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INTERNATIONAL

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Yegor Yermaltitskiy

Valery Barashkov — the first and only teacher in the history of Belarus who was awarded the People's Teacher of Belarus title, the Order of Labour Glory 3rd class, Nadezhda Krupskaya Literacy Prize and a prize from the Special Fund of the President of the Republic of Belarus — a delegate of the 7th Belarusian People's Congress

# Time has chosen us!

The major political event of the year — the 7th Belarusian People's Congress (BPC) — has taken place in Minsk. For the first time, this veche [popular assembly] has been held in a new constitutional status. From now on, the BPC is constitutionally endowed with the right to make decisions that will determine the strategic development of Belarus for years to come. Representatives of different social groups, ages and professions from all regions of the country have gathered in the capital to participate in the high-profile forum. → **2-3**





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On the first day of work, the delegates approved the Congress' agenda, and elected members of the BPC Presidium consisting of 13 people.

*As a result of a secret ballot, President Aleksandr Lukashenko was elected Chairman of the Belarusian People's Congress of the seventh convocation, and President's Aide Aleksandr Kosinets was elected Deputy Chairman.*

On the second day of the forum, the BPC delegates unanimously decided by open vote to approve the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Belarus.

The Belarusian Head of State emphasised the importance of the current moment,

*"Our Motherland has no one but us. Only we know what the future of Belarus should be, what our country should be like, and how to make it stronger. Only we know this, and no one else! Yes, it has been quite a challenge. It will not be easier, either. Yet, it will be interesting because we have chosen a strong, sovereign, independent, peaceful Belarus. We must withstand in this complicated and contradictory time. We must do it. The time has chosen us!"*

## Highest representative body of people power in the country

Aleksandr Lukashenko made a report to the delegates and guests of the forum on the current situation in the world, the country's economy, existing challenges and threats. "Today's event actually divides the history of the country's political life into before and after. This is an evolutionary movement and development," the President stressed. "We are okay with the fact that Western liberals dislike our political model. For our part, we do not reject progressive forms

of Western European democracy. We integrate them into our political system, our culture, our worldview as long as they do not contradict our principles and values. The Belarusian People's Congress plays the role of a mechanism for merging long-standing traditions with global political practices."

Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out that the BPC had largely determined the state structure of Belarus for nearly 30 years. The first BPC actually saved our country. All five-year socio-economic development programmes were implemented only after approval by the BPC delegates. According to the Head of State, the time has come to reach a new level,

*"Now the Belarusian People's Congress approves all the main programme documents that determine the country's economic development and security — in short, all strategic issues. The BPC has received exclusive powers to suspend the decisions of any body or official. Thus, the Congress will become a protective buffer against possible dangerous processes that run counter to the interests of society and the state."*

## Who gets rich from wars

The President drew attention to the deteriorating situation around the world — the West continues to foment conflicts and wars, undermine the economic situation of undesired countries and stimulate migration crises. "Western multinational businesses, mainly Anglo-Saxons, have enriched themselves significantly in recent years. But have Washington and London become stronger in terms of political reputation and authority in the international arena over the years? No. On the contrary, we see how the global image of once truly influential powers is collapsing. The economic collapse is not far off. Experts are already talking about the precariousness of the

global dollar pyramid. Wars for money have never made anyone stronger. It is the creditors of wars that enriched themselves either by selling weapons or by driving countries into debt, as is the case with our fraternal Ukraine today," the Belarusian leader stressed.

*"Everyone understands that Ukraine today is a testing ground where the fate of the future world order is partly decided. In fact, the largest nuclear powers are already fighting on its territory, albeit indirectly. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian government has come down to a deal with the West, trading weapons for the lives of Ukrainians. It is painful to see this... New attempts to crush us — Russians, Belarusians, Slavs — to destroy the sense of national pride and our culture have united us and motivated to restore our former power."*

The Head of State called on everyone to honestly answer the question — is there any real benefit from the West controlled supranational structures that have mushroomed all over the world? "The international law, the OSCE, the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and others have not been able to prevent a single bloody conflict, although that is their main task," Aleksandr Lukashenko underlined. "The European Peace Facility allocates funds for the war in Ukraine. Just think about it: money is in short supply, meanwhile the peace foundation sponsors the murder of people!"

## On the new world order

The President has once again urged the international community to think carefully about the consequences of the current confrontation imposed by the West,

*"The outcome will be dramatic if the confrontation is not stopped. Apparently, it will not save the previous world order. If the West wants to remain part of the*

*new world order as a centre of power, it should learn from Ancient China. The community with a shared future for mankind is an example of unity of nations without prejudice to national cultures, ideologies, and sovereignties, without suppression or a sense of superiority, without saber rattling. With the power of wisdom and intellect. The draft of a just world order proposed by China is viable and is very close to us, Belarusians."*

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the USA cannot agree with the fact that China is emerging as the world's top economy. America tries to speak with China from a position of strength out of habit. However, blackmail is a weak argument, the Belarusian leader is convinced. "The world has already changed, but not in the way those beyond the ocean dreamt of. The United States, having launched a brisk attack simultaneously on all those who disagree with it (from Belarus to North Korea, including Russia, China, Iran and others) has realised that it made a mistake by uniting disobedient Russia and its main enemy — China," the Head of State emphasised.

## Success formula for integration and co-operation

Along with that, the President of Belarus spoke in support of true mutually beneficial co-operation and integration unions, the ones that respect national sovereignty, build interaction between participants through dialogue, and search for compromise. The Head of State specified in this regard, "Security should be equal and common to all countries of the planet. I agree with experts who claim that co-operation and security systems can and should be built within the framework of the continent — Greater Eurasia.

*I am absolutely sure that our time-tested allied relations with Russia will be an*

*example of a peaceful and constructive agenda. Strong sovereign states make a strong union. This is a success formula for any integration. Our union building is a model of the union of sovereign nations. This model has all chances to succeed and draw new members.*

The Eurasian Economic Union also has solid resource, economic and transit potential. It may well claim technological and intellectual leadership in the region. The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, which Belarus is expected to join as a full member in the summer, is gaining weight. There is no doubt that the SCO and BRICS are the world's progressive majority. This is a challenge to the ideology of global unification."

## Time of the strong

Aleksandr Lukashenko underscored the fact that Belarusians had gone through a very interesting path together to form their national democracy, including through six sessions of the Belarusian People's Congress and four national referendums. We have created the backbone of civil society — strong and patriotic society.

"The time of the strong is coming. Not aggressively strong, but strong in spirit. Real power is measured by the desire to become better, to make the world a better place, to accept its national, religious, and ideological diversity, and to help those who are weaker. This is how we, Belarusians, understand the strength of the nation," the President stated. "We must be strong in order to safeguard peace in our country, maintain traditions, and preserve the spiritual core.

*We must be strong to be able to defend the weak, to help everyone who needs our help. We must be strong to be heard in the international political arena. Our voice is heard in the world and it will continue to be heard."*

# ‘Independence must be preserved. Preferably without war’

These words of the President of Belarus were addressed not only to the delegates of the 7th Belarusian People’s Congress (BPC) but also to all residents of the country

**The agenda of the second day of the BPC meeting included the approval of the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine. These are fundamental documents regulating the government’s approaches to ensuring national security in various spheres, taking into account geopolitical changes in the world and the use of military force in response to the existing challenges and threats.**

The President of Belarus, BPC Chairman Aleksandr Lukashenko described in detail the military and political situation unfolding in the Eastern European region:

- The major real risk is obviously created by Ukraine, which is a hotspot in the region. Washington is making every effort to drag Belarus into the conflict, and to launch a mechanism to involve other countries into it, aiming to weaken the Western and Eastern European regions.

- The allocation of \$60 billion by the United States of America for the war is the most important factor in the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. The allocation of ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile System) long-range surface-to-surface missiles poses a particular danger. There are drone strikes at the Russian territory targeting oil refineries and airfields, some influential people are put on a clock, as bandits say. All these actions on the part of Ukrainians indicate that the war is escalating.

- I am aware of the moods of Ukrainian military men — they are tired of this war, they have had enough. However, they cannot take independent action, because behind President Zelenskyy, who wants to fight ‘to the last Ukrainian’, there are NATO troops, the entire Western European bloc and the United States of America. The situation is very serious. I think, if the parties do not negotiate now, Ukraine will lose its statehood over time and may cease to exist.

- No one wants to fight today. Therefore it is necessary to move towards peace. The United States has succeeded in demonising Moscow and Minsk as enemies. Washington is steadily pushing aggressive narratives against the Belarusian and Russian states, turning up the degree of NATO’s hostility towards our countries. With the enlargement of the alliance into Finland and Sweden, Washington and Brussels continue to form a belt of unfriendly states around the Russian Federation. Other European countries are in line to join NATO. We know their goal. According to their plan, everything should be set on fire along this line.

- The people keep asking what the West and the USA want. I reiterate: they want to drown Russia in a war, tear it away from the emerging alliance with China. This union does not exist yet, but it is emerging. The circumstances have devel-

oped so that Russia and China need to be together. The US has understood this and it wants to drive a wedge.

- The US wants to kill several birds with one stone — to weaken Russia and overload Europe, weakening it as well. Afterwards, Americans will move on to deal one-on-one with China in the Pacific Ocean, involving, first of all, India (England is already there), Australia, Ukraine and South Korea in this confrontation.

- We do not threaten anyone with nuclear weapons. We are not attacking anyone, either. Yet, the West and the US know very well that if they just dare to set foot on the territory of Belarus, they will receive an instant response with all kinds of weapons from us as well as from the Russian

are planning to upgrade tactical nuclear weapons in other countries, as well. In the future, tactical nuclear weapons may be deployed on the UK territory.

- In the second half of the year, the White House plans to deploy dual-capable F-35 fighter jets certified as nuclear weapon carriers at the advanced Royal Air Force (RAF) base in Lakenheath. If they do not want escalation and are against the use of nuclear weapons, why are they doing this?

- The objectives of the events and the nature of the tasks underway, which are scheduled until the end of May, indicate that the West considers our region as a potential theatre of military operations. They have labelled Russia and Belarus as the enemy.



Federation. You have recently heard President Putin’s statement that an attack on Belarus will be regarded as an attack on the Russian Federation. Therefore, today we are fully determined to resist any aggressor and inflict unacceptable damage on it.

- Tactical nuclear weapons deployed on the territory of NATO member states are being upgraded at an accelerated pace. More than 200 munitions, including missiles and bombs, are stationed at European air bases, that is at Kleine Brogel Air Base (Belgium) — 20 munitions, at Büchel Air Base (Germany) — 20, at Aviano Air Base (Italy) — 60, at Ghedi Air Base (Italy) — 30, at Incirlik Air Base (Türkiye) — 50, and at Volkel Air Base (Netherlands) — 20. We have counted every single one of them.

- Last year, the airborne nuclear bombs kept at the Volkel air base in the Netherlands were replaced with modern, more powerful ammunition. Now they

- We see how airfields, naval bases, training grounds are being upgraded at a rapid pace on the other side of Belarus’ western border. Moreover, advanced bases are being created for the early deployment and storage of equipment, weapons and materiel.



- It is planned to supply the Polish Armed Forces with:

366 Abrams tanks, 38 launchers for HIMARS multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) with a total of 506 launchers to be delivered to the troops, 16 launchers for Patriot anti-aircraft missile systems, 96 Apache attack helicopters from the USA, about 1,000 K2 Black Panther tanks, 364 K9 self-propelled howitzers, 218 MLRS K239 from South Korea — for the ground forces;

32 F-35A Lightning II multirole fighter jets from the USA, 48 FA-50 combat aircraft from South Korea — for the air forces.

To date, as part of the implementation of relevant contracts, 69 Abrams tanks (in the M1A1 version) have been transferred to the Polish Armed Forces, as well as 8 Patriot anti-aircraft missile systems, 18 launchers for MLRS HIMARS from the USA, 31 K2 Black Panther tanks, 66 K9 Thunder self-propelled howitzers, 3 launchers with 15 turntables for MLRS K239 Chunmoo, 12 FA-50 light combat aircraft from South Korea.

- We do not want to fight anyone, and I am sure we will not have to. Our opponents understand that we can seriously respond. That would mean the simultaneous death of millions of people. That would mean a new war. If anything happens, we will all become a Brest Fortress [an iconic example of courage and fortitude of the Soviet people in the struggle for freedom during the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War] to defend our land. We have gained independence, so it must be preserved, by all possible means. Preferably without a war.

**More than 10 years have passed since the adoption of the previous National Security Concept. The State Secretary of the Security Council, Aleksandr Volfovich, revealed what fundamentally new approaches are contained in this important document,**

“All novelties can be combined into five large blocks. The first block is about the improvement of the basic conceptual framework, and the elimination of existing gaps. The second block envisages three aspects of the current assessment of the situation. These are methodological inputs that provide an understanding of the conditions under which we will have to ensure national security. This block also more clearly reflects the country’s foreign policy priorities, in particular within the framework of the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organisation membership. The third block has been supplemented with the provisions on the national interests of Belarus, threats and directions for their neutralisation. New national interests have been identified, including issues of national identity, social harmony, the inviolability of the foundations of people power and the rule-of-law state, ensuring the security and armed protection of the country. The fourth block focuses on the biosafety concept that has formed a separate sphere taking into account all global shifts caused by current biological threats. The fifth block sets forth a revised system of indicators used to assess the state of national security.”

**According to Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin, one of the main reasons for the revision of the Military Doctrine was the adoption of a new version of the Constitution in 2022.**

“The revision of the document was also due to the development of the national theory of military art. We have closed the gaps on the use of military force in peacetime, clarified the system of operations in the Armed Forces. We have made a number of landmark decisions on military construction, equipping the structural components of the national military establishment and the advancement of the defence economy sector. Especially considering the severe sanctions pressure from our opponents,” Viktor Khrenin shared the details. “The updated Military Doctrine has explicitly pinpointed the sources of threats to Belarus, as well as has provided a probability estimation of military conflicts of various types. The new version of the Military Doctrine also specifies the issues of fulfilling Belarus’ allied obligations and participating in activities aimed to maintain international peace and security.”

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Increased production and enhanced product quality —  
how modernisation has affected the economy of Dvoret's Flax Factory

# Horizons of 'northern silk'

JSC Dvoret's Flax Factory is one of the enterprises that make the difference in the structure of industrial production in Dyatlovo District. A new stage in the life of the enterprise began in 2009 when a new modern line was put into operation thanks to government support. The operation of imported equipment requires not only the specific amount of retted straw but also a certain quality. That is why so much attention is paid to working in the fields and reaping a good harvest, which affects the revenue and profitability of the factory as well as increased export positions.

By Tatiana Vrublevskaya

## Reconstruction gave it a second wind

The territory of the flax factory impresses with cleanliness and bright new buildings. Rolls neatly placed under canopies are sent for processing with the help of a loader. Oleg Zhidko, Chief Engineer at Dvoret's Flax Factory, offered a tour around the workshops. "Here it is, our new Van Dommel line for the production of long flax fibre with a capacity of 200 tonnes per shift," the interlocutor pointed to the high-performance equipment. "It was launched in 2009, and an additional short fibre production line was installed in 2013. The reconstruction made it possible to automate a lot of production processes, improve product quality, and boost labour productivity. The factory seemed to get a second wind. This year, it is planned to commission a cottonisation line at the Slonim site. This will enable deeper processing of raw materials as well as exporting more products."

The content of flax fibre in hemp straw constitutes only 30 percent. That is, 70 percent of flax shive remains for every thousand tonne. According to the company, "Waste is primarily used for heating the factory. Two Italian boilers of 4 MWt each are installed in our own boiler house. We provide heat not only for our factory, but also for half of the village."

The chief engineer offered to assess the retted straw quality by touch, "Do you feel it? It differs by touch. Here is number nine — it is dark grey and coarse. This one, number twelve, is much softer and lighter. The highest retted

straw number we have this year is twelve. The higher the retted straw number is, the more expensive the fibre is. The number is composed of many indicators. It depends on the length, flexibility, and colour. First of all, the fibre colour is influenced by weather conditions. Thus, we received fibre number fifteen in 2015. It was a great harvest!"

## A close-knit team is the key

A new workshop is bright and warm. The flax fibre of the new harvest is being sorted at large tables, and next to them is an energetic young man, Yevgeny Isachenko, deftly serving rolls to the line. "It is impossible to do without manual labour here since no machine is able to capture all shades of grey," the long fibre line operator clarified the details of the labour-intensive process. "I throw a roll in, and my assistant distributes it evenly along the conveyor line. Only retted straw with a number above one is suitable for this line. The higher the retted straw number is, the greater the fibre output is — both long and short."

The enterprise, which has become truly advanced and competitive over the past few years, employs almost 280 people. The Head of Production, Svetlana Gerasimovich, is constantly in touch with her team. "The factory works in three shifts," the interlocutor spoke about the everyday working life. "The process is complex and time-consuming. My production site is responsible for the harvesting and processing of retted straw that enters



Long fibre line operator Yevgeny Isachenko



the factory. However, the workflow begins from the moment when flax is pulled out of the ground and left in the open air. We go to the fields in order to assess the quality of flax retting, take samples, and determine the number. As soon as we see the shade of grey we need, we immediately give the command to bring it in from the fields. We accept the flax, stack and place it in special warehouses [large open-sided canopies made of precast reinforced concrete], sorting by numbers — from 0.5 to 2. There are six 'nominations' in total."

## Seamless operation guaranteed

The successful operation of JSC Dvoret's Flax Factory directly depends on the availability of raw materials for processing. Last year, the farmers harvested a sufficient amount of retted straw for seamless operation of the enterprise. The raw material zone of flax cultivation is 3,276 hectares and is located on the lands of Dyatlovo, Novogrudok and Slonim districts.

In order to ensure uninterrupted supply of raw materials to the enterprise, a mechanised subdivision for growing and harvesting flax was created at the flax factory back in 2003.

The Head of Mechanised Subdivision, Renat Grankovsky, demonstrated the equipment pleasing to the eye, "We have 360 units of diverse machinery, including self-propelled machinery, as well as trailing and mounted equipment. In total, we have 44 tractors, five of which are energy-saturated. At present, the mechanised subdivision is equipped with the latest mechanical means of both domestic and imported production. We are very pleased with the flax pullers assembled on the basis of JSC Shchuchin Repair Plant. We have 11 of them. In general, ploughs, flax strip turners, cultivators, and sowing units are always cleaned, repaired, and ready to work. The availability of a highly equipped material and technical base allows for timely and high-quality implementation of all the measures for flax cultivation and harvesting, and the creation of necessary stocks of raw materials for production needs. At the same time, we buy several pieces of equipment every year, realising that

upgrading is the key to progress."

Renat Grankovsky admitted that flax culture is capricious and very demanding. "Our major task is to ensure a sufficient amount of raw materials. We manage to achieve this goal every year due to strict compliance with technological regulations. More than 50 tractor drivers work in two subdivisions on a permanent basis. We carry out the flax sowing campaign on our own, but for harvesting we attract farmers who have machinery available, from all over the region. Meeting the deadlines is a crucial aspect in this case. We have as many as 31 self-propelled balers at the Dvoret's site, and we contract approximately ten more from the outside."

## Keeping up with best practices

Inna Kanus, Chief Economist of JSC Dvoret's Flax Factory, confirmed the above with figures, "Over the past year, the enterprise processed slightly more than 10,140 tonnes of retted straw, which is higher compared to the level of 2022. The long fibre output also increased and made up about 25 percent. A total of 2,819 tonnes of flax fibre were produced, of which 765 tonnes were long flax fibre, and 2,503 tonnes — short flax fibre. This is 27.8 percent higher than in 2022."

In 2023, the enterprise fulfilled a government order for long and short flax fibre for Orsha Linen Mill and Grodno-based textile enterprise Gronitex OJSC. "2,970 tonnes were sold, including 794 tonnes of long flax fibre, and 2,176 tonnes of short flax fibre," the chief economist shared the details. "1,280 tonnes were supplied to Orsha Linen Mill, and 680 tonnes — to Gronitex. The rest of the products were sold at free prices. The export revenue amounted to \$1,039,000. Over 80 percent of the products were shipped to the Russian Federation, and a small part to the People's Republic of China.

In total, the company received Br18.1m of revenue, which is 26.4 percent higher than the last year's level. This indicates production efficiency. Along with that, net profit amounted to Br965,000. This allows the factory to look confidently to the future.



Head of production Svetlana Gerasimovich and long fibre remover Natalya Levshuk



**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*“Projects to achieve technological sovereignty should become a driving force for the renewal of our industry, helping the entire economy to reach advanced levels of efficiency and competitiveness.”*

**At the meeting focusing on the state and goals of Belarus’ industrial development, on April 9th, 2024**



CNC machine adjuster Andrei Lisov and CNC machine operator Yana Voitova

Anton Stepanishchev

**Orsha Tools Plant has entered a new stage of its development, becoming a modern innovative production facility that is already a worthy competitor to foreign manufacturers in its niche on external markets. In general, the enterprise is contracted for 3-4 months in advance, and for 8-10 months for a separate product range.**

# A qualitative leap forward

## Orsha Tools Plant has opened an innovative tool workshop

**A new subdivision of the enterprise has been established as part of the second stage of the *Organisation of Modern Metal Cutting and Auxiliary Tools Production with the Introduction of Innovative Technological Processes* investment project, the implementation of which started in 2018. Its completion is expected next year. During a visit to the plant in August 2018, the President clearly outlined the purpose of the project — to set up the production of high-tech innovative tools that are imported and not mass-produced in Belarus.**

By Olga Bogacheva

### On modern technologies

Leonid Moyzhik, Director of the Orsha Tools Plant, spoke about the tasks that the enterprise had to solve towards the goal and the results achieved so far. Thus, to date, all the necessary construction and installation works have been completed in the workshop, and a part of the equipment in the amount of 25 units for mechanical, thermal, and galvanic processing of parts worth Br35.7m has been purchased.

The head of the plant paid special attention to the fact that about 90 percent of the machinery is equipped with a numerical control system. Modern technologies have allowed the enterprise to significantly expand the range of products manufactured in this workshop and improve quality.

“We have mastered the technology of applying a wear-resistant coating, the production of monolithic carbide tools and end mills with replaceable hard alloy plates. No one makes this unique tool on a mass scale in Belarus. Its features include increased durability, precision, and productivity. The tools are supplied both to the Belarusian market and abroad,” informed the head of the department.

Touching upon the specifics of the workshop, Leonid Moyzhik noted that

so far this is the only production facility of its kind in Belarus, and the technologies that are introduced into the workflow are unique, “Over the past year, about 1,500 employees of other domestic enterprises visited us as part of the experience exchange. I am sure that in the near future they will adopt some of our techniques to improve their production culture.”

The investment costs of the project were financed from the Republican Centralised Innovation Fund, borrowed funds from the Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ JSC), and at the enterprise’s own expense. The implementation of the project’s investment stage continues. Part of the planned range of tools has already been mastered. The Orsha Tools Plant intends to start production of a full line of high-tech tools this year. To this end, in December 2023, the enterprise signed a contract for a line of 19 units of equipment supply for the manufacture of taps with control and measuring equipment and tooling. The line is expected to be delivered in July, and its commissioning is scheduled for October. All work is carried out within the project implementation schedule. Full completion of the project will allow the enterprise to significantly

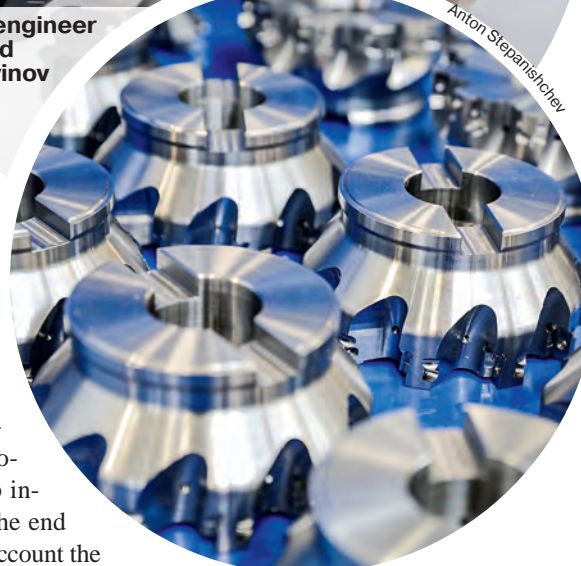


Leonid Moyzhik



Process engineer Richard Logvinov

Anton Stepanishchev



cantly strengthen its position in the domestic and foreign markets.

Leonid Moyzhik also stated that currently the product range produced in this workshop includes 800 units, “By the end of the year, taking into account the introduction of additional equipment, it will expand to 1,500. The volume of production in monetary terms by the end of the year will amount to Br600,000 per month, and at the beginning of the next year we are guaranteed to reach Br1m.”

### Planned goals

Outlining the plant’s prospects for the near future, Leonid Moyzhik stated that, in general, the enterprise is contracted for 3-4 months in advance, and even for 8-10 months for a separate product range, “We

manufacture both standardised products and special tools according to individual customer drawings. The list of permanent partners includes about 25-30 customers from Belarus and Russia, who actively use the products of the tool workshop.”

Sergei Avramenko, Deputy Director General of MTZ JSC, Technical Director, emphasised the strategic goals of the Orsha Tools Plant, “We have to substitute imports to the Republic of Belarus to the maximum extent possible. The competencies that this enterprise possesses, the product range that it has already mastered, allow us to replace by 70 percent what we produce inside the holding. Taking into account the specifics of the domestic machine-building industry, the plant can also scale these volumes to our other enterprises — MAZ, BELAZ, and MZKT.”

Along with this, Sergei Avramenko pointed out that tool replacement is not a one-step process, “The Orsha Tools Plant is moving in this direction, and in 2025 it should make a qualitative leap forward. As for the underutilisation of the tool workshop, due to certain foreign policy events last year, the enterprise had difficulties with the supply of equipment. We have successfully solved this issue and fully established the production of all tools. At this stage, all that remains is to work.”



Anton Stepanishchev

In a new workshop for the production of innovative tools

INDUSTRY

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# The best place is where we are

## Each of the Belarusian domestic tourism directions has a chance to become successful this season

### Domestic tourism

2022	2023
1,530.4 thousand visitors	1,759.2 thousand visitors
1,401.8 thousand excursionists	1,620.3 thousand excursionists
128.6 thousand tourists	138.9 thousand tourists

### FACTS

- 1,108 organisations carried out tourism activities in Belarus in 2023.
- 2.5 million tourists and excursionists used the services of the above organisations.
- Over 450,000 people used the services of Belarusian farmsteads in 2023.
- 95.7 percent of last year's guests of farmsteads are nationals of Belarus.
- 84.1 percent is the average occupancy rate of Belarusian health resorts last year.
- About 200,000 visitors were received by industrial tourism facilities in 2023 (a quarter more than in 2022).
- 21 percent is the share of 1-4 grade schoolchildren of general secondary education institutions who visited iconic tourist sites of the Great Patriotic War and the post-war period in the first half of the 2023/24 academic year.

### Number of rooms in collective accommodation facilities (as of the end of the period)

2000	29,599
2005	28,264
2010	31,905
2015	39,161
2017	40,646
2018	40,607
2019	40,773
2020	40,658
2021	39,855
2022	40,097
2023	40,233

Sources: Belstat, Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Industry

### Agro-ecotourism

Agro-ecotourism has become one of Belarus' most recognisable brands in two decades. It was rebooted last year — the requirements for farmsteads were changed, the possibility of running a hotel and restaurant business under the guise of agrotourism was suppressed. According to the National Statistical Committee of Belarus (Belstat), about 450 thousand people became guests of Belarusian farmsteads in 2023.

"Camping, kayaking, cycling trips are in high demand during the summer season," Irina Voronovich, Director of Tourism Department of Belarus' Ministry of Sports and Tourism, revealed the trends of recent years. Hiking is easily available to one's heart content due to the abundance of routes. There are plenty of cycling routes, too. Water tourism is also on the rise. However, the Republican Union of Tourism Industry (RUTI) has pointed out the flip side of the coin — the infrastructure is not keeping up with the growing interest. According to RUTI Chairman of the Board Filipp Guly, a conceptual master plan is needed applicable to each region of Belarus. "It is necessary to understand what recreational resources we have and what kind of infrastructure they can be filled with, as well as who will provide certain paid services in certain places. What kind of tourist flow can a particular location count on? Thus, a thorough district-wise analysis is required."

### Thirteen types of tourism are developing in Belarus in accordance with a single classification system adopted last year. This is quite a lot for a country that is not large by world standards. The major focus is on ramping up domestic tourism as one of the factors of economic growth, primarily in the context of regions. However, not everything is measured by money — travelling around our beautiful and fascinating country helps to learn more about its history and potential, as well as to strengthen patriotic feelings. And the latter is no less significant.

### Business tourism

Conferences, symposia, forums and other face-to-face business meetings are gaining a second life after the coronavirus pandemic. The business tourism enhancement roadmap includes three sections — organisational and marketing campaigns, as well as the creation of a tourist product. According to Irina Voronovich, hotels are involved in this direction since such events are often held on the premises of hotels. "As of the beginning of 2024, there were 600 hotels and similar accommodation facilities in Belarus. Many large complexes position themselves in the hospitality industry as business hotels and cater to business travellers. Thus, Belarus has all the capacities for hosting high-profile business events, and they are held in our country."

### Educational tourism

A list of sightseeing sites recommended for visiting by students has been formed. Contests of photographs, videos, and publications about these sites are held. Intensive work to create a register of educational routes is ongoing across the regions of the country. Guide books are published in aid of teachers. Thanks to the joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, unified days have been established for students to visit museums free of charge. The results have been amazing so far — in the first half of the 2023/24 academic year alone, more than 230 thousand schoolchildren visited historical tourist sites dedicated to the events of the Great Patriotic War and the post-war period. The work in this direction continues. The main thrust is on military and patriotic themes, as well as iconic sites — Mir, Nesvizh, Polotsk, national parks and nature reserves, industrial enterprises.

Specialised gourmet trips are still a rarity in our country. Yet, routes with elements of gastronomic tourism increasingly appear every season. These may include small industrial enterprises — a winery, a cheese factory, a bakery, a sausage workshop, and so on. In addition, farmsteads can offer master classes on cooking national cuisine.

As for state support for this direction, a designated working group was set up a few years ago within the framework of the Interdepartmental Expert Co-ordination Council on Tourism under the Council of Ministers. The roadmap it has created provides for measures to popularise Belarusian cuisine, promote national manufacturers, inform tourists about culinary events, culinary-themed festivals and more.

By the way, now everyone who wishes to take part in one of the most popular gastronomic events in the country can do so — the republican Gastrofest festival welcomes all participants. It takes place from April 18th to May 20th in Minsk, where 20 food outlets have prepared sets at a single attractive price.



### Religious tourism

There are about 690 religious tourism sites in Belarus. "We see demand both within the country and from foreigners," stated Sergei Gerasimenya, Deputy Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs. "The most popular sites are considered to be St. Elisabeth Convent in Minsk, the Holy Dormition Stavropegic Monastery in Zhirovichi, the Polotsk Epiphany Monastery, the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Budslav, the Archcathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Minsk that are known far beyond the borders of Belarus. The tourist flow to these religious shrines is growing."

### Spa and wellness tourism

According to the last year's data, Belarusian health resorts surpassed the economic results of not only 2022, but also the pre-pandemic 2019. The average occupancy rate last year reached 84.1 percent! Significant amounts were invested in the development of facilities, equipment and infrastructure in 2023 — 1.6 times more than a year earlier. This, in turn, allowed expanding the list of services. Another important recent trend is that there are more families with children in sanatoriums. This indicates the relevance of the proposed programmes, including spa treatments. Experts draw attention to the fact that high demand for Belarusian health resorts is expected this season again. In total, the Belarusian network of health resorts and wellness organisations included 287 facilities for more than 60 thousand places as of the beginning of the year. This includes 100 sanatorium and health resort organisations for 27.9 thousand places, and 187 wellness organisations for 32.2 thousand places.

Forests make up almost 40 percent of Belarus' territory, swamps — up to 15 percent. There are 4 national parks and 2 nature reserves in Belarus. In total, about 1.8 million hectares are specially protected natural areas in the country. The Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park alone was visited by about 521 thousand tourists in 2023. Every year, dozens of new eco-routes appear in the regions, designed for different categories of visitors. Thus, an ecological and historical route *The Heart of Lipichanskaya Pushcha* has been recently introduced on the territory of Mosty District, Grodno Region. It offers an ecological trail equipped with signs and information stands with QR codes, while the programme features, in addition to kayaking on the Shchchara River, an exciting off-road safari around the Lipichanskaya Pushcha and an ecological and educational excursion with the herbal tea tasting.

### Environmental tourism

Various events and activities are an important factor in encouraging people to travel to a specific region on a specific date. The National Tourism Agency publishes the calendar of the most interesting events with confirmed dates on its website — belarustourism.by. Contacts of event organisers and brief information about them are also posted there. The event calendar is available on the belarus.travel website in an interactive form. The website allows filtered search, by region or date. "Festivals, holidays, exhibitions, fairs, sports and cultural events are increasingly in demand among our travellers," emphasised Dmitry Morozov, Director of the National Tourism Agency.

### Event tourism

Castles, palace and park ensembles, family estates, iconic engineering structures, museums, ethnographic villages, and more have ensured a marked surge in historical and cultural tourism. In the year of the celebration of the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi invaders, heightened attention is paid to this direction. Events dedicated to this landmark date have been planned in every region and locality of the country. Local historians are planning expeditions and unique excursions to the places of military glory. All details can be found on the websites of executive committees, museums and regional tourist centres. Belarus has carefully preserved nearly 9 thousand monuments and graves from the Great Patriotic War — most of them are also included in military historical routes and guided tours.

### Historical and cultural tourism

Nowadays hunters are interested in getting not only prey, but also high-quality service. Therefore, guests of designated hunting areas are provided with recreation in specialised complexes, trophy hunting, weekend hunting, family trips with accommodation in comfortable tourist bases with well-developed infrastructure and catering. Currently, over 93 thousand people, including almost 1,300 women, can boast of a state hunting licence in Belarus. The appearance of the National Trophy Book, which will record the best achievements of hunters, has become this year's novelty. In addition, special hunting nominations *The Great Belarusian Seven* for men and *The Great Belarusian Five* for women have been introduced recently. Those who have obtained the specified trophies will be awarded with special badges worn on the breast.

The number of the Belarusian Society of Hunters and Fishermen members at the beginning of 2024 amounted to 64.1 thousand people, including 33.9 thousand having a hunter and a fisherman ticket, 29 thousand having an amateur fisherman ticket, and 1.2 thousand young hunters and fishermen.

### Gastronomic tourism

This direction boasts popularity with foreign visitors. There are even travel agencies in Belarus that specialise precisely in this area of inbound tourism. About 20 thousand surgical operations requiring a long stay in our country are performed for foreign guests per year. Our medical services are beneficial for foreigners in terms of the quality/price ratio. Belarus' Ministry of Healthcare has called transplantation, as well as oncology, neurology, neurosurgery and dentistry services the most in-demand areas in the field of medical tourism.

### Industrial tourism

The interest in visiting enterprises is not fading and is clearly far from its peak. About 200 thousand people visited these facilities last year alone. The enterprise leaders are BELAZ, Minsk Tractor Works (MTZ trademark) and Minsk Automobile Works (MAZ trademark). The Ministry of Industry enterprises hosted 93.5 thousand tourists, Bellegprom [Belarusian light industry concern] — 11.7 thousand, Belgospishcheprom [Belarusian state food industry concern] — 40 thousand, the Ministry of Architecture and Construction — almost 45 thousand people. More than 130 enterprises and organisations are currently developing this direction. The list is posted on the website of the National Tourism Agency.

### Hunting tourism

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**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*"Every corner of our Homeland has its own unique cultural and natural flavour... We are a family of seven: six regions and the capital. This is our slogan. The advantages inherent in every region must become the source of their prosperity."*

From the Address to the Belarusian people and the National Assembly, on March 31st, 2023

### Routes of Memory. Routes of Unity

(fourth stage, 2024)

The All-Belarusian youth expedition *Routes of Memory. Routes of Unity* is one of the large-scale projects implemented in Belarus' educational establishments. The participants are young people aged 14 and over, united in expedition teams, tourist and excursion groups at educational establishments.



### Designated directions include:

- Glorious Names in History;
- We Mustn't Forget These Roads;
- Shrines of Native Land;
- Heritage of Belarusian Land;
- Nature's Protected Trails.

The expected result is creative projects based on the hikes, excursions and expeditions in the nominations below:

- At the Origins of Knowledge;
- Know Your Homeland — Educate Yourself;
- Inspired by Homeland's Fragrance;
- Homeland, Our Wonderful Land;
- Tourist Mosaic of Belarus.

Source: Republican Centre for Ecology and Local History



## Demonstrations against Israel's war

Pro-Palestinian demonstrations at some of the US' most prestigious educational establishments over Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza have intensified, with students demanding the institutions to cut any financial ties to Israel

Standoffs between pro-Palestinian student protesters and universities are growing increasingly tense on both coasts of the US.

In New York, Columbia University's administration has given hundreds of demonstrators a deadline to clear a large campsite. Meanwhile, dozens of students remained barricaded inside two buildings on a Northern California campus.

Both developing incidents are part of intensifying student demonstrations against Israel's war with Hamas, leading to dozens of arrests on charges of trespassing or disorderly conduct.

Across the country, protesters at California State Polytechnic University,

Humboldt, started using furniture, tents, chains and zip ties to block the building's entrances. The defiance was less expected in one of California's more conservative regions, some 480km north of San Francisco.

Video showed protesters chanting 'We are not afraid of you!' before officers in riot gear pushed into them at the building's entrance. The university says three students have been arrested, and the campus was shut.

At New York University, police said 133 protesters were taken into custody and all had been released with summonses to appear in court on disorderly conduct charges.

In Connecticut, police arrested 60 protesters — including 47 students — at Yale, after they refused to leave an encampment on a plaza at the centre of campus.

In the Midwest, a demonstration at the centre of the University of Michigan campus had grown to nearly 40 tents, and nine anti-war protesters at the University of Minnesota were arrested after police took down an encampment in front of the library. Hundreds rallied to the Minnesota campus to demand their release.

Some universities are now doling out more heavy-handed discipline, citing safety threats to Jewish students and faculty — some of whom say protesters' criticism of Israel has veered into antisemitism.

## First drug to treat Bekhterev's disease

Russia's Health Ministry has registered the world's first drug for the treatment of Bekhterev's disease, assigned by the World Health Organisation (WHO) with the international nonproprietary name of seniprutug

"The Russian Health Ministry has registered the world's first and first-in-class targeted drug for the treatment of Bekhterev's disease. According to the results of clinical trials, it has shown a high profile of efficiency and safety. Once the drug is registered, the manufacturing company can start its industrial production," the Russian health department said in a statement.

Bekhterev's disease, also known as ankylosing spondylitis, is a form of chronic rheumatic inflammation that primarily affects the spine and sacroiliac joints, which connect the spine to the pelvis. It causes pain and stiffness in the spine, which can lead to limited mobility.

Scientists from the Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University of the Russian Health Ministry and the Shemyakin-Ovchinnikov Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry at the Russian Academy of Sciences have worked on the development of the drug together with the Biocad pharmaceutical company.

"The developed drug makes it possible to destroy pathological T-lymphocytes attacking the body's own cells. Initial clinical studies have confirmed that the development of the disease stops, without reducing the activity of the human immune system as a whole," Russia's Health Ministry noted.



Wings of the legendary cabaret in Paris' Montmartre fell off and damaged the tourist attraction's facade. Fortunately, no one was injured.

## UK has passed bill to send asylum seekers to Rwanda

Following the UK parliament's passage of the Safety of Rwanda bill, two top UN officials sounded an alarm about its harmful impact on global responsibility-sharing, human rights and refugee protection

Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, issued a joint statement calling on the UK government to reconsider its plan to transfer asylum seekers to Rwanda.

This arrangement seeks to shift responsibility for refugee protection, undermining international co-operation, Mr. Grandi added. "The new legislation marks a further step away from the UK's long tradition of providing refuge to those in need, in breach of the Refugee

Convention. Protecting refugees requires all countries, not just those neighbouring crisis zones, to uphold their obligations."

The UK government's controversial Rwanda scheme has been beset by legal challenges since 2022.

The government has been under mounting pressure to cut record numbers of asylum seekers crossing the Channel from northern France in small boats, particularly following a promise of a tougher approach to immigration after the UK left the European Union.

## Problems grow like a snowball

Terrorism threats, pollution warnings, and strike action are just some of the issues facing the organisers of the 2024 Olympic Games — set to begin in Paris

Ahead of the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics in July and August, approximately 500 migrants and homeless people have been relocated from France's capital city to rural regions and small towns of the country. This action is perceived by both humanitarian activists and some provincial authorities as an effort to conceal the existence of homeless problem.

Another major concern is whether the Seine will be clean enough for the first time in a century for triathlon competitors to swim in. Recent tests for E coli suggested it will not.

Moreover, the CGT public servants union has announced plans to strike dur-

ing the Olympics, which could mean many transport workers walking out. Transport operators are gearing up to carry between 600,000 to 800,000 Olympic visitors per day.

In addition, French journalists are prohibited from writing about problems related to the Paris Olympic Games. The French editorial offices received 'letters of recommendation' with the requirement to avoid negative language associated with the IOC and the Olympic Games.

And to top it all, the blades of the world-famous windmill at the Moulin Rouge cabaret club fell off and crashed onto the street.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

# Mind games

Artificial intelligence: scientific breakthrough, challenges and threats

**The UN General Assembly has recently endorsed a resolution concerning artificial intelligence (AI). The document essentially is aimed at ensuring that all automated solutions and related processes are subject to human oversight. This is not the first and far from being the last response to the risks that the rapid development of technology is fraught with.**



By Alena Krasovskaya

## Moving forward

The first patient with a brain implant from Neuralink, Elon Musk's neurotechnology company, has demonstrated his success and showed how he plays chess. Noland Arbaugh, a 29-year-old brain chip patient, said that he was paralysed in a diving accident about eight years ago, which is why he cannot feel anything below his shoulders. Now a man can use his brain power to move the cursor across the chessboard on his laptop screen, rearranging the pieces. The other day, the American billionaire announced another Neuralink's novelty — the Blindsight implant, which should significantly improve the quality of life for blind people. The implant is already being tested on monkeys, and, according to scientists, it will be able to restore vision and even has the potential to surpass normal human vision in the long run.

AI easily solves complex tasks, controls any processes, and generates economic and statistical forecasts. Experts predict that by 2050, more robots than human surgeons will perform surgeries in operating rooms worldwide. All this seems to open up amazing prospects.

*Yet, some aspects of the rapid development of AI can threaten humanity — if not with complete destruction, as science fiction and Hollywood depict, at least with major problems.*

## How it all started

The speed with which AI is being introduced into var-

ious spheres of our lives is incredible. It makes diagnoses and defends in court, creates paintings and music, identifies faces, predicts the weather and business prospects. And this is just the beginning. According to forecasts, AI will soon take over almost all spheres of human life. If we let it, of course.

*Back in 1950, English mathematician Alan Turing (the one who broke the code of the German Enigma cipher device during World War II) suggested that it would someday be possible for a computer to think. He also coined the term 'artificial intelligence' and described its theoretical and philosophical concept.*

Turing was prevented from going further in his research by the lack of technical capabilities and money. Computers at that time were very expensive and extremely bulky units that executed certain commands, but could not remember them. Only large technology companies and some prestigious universities could afford such a toy. The monthly cost of renting a computer reached \$200,000. For comparison: studying at Harvard University at that time cost a little more than \$1,000 per year.

The first more or less understandable definition of AI was given by one of its founding fathers, Marvin Lee Minsky, "The science of making machines do things that would require intelligence if done by men." The term AI finally caught on in 1956 after an academic conference at Dartmouth College in Hanover, the USA.

From 1957 to 1974, computers became cheaper and

smarter. In 1970, Marvin Lee Minsky said in his interview with Life Magazine, "In from three to eight years, we will have a machine with the general intelligence of an average human being." However, in addition to intelligence, AI still had to learn abstract thinking and self-knowledge.

In the 1980s, computers began to slowly learn based on accumulated experience — a system for implementing logic programming was developed and improved.

*The 1990s and 2000s were marked by the victory of AI over reigning World Chess Champion Garry Kasparov. During the same period, speech recognition software was introduced in Windows. Furthermore, AI learnt to decode human emotions — the Kismet robot, created in the late 1990s, could already recognise emotions through human body language and voice tone, and even simulate them.*

Now we live in an era of big data that humans cannot work with, but AI does a great job. Over the past 35 years, computer performance has increased a billion times. This means that a task the solution to which used to take decades is now solved in 0.3 seconds.

## Risks and challenges

*AI is a powerful tool, though its intelligence still acquires signs of the intellect of people who develop its algorithms. Accordingly, AI receives from its 'parents' the nuances of their perception of the surrounding reality.*

Thus, a few years ago, Amazon had a scandalous incident with developers who created an AI-powered recruitment tool for the company. Designed to simplify the recruitment process by sorting CVs and choosing the most qualified candidate, AI turned out to be... a sexist and taught the Amazon system to be biased against female applicants and prefer male candidates. It was not possible to find out who imposed this hiring feature on the AI recruitment system.

The US judicial system stumbled on the COMPAS algorithm, which predicts the statistical likelihood of rehabilitation or re-offense by criminal elements after being previously arrested, and is currently used in pretrial and sentencing. As a result of AI prediction, black defendants who do not recidivate were almost twice as likely to be classified as having a higher risk of repetition of crime (45 percent) compared to their white counterparts (23 percent). The basis for such conclusions was only the colour of the defendants' skin. Accordingly, based on the AI's findings, the sentences for black people were significantly higher than those for white criminals.

*The explosive development of AI coupled with improper control can pose increased threat to human security. Uncontrolled AI systems are already capable of making decisions that contradict human ethics and values. If such systems end up in the hands of criminals or unscrupulous creators or users without proper control, they can become extremely dangerous.*

In addition, unemployment caused by the replacement of employees with AI may lead to the emergence of the modern Luddite Movement unless there appear mechanisms to protect people who are already being displaced from their usual niches in the labour market.

However, the major problem is that people tend to show excessive confidence in AI, its data and estimates, believing that the computer is always right.

## Control is needed

In fact, AI's ability to have a devastating effect on our lives is quite comparable to a nuclear bomb. There is now a fierce arms race ongoing in the development of AI — the one who is the first will rule the world. The only question is how long and in what form the world will exist.

*In 1945, when the United States demonstrated the capabilities of the nuclear bomb, humanity tried to build an international security system trying to minimise the risks of a nuclear winter. Yet, the unharnessed development of AI can result in a large-scale disaster. This is because in the race for the AI world championship, there is no time left to thoroughly check the safety of new emerging systems, and few people are seriously concerned about the consequences of their use at all.*

Humanity should have curbed the uncontrolled AI expansion long ago, agree on new rules of the game and make AI an assistant, not a potential threat. Will we be able to do it in time?



## Graphics gained the upper hand

Vasily Sharangovich managed to achieve a lot in his life, although popularity and fame did not come to him immediately. Today he is an indisputable authority who left us a huge, primarily graphic, creative legacy. Vasily Petrovich started out as a painter, though. He got acquainted with painting back in college and was very fond of it at first. Yet, upon entering the Theatre and Art Institute, he still gave preference to graphics, which, in his words, he immediately fell in love with for the opportunity to freely work with the form, line, and composition. Already in his second year of studies, he received his first serious order — to make illustrations for a children's book for the Belarus Publishing House. Sharangovich went on to work with this publishing house for many more years.

According to the artist's daughter Natalya Sharangovich, the exhibition concept is embedded in the title itself, "We wanted to show him not only as an artist but also as a teacher." Natalya Sharangovich is sure that it is her father's generation that looked at Belarus comprehensively. "They revealed the theme of Belarus in their creative work, and brought this love to their students. Love for Belarus penetrates through everything — landscapes, people's faces, cities. I would really like people who come to this exhibition to see



Illustration for the *New Land* poem by Yakub Kolas

the reverent attitude of the students towards their Homeland, laid down by the teacher," she admitted.

Aleksei Matyushonok, Head of the National Art Museum Exhibition Department, curator of the artist's exhibition, drew attention to the fact that Sharangovich's artistic thinking was manifested clearly and widely especially in graphics.

"The exhibition can be divided into two parts. The first is the works by Vasily Sharangovich. The exposition begins with classic linocuts, autolithographs, monotypes and drawings of the 1970s and 1980s, where the author continued the tradition typical of the art of that time.

**Thus, it includes a series dedicated to Vladimir Mayakovsky — illustrations for the poem Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. A famous series In Memory of Fieri Villages by Sharangovich is also presented here.**

Then we turn to the works of a later period, where the artist summarised the idea of Belarus' history and modernity,

# Power of the teacher

*Personality. Artist. Teacher* — Belarus' National Art Museum hosts an exhibition dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the birth of the People's Artist of Belarus, Vasily Sharangovich

**Vasily Sharangovich is one of those classics whose creative work cannot be overestimated and does not hide any secrets. He was a brilliant master with an infallible sense of style, an exquisite graphic artist, whose works have long become part of the artistic culture of our country. Sharangovich is one of the main domestic illustrators — his numerous illustrations to works by Belarusian and foreign authors are considered to be exemplary. He was also a teacher and a mentor, whose students eventually turned into great recognisable creators themselves. The anniversary of the People's Artist of Belarus is an excellent occasion to once again see the creative path of a bright master of national culture through the collection of his iconic works, and to assess the impact of the maître on young talents. The *Vasily Sharangovich. Personality. Artist. Teacher* exhibition has become the focal point in the large-scale celebration of the 85th anniversary of the master's birth.**

and created a whole gallery of symbolic and monumental images. This includes, in particular, watercolour landscapes, mainly of Myadel area, created in the last years of Vasily Petrovich's life," explained Aleksei Matyushonok.

The second part of the exhibition features the works of the master's students and apprentices. A well-known fact is that in the late 1960s, public work was added to his vigorous artistic activities. At first, Vasily Sharangovich was invited to teach at his alma mater, Theatre and Art Institute. And in 1989 he was chosen the rector — not appointed, but chosen! Sharangovich turned out to be not only a good teacher, who was very much loved by his students, but also a talented manager. Thus, it is on his initiative that the institute received the status of an academy in the early 1990s.



Illustration for the publication *Yakub Kolas. From My Chronicle*.

## People's and beloved

**In 1991, Vasily Sharangovich was awarded the title of People's Artist of Belarus, of which he was extremely proud. In the same way as he was proud of his students.**

Over three decades, Sharangovich educated a galaxy of students. Among them are Valery Slauk, Nikolai Seleshchuk, Anatoly Aleksandrovich, Vladimir Savich, Vasily Baranov, Konstantin Vashchenko and many others. Like a big ship, he led them along. It is just impossible to show the

works of all his students within one exhibition as there will not be enough museum walls. Therefore, the National Art Museum took a different approach — they showcased the works of selected masters in the exhibition in order to clearly illustrate that even artists absolutely different from each other in terms of style called Sharangovich their mentor. After all, this is the power of a true teacher — to educate not those who imitate, but those who do as they see and feel.

The famous book illustrator, Valery Slauk recalled that Sharangovich was nev-



Illustration for the *New Land* poem by Yakub Kolas



*Target*, from the *Memory of Fieri Villages* series

er 'too kind' as a professor and treated his students in a strict manner. "In general, my admission to the Theatre and Art Institute is a vivid example of Vasily Sharangovich's pedagogical foresight. In those years, mainly students who had secondary specialised art education entered the institute. I did not have anything like that — first, three years in the army, then work at the automobile plant in Zhodino... Professor Pavel Lyubomudrov was a member of the selection committee at that time. He looked at my scribbles and said, 'This is interesting, but you will not pass even the first exam... There is going to be nudity, you've got to have skills to paint that. You can take a chance, though, if you wish.' Vasily Sharangovich usually had long conversations with students during exams to understand their personalities. He somehow managed to immediately notice my potential, so he accepted me on one condition, 'If you fail to do well and learn during the first semester,



then goodbye, no hard feelings.' If it were not for Vasily Sharangovich, I am not sure that I would have tried to enter the institute a second time," Valery Slauk reflected.

The Yakub Kolas State Literary and Memorial Museum helped the National Art Museum to design the exposition. Today, the collection of this museum holds 198 works of art by Sharangovich, including ten illustrations for poems by Yakub Kolas, and the prominent series of illustrations for the *New Land* poem by Yakub Kolas. The Chief Curator of Museum Collections, Vasilina Mitskevich, pointed out,

**"It is known that Vasily Sharangovich treated the creative work of Yakub Kolas with great affection, and felt the beauty of his poetic word — it was especially close to the artist's heart. That is why the master managed to convey so figuratively and at the same time realistically everything that Yakub Kolas had written about."**



Illustration for the publication *Yanka Kupala. Poems*

Anna Kononova, Director General of the National Art Museum, shared what new dimension visitors of the exhibition can discover in such an outstanding artist. "In addition to works from the National Art Museum collection, works from the archives of the Belarusian Union of Artists and the Belarusian State Academy of Arts are displayed. These works were not often exhibited in the public space, so we offer a unique collective exhibition. I would advise to pay attention not only to Sharangovich's lithographs but also to his amazing watercolours, which were rarely presented to the viewer. I think many visitors will discover Vasily Sharangovich from a new and unique perspective through these watercolours," the director emphasised.

It is possible to see and admire all iconic and must-see works by Vasily Sharangovich as well as rare pages of the artist's creative work in the exhibition building of the National Art Museum until May 19th.



**Nina Savina and Sergei Platonov have become the winners of the Belarusian Cross Country Cup and helped the Mogilev Region team to return the championship cup awarded by the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House to the victor of the tournament**



Andrei Sazanov

# Cross country running

By Tatiana Pastushenko

A large-scale cross country forum held at the weekend in Mogilev brought together nearly 700 participants. The event combined several tournaments at once — Belarus Open Cup, the republican track and field cross country competitions, the relay race in memory of honoured coach Aleksandr Kitsenko, as well as the Republican Universiade. Cross country races that traditionally kick off the summer athletics season have been held for many years with the support and for the prizes of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House. This year was no exception. Eleven races on the Dubrovenka embankment turned out to be full of struggle and emotions, and the names of the winners are already known.

Cross country running became a real challenge for both experienced athletes and juniors. The track at Dubrovenka is

not easy per se — its terrain will make anyone sweat. As if that were not enough, the celestial chancellery complicated the task for runners this year. The day before the start, it rained in Mogilev, and the track was covered with patches of mud. In addition, the organisers added challenges to the athletes by placing bales of hay along the distance that the runners had to jump over.

A rich competitive programme was opened by students. Polina Kibireva, a representative of the Belarusian National Technical University, celebrated the victory at the one-kilometre cross country race among girls. Dmitry Savin, a student of Mogilev State University named after A. A. Kuleshov, had no equal among boys. “There were a lot of surprises on the track, with plenty of mud patches. But we have coped with everything!” Polina summed up the results of the race. “I have the most positive impressions. When else would you run in such conditions?”

Indeed, this year’s cross country race will surely be remembered by the participants for a long time. The track held a lot of unexpected moments — athletes were slipping and sliding in the mud, falling and some of them even lost their spikes! However, all this makes the victory even more valuable and satisfying. Vladislava Tretyakova and Vladislav Kovalyuk clinched the victory among girls and boys born in 2009-2010, and Nadezhda Stepanushko and Yevgeny Kazakov became the best among the guys born in 2007-2008. Kristina Gorbulina and Maksim Novikov finished first in the junior races.

The names of the winners of the main starts — the three-kilometre women’s and five-kilometre men’s races which deter-

mined the winners of the Belarusian Cross Country Cup — are also well known to running enthusiasts. Nina Savina, the winner of the European 10,000m Cup and the European Marathon Cup in the team competition, participant of the Olympic Games, marked her return to the sport at the 3km distance. After a two-year break, during which Nina became a mother, the renowned athlete did not leave any chance to her rivals, having left everyone behind. The men’s fight at the 5km distance was much more intriguing. Sergei Platonov and Vyacheslav Skudny immediately indicated their intention to fight for victory and ran shoulder to shoulder for a long time. However, in the second half of the race Platonov broke away from the competitor, leaving him with a silver medal.

Nina Savina and Sergei Platonov helped the Mogilev Region team regain the main trophy of the tournament — the perpetual cup established by the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House and bestowed on the winner of the team competition. Last year, the cross country race was held in Minsk and athletes from the capital became the leaders in the final table. Mogilev residents had set themselves up for revenge and even somewhat exceeded the task having become winners even in the standings of regions and cities.

The summer season is announced open. It is going to be long and eventful. Ahead of the athletes are the BRICS Games, republican competitions, which include Belarus Cup and Championship, the World Friendship Games, and more. According to Andrei Gordeev, the senior coach of the national endurance athletics team, the competitions held in Mogilev became a good stage in preparing for the competitive season, and the high-level performance of the athletes on a difficult track has confirmed that the team is already in a combat-ready state. The best is yet to come!



# A big catch

Belarusian athletes have brought a scattering of victories and medals from international competitions

Last weekend turned out to be truly eventful — European Championships, World Cups and other top level championships brought a lot of victories to Belarusian athletes and positive emotions to fans. It has been a long time since we have been pampered with such an abundant feast of great results!

By Sergei Kanashits

Let us start with the domestic tournament as it can also delight with great achievements. First of all, our sincere congratulations to the Meshkov Brest handball players on the next (16th!) championship title. They once again had no equal in the Belarusian Men’s Handball Championship. Meshkov Brest confidently defeated SKA Minsk in all three matches of the final series, having won the last match in Brest with a score of 27:25, and proved that they are second to none in our country. Brest residents would certainly make noise in the EHF Champions League, but they are not allowed there. Of team sports, only Belarusian football players have the opportunity to participate in international competitions. UEFA and FIFA are the only sports organisations that try to maintain neutrality, stay clear of political juggling and not to bend under agenda-driven decisions.

In individual disciplines, Belarusians perform in the status of neutral athletes, which does not prevent them from



Mariya Gnedtchik

noc.by



Aliaksei Alfiorau

glorifying their native country. The bright and unique rising star of the pentathlon, Mariya Gnedtchik has successfully done this having won a gold award at the Pentathlon World Cup in Budapest. This is the first resounding success for the 20-year-old girl and definitely not the last one since Mariya is one of the most promising Belarusian athletes.

Let us say ‘brava’ to Alena Furman who won the European Rowing Championship in the lightweight women’s single sculls in Szeged, Hungary. One more Belarusian rower in the women’s single sculls, Tatsiana Klimovich also performed triumphantly at the same championship — she beat everyone in the Olympic qualification regatta and gained a ticket to the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Our boxing athletes are not going home empty-handed from the Old World Championship that has finished in Serbia. Belarusian boxers have clinched three awards. Aryna Danilchyk and Viktoriya Kebikova claimed bronze, and Aliaksei Alfiorau earned silver. Aliaksei was



Vasilina Khandoshka

ria.ru



Alena Furman

quite capable of more, but the way to the champion title was barred by a hand injury that prevented our athlete from competing in the finals.

Ihar Boki became the main hero of the Para Swimming European Open Championships. The Belarusian amphibian man, a 16-time Paralympic champion, distinguished himself with an incredible catch again. Ihar secured five victories at various distances and one silver award! The Belarusian national team has won nine medals in total.

And that is not all! Our outstanding synchronised swimmer Vasilina Khandoshka has demonstrated remarkable results at the Russian Synchronised Swimming Cup. The Belarusian took gold in the free programme, and showed the second result in the women’s solo technical programme. Taking into account the fact that there are no equals to Russian mermaids on the world stage, such a performance by Vasilina in Yekaterinburg can be safely equated with the most honourable world titles. Keep it up!

Aleksy Bibikov

## Photo of the week



Genrikh Kuklevsky, a farm-machine operator at Voronetsky agricultural enterprise in Berestovitsa District

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**On May 3rd, 2014,** a football stadium was opened in Borisov. The President of Belarus,

Aleksandr Lukashenko, took part in the opening ceremony of the Borisov Arena. The complex meets the highest UEFA standards and is capable of hosting any European competition, including the Champions League and the Europa League.

**May 3rd** is International Sun Day. The Sun is the closest star to the Earth and its powerful source of cosmic energy. It provides light and heat necessary for flora and fauna, and forms the most important properties of the Earth's atmosphere.



**May 4th** marks International Firefighters' Day. This date was chosen to observe the holiday in honour of St. Florian — the patron saint of firefighters who protects and saves human lives and ecosystem objects from fire. People of this profession are known for such qualities as professionalism, courage, determination, dedication.



**On May 4th, 1878,** Thomas Edison publicly demonstrated for the first time the phonograph he had invented. It was the forerunner of the gramophone, record player, as well as of

sound recording and reproduction devices in general. The idea of a phonograph, a machine that could record, indefinitely preserve and reproduce human speech and music, was completely new. The invented device immediately made Edison famous. He sent one of his phonographs to Leo Tolstoy as a sign of respect, to record the voice of the great writer.

**May 5th** is known as Press Day in the Republic of Belarus. The date for the holiday was chosen in honour of the first publication of

the *Pravda* newspaper in 1912. In fact, the Belarusian press has much deeper roots and a lot of significant dates. Thus, Francysk Skaryna published his first book in Prague on August 6th, 1517. Andrej Rymsha's calendar called *Chronology* and written in the Old Belarusian dialect was published in the Ostrog printing house of Ivan Fedorov in Volhynia on May 5th, 1581. It was also the first printed calendar of the Slavs.



**May 5th** is Easter for Orthodox Christians. Resurrection Sunday commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ and is the biggest and brightest

Christian holiday. This holiday celebrates the day on which the passage from death to life and from earth to heaven took place. Easter Sunday is the most ancient and important religious feast in the liturgical year.

**May 6th, 1904** marks the birthday of Pavlyuk Trus (Pavel Adamovich) (1904-1929), Belarusian poet, the author of the collections *Poems*, *Violent Winds*, *poems Convict*, *Young Fighter*, and more. He also wrote satirical poems and humorous poetic stories. Trus' poetry is characterised by a combination of sociopolitical motives with soft lyricism and creative use of folk song means.



**May 7th** is Day of Radio, Television and Communications Workers in the Republic of Belarus. It was on this day in 1895 that Russian scientist Alexander Popov made a presentation at a meeting of the Russian Physical and Chemical Society and demonstrated the world's first radio receiver he had created.



**On May 8th, 1945,** the German Instrument of Surrender was signed, and May 9th was declared Victory Day. After the unconditional surrender

of Germany, the Wehrmacht government was dissolved, and German troops on the Soviet-German front began to lay down their weapons. This is how the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people ended.

**May 9th** celebrates Victory Day in the Republic of Belarus — one of the most important holidays in the history of the country. May 9th, 1945 marked the Victory of the Soviet Union in the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War. According to modern researchers, 2.5-3 million and more residents of Belarus died during the Great Patriotic War.



**From May 9th to May 25th, 2014,** Minsk became the capital of world hockey having hosted for the first time the competitions of the best teams on the planet, the 2014 IIHF



World Championship. On May 9th, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko took part in the opening ceremony of the Ice Hockey World Championship in Minsk.