



The International Scientific and Technical Conference held in Minsk gathered 170 participants from 8 countries

6



Foreigners are coming to Belarus for medical treatment due to the high level of medicine in our country

7

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 15 (1021) ● THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2024 ● WWW.SB.BY

Ilya Shvechko



Marina Vasilevskaya, the first cosmonaut of sovereign Belarus, was warmly welcomed by relatives, friends, colleagues, representatives of the scientific community and the public at Minsk National Airport

Our space. Our hero

The journey to the stars of sovereign Belarus' first cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya was successfully completed on April 6th. Her flight lasted 14 days, including 12 days aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The milestone event became the result of many years of painstaking work involving a huge number of specialists who also passed the space exam with flying colours.

The whole Belarus does not tire of repeating — space is ours! We are proud of that! Our country has definitely gained a foothold on the list of space powers. The flight of the first cosmonaut of sovereign Belarus, Marina Vasilevskaya, has taken our country to a new level which will certainly continue growing. Meanwhile, it is the time for high awards to those who truly deserve it. The Head of State has presented them to the participants and organisers of the space flight of the first Belarusian cosmonaut in the sovereign history. Cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya was awarded the Hero of Belarus title by the President. → **2, 4**



9 771991 297007 2 40 1 5

‘The greatest victory for our country’

The flight of cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya to the ISS heralds a new milestone in Belarus’ participation in space programmes and a new level of allied relations with Russia, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko said at a ceremony to honour the Belarusian cosmonauts

Opening the ceremony, the Head of State noted that one slogan, motto, idea defined the life in Belarus for the last two weeks, “Space is ours!”

“We all thought about it, dreamed about it, and so it happened,” the President said. This phrase was said when the country saw off and welcomed back Marina Vasilevskaya, the first cosmonaut in the history of sovereign Belarus.

“Of course, we are proud of our fellow Belarusians, of everyone who, over the years, has made their Motherland proud by developing space technologies and conquering space,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

People in Belarus are very happy about the successes of their compatriot Oleg Novitsky who lent a helping hand to Marina Vasilevskaya and did everything he could to help her adapt to difficult conditions and fulfil non-standard tasks, the President noted.

“Her flight marks a new stage in sovereign Belarus’ participation in space programmes and a new level of allied, very kind, fraternal relations between Belarus and Russia, between our peoples,” said the Head of State. According to him, the state flags unfurled at an altitude of more than 400 km above the Earth became a symbol of the fraternal ties of the two peoples.

Belarus was watching the flight with bated breath and admired the courage and determination of their compatriot, the President emphasised. In fact, the country can be proud of all the young women who signed up for the project; there were more than two thousand of them (and after the flight, even more people wanted to go into space). All of them are amazing people who want to test their limits and meet the expectations of millions of Belarusians. Aleksandr Lukashenko sincerely thanked each of them, “You are smart and beautiful, real patriots of Belarus.”

“Marina, one can say that you were luckier than others. You did a great job, indeed. You deserved this flight, absolutely objectively. It was not easy. The flight was preceded by extensive training, there were a lot of anxiety and stress,” the President said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he himself experienced this feeling of excitement and anxiety, especially before the spacecraft launch. After all, a launch can fail, and this has happened in the history of Belarus when the launch of the first domestic satellite did not go as planned. Marina Vasilevskaya and other crew members were very uneasy when the first launch was aborted and postponed to a later date. When the spacecraft stopped, it was the most nervous moment. “Your composure simply shocked me. Well done!” said the Head of State.

Although the most difficult period for the first cosmonaut is over, her mission has just begun.

“I know what it means to be the first one. You have become a household name for people in Belarus and all other people who were worried for you, together with your parents. Being catapulted to fame comes with a new responsibility, it is a very heavy burden, which you will have to carry your entire life. I’m sure you can handle it. We won’t let you stay complacent. You will have to work very hard,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

Marina Vasilevskaya was part of the international crew that comprised Roscosmos cosmonaut, a native of Belarus, crew commander Oleg Novitsky and NASA astronaut from the United States Tracy Dyson.

“Marina was between two empires — the Russians, the most advanced nation in space, and the Americans. You understand, this is not just about an image. This is the greatest victory for our country. Our people deserve it,” the President emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko assured that Belarus will continue developing space technologies, “We will do everything, and we will achieve a lot more... We are a space country”.



Cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya was awarded the Hero of Belarus title by President Aleksandr Lukashenko. The Hero of Belarus title is the highest degree of distinction and is awarded only once for exceptional services to the state and society associated with the feat performed in the name of freedom, independence and prosperity of the country.

The Order of Honour was awarded to Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus Vladimir Gusakov.

The Head of State presented the Medal for Labour Merits to Director General of Belavia Airline Igor Cherginets and the President’s letters of commendation to cosmonaut Anastasia Lenkova and Deputy Head of the Aerospace Activities Department of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB) Ivan Bucha. Aleksandr Lukashenko also presented the President’s letters of commendation to the parents of Marina Vasilevskaya and Anastasia Lenkova.

The President emphasised that Belarus can do a lot for space. Thus, in the coming years Belarus, jointly with Russia, will launch into orbit a modern high-resolution satellite that will make it possible to clearly see matchbox-sized objects on Earth from space. “These are the most sophisticated technologies,” said the Head of State.

The same applies to nuclear energy and biotechnology, electric transport. “We have made significant progress here. The main thing is to maintain momentum,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

The President sincerely thanked Anastasia Lenkova, “You did well, you aced all the tests, like the first cosmonaut. I know this. Of course, I know how you felt (I would feel the same way) when you were one step away from your dream and things turned out a little different. But you carried yourself with dignity. I promise, your experience will come in handy. We will try our best to make your dream come true.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko also thanked everyone who provided scientific support for the project, who ran it, and who prepared the young women for the flight. This includes scientists, doctors, trainers and teachers — everyone who helped them become even more confident. Separately, the Head of State thanked the parents of the cosmonauts for raising such amazing daughters.

“Frankly speaking, I really wanted the girls to fly and become the first cosmonauts of the ‘women’s’ President [Aleksandr Lukashenko is often dubbed so for enjoying significant support from women]. I thought: maybe, I have already done enough for women and I am no longer indebted to them,” added Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Roscosmos Director General Yuri Borisov was honoured with the Order of Friendship of Peoples for outstanding achievements in the field of space and research, for training highly qualified personnel and strengthening international co-operation. The Presidential Commendations were conferred on Roscosmos Executive Director for Manned Space Programmes Sergei Krikalev, cosmonaut of the Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Centre Oleg Novitsky and Head of this centre Maksim Kharlamov.



Belarus and Uzbekistan ramp up trade turnover

Belarus and Uzbekistan have set ambitious goals and will stay committed to them, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko said as he met with Uzbekistan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Bakhtiyor Saidov in Minsk

The Head of State first thanked Bakhtiyor Saidov for the hospitality he received during the recent official visit to Tashkent, and conveyed his best wishes and gratitude to Uzbekistan leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

“We set ambitious plans then — to reach \$1 billion in mutual trade. I think we do not have time to retreat, and we do not need to. We are ready to play our role. I hope that Uzbekistan will also make every effort to do it,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President also expressed gratitude to Uzbekistan for supporting Belarus on its way to becoming a member of the Shanghai Co-operation

Organisation. “I ask you to pay special attention to the development of joint ventures that we agreed on. Then, we talked about BELAZ and other enterprises. Let us work substantially in this direction. We are interested in this. We have something to offer Uzbekistan. If you want to see some of our enterprises, we will organise a visit to any of them at any time convenient for you so that we can make sure that its products are acceptable for use in Uzbekistan,” the Head of State said.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, arrived in the Russian Federation on a working visit on April 11th. Marina Vasilevskaya, the first cosmonaut in the history of sovereign Belarus, also headed to Moscow on the President's aircraft.

Allied goals and priorities

The negotiations of the heads of two states lasted about four hours on the same day. The leaders discussed the development of co-operation between the two countries in various fields. The focus was placed on the regional and international situation, co-ordination of actions to respond to existing challenges and threats. The presidents dwelled on security issues and the situation in Ukraine.

Russia's president Vladimir Putin stated that Aleksandr Lukashenko was undoubtedly aware of all the developments unfolding in the Ukrainian direction. Along with that, the Russian leader availed himself of the opportunity to inform his Belarusian counterpart about the current events in detail, "You know that we have never rejected a peaceful settlement of disputes. Moreover, we were inclined exactly towards a peaceful conflict resolution. It was not us who started this war back in 2014. It all started with a coup d'état in Ukraine. And when the whole situation heated up, it was you who initiated the peace talks in Belarus. We started this," the Russian leader emphasised. "Then the negotiating team moved to Istanbul where this great work was practically completed. It had been going on for a long time. The resulting document was initialled on both sides. As you know, later, under pressure from the West, the Ukrainian side opted out of these agreements. Now, as you know, the idea of holding some kind of conference in Switzerland is being promoted. We are not invited there. Moreover, they think that we have nothing to do there... If the need arises, I will allow myself to turn to you and maybe we will continue consultations with you in this area."

Aleksandr Lukashenko confirmed that during recent meetings, the Belarusian and Russian leaders had repeatedly discussed the situation in Ukraine, including the possibility of a peaceful conflict settlement.

"If they want to hold what they call a peace conference in Switzerland to talk about peace in Ukraine without us, let them do it. We believe that the only thing they can agree on there is how to further escalate this conflict. Without Russia, what kind of peace process can there be? There can be no peace process without Russia," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

"Maybe they are right in choosing not to invite us there. After all, what can we talk to them about if they are trying to gather over a hundred states and dictate something to us or force us to do something? This is not a proposal for peace talks."

During the talks, Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed his conviction that today there is everything for negotiations on peace in Ukraine. The Head of State reminded about how the peace talks began — three rounds were held in Belarus, and the fourth round took place in Istanbul. Both countries came to certain agreements, drafted a final document, but the negotiations were disrupted.



On April 12th, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, and Russian leader Vladimir Putin held a joint meeting in the Kremlin with participant of the 21st visiting expedition to the ISS Marina Vasilevskaya and pilot-cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky. It is symbolic that the meeting took place on Cosmonautics Day. Vladimir Putin congratulated the cosmonauts on their professional holiday, as well as all those who work in this field. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that cosmonautics is not a new area to Belarusians. The President of Belarus has long been immersed in the field specifics — he has visited various cosmodromes and industry institutions in different countries, studied the technical side of the issue.

"We are working very seriously on Belarus–Russia joint programmes, also running satellite projects together. We have preserved satellite production factories since Soviet times. We are liaising with Russians. Manned flights are the current focus of our attention," the Belarusian leader noted.

In the coming years, Russia is planning to orbit the first module of the Russian Orbital Station. This opens up tremendous prospects for bilateral co-operation between Belarus and Russia.

The heads of two states communicated with the cosmonauts, and then continued the face-to-face negotiations that had begun the day before.

There was an impromptu moment during the meeting in the Kremlin. At the invitation of the Russian leader, Aleksandr Lukashenko and the cosmonauts joined a telephone conversation with the Pyak family with many children, who are hereditary reindeer herders living in the tundra in Yamal. Yenkysya and Zoya Pyak celebrate the 50th anniversary of their life together. The presidents congratulated them on their golden wedding.

The Belarusian Head of State expressed confidence that the cosmonauts would invite their family to see the most beautiful phenomenon — the launch of a spacecraft.

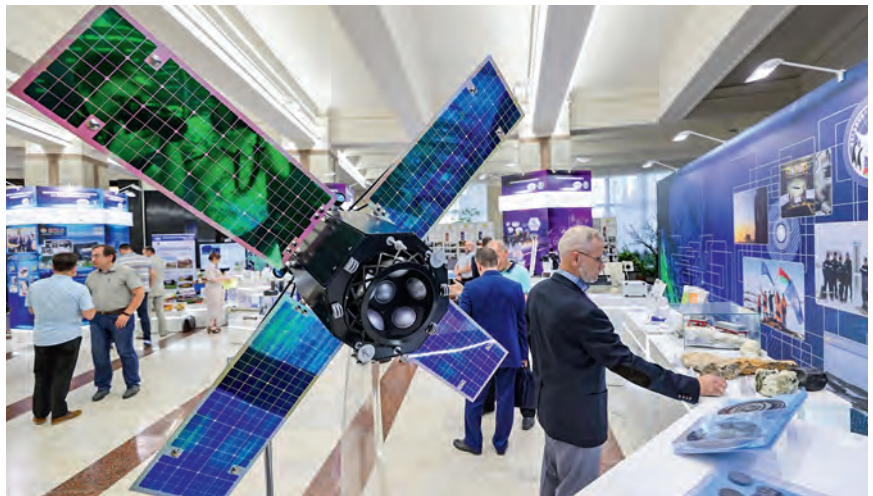
The cosmonauts also congratulated the reindeer herders' family on their wedding anniversary. Marina Vasilevskaya wished them good health and all the best.

Aleksandr Lukashenko was met in the Kremlin by journalists on the first and second days of his visit, who showered the President of Belarus with numerous questions. The Belarusian Head of State spoke frankly with media representatives about the prospects for a peaceful settlement in Ukraine, his meeting with members of the Russian Security Council, details of the hours-long talks between the two presidents in Moscow, the role of Belarus in ensuring security in the Ukrainian and Western directions, and many other topics.

"They just need to be reasonable — take the document (the one that you handed over to me), put it on the table and work on it. This is a sensible position. This document presents an acceptable position for Ukraine. And they were ready to sign it," the President of Belarus pointed out.

"Therefore, I absolutely support the peace process, which Russia has never abandoned, including today. If the Belarusian side can play any role in this, you know our capabilities. We will always be there for you and we will act in a coherent manner."

The Belarusian Head of State also sent a warning to the Ukrainian side. "These strikes coming from Ukraine that target sensitive points in Russia call for an appropriate response. I think there are a lot of crazy people in Ukraine, but not all Ukrainians are like that. I think they have realised the consequences and will do some rethinking in this regard. In principle, they are just provoking Russia to carry out such strikes," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.



"I think, Vladimir Vladimirovich, that your initiatives for a peaceful settlement of the conflict will find a response in Ukraine. Strange as it may seem, they will find support among the military. I am ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with you and work in this direction."

The Russian leader inquired about the situation on the western borders of Belarus.

"The situation is difficult. It is bewildering overall. What worries me the most is the policy of the Polish leadership. Why do they need this confrontation? The same about Lithuanians and Latvians... Firstly, they throw dozens of corpses across the border onto the Belarusian territory. There are some migrants going there, and they just throw them to our side of the border, over the fence that they have built. Now the snow has melted and exposed dead bodies lying right on the border," the President of Belarus shared the details.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that all this creates tension on the border. In

addition, the western neighbours have closed the border for Belarus and Russia, which affects third countries as well, "They have closed the border for both us and you. It has become very hard to work — even for Chinese, Kazakhs, Poles and others. There are huge queues at the borders. They are doing this on purpose."

The President of Belarus called the overall economic situation tolerable against the background of sanctions pressure, "We have overcome the sanctions-related economic pressure, just like Russia has. If we manage to provide this huge Belarusian-Russian market with supplies, and also work with friendly states, it will be enough

for our two countries. Therefore, we will be fine. We have the market and resources. We understand what needs to be done."

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko extended thanks to Russian President Vladimir Putin for his assistance in supplies through Russian ports, as well as for support in sending Belarus' first cosmonaut to the ISS.

"We want to launch a new satellite with a resolution of 25 centimetres into orbit in the future, possibly in two years, jointly with our Russian colleagues. It will be a serious declaration. We are working on it. There is no doubt that we will implement our plan. We will also work together on the cosmonaut training programme. We are ready to join your programme to do what Russian cosmonauts are doing. There is no need to have separate Belarusian and Russian programmes," Aleksandr Lukashenko underlined.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



The journey to the stars of sovereign Belarus' first cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya was successfully completed on April 6th. Her flight lasted 14 days, including 12 days aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Immediately after landing, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, congratulated the Soyuz MS-24 crew on their return to Earth and invited the cosmonauts and all those who participated in the space flight preparation to visit Belarus. The milestone event became the result of many years of painstaking work involving a huge number of specialists who also passed the space exam with flying colours.

Marina Vasilevskaya has been awarded the Hero of Belarus title. She is the first cosmonaut in the history of sovereign Belarus and the second woman to be honoured with the highest state award.

Our space. Our hero

BACKGROUND

Marina Vasilevskaya was born on September 14th, 1990 in Minsk. For the last six years, she worked as a flight attendant-instructor for Belavia Airlines. She flew as part of the crews of Boeing and Embraer aircraft. Before joining the airline as a flight attendant, she had been professionally engaged in ballroom dancing for 15 years. In her free time, Marina is fond of interior design, going to the swimming pool, doing aerobics, playing badminton and tennis. Once she returns to the ground from the sky, she goes straight to her garden where she grows vegetables and herbs with pleasure. The lady comes from a family of ordinary workers. Her family is big and friendly, she also has a brother and sister with nephews.

Interestingly, Marina's father Vitaly Vasilevsky said in an interview that even as a flight attendant, his daughter 'dreamed of flying higher than the sky'.



Preparation

The decision to arrange a flight to the ISS was made by the Presidents of Belarus and Russia, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin, during a working meeting at the Vostochny Cosmodrome on April 12th, 2022. More than 2,000 people took part in the candidate selection process. Having withstood a tough competition, the main requirements of which were professional qualifications, health status and other equally important parameters, Marina Vasilevskaya, a flight attendant of Belavia Airlines, was selected as the main cosmonaut. Anastasia Lenkova, a pediatric surgeon, was chosen as her backup.

In July 2023, the ladies began training at the Yuri Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Training Centre, and in February 2024 they successfully passed the exams and were recognised as fit for a space flight.

It typically takes specialists five to seven years to prepare for the first space flight. Marina Vasilevskaya and her backup Anastasia Lenkova were prepared for the flight in less than 8 months!

Keeping up the world level

On March 23rd, the Soyuz MS-25 spacecraft was launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome to the ISS. The crew was international — Belarusian Marina Vasilevskaya, Russian cosmonaut, Belarus-born Oleg Novitsky who was a crew commander, as well as astronaut from the USA Tracy Dyson. Fourteen days later, on April 6th, Marina Vasilevskaya, Oleg Novitsky and NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara landed on the territory of Kazakhstan, 150 km south-east of the city of Zhezkazgan.

Marina Vasilevskaya became the first cosmonaut in the history of sovereign Belarus. She managed to master the pre-flight training in the shortest possible time, cope with difficult scientific experiments in orbit and withstand tough launch and return conditions. Her case serves as an example that has assured many young people that flying to the stars is not such an unattainable goal.



Until recently, there were only 47 countries in the world that were able to send their representatives into space. Belarus became the 48th state on this list. This is an ambitious step forward, especially considering the fact that such projects are not only expensive but also require serious preliminary preparation. The country's capability to carry out space programmes undoubtedly attests to the highest level of its scientific development.

Laboratory in zero gravity

Cosmonauts have specialisations — a test pilot, a doctor, a researcher, an instructor, etc. Marina Vasilevskaya is a research cosmonaut. During her stay in orbit, she fully carried out the scientific programme developed by Belarus' National Academy of Sciences jointly with the Roscosmos State Corporation and the Russian Academy of Sciences. The research included seven targeted experiments: five research and two educational tasks in a variety of fields — from biology and physiology (the study of human capabilities under overload conditions) to the use of Belarusian-made photo and video spectral equipment located on the ISS.

In particular, it was required to complete a number of tasks on manned astronautics, conduct research related to lactoferrin protein, and study how probiotic

strains of lactic acid microorganisms and bifidobacteria behave in zero gravity. Studies were conducted on the possibility of formation and crystallisation of organic and inorganic materials in the conditions of orbital flight, as well as space photography of test natural objects were made. All these experiments not only have practical meaning but also lay the groundwork for future studies.

Meeting on native land

The support of the people, and especially of the President of Belarus, is invaluable. The Head of State worried about Marina as if she were his own daughter. Her parents repeatedly confirmed that when talking to reporters.

Belarusians showed their love not only during the spacecraft launch and landing but also when they warmly greeted the first cosmonaut of sovereign Belarus on the morning of April 11th at Minsk National Airport.

"I am very glad to set foot on my native land. I really missed my Homeland. I dedicate my space flight to our people, our Belarus," these were Marina Vasilevskaya's first words on her native land.

The cosmonaut thanked everyone for their tremendous support and such a heartfelt welcome, "I looked at Belarus from the aircraft porthole and rejoiced. Of course, our country looks much bigger from space, now I know that. But it is so pleasant to watch our beautiful green fields, forests and vast expanses from the airplane porthole."

A VOICE FROM ORBIT

On March 29th, at 17:50 Minsk time — it was at this moment that the ISS was flying over Belarus — Marina Vasilevskaya had a communication session with students of the Belarusian State University (BSU). There was also a live broadcast on the BSU YouTube channel. The cosmonaut communicated with university and lyceum students during 10 minutes and managed to answer numerous questions about the flight preparation and work in orbit.

Award

At the solemn ceremony honouring Belarusian cosmonauts at the Palace of Independence, Belarusian cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya, who was awarded the Hero of Belarus title by the Head of State, shared her emotions and impressions of the flight into space, "I am proud that I became the first cosmonaut of sovereign Belarus! It is a great honour and a great responsibility for me."

The cosmonaut addressed warm words of gratitude to Aleksandr Lukashenko for his great personal contribution to the space project.

"Thank you for your continuous support and care. Thank you for allowing this project to be implemented. I am proud that I was born in Belarus! I love my people! Everything I do comes from my heart. Being in space, I saw our Earth. It is amazing! It is powerful, big, beautiful, independent. I would like to wish all people to be kinder, to treat each other and their country with kindness," the cosmonaut conveyed her wishes to everyone.

The flight of a Belarusian citizen into space is undoubtedly a holiday and celebration for the whole country. It has also marked the result of long-term and fruitful work of many people. It is not just a huge historical event for Belarus. It is the time when the entire country, young and old alike, was unanimous in its unwavering support for its people, feeling excited and worried about the successful completion of this grand endeavour. We, Belarusians, stand firm for our people. This is why even such high achievements as a flight into space are within our reach.

FACTS

The 336th manned flight in the history of world cosmonautics took place with participation of Marina Vasilevskaya — the 21st visiting expedition (VE-21) to the ISS.

418.7 km is the ISS orbit altitude before the arrival of the Soyuz MS-25 spacecraft with a Belarusian cosmonaut on board.

About 12 days is the duration of the VE-21 crew's work on the ISS Russian segment.

7 main tasks — five research experiments and two educational projects — were included into the programme of the stay for sovereign Belarus' first cosmonaut on the ISS.

50 hours 22 minutes is the time from the Soyuz MS-25 launch on March 23rd to its docking with the ISS.

3 hours 23 minutes is the time from the Soyuz MS-24 undocking on April 6th to its landing in the steppes of Kazakhstan.



Ilya Shvedko

Co-operation guidelines have been set

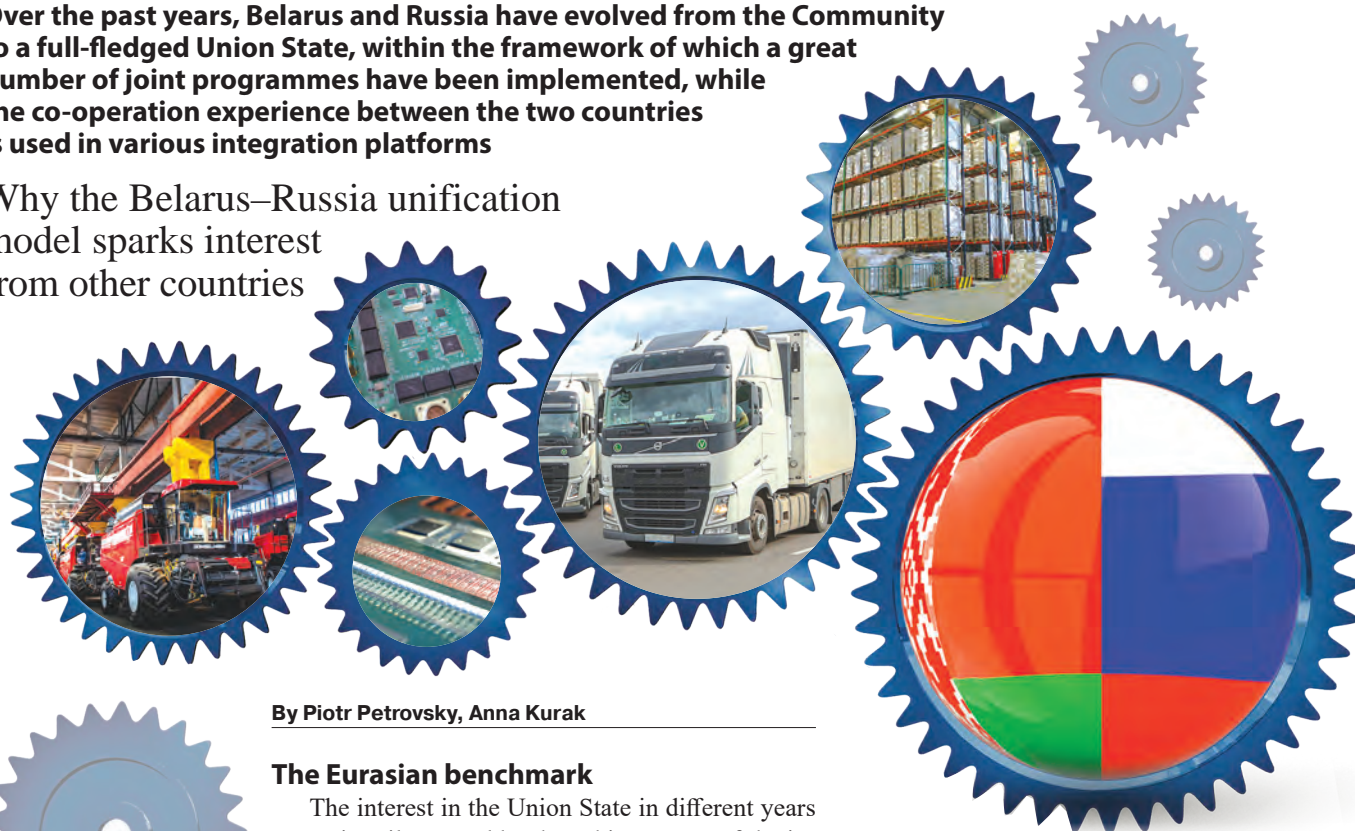
The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“The EAEU should, in turn, adopt our best practices — open borders and complete freedom for the movement of people and workforce. We do not have any restraining factors here today. We are doing everything for the benefit of our people in this regard. I think the EAEU should follow suit. Moreover, we have political, diplomatic, and military components in the Union State, which the EAEU does not have. I think these are the main issues that the EAEU should consider and adopt from the Union State.”

At the election of deputies to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly and local councils, on February 25th, 2024

Over the past years, Belarus and Russia have evolved from the Community to a full-fledged Union State, within the framework of which a great number of joint programmes have been implemented, while the co-operation experience between the two countries is used in various integration platforms

Why the Belarus–Russia unification model sparks interest from other countries



By Piotr Petrovsky, Anna Kurak

The Eurasian benchmark

The interest in the Union State in different years was primarily caused by the achievements of the integration. The developments of the Union State are truly large-scale. The trade turnover in 2023 reached a record \$54bn, which is 6 percent more than in 2022. However, if you look at the entire range of activities implemented within the Union State, you can see that it is by no means confined to the economy.

Within the framework of the Union State, equal rights of nationals of the two countries are ensured. This applies to education, healthcare, labour legislation and other areas. In contrast, the EAEU is limited by economic integration only. The experience of the Union State proven by 20+ years of practice allows solving a lot of issues of the Eurasian Union.

The EAEU may also be interested in the experience of tax harmonisation between Belarus and Russia, the union programme for which is currently underway. The same applies to the industrial, scientific and technical co-operation developed in the Union State. At present, the interaction between Russian and Belarusian auto giants — KAMAZ and BELAZ — has intensified. Belarusian manufacturers are developing full-cycle production, from stamping frames to engines and high-tech ABS systems, and other assembly units equipped with electronics that are in demand by Russians. Belarusian enterprises offer their best practices in the production of machine tools and equipment, as well as some types of microelectronics.

In the future, the EAEU has every chance to repeat the positive experience of the Union State at its level and to actually expand the Union State to its borders.

Proceeding from the realities

The accomplishments of the Union State indicate that we have travelled a path that can be expanded to other countries. In this case, it is necessary to take into account the growing crisis of the unipolar world.

An increasing number of countries are dissatisfied with the policy of the United States as a global gendarme and seek to pursue an independent course. The formation of a new multipolar world requires appropriate resources. The capabilities of the Union State are very useful in this regard.

A lot of countries are involved in co-operation with Belarus and Russia. Thus, for 45 years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has not only withstood the sanctions aggression of the West, but also has made tangible achievements in the field of import substitution — from military-industrial complex products to pharmacology, robotics and aircraft construction. Today, Iran has a fruitful and dynamic co-operation with Belarus and Russia in developing the vital North-South transport corridor which enables cargo to be shipped from the Union State to the southern ports and then — to the far arc countries. Minsk and Moscow have plans on launching joint ventures in liaison with Tehran. Let us not forget about Cuba, the distance from which does not prevent Havana from working vigorously with our countries. Cuba already acts as an observer within the EAEU. Thus, Havana has the potential to become the most powerful logistics hub in Minsk and Moscow’s trade relations with Latin American states.

Belarus and Russia have been pursuing a balanced and realistic policy for all these years. It is necessary to

remember that any expansion of integration should be based on practice. There should be nothing in excess in this matter, let alone artificial. An example of the latter is European integration. The EU is bursting at the seams today precisely because many of its projects have turned out to be far-fetched and artificial. Integration for the sake of integration is not necessary and benefits no one. Integration must proceed from the realities and life. This is exactly the case and the major advantage of the Union State.

Carrying out joint actions

In January 2024, the Supreme State Council of the Union State conducted a detailed analysis of 28 programmes implemented for the period from 2021 to 2023. What exactly has been done so far?

In short, five integrated information platforms have been created. The goods are now tracked and labelled along the whole territory from Brest to Vladivostok, with unified transport, veterinary and phytosanitary surveillance in effect. Currency and customs regulations have been harmonised. Measures to ensure information security in the financial sector have been developed, as well as unified rules for access to public procurement, competition rules and trading activities. Experts have identified approaches to the formation of a unified industrial policy, and joint investment projects are being implemented.

The working conditions in the transport and communications markets have been formed. The conditions for mutual access of tour operators to the travel services market have been determined. On top of that, the security sector is a fine example of collaboration where our countries act as a single defence structure.

Working on equal terms

Industrial co-operation is gaining momentum along the integration path. In addition, there is a tendency in the Union State to move from the ‘import substitution’ concept to the term ‘technological independence’. After all, this largely refers not to substitution with elements of copying, but to creating our own products with advanced characteristics. To this end, Belarus and Russia have joined forces in the economic sphere. Thus, large investment projects are already being implemented at Gomselmash [Belarusian manufacturer of agricultural machinery based in Gomel], Minsk Bearing Plant (MPZ trademark), the Belarusian Steel Works (BMZ trademark) and others. Another important area of co-operation is machine tool construction. Significant finances have already been allocated for its advancement.

At a meeting of the Supreme State Council in January 2024, the main directions for implementing the provisions of the Treaty on the Creation of the Union State for 2024-2026 were approved. The focus remains on the creation of a single economic space. At the same time, the block on humanitarian co-operation — science, culture and education — has grown significantly.

The strategy for scientific and technological development of the Union State for the period until 2035 has been approved. Belarusian and Russian scientists will be able to take advantage of the entire infrastructure of fundamental and applied research created in the two countries on equal terms.

Important areas of co-operation

Under the union brand

Belarus’ Ministry of Industry and Russia’s Ministry of Industry and Trade have approved 25 import-substituting investment projects based on Belarusian enterprises. As a result of their implementation, the most in-demand products will be released in the markets of the two countries — components, raw materials, assemblies, and more.



At the nuclear level

The Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant is the largest energy project of the Union State. The collaboration between Belarus and Rosatom continues in the field of nuclear medicine, digitalisation, additive technologies, elimination of accumulated environmental damage and radioactive waste management.



Space attraction

On March 23rd, 2024, the Soyuz MS-25 spacecraft with Belarusian Marina Vasilevskaya, Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky and NASA astronaut Tracy Dyson on board was successfully launched to the ISS. In addition, eight programmes of the Union State in the field of space technologies have been implemented over a quarter of a century, and three more are under development.



Common borders

In 2021, the Military Doctrine of the Union State was adopted. Co-operation in this area between the two countries has been strategic for decades. Joint drills West, Union Shield, Slavic Brotherhood are held. The regional grouping of Belarus and Russia troops and forces performs tasks to protect the borders of the Union State.



Cadres decide everything

About 1,500 co-operation agreements have been signed between universities of our countries. The Belarusian-Russian University in Mogilev is a unique educational institution where personnel training is carried out according to the programmes of the two states. The creation of the network University of High Technologies of the Union State based in Minsk is in the works.



Every grain counts

Ensuring food security is one of the key tasks of the Union State in the face of sanctions. Collaboration in agriculture has been established across all areas — from seed production and breeding to mutual supplies of processed products.



On the way to industrial independence

Sanctions force Belarus to take initiative and find opportunities that were available before but remained virtually ignored. The lack of interest in leveraging the existing opportunities earlier is related to the fact that it was possible to import turnkey technology and equipment from the West. Now we have to discard the stereotype of our technological backwardness, roll up our sleeves and engage in technological development single-handedly using our own intellect. Everything has turned out to be not as difficult as it seemed. This year's scientific and technological forum, which brought together an array of specialised industrial exhibitions under its roof, has become the most eventful in recent years both in terms of the number of exhibitors and visitors.

By Vladimir Volchkov

At the opening of the industrial exhibition, Piotr Vityaz, Academician of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences, noted that manufacturing means of production is the backbone of industry. It is hard to talk about full-fledged economic independence in the absence of domestically produced machinery, equipment, and technologies. According to Mikhail

The International Scientific and Technical Conference held in Minsk gathered 170 participants from eight countries



Myatlikov, Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it is necessary to strengthen the industrial sovereignty of the country, "The major role in this process belongs to mechanical engineering, metalworking and machine tool construction."

Machine tool industry encompasses practically all engineering and industrial areas — welding, cutting, high-precision surface treatment, precision mechanics, electrical equipment, sensors, microelec-

tronics control systems. Strictly speaking, Belarusian machines are still far from being fully localised, at least what concerns advanced models. Let us not disassemble — it is not so long ago that domestic technological equipment used a lot of imported components and assemblies, and most of them were high-tech.

The exhibition showcased both domestically made developments and Russian analogues, with some really interesting innovative solutions. After all, our

engineering school has remained very solid since Soviet times. The potential has been preserved. By the way, Belarusian high-tech engineering and R&D companies were very successful in selling their intellectual products to the West before the aggravation of the international situation. Western companies were eager and queued up to buy Belarusian developments. We have knowledge and ideas — thus, the time has come to apply them effectively within our country and in co-operation with friendly states.

Domestic manufacturers of machine tools and technological equipment, accessories, and industrial equipment were widely represented at the exhibition, such as manufacturers of computer numerical control (CNC) columns for machine tools from Russia, Belarusian sensors and elements of intelligent systems from our scientists. Companies from South Korea, China, Türkiye, Italy, and Sweden brought their developments, as well. The contours of new co-operation are gradually emerging, except that the dynamics of the technological adaptation process to new realities should have been more intensive.

Machinery behind our success



Yelizaveta Kobetskaya



AMKODOR has unveiled five novelties of road construction machinery with 80 percent component localisation

Belarus pays great attention to the issues of import substitution and localisation. Some companies from unfriendly states have stopped supplying their components to our country, thus posing a certain challenge. However, Belarus is successfully coping with it, finding ways to offset the impact of negative external factors. The recent presentation of new AMKODOR road construction machinery confirms this.

By Inna Gorbatenko, Vladislav Sychevich

Deputy Prime Minister Petr Parkhomchik attended the presentation in Kolodishchi, near Minsk. Having familiarised himself with the technological novelties that rolled off the assembly line in April 2024, Petr Parkhomchik noted that in recent years life itself forced to adjust plans for the development of domestic enterprises, "The confirmation to the fact that our industry workers have successfully coped with the challenge is the new products that we have seen today. We did not fail, as our opponents had expected, but quite the opposite — we found reserves within our country and concentrated our efforts on creating new models. This machinery is on par with world analogues in terms of its technical characteristics. An important point is that we have a very high level of localisation even at the development stage."

The new line of road construction equipment covers most of the needs of Belarusian customers. At the same time, domestic machines in this segment defy competition with foreign counterparts in terms of performance and are much more attractive in terms of price, cost of spare parts and maintenance.

The new products feature an excavator, a vibratory roller, a dump truck semi-trailer and two multipurpose loaders. The new machines are 80 percent localised with own components.

A crawler excavator with a 1.2 m³ bucket capacity deserves special attention. No similar models were produced in Belarus before. It is perfect for both land clearing and reclamation, and general construction work. That is exactly what the machine demonstrated. It went up and down various slopes easily showcasing its capabilities, and delighted the heads of road and construction organisations present at the event.

The other novelties unveiled at the presentation were not left unattended, either, and will surely find their owners soon — an asphalt single drum vibratory roller, which is an analogue of the imported one that left the Belarusian market; loaders with 2 and 7 tonnes lifting capacity in a new configuration; a dump truck trailer for transporting agricultural goods with up to 30 tonnes weight capacity.

Today, the machine building holding AMKODOR is one of the leading manufacturers of the widest model range of high-performance special purpose machinery for all sectors of the economy. In 2023 alone, 11 new models of special purpose and agricultural machines were created. The enterprise has mastered the production of axles, manipulators, harvester heads, control systems and other components for maximum localisation of machines. This year, the company is focusing on road construction and reclamation equipment as the President of Belarus has prioritised this direction, explained Andrei Yarotsky, CEO of JSC AMKODOR — Holding Management Company, "It is necessary to provide Belarusian enterprises with those machines that were actively imported before. Once we have closed the needs of the domestic market, we will focus on the second task — export. The demand in foreign markets is huge. There is a queue for our products. Moreover, it is not only Russia. There is a high demand for such equipment in Asian, Latin American and African countries, too."

Aleksandr Malinovsky, Director of R&D Centre — General Designer at AMKODOR, pointed out that the flexible technological base allows the holding to quickly update products, expand the model range and maintain the quality and reliability of machines at a high level. In addition, a well-developed network of service centres offers consumers in any region a comprehensive range of maintenance, repair, supply of spare parts, training of drivers and operators, which is another significant competitive edge making customers choose Belarusian machinery.

Foreigners are increasingly coming to Belarus for medical treatment due to the high level of medicine in our country

According to Belarus' Ministry of Healthcare, 134,000 foreign citizens came to Belarus to benefit from medical services in 2023. They were treated by local oncologists, ophthalmologists, cardiologists, dentists, neurosurgeons, transplantologists, hematologists, and plastic surgeons.

Healthcare tours

By Alena Krasovskaya

Debts ensured by insurance company

It is noteworthy that Belarusians who permanently live in other countries of the world also come to our country to use healthcare services. They enjoy all the benefits of high-quality Belarusian medicine solely on the grounds that they are still Belarusians. This is done not only by those who just got a job or started a family in a different country, but also by those who rushed abroad after the failed coup attempt in 2020. In other words, those who were the most dissatisfied and who still tell all sorts of tall tales about their Homeland abroad. Then why do they keep coming here? After all, now they have a chance to treat themselves at their places of residence. However, they regularly return to Belarus to get their teeth fixed, undergo a surgery or just have a basic medical examination. Maybe this is because something is rotten in the 'advanced democracies' of the EU and the US, and not everything is as amazing there as some people try to depict.

In fact, if Belarusian fugitives had been able to analyse information, they would have thought about the consequences even earlier. Thus, one of their ringleaders once broke his leg in the USA and immediately began to squeal, filled with indignation, all over the Internet — how come, American hospitals demand money from him in order to repair his broken leg, and a fair amount of money. Even despite the availability of insurance. Truly speaking, medical bills there were really exorbitant. Ambulance call — \$5,000, three days in the in-patient clinic — \$13,600, operating room rent — \$32,000, doctor's services — \$8,800, X-ray — \$900 each. The cost of the broken leg treatment reached \$100,000, and the insurance company washed its hands of the matter, having paid only part of the amount and suggesting paying the rest himself.



The cost of medical services remains to be a huge and tangible problem for Americans. There are a lot of different types of insurance in the US, yet sometimes Americans have no health insurance at all, while without an X-ray worth \$900-2,000 it may be impossible to survive. All in all, being sick is still an unattainable luxury for many Americans.

Of course, there is the so-called 'socialised medicine' in America, but it envisages only the simplest and basic manipulations — still for money, but at least not such immense amounts. Moreover, it is not always possible to wait to get the necessary help as there are crowds of fellow-sufferers. In view of the fact that living standards in the United States are falling, health insurance is becoming a luxury many Americans cannot afford. Therefore, spending 24h in the waiting room of an American hospital and going home after a painkiller injection and with a recommendation to take paracetamol is a common situation. A sick person may return to hos-



pital later, having a worse medical condition where they have to choose between the life or the purse. In case of choosing the first option, they have to pay off debts for life for the medical care provided in an emergency.

It is significantly cheaper for Americans to pay for a flight halfway around the world and get the necessary medical treatment in Belarus. Indeed, Belarusian prices are very reasonable, even for foreigners, the specialists are highly-qualified, and the level of healthcare is the one that not many people in America can afford. It is unbelievable but true — a day in a superior room with individual care in the traumatology department costs a foreign national a little less than \$15.

An examination may not be necessary

Europe has long forgotten what normal medicine is. Everything looks quite decent from the outside, though, just like in the US — there are insurances, there is paid medicine as well as alleged free medicine. This is until you come across the 'charms' of local healthcare personally.

In fact, you must pay for every cotton ball used for your needs while the insurance company, even if you have a residence permit, will not be particularly quick to pay all your medical expenses. Thus, in Poland, they kick a patient out of the hospital after abdominal surgery the next day, on the third day at best. No one really cares if a person has anyone at home to get them a glass of water or apply a bandage. In order to have stitches removed, a frail person has to crawl back to the hospital. The doctor will not come to the patient's home, nor will it be possible to use the ambulance as a free taxi. Don't you like paying tens of thousands of euros for such a service? Then welcome to the free hospital, where you will have to wait in a queue for the next 24h. They can just relieve your symptoms as part of the free service and there is no guarantee that they will do it efficiently.

While everything is clear about free medicine, it strikes as unpleasant that even in a paid clinic a patient sometimes has to wait for their turn for several months or over a year. It is a rather common situation in Europe now when a clinic calls a person to show up for a once assigned medical procedure or check-up, but the person died long ago.

The qualification of medical workers deserves special mention. At the end of March, a horrible story happened in a Prague hospital — they confused two patients there. The doctor who was performing the procedure not only did not pay attention to the patient's last name, but also did not notice that the patient was deeply pregnant. Only after the procedure, having seen the results, the doctor wondered, 'What did I do?'...



Such different approaches

In neighbouring Lithuania, young parents nearly lost their two-year-old son when they contacted a paediatrician. The child had been coughing and had a serious fever for several days, and the parents, having paid more than €100, expected that the boy would at least be professionally examined. Yet, instead of examination or treatment, they received... a recommendation to give the child warm water and paracetamol. To be totally honest, the doctor was not completely lazy and still listened to the sick child.

An attempt to demand to take tests from the child, make an X-ray, or prescribe antibiotics met misunderstanding on the part of the doctor who recommended bringing the child back in case he got worse. That is, pay €100 again and perhaps the doctor will deign to write out the necessary prescription, or even send the child for a blood test for an additional fee. In the meantime, the desperate parents had nothing left to do but to go home to give their sick child warm drinks, as the doctor recommended. When the parents and the sick child found themselves in the waiting room of a local hospital on the same day, the child already had serious breathing problems.

In terms of approaches to medical treatment, prevention, emergency care, drug prescription and availability of medicine, Belarus is very different from what one might encounter abroad. In our country, a doctor's visit to a patient's home on demand is considered the norm, as well as free ambulance, and more. In Israel, for example, if a hospital has no available places or a person has an illness not in line with the clinic's specialisation, a person will be refused medical help — no matter what poor health state a person might have. A sick person will have to independently try to find an appropriate clinic which will be able to render the required medical help.

In contrast, in our country, an intoxicated man who broke his leg near the maternity hospital was thoroughly examined in the emergency room of the same hospital, where they immobilised the broken limb, called transport and carefully took the patient to the traumatology department — for free.

This is how Belarusian medicine works. That is why, despite all the sanctions against our country, people from all over the world come to Belarus for health. Foreigners vote for Belarusian healthcare with their dollars and euros, and this is the best confirmation that we have something to be proud of.

THE VERY LEG IN QUESTION

Ambulance call — \$5,000
Three days in in-patient clinic — \$13,600
Operating room rent — \$32,000
Doctor's services — \$8,800
X-ray — \$900 each



Anti-NATO protests

Eight people have been reportedly injured during clashes between police and demonstrators taking part in an anti-NATO march in the Italian city of Naples, Italian media reported

According to the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper, protesters gathered outside San Carlo Theatre, where a concert was scheduled to mark NATO's 75th anniversary, demanding that the institution not be used for political purposes. The demonstrators were unarmed, but this did not stop the police from violently dispersing the crowd using batons. The crowd were chanting anti-NATO slogans, urging Italy to leave the alliance.

The report also noted a pro-Palestinian procession along Naples' Via Toledo, featuring participants displaying banners opposing NATO.

Around fifty people tried to break through the police cordon, forcing law enforcement officials to respond with

batons. Meanwhile, pro-Palestinian protesters occupied the premises of the University of Naples Federico II, demanding that NATO stop co-operating with Israel, the newspaper reported.

"We consider it unacceptable that such a method of violence is used against those who loudly condemn the barbaric war and the participation of NATO and our governments in the genocide committed by the state of Israel. While people are dying in the Gaza Strip, in Naples they are breaking the heads of those who dare to disturb high officials who have closed for celebrations in theatres," the protest organisers were quoted as saying by the newspaper.

Late last month, mass group demonstrations took place on March 30th in

several European countries as part of the weekly ongoing protests since the beginning of the Israeli war on Gaza.

The demonstrations showcased unprecedented high momentum and a wide scope across Europe, extending to many cities, including London, Paris, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Aarhus, Oslo, and others.

Naples is home to NATO's Allied Joint Force Command and Defence College.

Anti-NATO sentiment has grown worldwide, including in member countries over the alliance's policy of interference in other countries' affairs. Russia is also opposed to the bloc's eastward expansion, citing it as one of the reasons for Moscow's special military operation against Ukraine.

Corruption is rampant in EU

Criminal networks in the European Union are infiltrating legal businesses across the bloc's 27 countries, and rely heavily on corruption to carry out their activities

This is the grim picture that emerges from a report published by the EU's crime agency, Europol. The agency has identified 821 particularly threatening criminal networks with more than 25,000 members in the bloc.

According to Europol, 86 percent of the most threatening criminal networks are able to include the legal economy to hide their activities, and to clean their criminal gains. For European officials, drug trafficking and corruption are the main concern.

The Executive Director at Europol, Catherine De Bolle, has said that they know the 821 networks and that they will share the information about them with the members that have them in their territory.

As record amounts of cocaine are being seized in Europe and violent drug-related crime is becoming more visible in many EU countries such as Belgium and France, drug trafficking is emerging as a major activity, the report said.

Half of the most dangerous criminal networks are involved in drug trafficking, either as an independent activity or as part of a portfolio.



Disappearance of Austria's glaciers

Austrian glaciers receded last year at a rapid pace and the Alpine country is likely to be largely ice-free in 40 to 45 years as the process continues, experts said

The Austrian Alpine Club said that, of the 93 glaciers its volunteers measured and observed, all but one receded in 2022-2023.

The 79 glaciers measured both last year and the previous year were an average 23.9m (78 feet) shorter than a year earlier, it said in an annual report. That was the third-highest figure of shrinkage in both the club's 133 years of measurements and in the past seven years. The retreat of 14 other glaciers was observed less precisely, for example by comparing photos.

The biggest retreat was that of Austria's biggest glacier — the Pasterze, in the Glockner mountain group in the southern province of Carinthia — which shrank by

203.5m (668 feet), a record for that glacier.

Gerhard Lieb, the co-leader of the club's glacier measurement service, said Austria's glaciers can no longer be saved and their disappearance in the coming decades is 'unstoppable'.

"There might be some remnants in shadowed locations — maybe at the Glockner glacier on the north-east side, some areas in the Oetztal valley," said the service's other co-leader, Andreas Kellerer-Pirklbauer. "But de facto, in 40 to 45 years all of Austria will be pretty much ice-free."

He added that 'a late but very long and warm melting period in 2023' was the main culprit in the latest numbers.

Rich Americans seek second passports

The United States is experiencing a touch of socio-political instability — perhaps karma for the nation's history of interference in other countries' politics? — that is putting its people on edge

Not everyone has the means to prepare an exit plan, but wealthy Americans grab this chance. They have started acquiring second passports to other countries through so-called golden visa programmes, which allow wannabe residents to establish residency through investment.

The wealthy are building these 'passport portfolios' — collections of second, and even third or fourth, citizenships — in case they need to flee their home country. Henley & Partners, a law firm that specialises in high-net-worth citizenships, said Americans now outnumber every other nationality when it comes to securing al-

ternative residences or added citizenships.

"If I'm wealthy, I would like to hedge against levels of volatility and uncertainty. The idea of diversification is well understood by wealthy individuals around what they invest. It makes no sense to have one country of citizenship and residence when I have the ability to actually diversify that aspect of my life as well," said Dominic Volek, group head of private clients at Henley & Partners.

The top destinations for supplemental passports among Americans are Portugal, Malta, Greece and Italy, according to Henley & Partners.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Field of battle and co-operation

The interests of many countries clash in the Global South

With the onset of a new cold war, which has already surpassed the era of 1945-1991 in terms of tension and sharp rhetoric, the Dark Continent is once again emerging as the arena of confrontation between world powers and struggle for the independence of African countries



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"The world is changing. It will be different. There will never be a return to what was before. The peoples of the world are aware of this. For the most part, they have realised that the future belongs to Africa. The time of Africa has come."

During the official reception in honour of the President of Belarus on behalf of the President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, on December 9th, 2023

By Anton Popov

Blood and sand

There are a lot of hotbeds of tension in Africa today. Perhaps the Sahel, a natural area separating the Sahara Desert in North Africa and the fertile savannahs of equatorial regions, remains to be the most troubled region. The Sahel is home to a number of states that were colonies of France until the middle of the last century. After liberation from the colonial yoke, the administrators appointed by Paris were quickly replaced by cunning businessmen from French companies. As a result, the resources of countries such as the Central African Republic, Niger, and Mali remained in the hands of Europeans. However, the region has seen a number of changes of power in recent years. Pro-French regimes have been overthrown. Niger, which occupied a leading position in uranium supplies to the Fifth Republic, became a particularly sensitive loss for France.

In this regard, Macron's current activity in creating a coalition of countries ready to send their armies to Ukraine is

nothing else than an attempt by the owner of the Elysee Palace to somehow restore his shaken image after Paris' failed policies in Africa.

As predicted by experts, shortly after the ECOWAS intervention in Niger did not succeed and the West realised that the Alliance of Sahel States consisting of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger could not be taken using brute force, the level of terrorist danger in the region increased significantly. This is especially true of the problematic area where the borders of the three countries converge. Islamist gangs have been keeping the local population in fear for years there. Even though they are divided and at war with each other, they still manage to cause considerable damage. It was to combat the growing threat that the alliance countries agreed to create joint forces in early March to fight terrorists.

The leaders of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso face a difficult task. They will have to demonstrate cohesion and high efficiency, since the gangs have support base in the region among the poorest segments of the population and have the opportunity to move from country to country avoiding persecution by the authorities. In addition, military force alone will not be enough to succeed in this confrontation.

What is needed is economic transformations and the early implementation of measures to achieve financial sovereignty by abandoning the use of the colonial currency linked to the euro — the African franc, which enables Paris to maintain the remnants of control over the situation in West Africa and the Sahel.

The American trace

The actual collapse of the Françafrique is beneficial not only to the local leaders and progressive players like Belarus, Russia and China, but also to the United States. In conditions of strategic uncertainty, Washington is trying to fish in troubled waters. The story of the Senegalese protests and how the United States had a hand in extinguishing the unrest is indicative in this case. Let us remind that

the crisis in yet another former French colony broke out due to the postponement of the presidential election from February to December, which resulted in violent protests across the country. Pressure from the West, and above all the United States, played an important role in President Macky Sall's decision to make concessions to the protesters. As if on cue, the American media began to release materials with crying headlines about a 'possible coup', while US officials urged Senegal's government to move forward and hold its presidential election as soon as possible.

Americans also actively poke their noses into the relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. In mid-February, the United States condemned the actions of the Rwandan-backed M23 rebels operating in the Congolese province of North Kivu. After that, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Félix Tshisekedi accused Rwandans of plundering and trading his country's mineral wealth, in particular coltan.

All this happened against the background of protests by Congolese, who accused the United States of supporting Rwanda and the M23 gangs. Thanks to Washington's patronage, Kigali has no particular restrictions on coltan export, although this mineral is significantly less explored in the territory of Rwanda

than in Congo, while Kinshasa constantly faces obstacles to the trade of this valuable mineral. Therefore, the ostentatious outrage over the M23 activities on the part of the US looks more like a way to cover up the dark enrichment schemes of American companies — by the way, one of the two largest coltan processing plants is located in the USA — than a real manifestation of concern for the distressed residents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United States does not buy coltan directly from Kinshasa, because it does not want the natural resource-rich Democratic Republic of the Congo to strengthen its economy and become a regional leader.

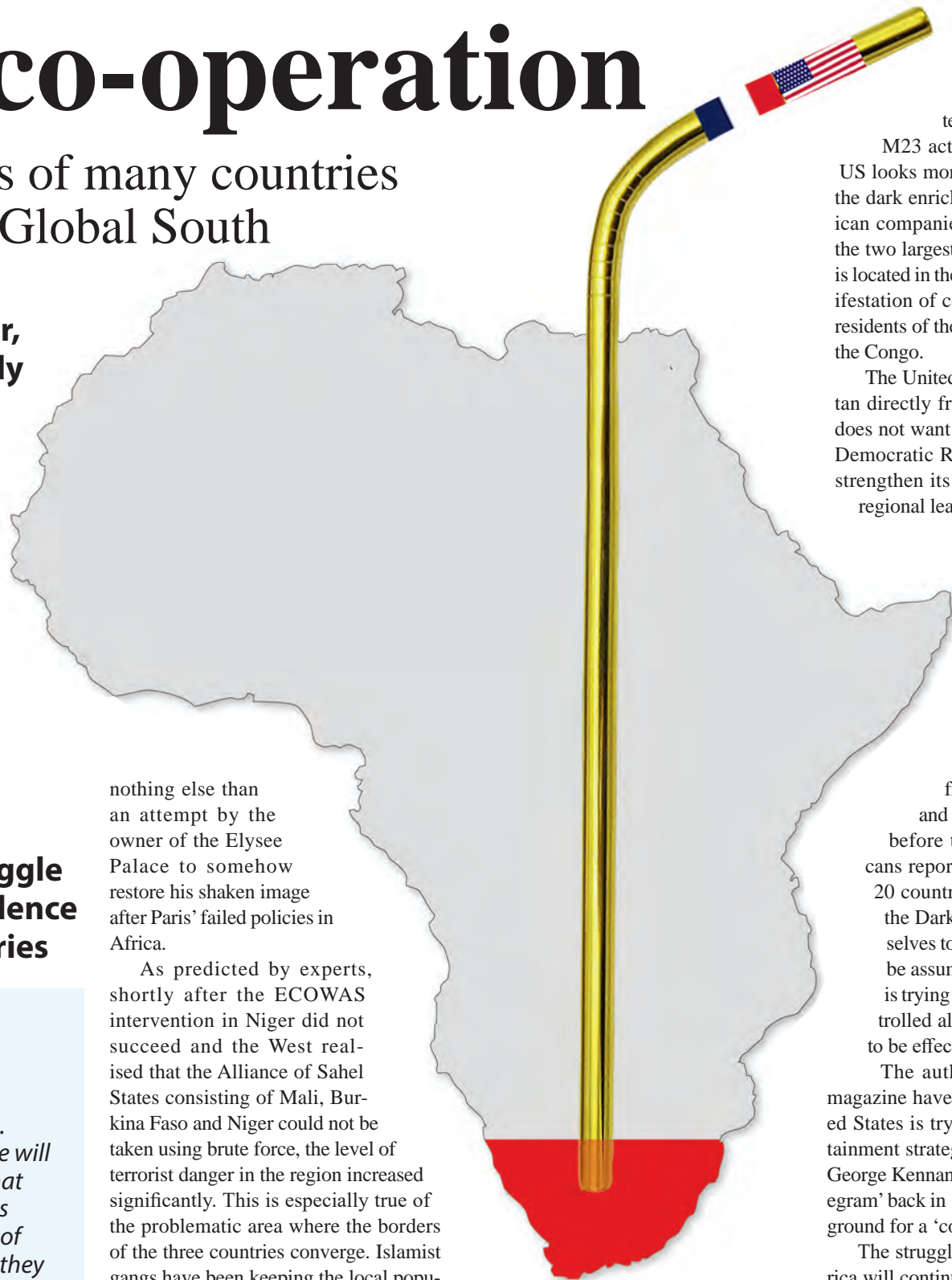
Exercise Justified Accord 2024 kicked off on the other side of the continent in early March with the involvement of military personnel from some African countries, as well as from the United Kingdom and the United States. Shortly before the manoeuvres, Americans reported that they had invited 20 countries, yet many powers of the Dark Continent limited themselves to sending observers. It can be assumed that the United States is trying to put together a new controlled alliance here. It is unlikely to be effective, though.

The authors of Foreign Affairs magazine have suggested that the United States is trying to implement a containment strategy in Africa proposed by George Kennan in his famous 'Long Telegram' back in 1946, and is preparing the ground for a 'colour revenge'.

The struggle for the influence in Africa will continue to grow. The countries of the continent have enormous potential for development which is artificially restrained by the West. The displacement of the old colonial powers and supranational corporations from the African continent meets the interests of Africa as well as the countries opposing the West. In fact, only when African countries gain economic independence will they be able to fully use their natural resources and human potential for their own benefit.

Belarus plays an important role in this epoch-making process. Our country has approached Africa not as a new colonialist but as a sovereign country ready for mutually beneficial co-operation.

During Aleksandr Lukashenko's visits to the African continent, stable ties were established, in particular, with Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea in the fields of agriculture, industry, medicine, education, and tourism. The bilateral agreements have already yielded fruits — last year, for the first time in its history, Zimbabwe was able not only to ensure food security but also to export grain thanks to the supply of Belarusian agricultural machinery. Positive prospects are also emerging in collaboration with such a rapidly developing country as Kenya, which the President of Belarus also visited in December. African states can also be considered as a gateway to the relevant region — thus, deals were signed with Equatorial Guinea on launching the first phase of a regional hub to promote Belarusian products to the markets of Central and West African countries.



AFRICA

The Minsk Times
Thursday
April 18
2024

9

Belarusian Polesie in spring

Wayward rivers and marshy landscapes, unique architecture and mysterious folklore, amazing cuisine and vibrant lifestyle of the locals — Belarus' southern region wins the hearts of even the most sophisticated tourists

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Exploring Herodotus' world map

The Pripyat River — the circulatory system of the region — is called the Polesie Amazon for its beauty and huge expanses of unspoiled nature. The current is fast, the landscapes in the floodplain are incredible. It also provides a habitat for a great number of animals there — from majestic bisons and red deer to rare Przewalski's horses. In order to experience maximum unity with nature, it is best to explore Pripyat from the water. Renting a kayak or a boat is no problem at all — kayaking and boat tours are arranged even directly from Minsk. It should be noted that such tours enjoy huge popularity. After all, now the river has overflowed its banks and turned the entire neighbourhood into a solid expanse of water — the bottom is not visible even in clear weather. By the way, according to the maps of ancient Greek historian Herodotus, it was in the area of modern Polesie that the real sea was once located.

Building a temple without a single nail

The wooden temples of Polesie built without a single nail are impressive for their durability. Modest at first glance churches have been the decoration of many villages for two or three hundred years already. All of them were built by local nameless craftsmen, so you cannot find two similar ones. There is an amazing Church of Trinity in Dobroslavka, a monument of wooden architecture — its width is only seven metres. The St. Nicholas Church in Kozhan-Gorodok surprises with five domes, each of which looks in its own direction. It seems to be about to collapse. Yet, it has been like this almost since the first years of construction in 1818. The St. Michael the Archangel Church in Rubel has never been closed since 1796, even during the wars. An almost two-hundred-year-old iconostasis has also been preserved inside. However, nowadays church services are held across the street, in the new Church of Christ the Saviour Image Not Made by Hands.

Tasting potato babka

“Poleshuki [name given to the people who populate the swamps of Polesie] are interesting people. If they do not like you, go away wherever you wish... But if they do, it is forever,” Bishop Stefan of Pinsk and Luninets once said. And he

was definitely right. Polesie is a special swamp republic inside Belarus with its own traditions, cuisine and even language. Each village has its own dialect, which is sometimes understood only by the locals. Yet, listening to them is a pleasure! Especially when sitting at the table with wonderful Polesie dishes — fragrant round loaves of bread, rich soups, machanka [stew made with a combination of pork, sour cream, flour, and beef stock] accompanied with fluffy pancakes, dumplings with blueberries and nalistniki [large thick pancakes] filled with cottage cheese. Many villages have been provided with gas heating, but no household is in a hurry to destroy masonry stoves. After all, it is in a cast iron pot that you can make the tastiest potato babka [baked grated potato pie, dressed with fried meat and onions] with a crispy crust — mmm, delicious!

Making friends with feathered and furry creatures

Travellers with children should definitely take an opportunity and go to the Pripjatsky National Park. Kids will appreciate walks à la safari, where in a couple of hours they can see deer, elk, roe deer, wild boars, foxes, hares and other animals on forest paths. There is also a site with a real ancient heathen temple and a meadow of wishes. Older children will be interested in visiting the Turovsky Meadow Nature Reserve. The locals jokingly call it ‘the bird airport’. Every year, hundreds of thousands of birds stop here on their way from Europe and Africa, where they winter, to nesting sites that can be located even in Yakutia. The chances of seeing an azure tit, a greater spotted eagle, a Terek sandpiper within arm's reach are very high. Professional ornithologists teach young tourists to ring birds.



The civilian registry office in Pinsk is located in Butrimovich Palace

BELTA



Water tours along the Pripyat River are very popular



Turovsky Meadow is a nesting place for rare bird species. Ruffs perform a mating ritual

BELTA



St. Nicholas Church in Kozhan-Gorodok

planetabelarus.by



Pripjatsky National Park

Getting to know the Pinsk gentry

“Pinsk is not a province, but the capital! The capital of Polesie,” residents of one of the oldest Belarusian cities say with pride. It is worth visiting here at least because Pinsk is in second place in the country in terms of preservation of architectural heritage. Magnificent temples, churches and synagogues, interesting museums and the picturesque embankment of the Pina River... Even the civilian registry office is located in a real palace of the 18th century. Cultural life is also booming. The Polesky Drama Theatre is the pearl of Belarus' theatrical art. Avid theatregoers from all over the country specially come to watch The Pinsk Gentry play in a local theatre. Yet, an absolute hit of recent seasons is Viy [horror fantasy play based on the novel by Nikolai Gogol]. In the performance of poleshuki, the evil spirit looks fascinating.

After the game, when the cup, medals and all individual prizes had already found their heroes, and the degree of emotional tension, although still hovering under the arches of the cosy Olympic Arena, no longer ignited the ice, head coach of the winners Dmitry Baskov willingly shared his impressions of the season and the final battle. Returning his thoughts to the most dramatic moment of the confrontation, when the scoreboard highlighted the sensational superiority of the Minsk Region team after the first period (4:3), he revealed that a serious conversation had taken place in the locker room. “I will not quote it verbatim but I think that after that talk, everyone realised the level of responsibility they must feel when going onto the ice against any opponent. Especially in the final. I will put it this way — in the team next to the First Person of the country, we must be the first only. We always have this task when stepping onto the ice in every match.”

Defeats in the first meeting (2:5) put the hockey players of Minsk Region in a desperate situation — they needed only a victory in order to continue fighting in the series. The contenders for the title fought tenaciously to gain it and, to the delight of the audience that filled the arena stands to the limit, they did not give up until the last second. In the end, everything was decided by the second period, which the enthusiastic team of the President won hands down — 6:1. According to some views, that it was the best performance that the national team of the Head of State has demonstrated recently — unbelievable speeds, amazing motivation, intense fight at every section of the hockey rink. Everyone performed great, but forward Aleksei Shantyka was the one to come up big. He scored three goals in a row and was later recognised as the best player of the game. Aleksandr Lukashenko made a significant



The team of firsts

Another season of the Republican Hockey League has become history — the President’s squad has once again won the main trophy

contribution to the team’s victory having scored a hat-trick of assists in the match.

To the credit of the loser team, it should be noted that they fought like lions. When it might have seemed that the duel had exhausted the intrigue and

experience and skill were on the side of the President’s national team that clinched a bright and memorable victory in a scintillating manner with a total score of 10:8. “The championship turned out to be emotional,” Dmitry Baskov summed up the



the match was quietly rolling towards its natural outcome, the hockey players of Minsk Region surprised again — the final third of the match passed with their advantage. It was a true final and a battle between two really worthy opponents. However, the

season. “We get older every year but our love for hockey does not decrease with time. The participants become stronger and younger, and the tournament acquires a new attractive flair. All the teams are motivated to beat the President’s squad, and



we are excited about that.” By the way, after the award ceremony, Aleksandr Lukashenko presented his medal to the son of the Minsk Region national team player Yevgeny Leonov. The boy dreams of becoming a hockey player like his father and studies at the Dinamo Minsk school. Therefore, he will surely remember such a memorable gift from the hands of the President for the rest of his life and it will be the best incentive for him to conquer future peaks.

Thus, another season of the Republican Hockey League has

WE NEED THIS KIND OF HOCKEY!

Some of the most active fans at the crowded Olympic Arena were guys from the Ivenets Boarding School for Children with Special Needs. These boys and girls know firsthand what real cool hockey is — they came to the Dinamo Minsk matches more than once, warmly welcomed our hockey players as guests at their school, and actively supported the President’s team in the Republican League playoff throughout the season. In March, they visited the Palace of Independence with an excursion and, of course, they could not miss out on the opportunity to visit the final hockey match for the trophy. After the game, they shared the joy of victory with the triumphant on the ice, imprinting in their hearts unforgettable emotions, numerous gifts and vivid joint photos for a long memory.

been consigned to history. The President’s team won the major trophy for the 15th time, while the bronze awards were granted to the hockey players of Grodno Region, who previously defeated the Brest Region team with a score of 6:3. The following players were recognised as the best in their positions: goalkeeper Maksim Shchepko (Minsk Region), defender Aleksandr Kovshik (Grodno Region), forward Artyom Karkotsky (President’s team), scorer Andrei Kostitsyn (31 points (15+16), President’s team).

Right on target

Anton Smolski became the winner of the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup

It was a long and very exciting biathlon season. Having started with the summer races in Sochi, it finished last weekend in Murmansk where the final stage of the Commonwealth Cup was held. In the mass start race that closed the programme, Anton Smolski took third place, which allowed the leader of the Belarusian national team to win the overall standings of the competition.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, congratulated the athlete on his brilliant success. “The victory achieved in an uncompromising struggle with the strongest Russian biathletes is the result of your hard work! Your victory has aroused bright emotions among all biathlon fans in our country,” the congratulatory message reads. The Head of State wished the athlete good luck and new victories for the benefit of Belarus.



It is difficult to say which place Anton Smolski would have won this season in the overall World Cup standings since neither Belarusian nor Russian athletes are allowed to participate in international competitions. Bearing huge reputational and financial losses, facing decreased interest in the tournament and a drop in sports level, the International Biathlon Union ended the season by fits and starts and will be remembered by a bigger number of incidents and embarrassing mishaps than in the entire previous history of the World Cup.

The Commonwealth Biathlon Cup,

which has been held for the second time only, is gaining momentum and entering new orbits of public interest. Dozens of athletes from Russian regions as well as young Belarusian athletes, who had previously experienced a serious shortage of competitive practice along with poor motivation in that regard, got a chance to show their skills and prove themselves.

The Commonwealth Cup has already surpassed many stages of the World Cup in terms of its organisation. Those who were present at the Raubichi biathlon competition will just confirm that. The competition

that Anton Smolski, the silver medalist of the 2022 Beijing Olympics, faced on the track is another confirmation of these words — Said Khalili, Anton Babikov, Eduard Latypov are all athletes with big names, and to get ahead of any of them in any race is not an easy task. A year ago, Smolski did not succeed in winning the overall Commonwealth Cup due to illness, which prevented him from participating in decisive races. This time, Anton has gained the upper hand, having won a well-deserved victory in a bright and uncompromising confrontation. Congratulations!

Summing up the season, it should be noted that Hanna Sola’s amazing performance, although not always consistent, has become her first season after giving birth to a daughter. Dzmitry Lazouski, Ilya Auseyenko, Ivan Tulatsin, Pavel Belko have made everyone talk about them, too. Certainly, our attention was focused on Dzinara Smolskaya, who won the women’s Commonwealth Biathlon Cup last year. This year, the young mum’s participation was an attempt to return, so next year we expect successful work in a duet from our biathlon star couple. After all, one victory is good but two are better!

BELTA

Photo of the week



International competitions in water adventure tourism — *Neman Spring* — opened the water tourism season on the Avgustovsky Canal, gathering about 200 participants

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On April 18th, 1902, fingerprinting was used to identify a criminal for the first time in the world. It is a method of identifying a person by fingerprints based on the uniqueness of skin pattern. Each person has an individual pattern of papillary lines on the fingers that do not change during life, and regenerate after skin damage. Criminology became the first and most important area where fingerprinting is used.

On April 19th, 1970, the first VAZ-2101 car, commonly nicknamed 'Kopeika' (aka 'Kopeck') in the Soviet Union, rolled off the Volga Automobile Plant's assembly line. VAZ-2101 Zhiguli is a rear-wheel drive passenger car of a small class with a sedan body type. Soon, Kopeika became a real people's car in the USSR. This automobile proved to be a small masterpiece — neither before nor after it, Soviet automakers were able to create such durable cars.



April 20th is World Circus Day. Although the circus is one of the oldest forms of art since mentions of all kinds of performances by

acrobats, jugglers, riders, and clowns date back to the ancient world, it appeared in its modern form only at the end of the 18th century. Its founder is considered to be Philip Astley, the English equestrian who showed various horse riding tricks in the ring.

April 20th, 1994 is the day when the museum in honour of Belarusian writer Vladimir Korotkevich was founded in the city of Orsha. The writer's personal belongings, documents, photographs, archival materials, friendly caricatures, drawings, books with gift signatures, statements and letters of contemporaries are exhibited there.



April 20th is Chinese Language Day, a memorable date established by the UN Department of Public Information. Chinese is one of the six official languages of the United Nations, along with Russian, English, Arabic, Spanish and French. Chinese Language Day pays tribute to Cangjie, the founder of Chinese writing, who developed a set of pictograms that later formed the basis for hieroglyphs. Written Chinese is considered one of the most difficult languages in the world.

On April 21st, 1969, there was established a branch of the Brest Regional Museum of Local Lore — Kamenets Tower. The tower (also known as Kamenets Pillar or Kamenets Vezha) was erected between 1276 and 1288 on the order of Vladimir Vasilkovich, Prince of Volhynia, by architect Aleksa as an outpost on the western borders. The tower is located on a high hill, on the left bank of the Lesnaya River. The modern exposition is placed on five tiers of the tower across five halls.



April 22nd, 1724 is the date of birth of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German philosopher, the founder of the German classical philosophy. Kant became the most influential philosopher of the Enlightenment era. Philosophers such as Nietzsche, Hegel and Schopenhauer based their theories on the denial of his ideas or agreement with them.

April 22nd is International Mother Earth Day. It was proclaimed by the resolution of the UN General Assembly on April 22nd, 2009. In order to achieve a just



balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature and the Earth.

April 23rd is World Table Tennis Day. It is celebrated on this day in honour of the birthday of Ivor Montagu, the famous British table tennis player, organiser of the first ever World Table Tennis Championship (1926), as well as the founder and first president of the International Table Tennis Federation. Table tennis (also known as ping pong) appeared more than a century ago. It is an Olympic sport today.



April 23rd, 1564 marks the birthday of William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English playwright and poet, one of the most famous playwrights in the world. In 20 years of his creative life, he created the works that have remained relevant for five centuries. Shakespeare is the author of 17 comedies, 10 chronicles, 11 tragedies, 5 poems and a cycle of 154 sonnets. His works encompass plays that are well known to any literate inhabitant of the planet, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Prince of Denmark*, *King Lear* and more.

