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Yury Mozolevsky

Scholarship holder of the President's Special Fund to Support Talented Youth, Vlada Aleksandrova

Young and talented

The state annually encourages young and talented musicians, scientists, painters and artistes — all those whom we can confidently call the future of Belarus. On the initiative of the Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, two funds were established: one aiming at social support of talented youngsters and the other — at assistance to talented youth. This year, 100 gifted young people and five artistic troupes have been recognised by the President's Special Fund. → 7



Technologies of tomorrow

A project that will bring the Belarusian agro-industrial complex to a new level: this is how the importance of building a hi-tech agro-industrial production facility in the Pukhovichi District of the Minsk Region is seen. Its organisation is being overseen by the Belarusian National Biotechnological Corporation (BNBC) and Chinese CITIC Group acting as the general contractor and a shareholder. The progress of construction has recently been discussed at a meeting with the President.



Surveyor Dmitry Prokhorchik at BNBC construction site

Speaking about the significance of the new site, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted,

“The enterprise which is currently being built near Minsk is like a nuclear power plant, whose first power generating unit will be launched in the near future. It is like the production of high precision weapons in Belarus, space projects, which we are implementing and on which we are working. It involves advanced technologies; it is our future. Add IT parks and the digitisation of our country, not only of the economy, to that. This is the future of our state, just like the future of any state.”

Agro-industrial production in the Pukhovichi District is the first agricultural enterprise at this level in the country. At the same time, other major investment projects are being implemented in Belarus. The President noted,

“I intentionally remind you, because some people here have purposefully ‘forgotten’ that we are implementing major billion-dollar hi-tech projects which will enable us to look into the future. Perhaps some wanted it to be more extensive, but this involved great expense.”

Not every country can afford to build such hi-tech enterprises as the BNBC agro-industrial complex. The Head of State recalled that the project is being implemented jointly with the People’s Republic of China, following an agreement with President Xi Jinping. “We just cannot lag behind the schedule. The enterprise should be built on time because it must work, bring profit and money which we have borrowed (in this case from the People’s Republic of China). Of course, we will have to return the money by 2032. I think if we implement a business plan, the loan will be repaid on time and with no

problems. At least, no one has ever had any complaints,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Construction on the project began in summer 2018. It is planned to build a complex of 14 plants with phased commissioning. Deep processing of grain using modern methods of biotechnology with the production of essential amino acids (lysine, tryptophan, threonine) for production of highly productive, balanced feed and feed additives will be undertaken here.

After the meeting, the Deputy Head of the President Administration, Valery Belsky, told reporters that the first stage of feed production will be launched in the near future,

“Next year, about eight months ahead of schedule, the second stage of production of amino acids will begin. Then the Corporation will start implementing the third stage of the project. For this purpose, a plot has been allocated in the Pukhovichi District. The estimated results of this project are about \$1bn in revenue over the next few years.”

After commissioning of the second stage, the project will reach its full capacity. In fact, about 40 percent of the products (amino acids) are planned to be exported to Russia, Ukraine, the EU and China. Hi-tech production will make it possible to ensure import substitution.

Although the facility near Minsk has not yet been launched into operation, Mr. Belsky noted, about 80 percent of the products are contracted: orders have already been placed.

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Minsk: cosy and beautiful

Construction of the Minsk-Mir complex and new social infrastructure facilities: topical issues of the Belarusian capital’s development are under the President’s control



Minsk-Mir complex

By Dmitry Umpirovich

On meeting the Chairman of the Minsk City Executive Committee — Anatoly Sivak, the Head of State discussed plans for the further development of Minsk. According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, Minsk is a clean, cosy, convenient and beautiful city now, offering opportunities for family walks with children, physical education and sports. Order in the hero-city of Minsk must be preserved. The President stressed, “Under no circumstances should anyone prevent people living there.”

A new large residential district is being built in the south of Minsk, on the site of the former Minsk-1 airport. Around 2.2m square metres of housing alone will be constructed here. According to the Mayor, the Minsk-Mir multifunctional complex is the main investment platform in the city and, unsurprisingly, the President’s attention is focused on it.

Aleksandr Lukashenko asked about the implementation of the project, “I’m mostly concerned about the construction of public buildings — a financial centre, and partly, a shopping and entertainment centre — which cannot be sold today to get quick money. He added, “Accommodation is a different matter. Good housing is being built, well done. However, other sites also need attention. What about the infrastructure? Are we meeting the construction deadlines in general?”

Actually, only 10 percent of accommodation is ready and 730,000 square metres are under construction. According to Mr. Sivak, construction of the financial centre has begun and the investor is now dealing with commissioning. “It’s also important to ensure that construction of roads does not lag behind the commissioning of residential buildings. Otherwise, we’ll face problems,” Mr. Sivak stressed.

The meeting focused not only on Minsk-Mir but the whole social infrastructure of the capital. Work is currently underway at 33 health and education facilities. Among them are ten hospitals and clinics and a school in the Kamennaya Gorka residential district. As the Mayor noted, the investment programme is significant and is aimed primarily at these two areas.

Peace and order in a stable country

Last week, the President received reports from Valery Vakulchik, the Chairman of the State Security Committee. The main topic of conversation was ensuring peace, security and order in the country. Aleksandr Lukashenko focused on this task from the very beginning of their talk, “National security is a top priority. In this regard, the State Security Committee together with the President plays a crucial role in the protection of the independence and the sovereignty of our state.”



Valery Vakulchik

History is a good teacher. We have learned its lessons, including from the recent Soviet past, what happens when a country finds itself in the midst of wars and conflicts, when its territory becomes a bargaining chip in the interests of those who have power.

Due to its geopolitical position, Belarus has always been hit by winds from different directions. The present period is no exception. It is no accident that the President started the conversation about security with historical parallels, “We know from where winds blow towards our Belarusian land. Unfortunately, not from the side we would prefer. However, we are prepared for anything. The peculiar feature of the present situation is that, by now, we have learned to cope with these winds and hurricanes. Back then, we did not know how to fight them. We did not have a sovereign and independent state because of that. Many times, Belarus was divided into pieces that were incorporated into different countries. You know that the country was actually partitioned before the last war. We cannot let this happen today.”

Sadly, there are certain forces that do not appreciate peace and order in our common home. They fail to follow the law and, under the pretext of the election campaign, they

are ready to turn everything upside down in the country. The President categorically and firmly expressed his position on this issue,

“We are extremely aware of the goals of certain ‘wind blowers’. These goals are clear: to organise a revolution in the run-up to the Presidential election or on the voting day. That was their plan. Using this meeting I would like to warn you and all people who will hear us, I want to warn all those ‘fanatics’ that there will be nothing of this kind in Belarus.”

This does not mean an attack on the rights and freedoms of citizens. Elections without competition of ideas, personalities and programmes are impossible. However, where there is freedom, there must always be responsibility. The President paid special attention to this point, saying, “We will never try to shut people’s mouths. Special places have been designated in Minsk and other cities for people to speak up and discuss things. As far as I know, there are six such places in Minsk. Our business is to control things and to make sure that actions are within the law. There are six places in Minsk where they can have their debates. The State Security Committee and the police should do their best to prevent violations...”

Everything should be in compliance with the law, in a just and honest manner,

without lies. We will respect those who will comply with the law during this period.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that economic, food, military security and many other areas are gradually becoming more acute due to the intense political period. The presence of several pandemics also contributes to the process. The President explained, “One of them is in the field of healthcare. Thank God, we are slowly overcoming it. A political pandemic — related to the elections — is also in place, as does the economic pandemic which envisages a crisis all over the world. It’s not our fault or our misfortune. Some other concerns are hovering around our borders, but are yet afraid to poke their noses in here. We must cope with these issues. Info-pandemics is another issue which is the background for all. On the Internet, which is a nuisance area, anything is posted; problems are added to the mass media from abroad, including by our brothers. We see all this.”

Valery Vakulchik assured the Head of State that there are no special conditions for the work of the KGB in preparation for the elections, and the agency is fully aware of the situation.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Format of live communication

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko met Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban — an influential Hungarian and European politician — in Minsk. During the talks, Mr. Lukashenko stressed, “Hungary is the closest partner for Belarus in the European Union. Like no one else, this country understands us and contributes to the deepening of our relations with the EU.”

By Marta Chvei

Reopening routes

Under the current conditions of the global pandemic, a visit of this kind acquires a special meaning. “You are opening up old and new routes to the whole world after what we thought was a terrible epidemic,” the President said, also expressing gratitude to Viktor Orban for starting the process from Belarus.

Aleksandr Lukashenko highly praised Hungary’s economic potential as a partner, saying, “This country enjoys the highest level of development and therefore — huge potential. We need to use all the opportunities of Hungary and Belarus to expand trade not only between the two countries, but also between two powerful economic organisations: the European Union, on the one hand, and the Eurasian Economic Union on the other.”

With sincere intentions

Viktor Orban thanked the President for the opportunity to visit Belarus. “I am honoured to be the first Prime Minister of Hungary to make an official visit to your country. When I thought about my foreign trips after the pandemic, mulling over where to go first, I decided to go where we’d promised to go a long time ago. I am happy to be here for many reasons. We’ve been committed to this visit for so long,” he said.

Mr. Orban also noted that Belarus is a developed country which can be proud of its achievements in industry and food production, as well as successes in sports and culture.

Co-operation on the rise

Summing up the results of the talks, the President later noted that ‘Belaru-

sian-Hungarian co-operation is on the rise’. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted a significant improvement in Belarus-EU dialogue. According to him, relations have become more pragmatic, more equal and, most importantly, more productive. “The credit is due to our friends from Budapest, and Viktor Orban personally,” he said.

The Head of State emphasised that Belarus and Hungary don’t tolerate any attempts to pressurise them from



the outside. “Our countries have encountered unprecedented and brazen attempts to counteract the realisation of our sovereign right to developing peaceful nuclear programmes. We’ve agreed to work together to give adequate but hard-line responses. The Belarusians will not tolerate the attempts of outside parties to influence our energy policy. At the same time, we guarantee that this policy will always be geared towards maximum security, openness and

transparency. Moreover, we will do our utmost to make not only the policy but the new Belarusian nuclear power plant work for the benefit of Belarus but also for the benefit of all the interested countries. We are ready to welcome experts of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the European Union, other international bodies so that they can make sure that the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets threatens neither Belarusians nor their neighbours,” he said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko added, “We’ve confirmed the interest in sharing the best practices in the sphere of nuclear energy, the operation of nuclear power plants, safe handling of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel.”

Viktor Orban stressed that Hungary supports the development of the *Eastern Partnership* initiative, of which Belarus is a member, “The moment has come for the European Union to lift existing sanctions against Belarus.

After the pandemic, a new type of economic co-operation will begin... It is impossible to build a partnership with sanctions.”

Strength will sustain

While talking to journalists, Aleksandr Lukashenko gave his view on the consequences of the pandemic. He said, “The pandemic will change many things. You know that two or three months ago, when the processes had just begun, I said here in Belarus that some people needed it. It is clear that even if this virus is not of human manufacture, many countries would still want to use it to change the world. Naturally, I mean the countries that consider themselves to be the most important ones and believe they have a role to play in the restructuring of the world. This is why the pandemic will really change a lot but the pressure will not go away. We have to be ready for that. There will be pressure from all sides and only the strong will withstand it. Strong not only economically, militarily, politically but, above all, morally.”

Regarding the pressure, Viktor Orban shared a similar position, “Western states often believe that they are representatives of higher-level thought because they have built parliamentary democracies after World War II. They think it gives them the right to tell us what to do and how to do it. This is one of the reasons for their attitude. The second reason is that we tolerate it. Many countries simply do not express their position firmly. We can listen to their different opinions but, nevertheless, this is our country, our economy, our destiny and we can make decisions on our own.”

President of Belarus appoints new Government

By Dmitry Kryat, Dmitry Umpirovich

Many of the officials have retained their previous positions but some new personalities have been appointed: **Roman Golovchenko** is the new Prime Minister and **Nikolai Snopkov** is the First Deputy Prime Minister. Among other appointments are **Aleksandr Subbotin** (Deputy Prime Minister), **Dmitry Krutoi** (Deputy Head of the President Administration), **Ruslan Parkhmovich** (Minister of Architecture and Construction), **Igor Lutsky** (Information Minister), **Piotr Parkhomchik** (Industry Minister), **Yuri Seliverstov** (Finance Minister), **Andrey Khmel** (Minister of Housing and Communal Services), and **Ivan Tertel** (Chairman of the State Control Committee). **Dmitry Pantus** was appointed Chairman of the State Military-Industrial Committee while the State Property Committee is now headed by **Dmitry Matusevich**.

To see it out and win

While making appointments, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, “You all know the state of affairs that is developing all over the world and, accordingly, in our country. Many new challenges, which have been concentrated in a short period of time, require the utmost mobilisation of all state bodies and, above all, the Government... This is the strongest test of our steadfastness and preservation of the state. We must endure this. And we will see this out — not for the first time — and win.”

The President noted that personnel rotation in the Government before the Presidential elections is a well-established practice in Belarus. This has taken place more than once: the Head of State appoints his team for people — when voting for or against during the elections — to understand who will overview socio-economic issues in the future.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he has the impression that some potential candidates of the current election campaign have truly come to turn the country upside down and destabilise the situation using someone else’s money.

The Head of State drew particular attention to the fact that the influence of external forces on Belarusian politics is absolutely unacceptable. He stated, “We’ve established the first independent sovereign state and we’ll not allow this country to be bullied, destabilised, torn to pieces or given to someone else. We have created a country where our children can live. Today is the moment when it should be defended, protected... Any decisions should be taken here in the interests of Belarusians; we have every opportunity to do so.”

Powerful projects

The President noted that the Government, led by Sergei Rumas, had obvious merits. Aleksandr Lukashenko explained, “Over this time, a balance in the economy on most indicators has been preserved. Jointly with the National Bank, stability in the financial market has been ensured. Incomes of the population have increased and a number of significant investment and infrastructure projects have been implemented.”

The Head of State drew attention to the fact that today some talk about the

need for fantastic projects for Belarus, deliberately ignoring significant breakthrough projects that have already been implemented or are being realised. These are, in particular, the Belarusian nuclear power station, projects in the field of biotechnology, space exploration, IT industry and defence rocket production.

Economic growth in focus

The President outlined the main goal for the Government: the achievement of sustainable balanced economic growth at a rate higher than the global average. However, in order to achieve this, it is necessary to find forms and tools that will force the entire system of state bodies to act.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that the Belarusian economy is open, but it is still necessary to take measures to protect the domestic market which ‘is small but it should not be given to anyone’. “No export brings no currency. Moreover, the problem of dependence on the market of a single country should be solved definitively: we cannot even 50-55 percent depend on fraternal Russia. We must diversify our markets,” he stressed.

Forum of Regions to gather neighbours



7th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia is to be held in Minsk and the Minsk Region in September — dedicated to the historical heritage of the Great Victory and bringing together about 500 participants

By Svetlana Savelyeva

A meeting of the Belarusian part of the organising committee — overseeing the preparation and holding of the forum — was held in Minsk, and its participants discussed current organisational issues. A joint session of the Belarusian and Russian parts of the committee is scheduled for June 16th, in the format of a video conference.

The head of the organising committee on the part of Belarus, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly — Anatoly Isachenko — recalled that the theme of the 7th Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia will be the historical legacy of the Great Victory as a basis for the development of socio-economic and spiritual ties of the peoples of Belarus and Russia. “In recent years, the forum has proved to be a good discussion

platform where parliamentarians, governors and the business community meet. Sessions are held as part of the event which focus on diverse topics, such as agriculture, construction, industry and others,” he said.

It was announced at the meeting that Section 1 — dedicated to preserving the historical heritage and strengthening the unity of fraternal peoples — will be held at the National Library of Belarus. Section 2 — *Joint Projects as a Factor of the Stable Economic Development of Belarus and Russia* — will be held in Zhodino, on the BELAZ site; the main topics of the reports will be electric transport, Union State roaming and high-speed rail. Section 3 — *The Feat of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War as a Basis for Educating about Patriotism and Civic Responsibility* — will be held at the National Academy of Sciences

of Belarus. Section 4 — *Creating Conditions for Increasing Socio-Economic Activity of Young People for Sustainable Development of the Regions of Belarus and Russia* — was proposed to be held at Agrokombinat Dzerzhinsky JSC, in the Dzerzhinsk District, while Section 5 — *Belarus and Russia: Expanding Joint Efforts to Counter the Glorification of Nazism on International Platforms* — will be held at the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War History. Work on forming the agenda of the forum’s plenary session has not yet been completed.

In addition, the programme envisages the organisation of a youth forum and the meeting of the Business Co-operation Council. The signing of co-operation agreements between the regions and the conclusion of commercial contracts are also planned.

Complete interaction

Gomselmash joins British Perkins to work on an innovative harvester

By Irina Sergeeva

The two companies intend to equip the high-performance harvester ‘Palesse GS16’ with an engine compliant with the Stage V environmental standard of the European Union. This Belarusian harvester is designed for large agricultural enterprises.

In addition to meeting Stage V requirements, Gomselmash wants the new harvester to offer low operational costs and high reliability. The company believes the Perkins 2206J-E13TA engine with the output capacity of up to 380kW (520hp), innovative exhaust

technology and low installation and operation cost fits the bill.

“After discussing the requirements for installing the Perkins engine in detail, our specialists thoroughly studied the engine’s digital model. They visualised the engine’s arrangement and design and made the necessary durability calculations. The engine’s installation has undergone thorough testing,” Gomselmash staff said.

Gomselmash Holding is a major manufacturer of agricultural machinery and a leader of the global market of harvesters and other complicated sophisticated agricultural vehicles.



ECONOMY

Spring in Gomel

Over 250 companies from 13 countries featured at online 21st international exhibition — *Spring in Gomel*



By Arina Novikova

The e-venue featured 11 different industries (food, engineering, woodworking, metalworking, construction, engineering, chemical and petrochemical products, light industry, banking, legal and insurance services and others) and 13 countries (Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Germany, Serbia, Slovakia, Croatia, Georgia, India, China and Lithuania). Thirteen chambers of commerce and industry and six free economic zones of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Serbia have joined the project.

The virtual version of the exhibition included three main venues. ‘Business Spring’ offered webinars, product presentations and enterprise services, B2B online talks. ‘Delicious Spring’ presented restaurants, cafes, bars and retail. ‘Gomel Spring’ was a place for arts where artisans showcased their works.

The organisers held a press conference for the national and regional media, a roundtable with the heads of the chambers of commerce and business unions of six countries and five webinars on topical issues for business. Representatives of more than 70 Belarusian and foreign enterprises and organisations took part in the events.

Marina Filonova, the Director General of the BelCCI Gomel Branch, took part in the first international online forum R2R (Region-to-Region)

organised by the Samara Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Following the talks, the BelCCI Gomel Branch made a decision to participate in the summer sessions of the forum with the regions of France, the Netherlands and Iran scheduled for this July.

The ‘Gomel Spring’ online platform featured presentations of 74 participants with contact and social networks information, photos of art works in 10 sectors: woodwork, children’s toys, clothing, decor, ceramics, natural cosmetics, interior items, accessories, jewellery, farmers’ food and eco-products.

Electronic business cards of the ‘Delicious Spring’ participants contained information about restaurants, cafes and confectioneries. Photos of the interiors, dishes and presentations provided an opportunity to channel the atmosphere of each participant of the online gastro-fest.



Project ready for realisation

Belarus and Hungary will co-operate in poultry farming — following the framework agreement signed by representatives of the 1st Minsk Poultry Factory and Hungary’s Babolna Tetra

By Natalia Yemelyanova

The document aims to run for three years and outlines the effort to breed young laying stock. The Hungarian partner will supply the 1st Minsk Poultry Factory with day-old chicks from the Tetra brown and Tetra white baseline crosses to improve the quality of the Belarusian cross and to provide the poultry factories in Belarus with laying stock. The total amount of the agreement is more than 3.4m Euros. Thanks to this project, from this year on, Belarus will have almost no need to import breeding flocks of laying hens and, starting from 2023, will be able to fully provide the domestic market with its own breed of world-class laying chickens.

During the talks, Igor Brylo — Belarus’ Deputy Agriculture and Food Minister — noted that trade between Belarus and Hungary is constantly growing. In

2019, it was up by more than 10 percent and, in January-March 2020, bilateral trade also expanded year-on-year. “We are interested in the supply of Hungarian corn, cattle and poultry. These sectors are very well-developed in Hungary. Relations between our countries are developing well at the highest political level and we have full understanding with our colleagues from the agricultural industry,” Igor Brylo noted.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary to Belarus, Zsolt Csutora, also highlighted the high level of bilateral relations. “Hungary knows a lot about Belarus and its well-developed agriculture. It is good when such negotiations take place between the countries because they lead to large projects between companies. We will be very happy to assist the development of the poultry industry in Belarus this way,” the diplomat said.

Sustainable positions



Summing up results

Over the past 15 years, 3.2m transactions worth \$21bn registered at Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange

By Olga Korneeva

The first stock exchange trading took place on June 2nd, 2005: Belarus' Bellesexport and Poland's International Paper Kwidzyn S.A. concluded the first exchange transaction for the sale of balance timber to the amount of \$189,000. "Since then, 3.2m transactions for a total of \$21bn has been conducted at the exchange, while the volume of exports amounted to \$5.8bn. The most popular products on the domestic market are round timber, ferrous metal products and oilseed meal, while the lion's share of foreign trade transactions accounts for lumber and dairy products," said Roman Yaniv, a spokesman for the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange.

About 24,000 companies — including 4,700 non-residents from 63 countries — are accredited at the exchange. All trades are held electronically, in five commodity sections: metal products, forest products, agricultural products, industrial and consumer goods and promising exchange products.

According to analysts, over 15 years, thanks to the market pricing mechanism and a high concentration of supply and demand on the exchange platform, Belarusian business entities have received additional revenue and saved over \$1.3bn.

How Vitba confectionery factory manages to increase exports during the difficult coronavirus pandemic

By Igor Svetlov

Last year, the leader of Belarus in the market of breakfast cereals and one of the top manufacturers of 'Vitba' confectionery celebrated its 30th anniversary. For many years, the factory's products have pleased customers and are in demand domestically and far abroad.

At present, many enterprises have faced objective problems and it's not easy for the confectionery industry either.

"Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the borders were closed at the beginning of the year. Of course, this also affected the activities of our company: there were orders but technically it was impossible to fulfil them," said Aleksandr Gidranovich, the General Director of the Vitba confectionery factory. "However, even in such a difficult situation, the factory, including our Orsha site — the Sladkaya Strana [sweet country] branch, worked with a steadily positive financial result for the four months including the forecast for May."

From January-April, its net profit almost doubled and the company's accounts payable significantly decreased. Moreover, Vitba employees were paid



an additional — 13th — salary in April, for their work in 2019. The growth rate of production in physical terms for four months reached 108 percent; over this period, exports rose by 46 percent (including 78 percent in April) and their share in the total volume of shipped products was 13 percent, with the return on sales — 15 percent. The average monthly salary rose by 20 percent to \$540 (equivalent) in April.

To maintain a stable position, the company's team has undertaken considerable work. "We aim to earn money, rather than to distribute products or store them. To do this, we've worked very closely with retail chains in the domestic market. This has enabled us to raise net profit. As for exports, Russia was closed in April, especially its Far Eastern regions. We delivered large amounts to China and new

contracts are being worked on to continue sales there," said Mr. Gidranovich.

The pandemic has also affected the consumer culture: in recent months, customers are demonstrating a high demand for breakfast cereals from the Vitba line of healthy food — which have significantly displaced confectionery products in shops. In April, their share in the structure of exported products accounted for 94 percent and, at present, the company is meticulously working on the range to respond sensitively to the slightest changes and market demands, as well as preparing to launch new types of products. "We are also working on the factory's development: a logistics centre is being built on its site which we plan to open this year. Despite all the difficulties, the construction has not been frozen," the official adds.

Aleksandr Gidranovich pays special attention to the safety measures taken at the factory since the beginning of the spread of coronavirus infection in Belarus. "In order to avoid contact as much as possible, we have separated the streams of people. Some now work remotely. Sanitisers are installed everywhere and temperature measurements are conducted. Employees wear masks and, as a result, the overall disease rate was lower from early 2020 than in previous years," the CEO notes.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Belarus to simplify the procedure for obtaining citizenship

Deputies of the House of Representatives adopted amendments to the law on citizenship of the Republic of Belarus. In particular, the period during which a person must continuously live in our country is reduced from 7 to 5 years. A simplified procedure for acquiring Belarusian citizenship is planned to be provided for foreigners who receive vocational education in the country, who have been married to Belarusians for at least three years, have children — citizens of Belarus, those who have graduated in Belarus and have been working in the country for at least three years. The amendments also stipulate that persons who participated in terrorist or other extremist activities that have inflicted serious harm on the interests of Belarus will be stripped of their Belarusian citizenship. This measure will apply only to those who have acquired citizenship not by birthright.

Expo 2020 shifted for next year

The world exhibition *Expo 2020*, which was planned to be held in Dubai, was postponed for a year.

The proposal to move the exhibition was made by the Government of the United Arab Emirates. 113 out of



170 member states of the International Exhibition Bureau voted for the transfer of the exhibition (two-thirds of the votes were needed). Voting, because of the epidemiological situation, was conducted remotely since the holding of the General Assembly of the International Bureau of Exhibitions was not possible due to restrictions on the spread of the new coronavirus.

As a result, the dates of *Expo 2020 Dubai* have officially changed to October 1st, 2021 — March 31st, 2022. The event will keep the name *Expo 2020 Dubai*.

Belarusian children's heart surgeons performed unique first-ever operation

Damage to the tricuspid valve led to a decrease in oxygen saturation and endangered the life of a 13 year old boy. It was necessary to urgently replace the valve or to carry out a plastic replacement. Due to the fact that the child has already undergone 4 operations, performing open surgery was high risk. To save his life, it was decided to carry out a unique operation: a tricuspid valve prosthesis using modern low-traumatic

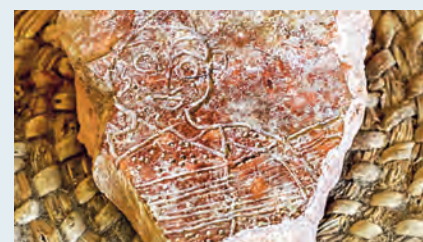


methods of endovascular surgery. According to Konstantin Drozdovsky, the Director of the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Paediatric Surgery, the 'Melody' artificial biological heart valve was successfully inserted into the baby's tricuspid valve through a small catheter in the femoral vein.

In Polotsk, a 12th century stone block found depicting a jester musician

During excavations near the Transfiguration Church of the St. Yevfrosiniya Monastery in Polotsk, archaeologists found a 12th century stone block, depicting a musician — most likely to be a jester. He has unusual headgear in the form of a cap. The image has not been fully preserved, only the chest part. He holds a stringed instrument under his left hand. Perhaps this is a 'gusli' or some kind of stringed bow instrument. The brick fragment found corresponds to the period of construction of the church. The drawing was created when the stone was still incomplete. Obviously, the master did this during his break.

All findings remain in the laboratory of the Polotsk University. In the future, they will be transferred to local museums.



Travelling to work with the wind in your hair

Media coach Vasily Yachenko became an active user of an electric scooter at the beginning of this season and daily covers around ten kilometres through Minsk. He still uses sharing services but admits, "I pay slightly more than \$4 a day (equivalent) but am already considering buying a scooter for myself."

He is now studying the models offered for sale and is convinced that scooters will enjoy an increased demand, "This is a new level of urban transport development. For young people, the car is no longer a symbol of status and prosperity. Simplicity and convenience are the key. It's not so easy to find a parking place in the city centre or go to work through traffic. No problems of the kind emerge with the scooter."

Mobility for all ages

A scooter is the most popular type of electric transport among Belarusians — followed by electric bicycles and unicycles. Igor Sushchenko trains others to use the latter. He explains, "The main advantage of this device is mobility: a unicycle can be taken to a museum or to a store. In addition, the diameter makes it possible to ride where no other transport can be used. There are many advantages in terms of service: buy it and forget it. There's no need to twist anything, as in an electric scooter."

He has enquiries from both children and pensioners. Igor's oldest student is 72 years old. The instructor states that he can teach anyone in an hour, "I've been a unicycle user for five years — travelling to work and on business, even on rainy and icy days. I drive 10-60km daily but it's not the limit: some people cover up to 120km — coming to Minsk from suburbs. A good unicycle costs an average of \$830 (equivalent)."

Despite the development of electric transport, traditional bicycles continue enjoying demand. Moreover, the majority of Belarusians currently prefer this personal vehicle — viewing it as the most environmentally friendly, economical and easy to manage.

'Aist' on roads

The pandemic has affected supply as well as demand. "On the one hand, the number of those wishing to cycle has increased, on the other hand, the availability of supplies from abroad is quite poor at the moment. People call different stores and often fail to find the desired models, or their prices are too high," said Sergey, a purchasing specialist at one of the stores selling electric vehicles.

It would seem that the current situation should give an impetus to the increase in production of domestic bicycles and scooters. However, the country's largest manufacturer of such vehicles — Motovelozaovod JSC — admits its work is dependent on suppliers. "If countries are closed for quarantine, we can't bring in the necessary components," says Dmitry Ulyanovich, a leading marketing specialist of the company. "However, despite this, we will be able to fully meet domestic demand. We are taking certain measures, especially regarding internal management and regulation, to keep up with last year's figures and, if possible, increase our volumes."

Dmitry adds, in 2019, the plant produced over 60,000 bicycles — of a

Wheels are rolling

Personal transport is gaining popularity

Belarusians are now more often choosing bicycles, scooters and electric unicycles. The global industry of personal vehicles is booming: under the conditions of coronavirus, it is a true challenge to keep one's distance on public transport. How much does it cost to shift to one or two-wheeled transport and what conditions are being created in our country for cyclists and scooter drivers?



In June, 10 new bicycle shelters will be arranged at Minsk's flat parking lots. In total, 35 such points have already been launched for parking two-wheeled vehicles.



hundred models: mountain, highway, urban, children's, adolescent, folding. Bicycles of the historical 'Aist' trademark are in demand not only among Belarusians: 60 percent of Motovelozaovod's products are exported.

"We monitor current global trends and are developing electric models, seen as the most promising direction. Last year, we launched mass production of electric bicycles. This year, new versions with a range of up to 50km have been added.

preferences. According to the survey, more than one in three residents of the cities studied has a bicycle. In Minsk, there are over a million of them.

"So far, most people use a bicycle for recreation — to ride after work or on weekends," notes Maksim Puchinsky, a bicycle infrastructure specialist at the Minsk Bicycle Society. "For personal mobility tools to become utilitarian transport, it is necessary to create a high-quality infrastructure."

Much has been done in this area in recent years. In 2009, the first cycle lane appeared in Minsk, curbs were lowered, cycle paths were drawn on sidewalks and, last year, the first bike lane was added to Minsk's roadway. "We are now going further and advocate more comfortable conditions for cyclists," Maksim adds. "We need to create connected bicycle networks."

Belarus has, in fact, adopted a national bicycle strategy and, in line with the document, the share of bicycle rides should increase in cities with the population of 50,000 people or more to 8-10 percent by 2030; in cities with the population of less than 50,000 and urban-type settlements — to 15-20 percent; in agro-towns and rural localities — over 40 percent. At the moment, 2 percent of all movements in Minsk are conducted by bicycle.

Traffic rules for scooters

An increasing number of cyclists, scooters and unicycle users requires not only the creation of high-quality infrastructure, but also the improvement of traffic regulations. Reducing the number of cyclists injured in road accidents and reducing the number of fatalities (by at least 25 percent by 2030 against 2018) is another key goal of the national cycling strategy.

Traffic Police of the Interior Ministry has prepared a new version of traffic rules which envisages changes in the use of bicycles and other means of personal mobility by citizens. A mandatory requirement for cyclists to use reflective vests on country roads in the dark is proposed. Cyclists will not be able to dismount at pedestrian crossings, but will be required to slow down in advance and move at the speed of a walking pedestrian. The new version will also define the means of personal mobility, as well as other changes and additions.

Scooters and bicycles are an up-and-coming market today. It seems that it will remain so even after the coronavirus recedes. This means that bike production around the world will continue growing and, accordingly, accompanying services — such as sharing, dealership services and repairs in cycling parks — will expand.

Yellow wave

To ride a bike or an electric scooter, there's no need to spend a large amount of money to buy them. Last year, bike sharing came to Belarus. Yellow bicycles and scooters can be rented and left after the trip anywhere in the city: you only need to have a smartphone with a linked bank card and downloaded app.

Approximate rates (equivalent) for a bicycle are as follows: a deposit for the start — \$0.2, a minute of rental — \$0.02. For an electric bike — \$0.4 for rent, and \$0.1 for a minute of driving. For electric scooters — \$0.4 for the beginning of the movement and \$0.06 per minute of rental.

According to TourStat, Minsk is in top three cycling cities in the CIS

Young talents highlighted by the President's Special Fund to Support Talented Youth spoke about plans for the future

By Irina Ovsepyan

Scholarship holders, diplomats and laureates... Though the awards have not yet been bestowed, a wave of happiness has swept among the country's young talents, as the President's Special Fund to Support Talented Youth unveiled a list of those who, without exaggeration, hold the cultural future of Belarus. Some of them have achieved their first great success on their chosen path while others can already boast an impressive list of victories and achievements, but they all have one thing in common: they work very hard.

A student of the Gymnasium-College of Arts named after I.O. Akhremchik, Yekaterina Maslenikova, receives a scholarship from the Special Fund for the first time. The decision to encourage her was made after the 12th Republican *Open Art* Competition, where the promising young artist became a laureate of the 1st degree.

Katya has been drawing almost from birth, her mother Tatiana recalls, "At seven months she couldn't walk but already held a brush in her hands! She attended art studios in her childhood and, two years ago, she entered the Gymnasium-College named after I.O. Akhremchik; at that time, it was already clear that my daughter would be engaged in fine art in her adult life. Katya is now 12 years old, she is very creative, enjoys dreaming, but drawing is the most important thing in her life. It's still hard to say which direction she'll choose in the future, but I notice that she is attracted to decorative-and-applied arts, she does it well. I'm very glad that my daughter has become a scholarship holder, this is her first serious creative success and I hope not the last."

The prize and diploma was also received by Dmitry Bezzubenko: the young dancer and lecturer of the Choreography Department at the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts has already received awards from the President's Special Fund.

"At such moments you feel responsibility first of all, and with each award it grows more and more," said Dmitry. "Each time you are rewarded, you understand that this step has already been taken and the next should be even higher. The feelings are the same as when you arrive at the festival: you must at least

Young and talented

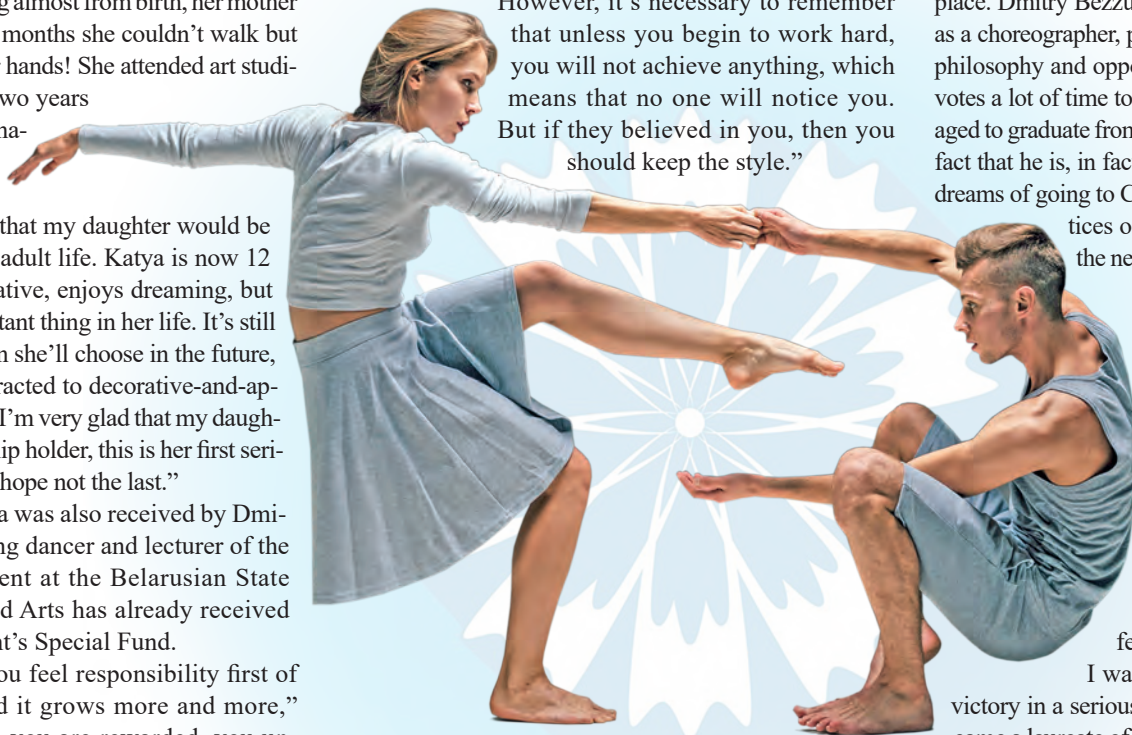
The title of scholarship holder and laureate of the President's Fund is more than an award. This is a guarantee that the state assumes responsibility for the further professional development of the young talent.



A photo from Yekaterina Maslenikova's personal archive

confirm the level of last year and rise up a little bit; otherwise the whole meaning is lost. It's necessary to constantly develop. Of course, it is very nice that we are noticed and supported, this gives us a good impetus.

However, it's necessary to remember that unless you begin to work hard, you will not achieve anything, which means that no one will notice you. But if they believed in you, then you should keep the style."



Dmitry Bezzubenko is inspired by contemporary dance which envisages a deep philosophical subtext and works at the limit of physical capabilities

The prize of the President's Special Fund went to Dmitry following the results of the Belarusian Contest of Modern Choreography as part of the 32nd International Festival of Modern Choreography in Vitebsk, where he took 2nd place. Dmitry Bezzubenko is increasingly trying his hand as a choreographer, preferring modern dance with its deep philosophy and opportunities for self-expression. He devotes a lot of time to scientific work and has already managed to graduate from the University of Culture, despite the fact that he is, in fact, a young specialist. In the future, he dreams of going to China to study the choreographic practices of the Heavenly Empire, and then use the new knowledge to realise his own ideas.

Mikhail Volchkov learnt the news about the award in the midst of state exams as he is graduating from the Belarusian State Academy of Music. This is not the first time that a young accordion player has received awards from the President's Special Fund and admits that the choice of music as a profession was also influenced by recognition from the state.

"I already have more than ten different awards from the Special Fund. I was encouraged in 2007 after my first victory in a serious competition. I remember how I became a laureate of my first grand prize: an eighth grader of the Mogilev State Gymnasium-College of Arts, I was presented with the award personally by the President. I still have a photograph of us shaking hands," he said.

Since then, Mikhail Volchkov twice became the laureate of the Special Fund; no doubt, he has many successes ahead. The young accordion player shares his plans with us: according to the placement of graduates, he will teach at the Minsk State Music College named after M.I. Glinka and at the same time he is preparing to enter the Belarusian State Academy of Music Master's degree programme. This promising young man is also a solo instrumentalist of the State Academic Dance Ensemble of Belarus. His plans include tours and new contests. This spring was marked by the cancellation of many cultural events, but the creative youth is still full of hope, setting new goals and striving for success.



Mikhail Volchkov

Investing in the development of geniuses and thus forming the 'golden fund' for the nation: such a state aim was set by Aleksandr Lukashenko. On his initiative, two funds were established: one aiming at social support of talented youngsters and the other — at assistance to talented youth. This year, about \$25,000 (equivalent) was allocated from the President's Special Fund to support 100 representatives of talented youth and 5 artistic troupes. In total, about \$300,000 will be sent to young talents in 2020.

Country's history in a single book

New historical atlas released in Belarus

By Natalia Yemelyanova

A new atlas — developed by Belkartografiya Republican Unitary Enterprise jointly with the country's leading scientists based on the unique *Large Historical Atlas of Belarus* four-volume edition (2009-2018) — has been published and gone on sale.

The authors tried to show the historical past as fully as possible — from the appearance of the first person on the Belarusian lands to the present time. Each of the four parts of the atlas shows the socio-economic evolution of society, its political and military history, ethnic processes and the formation and devel-

opment of religious relations.

The first part covers the period from the appearance of the first people on the territory of Belarus to the mid-16th century when — as a result of the Union of Lublin (1569) — the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The second part of the atlas focuses on the period from the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the end of the existence of this state in 1795, while the third part is devoted to the period when the Belarusian lands were part of the Russian Empire: from 1772 to early 1917. The fourth part shows the way of formation and development of the Belarusian na-



tional statehood in the 20th-early 21st century.

As announced by Belkartografiya, the edition is aimed at a

wide range of readers and is addressed to those who are engaged in scientific research, the organisation of educational processes in higher and secondary special institutions and schools, as well as the younger generation who are investigating the world around them.

The Belarusian-language historical atlas has 336 pages and a circulation of 1,000 copies. Its electronic version is also available.



Protests flare across USA

Tens of thousands of people defied curfews to take to the streets of US cities for protests over the death of a black man in police custody, as National Guard troops lined the steps of the Lincoln Memorial

Amid an escalating crackdown on protests against police brutality and racism, the United States is being gripped by political paralysis and infighting as America's leaders struggle to resolve the crisis.

The most widespread protests in the US in five decades have spurred no consensus on either the reforms necessary to address protesters' demands or how to handle demonstrations that have often included property destruction and arson. And efforts to shut the protests down are often serving to further inflame them, with police measures only proving to demonstrators the need for reform.

As protests raged in more than 140

cities across the country, dozens of demonstrators and police officers were injured, and at least two died.

At least 9,300 people have been arrested in protests around the US since the killing of George Floyd. President Donald Trump has threatened to use the military to battle the violence and has derided local authorities, including state governors, for their response to the disturbances.

Protesters gathered from coast to coast while mourners in North Carolina waited for hours to glimpse the golden coffin carrying the body of George Floyd who was killed in Minneapolis on May 25th, sparking a wave of global anger.

Many cities lifted curfews imposed following initial spasms of arson, assaults and smash-and-grab raids on businesses. Authorities have softened restrictions as the number of arrests plummeted.

The largest US demonstration appeared to be in Washington, where protesters flooded streets closed to traffic. The White House was fortified with new fencing and extra security precautions.

Peaceful marchers filed across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, the boulevards of Hollywood, and the streets of Chicago, Philadelphia and Nashville.

Massive sponge created to soak up oil spills in the ocean

A new 'smart sponge' designed to clean up oil spills in the ocean has been developed at Northwestern University, USA

The sponge is described as highly porous and works by selectively soaking up oil, sparing both water and wildlife. It can absorb over 30 times its weight in oil and then be reused up to several dozen times afterwards. The secret to the sponge lies in its oleophilic, hydrophobic, magnetic (OHM) nanocomposite coating. This chemical coating allows oil to be extracted from water with ease, meaning the process can turn any regular, cheap sponge into a smart sponge.

Vikas Nandwana, a Research Associate at Northwestern University, describes how they plan to use the sponges. They will come in 'sponge sheets' which are wrapped into rolls. There is no limitation in size but, 'typically, 2-3 feet width is enough'. The sheets can be employed in many ways. Most commonly, they would be applied like 'sorbent pads' (absorbent pads used to cover beaches after an oil spill) but they can also be airdropped in to soak up oil from the sea.

"Oil spills have devastating and immediate effects on the environment, human health and economy," says Nandwana's colleague Vinayak Dravid, who led the research. "Our sponge can remediate these spills in a more economic, efficient and eco-friendly manner than any of the current state-of-the-art solutions," he says.

At sea, oil spills are extremely dangerous, more so than those on land. They can spread for hundreds of nautical miles and form a thin coating which covers beaches. Seabirds, mammals or shellfish touched by the oil can subsequently die from swallowing it.



\$2.9m for Aivazovsky's picture

The Bay of Naples painting by the famous marine painter, Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900), became the top lot of online trading of the Russian paintings, organised by Sotheby's auction house

According to information on the auction website, the canvas, created in 1878, was sold for \$2.9m, and the total sales revenue amounted to \$7.1m.

The initial estimated value of the canvas has more than doubled. Aivazovsky's painting, entitled *Passing Ship on a Moonlit Night* (1868) was also sold with a significant excess of the estimated cost. It went under the hammer for \$548,000 with an estimate of \$190-250 thousand. The canvas *Harvest* by Piotr

Konchalovsky (1876-1956) was sold for \$236,000.

Meanwhile, *The View of Moscow* by Aleksei Savrasov (1830-1897), the cost of which was estimated at \$425-665 thousand, was not sold, as wasn't a portrait painted by Konstantin Makovsky (1839-1915) of his third wife Maria Alekseevna Makovskaya with an estimated value of \$220-300 thousand.

In connection with the pandemic, bidding was held online.

World's deepest octopus

The deepest ever sighting of an octopus has been made by cameras on the Indian Ocean floor

The animal was spotted 7,000m down in the Java Trench — almost 2km deeper than the previous reliable recording. Researchers, who report the discovery in the journal *Marine Biology*, say it's a species of 'Dumbo' octopus. The name is a nod to the prominent ear-like fins just above these animals' eyes that make them look like the 1940s Disney cartoon character.

The scientist behind the identification is Dr. Alan Jamieson. He's pioneered the exploration of the deep using what are called 'landers'. These are instrumented frames dropped overboard from research ships. They settle on the seabed and record what passes by.

Dr. Jamieson's equipment filmed two octopuses — one on a drop to 5,760m and a second to 6,957m. The individual animals were 43cm and 35cm in length. They've been placed in the Grimpoteuthis family — the group commonly known as Dumbo.

Octopus fragments and eggs have been found at very great depths, but until this discovery, the previous deepest reliable sighting was at 5,145m down.

"The significance of the Indian Ocean observations is that we now know that

octopuses can find potentially suitable habitat across at least 99 percent of the global seafloor. But those animals that do live at depth will clearly need some special adaptations," said Dr. Jamieson.

"They'd have to do something clever inside their cells. If you imagine a cell is like a balloon — it's going to want to collapse under pressure. So, it will need some smart biochemistry to make sure it retains that sphere," the scientist explained. "All the adaptations you need to live at pressure are at the cellular level."



The artist that draws the battle

Vladimir Saiko held his first personal exhibition at the age of 16, and already at 20 he has founded his own visiting school of painting. There is a gallery of his works in Volozhin, and, in total, there are already more than 2,000 works in the artist's collection. The young battle painter, Vladimir Saiko, proves by his example that his profession is prestigious and profitable. There is only one 'but' — you need to love what you are doing without question.



Vitaly Pivovarchik

Vladimir Saiko

By Yulia Demeshko

In a round-about way

He has always been keen on military and historical subjects. Once Vladimir even entered the Suvorov School, but in time he realised that painting was closer to his heart. His career began with the Akhremchik College of Art, where he painted landscapes and portraits.

"What is battle painting? This is both landscapes and portraits combined. Battle painting, by the way, is a very specific genre of fine art. It's not enough just to draw soldiers — it's necessary to know everything about the period that you paint, the events of that time, how warriors and commanders dressed, what banners there were... and many other details. In fact, this type of painting can be done by someone who has good knowledge of history."

Mr. Saiko polished his skills as a military painter at the Surikov Art Institute in Moscow. Then he returned to Belarus and re-entered the Belarusian Academy of Arts.

How did the Siberian riflemen end up in Postavy?

At home, Vladimir acquired his own large workshop. He found it in the village of Zhazhelka in the Smolevichi District. When the first pupils appeared, the workshop turned into a school and Vladimir also became a driver and lecturer: he took his students to Zhazhelka, and then drove them back home. Now, Mr. Saiko's school can rightfully be called a travelling school. Together with his students he travels to paint all over Belarus in any weather.

"For example, in the early morning on the shortest night of the year — on June 22nd — I bring them to paint the first rays of dawn. We work in both frost and heat. We also visit such parts of Belarus, where, it would seem, you will not find a single painter. This will be remembered for a lifetime," notes Mr. Saiko.

And so the *Siberian Riflemen* picture appeared. It's a major battle work that took two years. The 2x3m canvas portrays the history of the Naroch offensive operation of 1916 — unrivalled in its scale. Just imagine, on an area of about 75sq.km there were more than a million people.

This fact itself arouses such a great interest in the young artist that he began to learn more. He learnt about the tragic story of 17 year old Yevgenia Vorontsova — a daughter of a wealthy Moscow businessman, who went on the attack with Russian soldiers. The girl had exceptional courage: at the moment of maximum confusion, reaching up to her full height and shouting 'Brothers, go ahead!' she rushed to the German trenches. The regiment then managed to occupy the enemy's defence line. Yevgenia was struck down on the spot by an enemy bullet, but her feat is still remembered.



The Siberian Riflemen. (canvas, oil, 2016)

artcenter.by

"I depicted her in the picture, but she stands in the building among other soldiers. When I was working on the canvas, I used the archives of that time, examined faces, tried to convey how the soldiers twisted their moustaches and how this young girl could look. She is usually noticed first. It was not easy to show only a female face in a figure dressed in an overcoat, but so that it looked female," explains the author.

The *Siberian Riflemen* painting captures the last second before the battle. The military uniform of that time, military orders, the movement of the firing point and the position of the rifles was depicted by Vladimir with particular meticulousness, in detail. He even registered the entire military history of the regiment on the Aleksandrovskaia anniversary ribbon.

"Yes, the picture needed such a ribbon. But getting it was virtually impossible. By a twist of fate, I found a man in Irkutsk, who was a descendant of those Siberian soldiers. They were transferred from Nikolsk-Ussuriysk by rail to Belarus..."

In total, there are more than 50 characters on the canvas and all are different. That is why not only the artist is needed to create the battle picture: the help of uniform specialists, heraldry experts and historians is needed...

"Later, I learnt from a book by a Belarusian local historian that the battle in which Vorontsova participated was not at Naroch, but near Postavy. So I had to completely rework the area."

Vladimir presented the *Siberian Riflemen* to the Postavy Museum of Local Lore, where the painting was proudly placed in the main exhibition.

Inspiration taken on the battlefield

Vladimir works on his paintings directly on the battlefield, as he participates in military-historical reconstructions. What he experiences, he says, is

THE MT REFERENCE

The works of Vladimir Saiko are kept in museum and private collections in Belarus, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Italy, Serbia, China, South Korea, the USA, Kazakhstan, Iran, Venezuela, Ecuador, alongside the Louis Francois Centre for UNESCO in France



Protection of the Destroyed Caponier of the Brest Fortress. Noon, June 22, 1941. (canvas, oil, 2019)



A photo from Vladimir Saiko's personal archive

often what happened during the battles: he was freezing in the trenches, covered with earth after an explosion, and he even drank Schnapps with the 'Germans'. However, Vladimir mostly likes to work at the epicentre, when stray shots, explosions and pyrotechnics are thundering around, when there are riders, cavalry, sabres. The secret of a good picture, says the artist, sharing his thoughts, is to show those emotions that he himself experienced.

"Reconstructions are like an immersion. During one of them I was standing next to the Russian battery and felt just like the horse-drawn cavalry did, a

whole herd of horses were galloping towards me. There were two ways to go. If you run, they will trample you, but if you stay standing, the horse will never go into an obstacle when it's possible to turn. That's what happened, and it was such a sight! Everyone thought I was already gone, but the dust had disappeared, and I was standing there still painting. In the smoke. In the dust."

Now Vladimir lives in his estate near Borisov and is creating a new work dedicated to the tragic crossing of Napoleonic troops through the Berezina River. After almost 200 years, it is very difficult to reproduce how everything was. Photos at that time didn't exist. Of course, there are works by painters of Napoleon's army, but these are only small sketches.

"As in my previous picture *Crossing*, I wanted to show the defeated army, but not as broken and dirty as seen on many canvases. For me they are people who held logs on their shoulders so that their comrades could pass over them. I believe that if a soldier takes risks, then he takes risks rationally. I do not want to portray stupid soldiers. In my paintings you will not find such images."

Wellspring

A miracle of nature and sometimes even holy places

Author's project of Vladimir Tsvirko

It seems as if the whole world revolves around this spring. I refer to the world around us, which is actually not so small, encompassing around ten villages and a rather big city. It's not only people from the surrounding villages who knew about the wellspring, however. Rumours about its magical and healing properties spread far over time, and people from distant places began to come to the spring. The locals were surprised, but at the same time proud, "Why not? Our wellspring is unique! There are rumours about it even in neighbouring countries."

Perhaps they exaggerated about the neighbouring country, but so as not to offend their boundless respect for this natural phenomenon, I didn't allow myself to doubt it. However, I wondered how this spring could prove itself and earn such faith and attractiveness from the whole district. To my delight, at that very moment, the memories came back to me, alongside stories that would have been enough for more than one such essay.

Of course, we must start from the very beginning: how this incomparable miracle of nature appeared. According to the first legend, a long time ago, after a long and snowy winter, a mighty spring flood washed away a large stone, which had always lay here. It was believed that this stone stood on the site of an ancient pagan temple. So, the flood moved the stone and pulled it down the slope. In the place where the stone lay, the wellspring appeared, as people said, to remind our contemporaries where they came from while also encouraging them not to forget about the memory of their ancestors and the ancient history of the area.

Another legend that I heard was closer to our time. During WWI, a shell or, possibly, a grenade exploded here. The crater that appeared on the site of the explosion began to fill up with water in the dry season. A small wooden blockhouse was put in place of the brook, and the rest of the crater was covered with sand. The wellspring became a symbol, as if saying that an explosion is death and unhappiness while water means life and love for people. I've also heard the following recollections: when the soldiers intended to install concrete fortifications near the village, local residents told them about the well and how it appeared. So, they moved those bunkers away from the village so that there were no shots



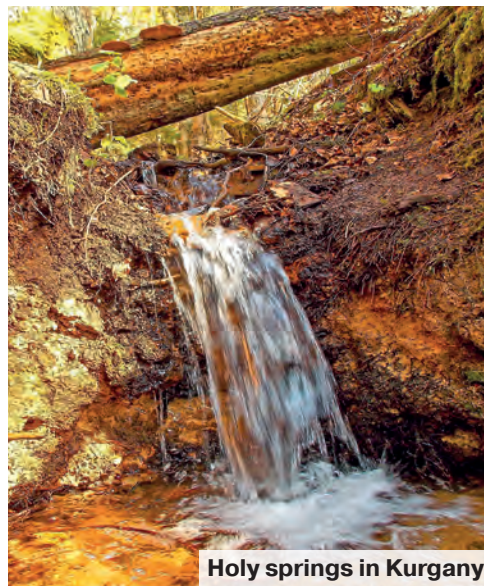
Vitovsky miracle-working spring



Bogdanovich spring in Rakutevshchina



Zaslavl spring



Holy springs in Kurgany



Krynitsa in Rubezhevichi



Holy spring in Rakov



Straplevsky spring

at the village or the spring. And so it happened: over the whole war, not a single shell fell on either the spring or the village. "This is how the wellspring saved the whole settlement," the residents concluded.

From that time on, a small wooden chapel appeared over the holy place. Moreover, the blacksmith who made the cross on its roof, had a daughter, who had not been able to walk for a long time since childhood, but suddenly could manage it within a day. The blacksmith went to the source with the child and thanked it.

In Soviet times, this chapel was 'accidentally' burnt several times. But the inhabitants of a nearby vil-

lage and even distant settlements, silently took their saws and axes and literally in a day or two erected a new chapel, even more beautiful than the previous ones.

During Baptism, water is transported in a large barrel from this small shrine, which stands on the outskirts of the cemetery, with its preserved old stone tombstones. As a result, this water — after immersing the life-giving cross into it — becomes holy twice. Therefore,

its strength is incredibly healing, encouraging so many people to visit it. It is well known that faith is the most important thing in human life. How can people do without faith? This faith, along with the spring water, embodies a miracle. If you don't believe this, then step aside.

Completing their recollections, the locals led me to the wellspring that has attracted people over and over again from all around the world. This is the story of the spring and its legendary appearance, about its life, sometimes about suffering, sometimes about happiness, because people did not abandon it but preserved and saved it.

It would be appropriate to say a little about the modern life of the spring and how this holy corner survives today — a piece of our Fatherland. The path trodden here is noticeable and quite wide. People go just to collect the water in bottles, or simply wash their faces and eyes, or even be alone with the spring to share their secrets or ask for help. The brook murmurs

almost inaudibly, like a best friend, as if listening to the quietest and most secret thoughts of those who have found time to stop near it. Looking at the fact that the path to the spring is not overgrown with grass, we can see that it helps everyone who comes here, although it may seem small and insignificant. However, apparently, this is precisely where its strength lies: to help all living things selflessly.

Raubichi: where sport lives on

Raubichi is now crowded. Despite the fact that the pause in international competitions has not yet been completed, Belarusian athletes continue to prepare: some for the resumption of the season and some — for the start of the new season. At present, biathletes, skiers, skaters, cyclists, ice hockey players of the U17 and U18 national teams, as well as track-and-field athletes are training at the Republican Centre for Olympic Training in Winter Sports.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Raubichi is a familiar place for our biathletes. In the off-season, our national team is conducting its second training camp there. Anton Smol'sky says that the conditions are excellent and the complex has everything necessary for high-quality training. Moreover, Raubichi has thoroughly prepared for the athletes' training camp and thought through everything down to the smallest detail: even food is delivered to athletes in disposable containers. Currently, Anton continues, the team is engaged in basic work: it is gaining physical condition and conducting shooting exercises. "The training sessions are quite long, so there's not much time to relax: we work about eight hours a day, not taking into account the time we spend on transitions between objects, lunch and so on," he noted.

According to Anton Smol'sky, continuing with the same situation for a long time is somewhat annoying, but biathletes understand that, compared with shooting skiers from other countries, they are lucky. "In some countries, biathletes are also training, but we have better conditions than many of them. Recently, for example, we've talked with the Lithuanians: they are also trying to prepare, but everything is closed for them, therefore they mainly train at their homes. It seems to me that organised gatherings are carried out only by the Norwegians."

The skaters of our national team have also started work. Ignat Golovatyuk tells us, "We don't have ice training yet, so we ride bicycles and roller skates and are engaged in general physical training: running and jumping. The conditions are good. We work in a closed mode, so it is problematic to go

anywhere outside the complex. For me, this is the first training camp in Raubichi; previously I used to train at the Zeleny Bor complex. Here the conditions are just as good. The only difference is that the site in the Zeleny Bor is more compact."

Recently, members of the national team in oriental martial arts left Raubichi and the head coach, Vitaly Tishurov, said, "We held two training camps at Raubichi. Before them, we did tests for coronavirus and everyone had a negative result. We worked fruitfully: we had



High jumper Maksim Nedosekov, along with other athletes, is training in the complex

one basic training each day and the second session was either in the gym, or it was a game, or a cross country run. Twice a week they went to the bathhouse. Taking into account that Raubichi is primarily a base for winter sports, we were brought flooring and boxing bags for training here. Of course, it would be nice to have a ring and wall cushions, but in the current conditions and given the fact that these were supporting training camps, everything was organised perfectly."

The fighters decided to use the neighbouring representatives of other sports in full. Vitaly Tishurov says that they even managed to train with the hockey players of the U17 team



Raubichi Republican Centre for Olympic Training in Winter Sports



Raubichi is a familiar place both for the national biathlon team and for the reserve



Cyclists eat up the kilometres not only along the highway

on the ice, "Some guys from our team, including me, have experience of playing in amateur teams and leagues and just enjoy hockey, so we decided to conduct a training game with the ice hockey players; it was an interesting experience!"

Unlike winter sports representatives, the calendar for our kickboxing and Thai boxing teams has significantly changed due to coronavirus: the WAKO European Seniors Kickboxing Championship was postponed to December,

the WAKO Cadets & Juniors World Championships to November, the IFMA World Muay Thai Championship, originally scheduled for early June, was also shifted to November.

"We had to rewrite our training plans. We are engaged in supporting work so that our athletes stay in shape while working on technical issues and a physical base. Fortunately, there is an opportunity in Minsk to hold professional tournaments according to the rules of K-1, and some of our guys took part in them, which was important from the point of view of psychology. Now our athletes are waiting for clarity regarding one more tournament: the CIS Games, the programme of which includes Muay Thai. For now, fighters are training in their clubs, but as soon as the decision on the competition is announced, they will gather again for centralised training."

However, Raubichi will not be empty in the summer. Representatives of the male and female 3x3 basketball teams, freestyle wrestlers and snowboarders will soon join the biathletes and skiers who will continue training in this sports complex, while the Belarusian and Russian figure skaters are also planning to hold a joint training session here.

ARENA

● Formula 1 starts in early July in two stages in Austria

The first stage of the 2020 Formula 1 World Cup racing will be held in Austria from July 3rd-5th. The season will begin in two stages on the track in the Austrian town of Spielberg (July 3rd-5th and July 10th-12th), stages will then be held on the race tracks in the suburbs of Budapest, Hungary (July 17th-19th), British Silverstone (July 31st — August 2nd and August 7th-9th), Spanish Barcelona (August 14th-16th), the Belgian Spa (August 28th-30th) and Italian Monza (September 4th-6th). Within each Grand Prix, Formula 2 and Formula 3 racing series will take place.



After the event, a calendar of the remaining stages of the championship will be developed, in particular, a race in Sochi is scheduled for late September. The organisers intend to conduct 15-18 stages, although 22 were planned initially.

It is noted that the first races will be held without spectators.

● Smolevichi midfielder Anatoly Makarov awarded title of scorer of the best goal in the 11th round of the Belarusian Football Championship

This is the result of a traditional fan vote organised by the Belarusian Football Federation. In the away game with Zhodino's Torpedo-BelAZ (1:2), Anatoly



Makarov opened the score in the 15th minute with a spectacular shot from outside the hosts' penalty area, but it still didn't help his team achieve a positive result.

Earlier, the Brest Dinamo forward, Pavel Savitsky, was recognised as the best player of the 11th round, having scored a goal double in the victorious game with Rukh (4:1).

● Athletics Championship of Belarus to be held from July 31st to August 2nd

The tournament, which will take place at the Dinamo Stadium, will be held in a new format and will be called Belarus Athletic Games. According to the Chairman of the Belarusian Athletics Federation, Vadim Devyatovsky, the competition will be held in the format of classical athletics and they will present all disciplines, except for



the marathon. "It's important for us to check the condition of the leading athletes who have continued training all these months," he said. "We don't say that at the national championship they need to show Olympic results at all costs. Some, on the contrary, use the break in the international calendar to recover and only in August will they gain momentum. But for those who are on the go, the main domestic tournament should be something like a test and the opportunity to realise their accumulated potential."



Aleksandr Kustnner

Photo of the week

Fishing on the Berezina River: a ruffe

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On June 11th, 1910, Jacques Yves Cousteau (1910-1997) was born — a French oceanographer, pioneer of underwater research and filming. In 1943, he tested the first scuba prototype, developed jointly with

Émile Gagnan, enabling lengthy underwater research for the first time while significantly contributing to the improvement of modern knowledge of the underwater world. He became the creator of waterproof cameras and lighting devices and invented the first underwater television system.

On June 12th, 1905, the International Weightlifting Federation was founded, with headquarters located in Budapest. Members of the organisation are national weightlifting federations of 187 countries around the world. The current President of the IWF is Hungarian Tamas Ajan.



June 12th is the state holiday of the Russian Federation — Russia Day. On June 12th, 1990, at the First Congress of People's Deputies of the RSFSR, a Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation was adopted.

June 13th is the Queen's Birthday — a national celebration in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The British monarchs have a long tradition of celebrating their birthday twice. Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain was born on April 21st, 1926. This year, she turned 94. Today, she is considered the oldest British monarch and the oldest leader of the state. But officially the Queen celebrates her birthday in summer, on the appointed Saturday in June, in the hope of good weather.



On June 14th, 1900, Mikhail Zabeida-Sumitsky was born (1900-1981, in the village of Shepichi, Pruzhany District, Brest Region) — a Belarusian singer. He performed on the best opera stages of Harbin, Milan, Poznan and Prague. He is one of the brightest representatives of the European vocal school. He always sang in the original form (in eighteen different languages). He had a vibrant stage appearance, acting talent and excellent voice, which was admired by the whole of Europe in the 1930s.



On June 14th the Republic of Belarus celebrates Light Industry Workers' Day. Light industry is the leading branch of the national economy of Belarus, uniting more than a hundred organisations of various forms of ownership, as well as industry institutes and training colleges, alongside production network facilities in the Republic and abroad. 119 organisations of this sphere are united into one state concern, Bellegprom.



June 14th is World Blood Donor Day. It has been celebrated since 2004 on the birthday of Karl Landsteiner (1868-1943) — an Austrian scientist and Nobel laureate in Physiology and Medicine (1930), who discovered human blood groups (1900).

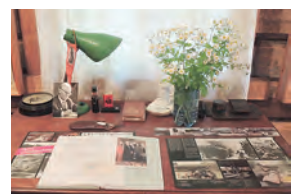


June 15th is World Wind Day. It has been marked on the initiative of the European Wind Energy Association and the Global Wind Energy Council since 2007. Its goal is to draw public attention to the huge



potential of wind energy, which can help solve a large number of problems, not only regarding energy, but also those dealing with economy and the environment.

On June 16th, 1985, the Petrus Brovka House-Museum — a branch of the Petrus Brovka Literary Museum — received its first visitors. It is founded in the poet's homeland in the village of Putilkovichi, in the Ushachi District of Vitebsk. The museum presents numerous original documents reflecting the life and work of the national poet of Belarus.



June 17th is World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. It has been marked by a decision of the 49th session of the UN General Assembly on the day of the signing of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in 1994 in Paris. Human activities should aim to reduce desert areas, as the effects of desertification and drought are food insecurity, hunger and poverty.

