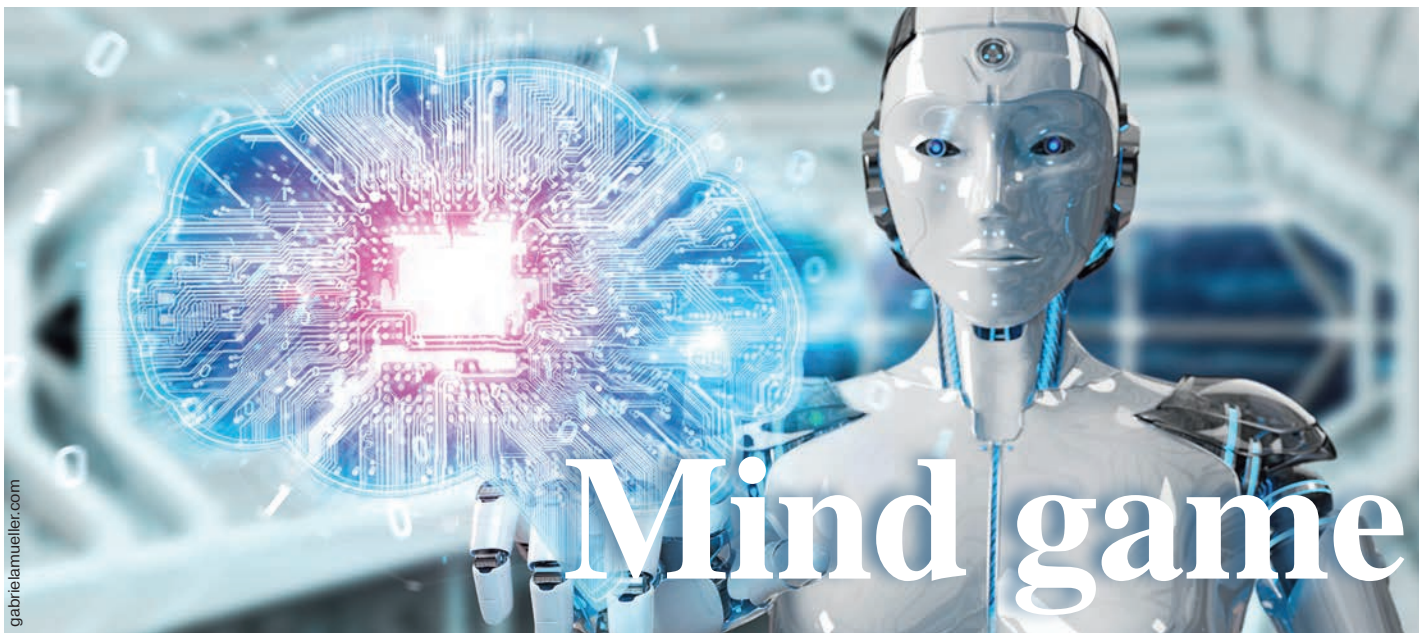


President signs Ordinance 'On Foreign Gratuitous Aid'

The document regulates the registration, taxation and use of such aid. The ordinance specifies the purposes for which this aid can be used: providing medical and social aid, supporting libraries and museums, providing sports gear and other socially important purposes.

Aid meant for these purposes will be exempt from taxes on the decision of the Belarus President Property Management Directorate. A special inter-agency commission will be set up to decide whether foreign aid can be used for other purposes and whether aid recipients can claim tax benefits.

The document will come into force three months after its official publication.



Developments for smart watches, a yoga instructor and computer vision technology are among the artificial intelligence startups of Hi-Tech Park residents

By Ilya Kryzhevich

Wide range of applications

We live in a time when chatbots can be easily confused with people and a voice assistant can order purchases for a week and arrange home delivery — without the host’s help. Artificial intelligence is increasingly entering our everyday lives, sometimes unnoticed, though significantly simplifying life and transforming it. Smart algorithms, machine learning and computer vision are used all over the world in various fields, from medicine to financial technology and the defence industry.

As the Hi-Tech Park says, over 800 of its residents are developing artificial intelligence (AI). This has also contributed to the Park’s recognition as a world AI centre.

In recent years, the Belarusian AI market has grown significantly, with healthcare startups widely represented. For example, Lung Passport is an intelligent system which enables users to diagnose lung disease by the sounds of their lungs. In turn, Flo is a digital tool that helps women detect health problems in time; this project attracted \$18m in investment. Developments by Rocketbody Technologies are also impressive: the innovative technology for smart watches aims to increase the efficiency of a human body during physical activity.

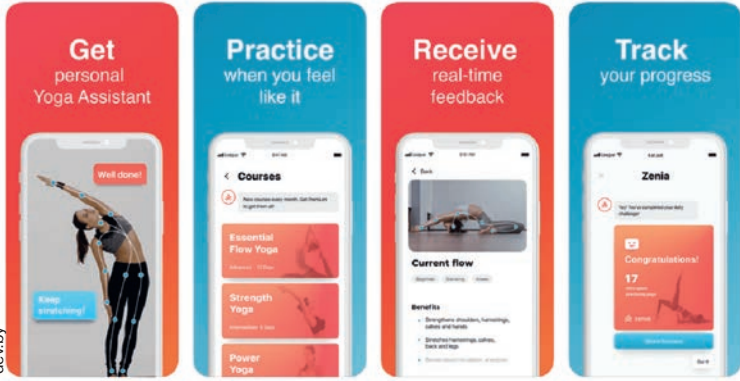
In the field of agriculture, there are also some interesting projects using AI solutions. For example, the OneSoil startup is developing a service for monitoring the state of acreage, forecasting and planning agricultural operations using artificial intelligence technologies. The development created by the One-Soil team enables farmers to significantly save resources. No less interesting is the project from Rozum Robotics, a manufacturer of innovative products in the field of robotics. The company is engaged in the development and production of collaborative robots based on their own components: bodyless motors and servomotors.

Interestingly, HTP residents not only promote their developments but also attract foreign projects. The latter appreciate our working conditions and the possibility of collaboration with companies working in related projects. Among the well-known names is Yandex.

Direction for investment

A special Bulba Ventures fund was created in 2018 to develop innovative IT startups in the field of AI and machine learning. As its team explain, the fund invests in startups at the pre-seed stage (when external financing is attracted) and seed (the investment stage that stimulates the exponential growth of the startup). The amount of investment varies depending on the project and its development stage. At the moment, the fund’s portfolio includes 5 startups: OneSoil, RocketBody, Vochi, Zenia, and Geros.

Vochi is a mobile video editor. The programme uses video segmentation algorithms and computer vision technologies. Each user can apply effects to individual objects in a video on their mobile device. Zenia is a personal assistant for yoga with the technology of recognition of movements. The product technology is based on computer vision algorithms and neural networks. In turn, Gero uses methods from physics to combat aging — the development of new drugs and algorithms for assessing age-related risks.



Developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) are conducted by over 800 HTP residents



OneSoil team’s development enables farmers to significantly save resources

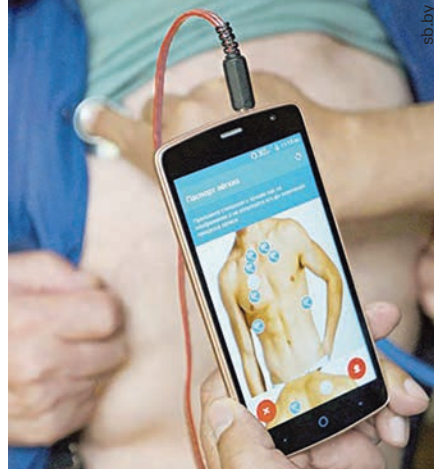
The fund enables startup companies working with AI to get direct access to technical and business expertise for project development. In addition, startups can count on support from direct partners of investors in the process of their work with the organisation. No less important is the fact that, thanks to working with an investment company, startups can become HTP residents.

Ideas ready to launch

Another positive aspect is that a wide range of HTP tools enables young AI startups to develop quickly: from idea to product creation. Roman Gromov, a co-founder of the AI-BION medical technical startup, says his team has managed to develop a platform in 5 months and is now able to compete with large businesses. “Before deciding where to apply our own AI developments, we analysed a huge number of hypotheses — to come to the conclusion that, in the current situation, digital pathanatomy is likely to become the most popular medical segment. As a result, we’ve focused on analysing medical histological images using the latest advances in artificial intelligence and computer vision,” he explains.

The project helps analyse a digital copy of a snapshot of human biomaterial obtained using specialised medical equipment — a histological scanner — and assists doctors in making the right decision. A huge image file with a size of several gigabytes and a resolution of hundreds of thousands of pixels, which is tens of millions of cells, is not so easy to analyse with the eyes of even the most experienced specialist and takes a lot of time. But for the application of artificial intelligence, this is the ideal environment.

“Our AI module helps doctors make more accurate and balanced decisions — primarily in such areas as oncology, diseases of the internal organs, and cytology. In



Lung Passport is an intelligent system which enables users to diagnose lung disease by the sounds of their lungs

fact, we can talk about developing our own medical decision support system. Thanks to the modules being developed, diagnoses will become more accurate. In addition, we have developed our own software platform — PACS: a system for storing and peer analysis of histological images. We provide doctors with the opportunity to work remotely on the same medical case, jointly annotate and discuss complex cases, make collective conclusions and accumulate and share experience. Doctors exchange opinions over secure communication channels. Now the platform is actively developing and is saturated with intelligent components,” Mr. Gromov states, adding that the startup is working closely with leading pathanatomy and forms the core of expert professionals in the field, “We liaise with leading medical institutions that focus on the topic and are currently working on testing solutions with the Children’s Cancer and Immunology Centre and the Department of Pathanatomy of the Belarusian State Medical University; we have jointly opened a laboratory for analysis and markup of medical images there. We are on the threshold of interaction with other Republican scientific-practical centres and laboratories.”

Digital pathanatomy is globally considered to be a relatively young discipline but it’s already well developed. In the local market, it is still developing on the basis of a single startup and does not have a competitive environment. In general, there are not many similar projects in the CIS but more are known in Europe and the USA. It is with the latter that domestic developers have to compete since it is in these markets that the greatest demand for such technologies is registered.

EXPERT’S VIEW

Vsevolod Yanchevsky, Director of the Hi-Tech Park Administration:

In recent times, the Hi-Tech Park has experienced a real explosive growth of projects in the field of artificial intelligence. Our HTP, and therefore Belarus, is turning into a serious regional centre for the development of AI technologies. I think that today no one in the world can accurately predict what role AI will play in the life of civilisation. However, it’s becoming increasingly obvious that this role will be comparable to the greatest upheavals in the history of mankind.

Under reliable protection

On May 28th, the command, personnel and veterans of the border guards celebrated their professional holiday — Border Guard Day

Even now, when the neighbouring countries have closed their corridors against mass movement, the work of our border guards is still intense. Border violators have their own lives: they come up with dozens of sophisticated ways to outwit the guards of the Belarusian borders, but in vain. Our correspondent got convinced of this, having got to know the realities of the work of the Brest border guards.

By Aleksandr Mityukov

Smoke over the Bug River

At the Kozlovichi international checkpoint near Brest, special attention is being paid to the state of health of carriers under current conditions. They are required to measure their temperature. Truckers, passing the necessary procedures, willingly make contact. A carrier from Latvia, Oleg Agafonov, maintains strict sanitary control, "Since the 1990s, I have been working in this area. Belarusian border guards have always been friendly. This is their peculiar feature! It is right that they seriously inspect drivers. In Europe, for example, there is no such controls at the border. Only maybe in Poland, though in public places there everyone must wear masks."

The shift supervisor of the border control department, Igor Shpilevsky, a hereditary border guard, is responsible for everything that happens at the checkpoint. This is the head centre to which all services are linked. Hundreds of signals come here every day to which it's necessary to quickly respond. The job is not easy, but the officer is used to it.

Up to 600 cars in both directions pass through Kozlovichi every day at the moment. The volume, due to coronavirus, has decreased, but, according to Aleksei Kuzmitsky, the Deputy Head of the Border Control Department, new functions have been added, "We inform the Interior Ministry who passes through and who remains in the country. Accordingly, we help employees of sanitary control points."

About adventurers and criminals

The outpost named after A.M. Kizhevato is the pride of Brest. Its outskirts just pass through the territory of the regional centre. The Head of the outpost, Dmitry Skarina, talks about some of the

According to the official representative of the Brest border group, Sergei Dmitriev, since the beginning of the year, there have been 34 attempts to illegally transfer material assets worth over \$120,000 across the border that have been stopped, while 3 weapons have been seized and one incident recorded related to illegal drug trafficking

tricks of illegal immigrants, who often use the Brest Fortress to implement their plans, "They try to blend into the crowd and pretend to be ordinary tourists. Even when they are being detained, they are persuasive, saying that they came to see the legendary citadel. In a recent case, a Ukrainian citizen tried to cross the Bug River during an oath ceremony by recruits. After the detention he tried to pretend to be a fisherman."

Border guards are hard to deceive. Violators make mistakes in small details and even modern technologies do not save them. Dmitry Skarina recalls a recent false tourist from Africa, "His vocabulary was weak. The squad asked for his mobile phone to talk through a Google translator, and saw the prepared phrases in Russian for communication with the local population: 'Where is the border', 'How to get to Poland', 'Please

do not tell the border guards about me'. Many illegal immigrants come into the view of surveillance cameras, whose number is increasing. However, the vigilance of sentinels and sentries cannot be discounted. Recently, a Russian citizen was detained, trying to break into France with her lover, whom she met on the Internet. But it is not only love and the search for a better life that pushes people to desperate actions. Real criminals also come

PRESIDENT'S CONGRATULATION

In the year of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory we recall that border guards were the first to take the blow. Protecting the Motherland's border today, you maintain the glorious traditions of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War as you are defending the security of the state. Border guard service is one of the most prestigious and responsible types of military service. This service is only for real patriots who know the true meaning of the words: loyalty and military duty.

I'm confident that thanks to considerable transformations in the border guard service, exceptional professionalism and constant combat readiness, the courage and bravery of border guards, our state and people are under reliable protection.

Special words of gratitude are addressed towards border guard veterans for their contribution to maintaining peace on Belarusian land.



Laying flowers at the Victory Monument on Border Guard Day



Artur Nozdrin while patrolling a section of the Belarus-Ukraine border

onto the radar, "There are those who are on the international or Russian federal wanted list. Not so long ago, a native of Chechnya was detained, who went to Europe and was wanted at home for possession and distribution of drugs..."

Good tradition

The service requires excellent physical fitness from the defenders of the outpost. With private soldiers Mikhail Rimashevsky and Yuri Lopatin, who entered the patrol, I only walked a little along the boundary, not the whole 10km distance and without being fully equipped or with a gun! The guys say that for them this is the order of the day. The most difficult thing, according to Mikhail, is the night shift, especially if they detain an intruder at dawn, "At six in the morning, a Russian citizen was detained. I was on patrol. On the hospital island, opposite the Berestie Museum, we found his backpack and began to look for traces. The intruder was found in a tree: he was sitting on top and hoped to jump over the barbed wire."

However, private soldier Aleksandr Yatchenko has a different function today. He is a sentry. It can be said that the face of the country guards a railway bridge leading to Poland. A soldier can be seen when driving along a bypass road that passes by an outpost. The border guard meets and escorts trains going to our neighbours. Locomotive drivers greet him and say goodbye to him: such a good tradition...

Museum open for all

Ancient weapons, numismatic rarities, jewellery, masterpieces of fine art, musical instruments, crafts and national costume: the *Rarities of the National Historical Museum* exhibition project is presented on the fence of Minsk's Chelyuskinty Park

By Irina Ovsepyan

70 large-scale banners feature many treasures of the museum, though its entire archive is plentiful enough to cover the whole city with pictures. There are genuine artefacts and these are the first that the project authors tried to present. Five branches of the museum have participated in organising the show: the Museum of Modern Belarusian Statehood, the Museum of Theatre and Culture History of Belarus, the House-Museum of 1st Congress of RSDRP, Belarusian Cinema History Museum, and the Museum of Nature and Ecology.

"We have long wanted to implement this idea," said the

Director of the National History Museum, Pavel Sapotko. "We are very happy that it's finally been made a reality. Our desire coincided with a difficult epidemiological situation, and it turned out that people didn't come to the museum, but the

whole range of Belarusian culture by presenting our museum collections. We have 58 of them, they are very rich, and we decided to briefly cover all topics — from precious metals and works of art to Belarusian ethnography and musical culture."

The project — authored by Oleg Lukashevich, Aleksandr Alekseev, Oleg Ladisov and Darya Ovchinnikova — is realised with support of the Culture Ministry and the Minsk City Executive Committee

museum went to the people. In my opinion, this is the safest project right now: it is accessible and does not involve a large crowd of visitors to the exhibition, which will be displayed for a year, and perhaps longer. Of course, it is very valuable for us to show the

History is presented here through theatre, music, cinema, and landmark events. For tourists, the exhibition will replace a fully-fledged guide, all information is available in three languages: see, admire, choose a pathway — which of the ex-



hibits would you like to see live. All the difficulties will be overcome sooner or later, the borders will be opened, and where should our nearest neighbours, exhausted by quarantine, go if not to calm and safe Belarus?"

"We also show the riches of our regions!" smiles Mr. Sapotko. "Take ethnography, for example. Each ethnographic region has its own tradition, its own language features, gastro-

nomics and variety of national costume. When the tension subsides, people will come to us: both Russians and guests from other countries. Moreover, there is now a great interest in the hinterland, because it is there, far from the capital, that a living culture is preserved: folk crafts, intangible culture — folklore and rituals. And our project can really be a guide to Belarus not only historical, but also modern."

INSIDE



New era in space travel

For the first time in history, NASA astronauts have launched from American soil in a commercially built and operated American crew spacecraft as part of NASA's Commercial Crew Programme

Two NASA astronauts have arrived at the International Space Station, nineteen hours after launching from Kennedy Space Centre in Florida last Saturday. NASA astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken made the trip on a private space vehicle designed, built and launched by SpaceX.

NASA is partnering with private companies like Elon Musk's SpaceX to ferry astronauts to the International Space Station.

"This is a dream come true for me and everyone at SpaceX," said Elon Musk, chief engineer at SpaceX. "It is the culmination of an incredible amount of work by the SpaceX team, by NASA and by a

number of other partners in the process of making this happen. You can look at this as the results of a hundred thousand people roughly when you add up all the suppliers and everyone working incredibly hard to make this day happen."

During their trip to the ISS, Hurley and Behnken tested the vehicle's control and life support systems. The two were even able to get a little sleep — pulling out sleeping bags and astronaut sleepwear for a few hours of shuteye in space. "It was actually a pretty comfortable night's sleep," said Hurley.

Crew Dragon is designed to dock autonomously to the ISS. Since this is a test flight of the spacecraft, Hurley and

Doug took manual control of the spacecraft near the station to test the vehicle's controls before letting the computer take over for the final docking sequence.

"It flew very well, very crisp," radioed Hurley after the manual test flight near the station.

Hurley and Behnken will spend up to four months on the station. The two trained for spacewalks at Johnson Space Centre before their flight. They join NASA's Chris Cassidy and Russian Cosmonauts Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner.

Once their mission is complete, Hurley and Behnken will return to Earth in the Crew Dragon capsule splashing down in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida.

Dinosaur asteroid's trajectory was 'perfect storm'

A clear picture is emerging of why the asteroid that struck Earth 66 million years ago was so catastrophic

The space object, which wiped out 75 percent of all species including the dinosaurs, hit the worst possible place on the planet and — according to new research — at the most lethal angle.

Investigations at the crater site, together with computer simulations, suggest the impactor dug into the crust at an inclination of up to 60 degrees. This exacerbated the climatic fallout.

We know that the target rocks, in what is now the Gulf of Mexico, contained huge volumes of sulphur from the mineral gypsum. When this material was thrown high into the atmosphere and mixed with water vapour, it produced a 'global winter'. And the angle of attack ensured this environmental crisis was intense and prolonged.

"At 45 to 60 degrees, the impact is very efficient at vaporising and ejecting debris to high altitude. If the impact happens at shallower or much steeper angles, the amount of material that's put into the atmosphere that can then have climate-changing effects is significantly less," explained Prof. Gareth Collins from Imperial College London. "It's evident that the nature of the location where this event happened, together with the impact angle, made for a perfect storm." The majority of plant and animal life on Earth succumbed to the challenging conditions.

Prof Collins' and colleagues' work is published in the journal *Nature Communications*. Prof. Collins is part of an international team that's been studying the anatomy of the crater associated with the calamitous asteroid strike.



Alluring tourists back

Trying to refill their empty beaches after the end of the pandemic some countries offer to split costs for tourists to fly in, as well as cover some expenses for accommodation and activities

Sicily's regional government is offering to subsidise holidays on the island for both domestic and international visitors in an effort to kickstart tourism after the coronavirus pandemic. News of the scheme came days before a statement from the Italian government that it expects borders to be open to tourists this summer.

A financial pot of 75m Euros of regional government money has been set aside to boost tourism following huge financial losses after the lockdown. Current plans include subsidising visitors' accommodation costs, offering one night of a three-night trip for free, or two nights of a six-day trip, as well as

vouchers for cultural and heritage activities. There have been reports that the funding may also be used towards paying for up to half of the cost of flights, but this has not yet been confirmed.

The battle to lure tourists to the Mediterranean is hotting up with Cyprus declaring it will go one step further than its competitors, footing the bill for anyone whose holiday is ultimately ruined by coronavirus. Lodging, food, drink, and medicine for both visitors that contract coronavirus and their families will be covered by the Cypriot government. Patients will only have to pay for their taxi ride to the airport and flight back home.

Ancient mosaic discovered

A beautiful and remarkably well preserved mosaic floor from ancient Rome has been discovered by archaeologists in northern Italy

The stunning discovery, made in the township of Negrar, north of Verona, comes almost a century after the remains of an ancient villa were found on the site.

Pictures of the floor posted by the town's officials show its intricate patterns and colourful detail, much of which has been preserved perfectly through centuries.

The floor was buried underneath a vineyard in the hilly region, officials said. They wrote that 'after countless decades of failed attempts', archaeologists had uncovered 'part of the flooring and foundations of the Roman villa located north of the capital, discovered by scholars over a century ago'.

The team's objective was to 'identify the exact extension and exact location of the ancient construction', they added in the statement online.

The town will now work to ensure the floor can be seen by the public, officials said, but they warned, "The result will not come soon and significant resources will be needed."

Ancient sites in Italy are starting to slowly reopen as the country comes out of its lengthy coronavirus lockdown. Shortly before the pandemic hit Italy and forced nationwide closures, the famed House of Lovers in Pompeii was reopened after 40 years following an ambitious restoration project.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Wonderful plant kingdom

From economists to ceramists: a children's hobby gave a Minsk woman a purpose in life



Instagram photo of Katerina Zhiznevskaya

By Irina Ovsepyan

‘Those who dream, live’ — the motto was chosen by ceramist Katerina Zhiznevskaya. From early childhood her own dreams and fantasies have been connected with Belarusian nature: the clay, from which she once sculpted toy figurines in the countryside, the healing herbs that she and her father collected while fishing at the River Pripyat. She carried the breath of a forest, a field, a flowering meadow in her soul all her life to one day completely change her seemingly accomplished career and become a free artist.

Katerina Zhiznevskaya’s quiet and vibrant workshop boasts plenty of curiosities: thin prints of wormwood stalks and blades of grass on warm glazed clay, wide dishes in the form of green cabbage leaves and small elegant ones like oak leaves. Until recently, the artist was — you won’t believe it! — an economist and successfully worked at a large company.

It’s always difficult to change a settled and established life, but, as Katerina says, in her case, fate itself brought her to the right point, though it took many years.

Leaves, herbs and natural colours — Katerina Zhiznevskaya has been inspired by native nature from her childhood



“In my first education, I’m a physical education teacher!” laughs Katerina. “Since childhood, I enjoyed sports and played basketball, we are still good friends with the guys from our school team and didn’t lose touch over the years. My second higher education is economic and I’ve worked for 18 years in the manufacture of cosmetics. There was a time when I left to build my own business, but then the children were born, and it is rather difficult to combine entrepreneurship with raising children. For the same reason I was only able to seriously take up ceramics two years ago: my daughters grew up, and I have now got some time for self-development.”

Katerina studied, mastered various techniques and searched for herself. Sooner or later, each artist faces the question: what will be their own style, unlike anyone else? Imprints of plants on soft pliable clay is one of the simplest things that almost all beginner potters try. But, according to fellow ceramists, it was Katerina Zhiznevskaya who managed to bring this process to perfection and now it is her trademark.

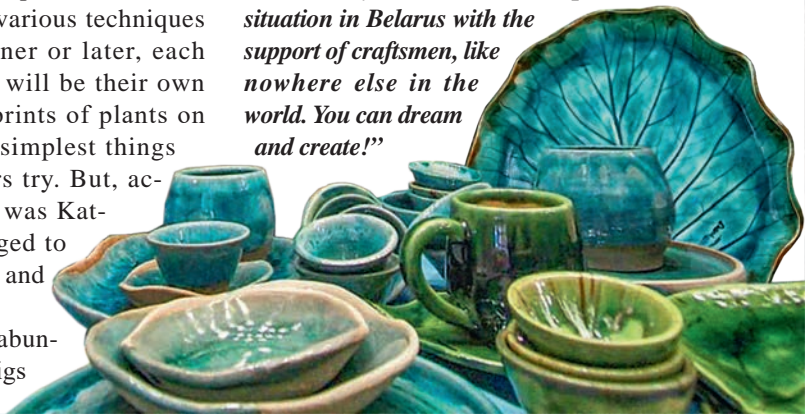
In her workshop there is an abundance of dried herbs, flowers, twigs and leaves. The master is en-

gaged in collecting and drying her unusual herbarium almost all year round, bringing interesting leaves from all trips and travels, without ignoring urban parks and squares, as well as garden vegetation and country flower gardens.

Large leaves of giant rockfoil, widely-ramified palms of chestnuts and maples, powerful horseradish leaves, lush dill, carved greens of ferns — everything can be used. Cornflowers and garden irises bloom on saucers and cups while the contours of goutweed’s umbrellas and yarrow’s blossoms show through, as do the soft lines of algae... Horse sorrel inspired the creation of sushi stands; friends asked her to make them for their cafe and long large boat-leaves couldn’t have come at a better time.

The most exciting moment for every ceramist begins when it comes time to open the furnace: what if it didn’t work out? Handmade work requires attention; this is not a well-established line in the factory, though sometimes defects occur even in factory production. Therefore, a master craftsman is responsible for each of their products.

“What pleases me most is the favourable regime that the state has created for artisans,” says Katerina Zhiznevskaya. “We have a unique situation in Belarus with the support of craftsmen, like nowhere else in the world. You can dream and create!”



Olga Giloveinya knows how to turn ordinary wool into a golden fleece

By Anna Naumova

If you happen to be in the town of Liozno in the Vitebsk Region, make sure you take the opportunity to visit the local House of Crafts where craftsmen are reviving traditions bit by bit. Among the craftsmen there is Olga Giloveinya — an artist, a craftswoman and a felt-maker who knows how to create a miracle from spun wool.

Felting burst into her life rapidly, like a fast train. The comparison is quite appropriate, because before that Olga worked as a train carriage hostess for ten years. She’d once been asked by her boss to supplement her railway uniform with a black beret — befitting the season. So, it began.

Olga tells us with a smile, “I had some black wool. I found a lesson on wet felting on the Internet and managed to do everything in half a day. My colleagues were amazed, exclaiming: ‘It’s impossible!’”

It is possible; you just need to have strong determination and a creative ‘streak’. Olga notes that physical strength is not the most important thing for a felt-maker, “A pair of rubber gloves is used for each product. Coarse wool needs to be sorted, washed, combed and laid out in ‘lush clouds’, so that the layers fall one on top of the other. The main tools are special brushes, rolling pins, an old smoother, water, soap, film, calculator, paper and pen. It’s impossible to do it without calculations, because you need to know the possible shrinkage.”

Clever felting with wool

As long as she remembers, Olga has been a needlewoman. Her grandmother embroidered beautifully, while her mother headed a Skilful Hands club at the school. After graduation, Olga entered the School of Light Industry in Vitebsk and then worked at a garment factory but returned to Liozno due to housing problems.

skill with others. Such pictures are the first thing that children try in the club (in order to understand the technique). Looking at the soft and comfortable items, I wonder if anyone can do felting. If they want to, then yes. This winter, for example, a ‘foreign’ pupil attended classes — Kirill Bogomolov, a farmer from the Smolensk Region. Togeth-

close to such works: with history. ‘Magerka’ hats and those with ear-flaps, shawls and overcoats: all are beautiful, warm and quite ‘wearable’. Speaking about ‘magerka’ hats, Ms. Giloveinya smiles and intrigues us saying that the hats could be removed in only two cases, “Before going to bed and in front of a master. From time to time people want to buy one of our felted women’s overcoats with side collars. Its collar is not fur, but fantasy. The design was invented by ourselves.”

According to Inessa Samusenko, the Head of the branch of the House of Crafts, ‘a new collection of winter traditional clothes will be released that will include manually felted men’s headgear from Ms. Giloveinya. Creativity is guaranteed.’

The Internet helps promote the items, as well as a creative approach. How can you not smile, when you click on the hashtag #шерстьлюблюкакмоль? There is a demand for felted hats and mittens, scarves and baktuses, bags and beads, including among Russians.



Anton Stepanishchev

It’s Olga’s fourth year in the House of Crafts. She is engaged in the creation of traditional folk costumes while also leading a felting club, called Sherstyanika. The original name is a mix of ‘sherst’ (wool) and ‘zemlyanika’ (wild strawberry). The juicy berry is the emblem of the region and one of the favourite motifs of the craftswoman. Her eye-catching items include elegant brooches, toys, charms and even pictures. Wool painting is a separate topic that Olga Giloveinya has mastered in just over one month but now she is happy to share her

er with his family, he lives in the border Rudnya District and is a frequent visitor to Liozno. He saw the announcement of the felting club accidentally and dropped in. He tried to immerse himself and mastered the basics and also presented a large bag of wool from his own sheep to our House of Crafts — enough to last a long time.

“Domestic wool is rare today, like the golden fleece. We use it only for authentic things and take the wool offered in stores for the remaining items,” Olga explains.

In the exhibition hall we come up

Olga Giloveinya writes wonderful poems. She is a participant and diploma winner of many competitions, including those held in Russia. Olga dedicated her ‘Hugging the Sky’ collection of verses to her father Nikolai Aleksandrovich and his dream of becoming a pilot.



Braslav Lakes National Park. Slobodka village near Lake Potekh.



Lilac flowering in Central Botanical Garden

Time to go to a virtual picnic

By Kristina Khilko

Become the lord of the lakes

Dunes, pine trees and the snow-white sails of yachts gliding on the water create a sea-like landscape but it's actually Lake Drivyaty. Those coming here can see the sandy bottom and watch the fish through the transparent water — even in the deepest places. There are about sixty such lakes in Braslav, the centre of the Braslav Lakes National Park, and, in summer, it becomes the resort capital of Belarus.

The local city beach hosts concerts and festivals — including the famous *Viva Braslav* musical project. Those wanting privacy and tranquillity can choose from dozens of surrounding lakes, where no one else will be seen. It's even better to go to an island like Robinson Crusoe. The most suitable point to appreciate the beauty of these places at a glance is Mayak Mountain, which offers a unique view of the pearl necklace of the Braslav Lakes.

Where to watch: braslavpark.by/flash/cb_nature/index/cb-nature.html

Appreciate a Martian landscape

Yelnya Nature Reserve makes tourists fall in love with it from the very first second. From the heights of the helicopter which sometimes take tourists to remote parts, the swamps resemble mysterious Martian landscapes.

Yelnya is a nesting place for rare birds such as the white partridge and white-tailed eagle. In autumn, when the birds migrate, it turns into a 'transit hub'. Thousands of cranes come here to refresh themselves and gain strength before the long journey to the south. This is a 'golden time' for photos and bird watching.

In May, tourists are invited to travel along special routes laid out among the impassable swamps for the sake of blooming beauty-fluff. Small snow-white balls seem to cover the marshes with a snowy blanket in spring. Dwarf birch and cloudberry — which are not typical for Belarusian latitudes — grow nearby...

Where to watch: yelnypark.com/about-the-project

Get from spring to autumn

A virtual tour to the Central Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in Minsk is not boring. Those tired of looking at the flowering rhododendrons might click the mouse and find themselves walking along the snow-covered paths along the lake. After admiring the spring tulips and hyacinths, they can

Summer is coming and it's time to prepare new travel routes. While it's impossible to get out for 'exploration', virtual tours to Belarusian parks and reserves are available.



Upland Yelnya swamp is a unique natural place that appeared 9,000 years ago. A great number of lakes with scenic islets have merged into it.



Central Botanical Garden



Tourist complex Krasny Bor

go back to the 'golden autumn'. Actually, it's better to 'walk' according to the season. The landscape is especially beautiful in May and early June, when everything is surrounded by delicate greenery, fruit trees and lilacs are in bloom. The Garden boasts a collection of the most diverse varieties of lilac in different shades.

Lovers of the exotic would definitely appreciate the only greenhouse of citrus plants and a lemonary in Belarus. The Botanical Garden brings together more than ten thousand plants from all over the world. Visitors like to take photos among the tropical and subtropical 'newcomers': cacti, agaves, eucalypts, bamboo, palms, cypresses, magnolias and coffee bushes. Moreover, a bottle tree, from the sunny island of Madagascar, can surprise anyone joining this tour.

Where to watch: atmosfera.by/all/bg.html

Listen to pushcha nightingales

Belovezhskaya Pushcha is the oldest and largest forest in Europe; it covers half a million square kilometres. Many trees are true old-timers — being 300-400 years old.

It is best to enjoy the fascinating melody of the pushcha in spring: nightingale concerts are in full swing now.

A virtual path will lead to the estate of Father Frost, in the heart of the National Park. He accepts guests at any time of the year, though he changes his clothes: instead of the usual winter fur coat, he might put on a light kaftan and straw headdress. There is lots to see when visiting the wizard: wooden houses decorated with openwork carvings sparkle with bright lights in the evenings, creating a special atmosphere.

Where to watch: npbp.by/360/belovezhskaya-pushcha.html

Follow the tracks of a forest giant

Hunting traditions in Belarus date back more than one hundred years, and the forest lands surprise with their diversity. However, while it is not the season, anyone can investigate the Krasny Bor tourist complex, while 'wandering' through the dense forest. In mid-May, the hunting farm celebrated its 22nd anniversary. Over the years, deer, mouflons and fallow deer have lived here and the auroch is undoubtedly viewed as the king of the Krasny Bor forests: about two hundred of the forest giants live here at present. Participants of a virtual tour can walk along animal trails and get acquainted with the habitat of the largest forest residents. The height of an adult auroch reaches 2 metres and its body length is more than 3 metres; the animal weighs around a tonne. It's a little scary to face a giant like that but watching from the screen is a different matter.

Where to watch: krasnybor.by/3d-tur/

Rushing into history

BATE wins Belarus' Football Cup for the fourth time in its history

By Tatiana Pastushenko

In the final match of the Cup — in which Borisov's team played against present champions Brest Dinamo — BATE fans put a 'High Time to Get Back What Belongs to You!' banner at Minsk's Dinamo Stadium. The recent match between the two teams in decisive Cup matches was already the third: previously, BATE failed to beat Dinamo in the national Cup finals, twice losing in matches for the trophy. However, this time, everything looked different: BATE returned the favour, winning the tense match that lasted for over two hours.

Even before the opening whistle, the match promised to be interesting. BATE — though not beginning the season confidently — managed to gain momentum and, after an eight-match losing series, captured a leading position in the championship. The season was even more difficult for the Brest footballers: in ten matches, Dinamo won only four times. On the eve of the Cup finals, the teams held a 'dress rehearsal' in a 10th round match: in Brest, BATE beat the home team with a score of 3:1.

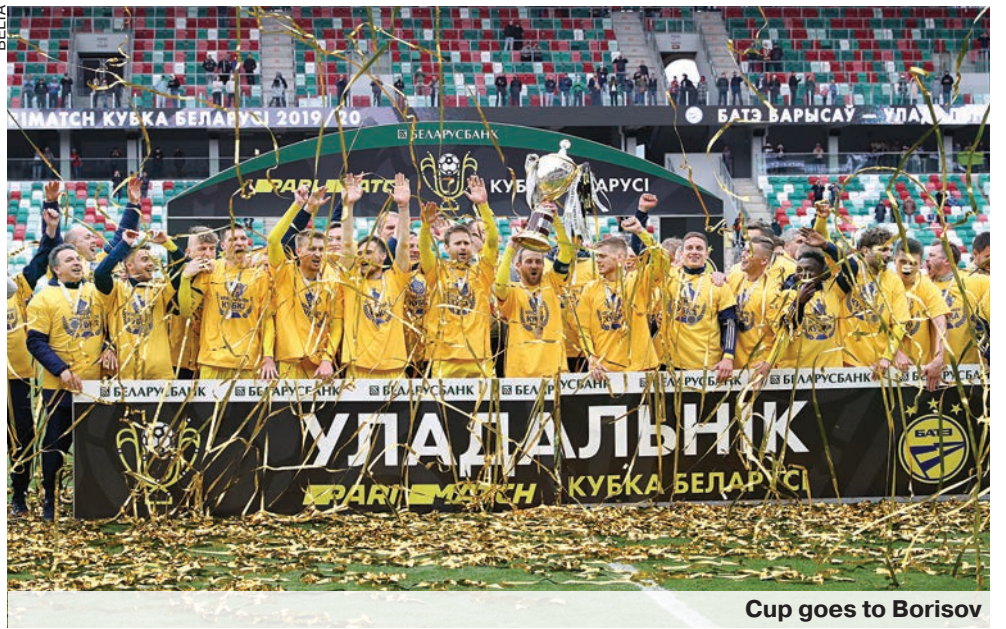
In the finals, the fight was no less persistent. The stadium was full of fans, though only 25 percent of all possible tickets went on sale. Despite the fact that the match ended with the score of 1:0 in favour of BATE, hardly any of those present regretted that they'd decided to spend a Sunday evening with football.

The match for the trophy was full of emotions: warnings, injuries, lively conversations and unrealised scoring chances. To decide the Cup winner, the teams didn't have enough regular time and needed to play two extra-times. The match could have gone to a penalty shootout, but Zakhar Volkov managed to put in a winning goal in the 121st minute.

"It's vexing to lose in the last minute," the head coach of Brest's players, Sergey



Kovalchuk, said after the match. "With an equal game, BATE was a little luckier. However, we told the guys they did well; they simply failed to figure it out in the last moment and conceded a goal. We lost to a good opponent, the leading club in the country, so I think we shouldn't make a tragedy out of this defeat."



Cup goes to Borisov

For BATE, the current title of Belarus' Cup holder is the fourth in its history and, after this victory, Borisov footballers have become record holders for the number of trophies won

we remembered Anatoly Kapsky [the founder and head of the club who passed away in 2018] and dedicated this victory to him. As for the game, it was hard mentally after playing in the championship, and physically it was not easy to recover after such a tense match."

Had Volkov not scored in the last minute of extra-time, the result of the match could have been very different. Alshevsky did not hide the fact that the team hadn't work out a penalty shootout plan for the final and didn't even talk about it, thinking that the match should be solved in full time. His team managed to finish off their opponents, although some of the referees' decisions caused a heated discussion among fans and players, the result is unchanged: the Cup went to Borisov.

After the match, Kirill Alshevsky spoke not only about its moments. For him, the victory in the national Cup was the first title won as head coach of BATE. "I am glad that we've returned the trophy to the club. I love my club, I grew up in it. I'm doing my job. Given the pressure that comes from being a relative of Anatoly Kapsky, I feel better now. The pressure comes from inside. I understand that the club that my uncle created is in my hands and we mustn't waste it," he said.

Professionals in a virtual arena

Professional athletes participate in virtual basketball tournament for the first time in the history of Belarusian eSports

By Arina Novikova

The bronze medalists of the 2nd European Games — Maksim Lyutch, Andrey Rogozenko and Natalia Dashkevich, as well as the frontman of the national team of Belarus — Aleksandr Semenyuk — fought for the champions' cup.



Tournament participants Aleksandr Semenyuk, Andrey Rogozenko, Maksim Lyutch and Natalia Dashkevich

Maksim Lyutch won, beating Aleksandr Semenyuk in the semi-finals and Andrey Rogozenko in the finals.

While real competitions are suspended, basketball players were able to demonstrate their skills in virtual arenas and determine the best in an online tournament. The cyber tournament was organised on the initiative of the Belarusian Basketball Federation and the Belarusian Computer Sports Federation. Technical support was provided by the eSports organisation — Pavaga Gaming.

ARENA

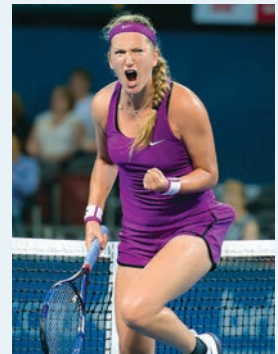
President's Sports Club sums up results of its work over 5 years



A general meeting of the club was held at the NOC headquarters, focusing on the election of the management team. The current Chairman of the Central Council of the President's Sport Club — Dmitry Lukashenko — was re-elected for a new term. The Central Council also includes Sergey Bulygin, Anatoly Varivonchik, Andrey Karpovich, Marina Lobach, Viktor Lukashenko, Aleksandr Moshensky, Sergey Safaryan and Oleg Shepel. Another key issue of the event was summing up the results of the club's work and defining the organisation's activities for the next five years. As it was noted in the speech of the Head of the organisation, it is planned to further improve the work to solve state-important tasks set for the club, to actively participate in the organisation and holding of sports and mass events in Belarus. The President's Sports Club also intends to expand international relations in order to create a positive image of the Republic of Belarus and strengthen its position on the international sporting arena.

Azarenko to play at tournament in USA

Former world number one tennis player — Victoria Azarenko — plans to take part in the Credit One Bank Invitational in Charleston, the USA. The event which will begin on June 23rd will feature 16 players. Apart from Victoria — currently ranked 58th, Charleston will welcome world number four, Sofia Kenin of the USA, Canada's Bianca Andreescu (6th in WTA), USA's Madison Keys (13), Alison Riske (19), Sloane Stephens (37), 2016 Olympic champion Monica Puig (90) from Puerto Rico, and others. The players will be divided into two teams to play 16 singles matches and eight doubles contests. The tournament will be played without fans.



World Anti-Doping Agency to increase the number of doping tests

Representatives of the organisation call the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic and isolation of athletes the reason for the intensification of the fight against banned drugs in sports. World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) believes that these factors may have contributed to the use of doping, but violations can be determined after comparing the results of tests with biological passport data and the results of previous samples. As noted in the Agency's statement, the reason for studying the issue was the concern of many athletes and coaches about the reduction in the number of doping tests during the quarantine period.



SPORT



Pavel Kurmin

Photo of the week

Tsna reservoir in Minsk

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

June 5th is the World Environment Day. It was announced in 1972 at the 27th session of the UN General Assembly. The date was chosen to be the start of the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 (Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment). Each year, the day is held under a particular motto. The topic for 2020 — *Time for Nature* — is devoted to the conservation of biodiversity: an urgent and significant problem.



On June 6th, 1950, Aleksei Dudarev was born (in the village of Kleny in the Vitebsk Region's Dubrovno District) — a Belarusian playwright, theatrical figure and Honoured Artist of Belarus (1991). Short and feature films — *Neighbours* and *White Dew* — were staged based on his scripts. He is an author of the plays *The Evening*, *Privates*, *The Black Lady of Nesvizh*, *At Twilight* and others. He is also a laureate of the Lenin Komsomol Prize of Belarus (1982, 1984), the USSR State Prize (1985) and the 'For Spiritual Revival' Award (2000).



On June 6th, 1895, Nikolai Shchors (1895-1919) was born — a legendary commander of the Civil War. In 1918, he was the squad leader in the battles against German troops, then the commander of the Bogun regiment, of the 1st Ukrainian and 44th rifle division brigade in the battles against the Petlyura and Polish troops. Streets in many Belarusian cities are named after Shchors. During the Great Patriotic War, his name was assigned to 3 partisan brigades and 16 partisan detachments operating in the occupied territory of Belarus.

June 6th is the Russian Language Day. It was announced by the UN in 2010 and is celebrated on the birthday of the great Russian poet A.S. Pushkin as part of a programme to support and develop multilingualism and cultural diversity. The Russian language is one of the largest languages in the world, being the most widespread of the Slavic languages and occupying a place in the top ten world languages in terms of the total number of speakers. Along with the Belarusian language, Russian is the state language of the Republic of Belarus.



On June 6th, 1945, the Brest State University named after A.S. Pushkin was set up, then called a teacher's institute. In 1949, the Institute was named after A.S. Pushkin to mark the 150th anniversary since the birth of the poet. Today, the Brest State University named after A.S. Pushkin is the largest educational institution in the Brest Region, alongside a centre for research, cultural and educational life in western Polesie.



On June 8th, 1920, Ivan Kozhedub was born (1920-1991) — a Soviet fighter pilot, distinguished ace of the Second World War, air marshal and three times Hero of the Soviet Union (awarded twice, in 1944 and 1945). During WWII, he was a squadron commander and deputy regiment commander in combat aviation. He took part in 120 air battles and shot down 62 aircraft. He developed a number of new techniques and methods of conducting air combat. The streets in Mogilev and Rogachev are named after him.



June 8th is the World Oceans Day. It is celebrated in accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution of

February 12th, 2009. Oceans are the lungs of our planet, providing most of the oxygen needed for our breathing. They occupy three quarters of the Earth's surface and contain 97 percent of water reserves.

On June 9th, 1960, the Belarusian State Archive-Museum of Literature and Art was founded — a unique research institution that identifies, collects, stores and popularises documents on the history of Belarusian culture. The archive museum boasts documents and materials on the history of literature, fine art, theatre and music of Belarus from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day. It stores the personal archives of the writers A. Adamovich, M. Bogdanovich, Y. Bryl, V. Bykov, V. Korotkevich, as well as archives of the unions of writers, composers, journalists, theatrical workers and many others.

