



On Belarusian subsoil reserves and import substitution of imported mineral raw materials with domestic ones

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Andrei Dudko — one of the actors in the *On the Other Shore* film — serves at the Vidzy border post today

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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 04 (1010) ● THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024 ● WWW.SB.BY



At BelGee enterprise

Belarusians can do everything

Belarusians really know how to do everything. President Aleksandr Lukashenko often says this, and this is not a figure of speech. Over the years of sovereignty, we have not only preserved the Soviet-era industrial base and made it competitive in all respects. Completely new industries have emerged in the country. We went into space, built a nuclear power plant, created our own rocket science, and made an incredible leap in the development of the agro-industrial complex. But all this and much more that we have today might not have happened if it weren't for our President's ability to look beyond the horizon, see new prospects and convince everyone that this will benefit the economy and people. The production of our own passenger car is a good example of this. → 4



Security is a common task for every citizen of Belarus

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting of the Security Council, which was devoted to the consideration of two most important strategic planning documents — the draft National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine of Belarus

The significance of the event, according to the Head of State, is also due to the fact that, according to the new Constitution, both documents are approved by the Belarusian People’s Congress.

The key directions for transforming modern risks, challenges and threats in the field of national security are set out in some detail in the concept and Military Doctrine, the Head of State stated.

“And many of the estimates and forecasts contained there are already coming true,” the Belarusian leader noted.

As an example, the President cited the situation in the Middle East.

“This is a terrible humanitarian disaster. Please note that threats to use nuclear weapons were made almost immediately after the escalation of the conflict. And, as is usually the case, there were no sanctions from the ‘civilised’ West. Duty statements as if nothing happened. Unfortunately, we have returned to a time when military force became the main argument in building interstate relations,” the Head of State said.

As for the draft of the new Military Doctrine, it fully takes into account the ongoing cardinal changes in the military-political situation and new military dangers. Approaches to determining the nature of modern military conflicts have also been updated in the interests of developing adequate response measures for the armed defence of the country.

The President recalled that last year, following a meeting of the Security Council, where the draft National Security Concept was generally approved, the task was set to informally approach the preparation of a new concept and submit it for wide public discussion with the involvement of representatives of the scientific and expert communities, and the media. The Head of State instructed to discuss this document in detail and ask people’s opinions.

“After all, ensuring national security is our common task, every citizen of Belarus,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

In this regard, the Head of State asked what specific results were obtained from the public discussion of the concept.



The draft of a new edition of the National Security Concept was approved in February 2023 at a meeting of the Security Council. Then the Head of State ordered a public discussion of this important document before submitting it for approval by the Belarusian People’s Congress.



During the year, 70 discussion platforms were organised in all regions of the country, in government bodies and organisations, labour collectives, educational institutions, trade unions and public associations with the involvement of representatives of the scientific and expert community, major religious denominations, and civil society actors.

At the current meeting of the Security Council, specific proposals were reported to the Head of State, which, based on the results of public discussion, are planned to be included in the updated concept. They relate primarily

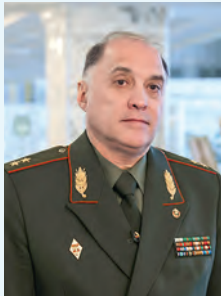
to additional protection of the institution of the traditional family, increasing the level of social responsibility of business, overcoming disproportions in regional development, specifying the list of national security forces, the conceptual apparatus used, and the procedure for approving a system of indicative assessment of the state of national security.

The decision to develop a draft of a new Military Doctrine was made after the approval of the new edition of the National Security Concept in February 2023. The new Military Doctrine does not provide for a radical revision of the provisions of the state’s military policy; the current provisions remain unchanged, and its defensive nature is preserved.

The document is public, open in nature, systematic, methodological, specific, corresponding to modern realities. At the same time, emphasis is placed on such national values as peace, stability, and security.

The new Military Doctrine reveals the content of our country’s military policy. In particular, it is emphasised that Belarus is a peace-loving country and does not threaten anyone. But attempts to interfere in internal affairs, and even more so the threat of using military force or aggression, will be suppressed using the full potential of the state.

After approval by the Security Council, the drafts of the new National Security Concept and Military Doctrine will be submitted for approval to the Belarusian People’s Congress.

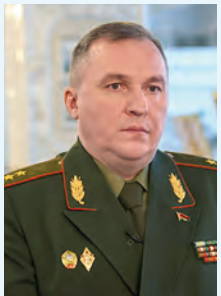


THE CONCEPT PROJECT AROUSED GENUINE INTEREST

After the meeting with the Head of State, **State Secretary of the Security Council of Belarus Aleksandr Volfovich** told reporters about the results of the public discussion of the draft concept and some of its innovations, “The discussion of the project aroused genuine interest. To maximise audience coverage, the draft concept was published on the National Legal Internet Portal, where over 15 thousand citizens’ requests to this document were recorded. The most important thing is that we received feedback.”

The Secretary of State noted the facts of the outbreak of new military conflicts in the world and sometimes threats made by some politicians about the possibility of using nuclear weapons. Moreover, Poland, a neighbour of Belarus, is asking to place American nuclear weapons on its territory. “Today, Europe already hosts 150 American nuclear warheads, not counting the nuclear weapons of France and Great Britain. Some countries are still asking to be placed on their territory. It’s clear why, given their militaristic nature, aggressive statements towards our country,” Aleksandr Volfovich noted.

In this regard, the provisions of the concept are strengthened by the risks of military conflicts using nuclear weapons. Moreover, this proposal came from the citizens themselves. Proposals to strengthen the social responsibility of business and overcome disproportions in regional development are also reflected.



THE KEY MESSAGE IS THE PEACEFUL NATURE OF THE BELARUSIAN PEOPLE

Military doctrine is a fundamental document that reflects the main views of the state on peace and war, on the use of military force in response to existing challenges and threats. The updated Military Doctrine of Belarus preserves and emphasises the peace-loving nature of our country, **Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin** told reporters following a meeting of the Security Council and spoke in detail about the innovations of the document.

The minister described the main idea of the updated document as follows, “The spirit of our doctrine is the peaceful nature of our people. We clearly emphasise and say that the Republic of Belarus does not consider any people as its enemy, despite the actions of their government. An important feature of the document is that it is addressable. That is, it identifies the sources of threats and from which countries they come.” In addition, a new chapter appeared in the document, which defines Belarus’ obligations to its allies. Here, the developers also took into account the experience of the coup attempt in Kazakhstan in 2022.



Ivana Zigon: the Slavic values that the President of Belarus defends will form the basis of the new world

Yugoslav and Serbian actress, screenwriter and director Ivana Zigon received a special

award from the President of Belarus for her significant contribution to the preservation and popularisation of Slavic culture and the implementation of joint Belarusian-Serbian creative projects. “I will say the main thing: the Slavic values that the President of Belarus defends will form the basis of the new world that is being born before our eyes,” Ivana Zigon expressed confidence in a conversation with journalists. The actress admitted that for her there is no higher award than the one she accepted from the hands of the Belarusian leader, who stands in defence of Slavic values. The special prize winner added that the whole of Serbia rejoiced at her award, “My phone was full of congratulations. This response once again showed how much the Serbian people remember the visit of your President and understand who their truest and most reliable friend is.” Ivana Zigon also shared her memory of how her father reacted to the visit of the President of Belarus to Yugoslavia in 1999, “My father Stevo Zigon, an actor and director, was a prisoner of the Dachau concentration camp. He cried very rarely in his life. Moreover, I remember how in 1999 your President, risking his life, came to our country. We were watching the news and quite unexpectedly we saw your President. He visited children in the hospital who suffered from NATO bombing. And then my dad cried.”

Belarus offers favourable conditions to foreign businesses

The meeting began with a discussion of the draft decree, which proposes to introduce a number of innovations in the field of valuation activities.

“Only an objective assessment allows making the right management decisions. Especially when it concerns the market value of state (consider, people’s) property or future budget revenues. Let’s move on. The government proposes to show more flexibility (I don’t know how much more bending can be done here) in matters of the sale of property by foreigners from unfriendly countries and to provide for cases when this is possible.

Of course, in order to protect our economy from the lawlessness of the West in the face of growing sanctions pressure, we have adopted a number of systemic documents, and today not a single shareholder or owner who has the citizenship of an unfriendly country has the right, without special permission from the Government and a contribution to the budget, to sell off property, exposing the main economic funds.

I would like to discuss in detail the feasibility of accepting proposals prepared by the government on permits for the sale of property by foreigners,” Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

As Economy Minister Yuri Chebotar explained, if now a company with foreign capital (from an unfriendly state) wants to leave the market by selling its asset to Belarus, then it will need to pay a duty of at least 25 percent and then obtain permission from the government. They are not going to abandon this approach, but it is necessary to make certain adjustments, since this rule sometimes negatively affects the current activities of organisations in the banking, leasing and construction sectors.

For example, a bank issues a loan to a citizen secured by real estate. And if this property ultimately goes to the bank, it must sell it to compensate for its losses from the unpaid loan. But, having sold the property, the bank must pay another 25



On January 18th, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting with the leadership of the Council of Ministers. Several proposed innovations affecting various areas of the economy were submitted for Head of State’s consideration.

percent duty. As a result, all this one way or another falls in the future on the shoulders of its clients — ordinary people.

The situation is the same with foreign developers: according to the current rules, they can sell built housing to people only with the payment of a duty. But most likely the developer will simply compensate for their additional costs with the increased cost per square metre, and in the end everything will again fall on the shoulders of buyers.

“If this foreign bank (and it is actually foreign) plans to operate in Belarus, they must be placed on equal terms with our banks. And tomorrow this bank will curtail its activities...” Aleksandr Lukashenko noted.

“Then the rule of the decree comes into play, and he can leave only with the permission of the Government, provided that it pays at least 25 percent,” Chairman of the State Control Committee Vasily Gerasimov joined the conversation.

One of the topics of the meeting was opposition to the withdrawal of capital. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Belarus, surrounded by barriers and prohibitions, lives and works in difficult economic conditions.

“Sanctions are a traditional and time-tested practice of pressure by so-called world leaders on countries they dislike. Unfortunately, this is, so to speak, a fashionable economic trend. Thus, both the United States and the European Union have been cracking down on competitors for a long time. We offer foreigners some of the best conditions: preferences, benefits, infrastructure, and, of course, skill sets. Come and work. But not for the sake of profit at the expense of our people,” the Head of State emphasised.

Nevertheless, representatives of state control report facts about the outflow of funds to unfriendly countries and even the deliberate withdrawal of profits outside Belarus.

Another topic of the meeting was the adjustment of customs legislation. According to the government, the changes are necessary to harmonise the legislation of Belarus and Russia.

“That is, as part of the implementation of the Union programme. But in the process of unification, the interests of the state cannot be infringed,” the President emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that relations between the two countries, no matter how good they are, must be improved. But with any changes or innovations, we must remember, first of all, sovereignty and independence.

One of the important topics on the agenda of the event was the creation of a Russian-Belarusian spacecraft for remote sensing of the Earth.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the draft relevant decree had already been submitted for his consideration and the government was instructed to study the issue of financing in more detail. The President noted that the process of creating the device itself does not present any particular difficulties; this can be done, figuratively speaking, by taking a Russian platform and installing Belarusian equipment on it.

“The project must be considered not only from the point of view of national security, but also as a promising area of bilateral scientific co-operation, which will allow developing the skill sets of both the Belarusian and Russian sides. And in the future it will bring even greater returns to us and our partners,” Aleksandr Lukashenko added and asked how things are going with the use of our first Earth remote sensing device, the service life of which has been extended, and a communications satellite.

The President asked about the economic efficiency of both devices, how much these projects paid for themselves.

The meeting participants discussed all the identified issues substantively and in detail. Regarding amendments to

the decree, which regulates valuation activities in the Republic of Belarus, several norms in the document were laid down at the initiative of the customs authorities. As a result of the discussion, the Head of State instructed to develop criteria as soon as possible and identify organisations that are most competent and will provide assessment services within the framework of customs affairs.

It is also necessary to look at the organisation of work in this area as a whole. The audit period is until April 1st, during which time it is necessary to study the activities of appraisal organisations and establish proper order by defining clear and understandable rules of the game.

The bill on amendments to the law on customs regulation considered by the Head of State concerns both directly national customs administration and contains provisions aimed at unifying legislation with Russia.

Significant relief for business, a reduction in administrative regulations, and simplification of procedures are proposed. For example, business entities will not provide a number of documents to customs at all; in certain areas, the terms of administrative customs procedures are being reduced, and new procedures are being introduced that will make customs clearance easier for business entities.

A significant part of the changes also applies to individuals. We are talking, among other things, about simplifying the procedure for filing a customs declaration when crossing the border.

Regarding the creation of a new Belarusian-Russian spacecraft for remote sensing of the Earth, Aleksandr Lukashenko particularly focused on issues of economic efficiency and payback. An order was given to calculate costs, payback and efficiency in even more detail.

Regarding the government’s proposals regarding the sale of property by owners from unfriendly countries, Aleksandr Lukashenko instructed to develop an exhaustive list of ‘exceptions to the rules’ and make an appropriate decision at the level of the Council of Ministers. These cases will be taken into account, but otherwise strict restrictive measures aimed at preventing attempts to withdraw capital from the country will continue to be in effect.

At the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko also emphasised that Belarus can and should engage in import substitution in those segments that, due to sanctions, were abandoned by investors from unfriendly countries.

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THE STATE QUALITY MARK HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN BELARUS



The corresponding Decree No. 21 was signed by the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The sign is a red pentagon, in the center of which there is a stylised image of an inverted letter ‘K’ and the inscription ‘Belarus’. The five corners of the sign symbolise the quality of Belarusian products, achieved by a combination of five production indicators: safety, environmental friendliness, innovation, manufacturability and aesthetics.

The procedure for assigning the State Quality Mark and the list of incentive benefits and preferences provided to manufacturers upon its assignment will be determined by the government. The establishment of the State Quality Mark will help improve the quality of Belarusian goods and services.

Task from the President: enter mass production of electric vehicles by January 1st, 2025

The President's helicopter landed on the territory of the enterprise. Nearby there is a large parking lot with ready-made cars. Seeing it, Aleksandr Lukashenko asked: they say there is a queue to buy cars, but the warehouse is full here.

As the Head of State was assured, the cars in the parking lot are only a three-day production volume. Products are supplied to customers both in Belarus and Russia. Dealers in Belarus currently have about 800 cars.

As Aleksandr Lukashenko was reported, the domestic automotive industry as a whole is demonstrating good performance results. For example, in 2023, the highest export volume in more than 20 years was achieved. A large-scale investment programme is being implemented, including with the participation of the Russian side, which in the current conditions is very interested in the products of the domestic automobile industry and is ready to finance relevant projects. After all, Belarus has both production facilities and specialists with certain skill sets.

"We need to take advantage of this. There is a market, we are in demand. We have the skill sets," said the President.

Belarusian electric vehicles are also in great demand on the market. The country is implementing two pilot projects to transfer passenger transport to electric transport in Zhodino and Shklov District with the development of the corresponding infrastructure. Completion of the projects and delivery of electric vehicles is planned for the 1st quarter of 2024. The goal is to gradually increase the use of electrical energy in passenger transportation, reduce the level of air pollution, and practice the country's existing skill sets in the production of electric vehicles and charging stations.

According to experts, electric vehicle manufacturers have contracts for the current year and are now concluding contracts for 2025; their products are in great demand.



Speaking about the automotive industry in Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko figuratively expressed that in this regard, 'we are a bird flying not on one wing, but on one and a half wings'. The Head of State explained that the country produces trucks, dump trucks, and buses, but the production of passenger cars was less developed.

"There should be a passenger car in this line. This is for the people. We need to reach every person. The queue is crazy. The main task of the government and the minister is to satisfy the demand. Otherwise, a holy place is never empty, competitors will come. Therefore, it is necessary, as far as possible, to increase the production of passenger vehicles," the Belarusian leader emphasised.

Currently, the production of passenger cars is developing in Belarus mainly in two directions. Firstly, this is BelGee. The second is co-operation with the Chinese manufacturer FAW under the Hongqi brand.



The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, visited BelGee during a working trip to the Borisov District

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted the importance of developing co-operation with Chinese partners who have modern skill sets in the automotive industry, "This is a high-level production. Therefore, we need to co-operate with China, learn from them and borrow everything we can."

But one issue remains for manufacturers in Belarus — localisation. In this regard, the Head of State was informed about BelGee's plans to modernise the plant to increase its capacity. Now the demand for his products is quite high. Thus, almost 68 thousand cars were sold over the year, sales volumes on the domestic

platform, and was also shown prototypes.

The President focused on the timing of the launch of production of the domestic electric vehicle. After listening to the explanations of those in charge, the President set a deadline for the beginning of next year.

"Your task is to basically do all this by January 1st, 2025," Aleksandr Lukashenko instructed.

The task set by the Head of State is quite tense, because previously the deadlines for the development and production of a domestic electric vehicle were determined within 2021-2025.



Aleksandr Lukashenko got acquainted with the production of cars and visited the workshops.

During his visit to BelGee, the President was presented with an exhibition with samples of the products manufactured by this enterprise, as well as the Unison, electric vehicles produced by enterprises of the Industry Ministry and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. These are, for example, a prototype of a BELAZ dump truck running on hydrogen, a MAZ tourist bus, a prototype of a hybrid MAZ-X truck tractor, a modern electric bus, Hongqi passenger cars, a prototype of a domestic electric vehicle.

During his visit, Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke with BelGee employees.

"The prospect is for us to build a body shop here and stamp bodies. There is probably no company in the world that would produce all the components in one country, be it an airplane, a car... Great co-operation, long-term co-operation. But due to the fact that the world has gone crazy, competition is reaching military action, we need to rely primarily on friendly countries," Aleksandr Lukashenko noted.

One of the main global trends now is the production of cars using clean electric energy. These are not only electric vehicles, but also hybrid ones.

"The world shows us where to move. And we decided that we should follow this path, but by modernising and improving this production. Of course, we will help develop and modernise this enterprise. Next up is a workshop that will cast plastic products. What we don't do here, other enterprises will do. And the advantage of our system is that almost all of us are state-owned enterprises. And if someone is looking in the wrong direction, then we direct them to the right place in order to work towards the final result," the Belarusian leader emphasised.

Summing up, Aleksandr Lukashenko explained that in terms of localisation in the production of domestic cars, not only everything that is possible will be done, but will also be taken into account so that the products are competitive in the market.

"As long as I am President, we will not abandon this plant. This is partly my child. We will improve it, grow it, train people. This is our property. We did it, and we will move forward," the Head of State added.

The President also answered a question about the country's security in view of the draft updated National Security Concept and Military Doctrine recently presented to the Head of State. Are the measures in these documents sufficient to maintain peace and tranquillity in the country?

"Peace is expensive. You have to pay for it. But you don't have to worry. We, our people and state, have never been as protected as we are now. How it will be if, God forbid, a war breaks out, it will all depend on us. The system is built, there are Armed Forces, mobilisation reserve, territorial defence, people's militia. Everything is lined up. Weapons and ammunition have been distributed and stored locally. At this stage, everything is enough," Aleksandr Lukashenko assured.

The Head of State especially noted co-operation with Russia in terms of resolving security issues.

"As soon as nuclear weapons appeared in Belarus, all wings dropped. And our neighbours, who were stunned, and others. Although God forbid not only me, but also the new generation of politicians, think about using these nuclear weapons. This is a terrible weapon," the President said.

Belarus previously received Iskander missile systems from Russia and is developing its own military-industrial sector, preserving scientific and industrial schools left over from Soviet times. All this is an additional deterrent factor.



What does the updated National Security Concept include

Creation and development, not destruction and extermination, are the main guidelines of Belarusian society

Last week, the Security Council of Belarus, headed by the President Aleksandr Lukashenko, reviewed the updated strategic documents — the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine. Soon they will be approved, as required by the new Constitution, at the Belarusian People’s Congress. Their adoption is our response to geopolitical changes in the world, new challenges and threats. The International Institute for Strategic Studies in London states that in 2023 there were 183 regional conflicts in the world, 57 of which were in the ‘hot’ phase, that is, military force was used. In this regard, the revision of the Concept of National Security and the Military Doctrine of Belarus is especially relevant, since today the task of maintaining peace is a priority for most states on the planet.

By Nikolai Buzin,
Doctor of Military Sciences, Professor,
Assistant to the Chairman of the House
of Representatives of the National
Assembly

Fundamental military-political document

The National Security Concept is a fundamental military-political document that regulates the state’s approaches to ensuring its own security in various areas. In our country, the previous edition of the Concept was adopted in 2010. Since then, the balance of political forces around Belarus has changed significantly, and a new version of the Constitution has been adopted.

Today, leading states have entered into an uncompromising struggle for geopolitical dominance, and the planet is at the stage of forming a multipolar world order. Since 2010, military science and practice have made significant strides forward, including those with elements of artificial intelligence. Western countries have actually carried out coups d’état using the mechanisms of ‘colour revolutions’ in many parts of the world, including in neighbouring Ukraine. In August 2020, our country became the target of destructive influence. Since 2022, the United States and its satellites have launched the process of destroying the alliance between Russia and Belarus through economic strangulation and hybrid warfare at the hands of the Ukrainian regime.

All this led to the objective need to adjust the fundamental principles of ensuring national security in our country, which were implemented in the period from 2022 to 2023.

Taking into account new trends

An analysis of the provisions of the draft National Security Concept of Belarus for 2023, which is publicly available, indicates that the document has been significantly expanded and supplemented. In particular, the general provisions of Section I are brought into line with modern scientific achievements.

The list of areas of national security has been expanded by highlighting biological security as a separate area, which reflects the experience of modern wars and armed conflicts and trends in the art of war.

Sections II and III have been radically revised, which made it possible to reflect the trends of the modern world, clarify the national interests of our state and the list of threats to national security in various areas. Significant attention is paid in the document to national identity, historical heritage, and traditional values, which have become objects of direct operation in modern interstate confrontation.

Within the framework of sections IV and V, the goals, objectives and principles of ensuring national security are revealed, approaches to neutralising internal and external threats are reworked. The sections relating to scientific, technological, information and military security spheres have been expanded. An important addition to the document is the clarification of indicators of the state of national security and the inclusion of the Belarusian People’s Congress in the list of entities ensuring national security.

Element of strategic deterrence

At the same time, as part of the nationwide discussion of the National Security Concept, which was initiated by the Head of State, the scientific community and citizens of the country, certain additions and clarifications were proposed.

Thus, statements by Poland about its desire to place American nuclear weapons on its own territory and Israel about the possibility of using atomic charges (despite the official denial of their presence) amid the escalation of the conflict in the Gaza Strip forced the addition of paragraph 5 of the concept. In its final version, it looks like this, “The number of states wishing to become owners of nuclear weapons or place them on their territory, primarily in Europe, is growing. The risks of a nuclear conflict are increasing.”

This addition justifies the decision to station Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus as a critical element of strategic deterrence.

Traditional values and mental purity

Issues of a spiritual and moral nature, protecting the institution of the traditional family, and increasing the efficiency of security in the demographic sphere received significant resonance and feedback in Belarusian society. They are reflected in a number of sections of the concept. Thus, as a strategic national interest, a provision was introduced on ‘the comprehensive protection and preservation of the institution of the traditional family as a union between a woman and a man by birth’. In paragraph 29, one of the main threats to national security is ‘depopulation, demographic aging, declining birth rates, shortening life expectancy, and the decay of the institution of the traditional family’. And the main direction of neutralising internal sources of threats in the demographic sphere is defined as ‘comprehensive stimulation of the birth rate, ensuring simple reproduction of the population, strengthening the institution of the family, preventing its degradation, preserving traditional spiritual and moral values’.

The provisions regarding ‘civil society’ received additional development within the framework of the National Security Concept. They are reflected in paragraphs 31, 64 and 71 of the document.

Demand for peace, security and justice

A number of additions to the concept stem from the features of the socially oriented model of the Belarusian economy and ensuring the implementation of the principle of social justice. Section five of paragraph 56 enshrines the provision on ‘improving the system of targeted assistance to the population and increasing the social responsibility of business’, and in paragraph twenty – ‘improving the material and technical base of social facilities, eliminating imbalances in regional development’.



The President
of Belarus,
Aleksandr
Lukashenko,

“We respond quite adequately to the latest challenges thrown at us — provocations, sanctions, political ultimatums, etc. But all tests are, first of all, experience. And experience is an invaluable material for developing a strategy for further development. Adapting the National Security Concept to the realities of today is a completely logical and very timely step... Geopolitical interest in Belarus on the part of the Western hegemon is the history of more than one century. But technologies and methods of conducting hybrid wars are constantly being improved. And we must look even further and work ahead.”

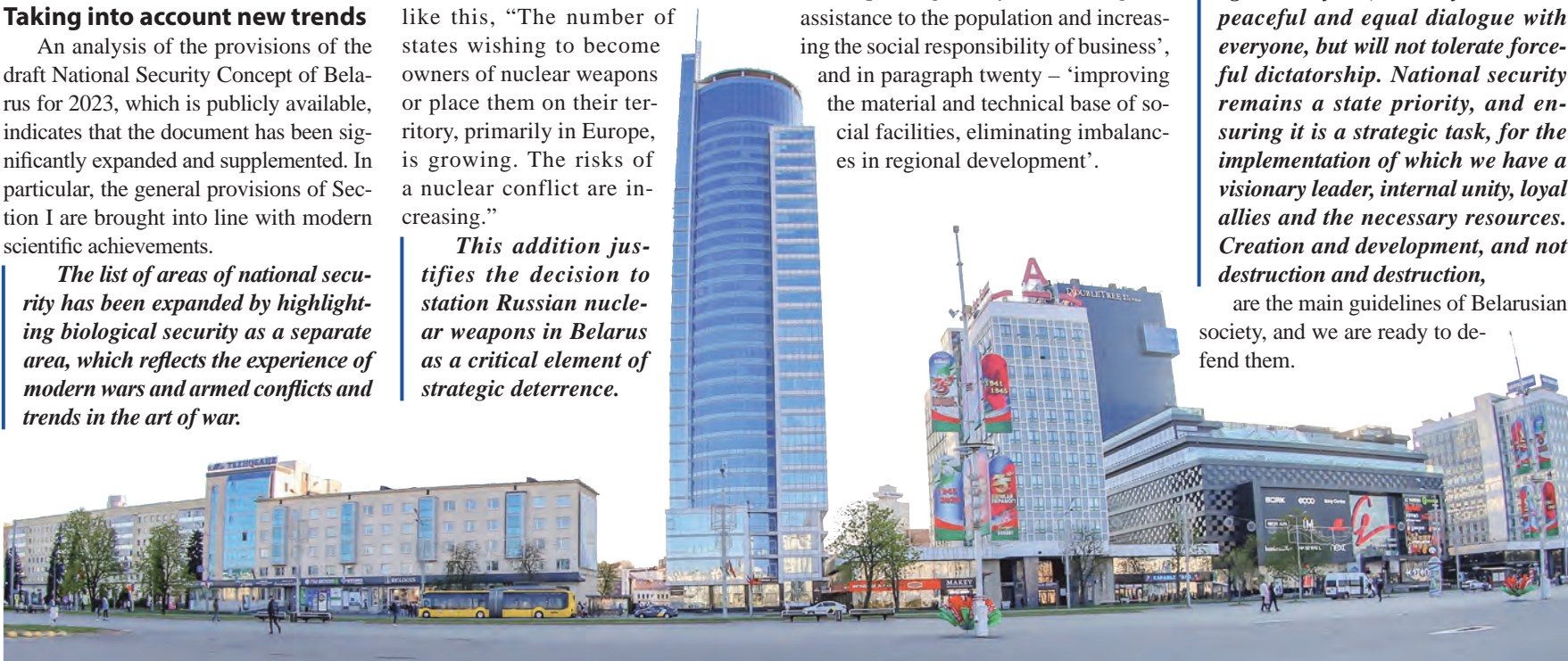
During a meeting of the Security Council on February 20th, 2023

Today in Belarusian society there is a real demand for security and stability. Events in many parts of the world and in our own homes demonstrate how easy it is to lose them and what incredible efforts it takes to preserve them. Belarus is a peaceful country, and our citizens have well learned the bitter lessons of history.

The updated National Security Concept has incorporated everything new that has been developed by society in a variety of fields of activity, and has summarised the accumulated experience and knowledge gained over the decade.

Belarus once again declares to all states that it has no complaints against anyone, is ready to build a peaceful and equal dialogue with everyone, but will not tolerate forceful dictatorship. National security remains a state priority, and ensuring it is a strategic task, for the implementation of which we have a visionary leader, internal unity, loyal allies and the necessary resources. Creation and development, and not destruction and destruction,

are the main guidelines of Belarusian society, and we are ready to defend them.



Wealth of the Belarusian land

Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry — on Belarusian subsoil reserves and import substitution of imported mineral raw materials with domestic ones

About 50 different types of minerals have been identified in Belarus, and the total number of deposits exceeds 14 thousand. We have not only potassium salts, sands, kaolins, clay, dolomite, chalk, but also basalts, tuffs and much more. Today, the important task of import substitution of imported raw materials with domestic ones is being solved where it is economically feasible. We learned about the features of this work, the secrets that the Belarusian subsoil keeps, from the Head of the Main Department of Natural Resources of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, Vasily Kolb.

By Vera Arteaga

Sands — in progress

— Today, given external challenges, the issue of import substitution of raw materials is quite relevant in Belarus. It was previously noted that a number of government agencies and enterprises began to carry out large-scale work to reduce imports of mineral raw materials and maximise the use of their own. How can we assess the results of 2023 in this direction?

— Indeed, today at many enterprises in the country the strategy regarding the use of mineral raw materials has changed. Work has already been organised in a number of areas to increase its production, and approaches to mineral processing technology are being revised. And this despite the fact that just a year ago the work of some enterprises was based only on imported raw materials.

During 2023, the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, together with interested departments and organisations, developed about 15 proposals for the development of the mineral resource base. These approaches will not only significantly reduce the volume of imports of minerals available in the country, including sands, kaolins, clay, dolomite, chalk, basalts, but also increase the efficiency of existing production facilities for the extraction and primary processing of raw materials.

Having analysed the operational information, it can be noted that compared to 2022, there is an increase in the production of potassium salts by 170.4 percent, glass sand by the enterprise Gomelsteklo by 115 percent, building stone by Granit by almost 113 percent and Gomelobldorstroy by 154 percent, chalk and marl used for cement production by organisations of the Belarusian Cement Company, by 103.7 percent.

— Which country's enterprises' experience in terms of raw material import substitution can be considered particularly successful?

— At the top of the list are organisations of the Industry Ministry, which are carrying out targeted work, in particular, to increase the share of domestic quartz sand in the production of foundry products. Thus, Osi-



povich Automobile Units Plant has completely switched to domestic raw materials since August 2022, using over 500 tonnes of sand during this period. In 2022, the branch of Atlant, the Baranovichi Machine Tool Plant, completed tests and a complete transition to the use of this raw material for moulding production. The branch of Gomel Mining and Processing Plant of Gomelsteklo. In 2023 alone, more than 4.4 thousand tonnes were processed. The shares of imported sand from MTZ and MAZ decreased to 12 (6.4 thousand tonnes) and 30 percent (4.5 thousand tonnes), respectively.

Today and for the future

— What minerals are Belarusian geologists generally working on today? Have plans for their exploration and production been fulfilled over the past year?

— In 2023, in accordance with the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources for 2021-2025 state programme, all indicators for the growth of mineral resources were met. In particular, we have grown with oil, basalts, and sands.

Thus, in the northern part of the Western section of the Sloboda Deposit, Minsk District, an increase in reserves of silicate sands was obtained by 7.2 million tonnes, basalts at the Novodvorskoye Deposit, Pinsk District — by 54.5 million tonnes. Also, during the exploration work, basalt resources in the identified Pinsk and Ivanovichi areas were estimated at 648 million tonnes, and oil resources at the Zhukovichi structure — 457 thousand tonnes.

As for mining, according to current data, we are seeing an increase in this direction. Enterprises developed appropriate strategies. As an example, Belorusneft, which, in accordance with the strategy for the development of the petrochemical complex until 2030, achieved a record oil production of 1.87 million tonnes last year, which is 103 percent higher than in 2022.

We replace it with domestic

— What raw materials resources of our enterprises in the future, in your opinion, can and should be replaced with Belarusian raw materials?

— Despite the developed raw material base for such important minerals as kaolin, quartz sands, clays, gypsum, dolomite, chalk, basalts, stable imports are still observed. We believe that the existing deposits of these minerals in Belarus are promising in terms of import substitution. And work in this direction continues.

Firstly, we can talk about the potential transition to domestic raw materials for enterprises producing basalt products. These are not only mineral wool slabs and continuous basalt fibre, but also landscaping elements, such as paving slabs.

Non-fuel peat products also have significant potential. We are talking about the creation and implementation of new fertilisers and nutrient soils, sorption materials, activated carbons and others.

It is expected that in the near future we will be involved in the development of the Sititsa Kaolin Deposit. This raw ma-

terial is used in the production of ceramic products, and work is currently underway to improve its quality and prepare results for its further use in the country's economy.

Enterprises in the foundry industry show interest and are actively working on import substitution — the use of moulding sand, the glass industry — quartz sand for the production of glass products, and the ceramic industry — refractory clays. For these purposes, the country has proven mineral resources. It is necessary to improve processing technology in order to improve their quality to meet industry requirements.

— In March 2023, large-scale work began on detailed exploration of basalts and tuffs at the Novodvorskoye Deposit. What is the prospect of reducing imports of these minerals in this regard?

— In the first half of last year, work on detailed exploration of basalts and tuffs at the Novodvorskoye Deposit was completed. Industrial reserves of basalts amount to more than 54 million tonnes, and tuffs — over 8 million. A feasibility study for the development of the field has been compiled.

We can already say today: the commissioning of this complex will allow us to reduce the import of basalt (Br4.1 million in the nine months of 2023) and create about 460 new jobs in the region, as well as completely replace the import of raw materials and ensure existing production, leaving currency in the country.

— How do you generally assess the economic benefits of replacing imported raw materials with Belarusian ones for industrial purposes?

— Foremost, by extracting our own mineral resources, we thereby ensure the economic security of our republic and reduce its dependence on other countries in terms of imports. Secondly, by involving new fields in the development, we can talk about creating new enterprises in the regions or increasing the production capabilities of existing enterprises. And this means new jobs, increased revenue, tax revenues, production of new types of products and expansion of the range.





“Here and now. Real life is not a role. You can’t retake it...” one of the actors in the *On the Other Shore* film is sure. Today he serves at the Vidzy border post.



Place in history

He was given a summons to join the army shortly before the premiere of the film, which was timed to coincide with National Unity Day. And while the crowded cinema halls confirmed the unprecedented popularity of the main film over the years, Andrei Dudko was packing a backpack, going to the military registration and enlistment office. The young Belarusian artist, who played a significant role in the sensational historical feature film of the Belarusfilm National Film Studio, did not even have time to experience the full taste of unexpected fame. Is everything going well in the army?

By Yelena Begunova

You can’t play patriotism

It’s frosty outside — minus thirty degrees. The trees along the road are covered with icy frost. Vidzy, forty kilometres from Braslav, is the extreme point of Belarus. There are only a few kilometres left to the Lithuanian border. This is where Andrei Dudko serves. The border post is warm and cosy; from the enclosures you can hear the barking of service dogs who are waiting for their ‘outfit’ to guard the state border.

And here is Andrei. The border guard’s uniform suits the slender and tall fair-haired guy very well. A charming smile, an open look — he clearly wins you over.

“How are you doing, Andrei?” we meet him with a question.

He responds with military clarity and admits, “Great! To be honest, at first I dreamed of having an honour guard company, but now I understand: the border outpost is mine! I have been serving for less than three months, adaptation, one might say, has already taken place. It is increasingly easier to cover the 10–15 kilometres on skis or on foot, which is usually included in the border patrol route. I finally learned how to navigate the terrain (although not long ago I even moved around Minsk with a navigator). I already know how to read traces, notice and record the smallest details... All this, undoubtedly, will be useful after the service.”

Andrei is 24 years old. Perhaps another would want to last a little longer in civilian life, but he is convinced,

“Military duty is a sacred duty. And let this sound a little pompous, but... Is it possible to consider yourself a full-fledged man, a defender, if you have never stood in the ranks, never held a weapon in your hands and did not feel responsible for those who are behind you?”

I believe in this guy’s sincerity. Pride in what he does. Sparkle in his eyes. Unconcealed emotionality. You can’t play it. After all, patriotism is not a role. And today Andrei understands: personally behind him are his mother and father, who work at the Verkhnedvinsk creamery. And also many thousands of other people’s mothers,

fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers. Those people who are sure: there, on the border, everything is always under control.

Good must prevail

“Andrei, you played the role of Jurek in the film, the son of the commandant of the Polish guard, Pan Szymanski. The character is ambiguous for me, as a viewer... The ending is also sharp: Jurek, in a fit of emotion, kills his father and the cheating girl. How do you rate: is this hero positive or negative? And how difficult was it for you to take on this role?” I’m asking a slightly provocative question.

The border guard doesn’t even think about it: in the historical drama telling about the events of 1925, when, after the signing of the Treaty of Riga, Western Belarus lived under the rule of Poland and tried in every possible way to defend its own culture, language and faith, there are no random heroes. Each image is collective and complements the overall historical picture, emphasizing the importance of national unity.

“Jurek is a simple, naive, sensitive and even vulnerable young man. But he is very responsible, deeply devoted to his friend Pavel, in love with the treacherous Rada and does not notice the deception — he is simply far from this feeling. I didn’t have to ‘play much’ — I was like this guy myself just yesterday. Today, having put on a military uniform, I have matured, become different... Is

it possible to justify murder? Of course not. But there, in the film, this is not just murder — a protest of a pure soul against evil and betrayal. Riot. Negation. Yes, Jurek, soft and perhaps weak-willed. But he is ready to answer for what he has done, and when he is offered to ‘play along’ and take part in the provocation, accusing intelligence officers from the ‘other side’ of murder, he refuses. Too honest Jurek becomes dangerous for the Polish government — he can uncover a political conspiracy. And then a shot is heard behind the closed door...”

Here and now

I see: Andrei Dudko seems to be reliving those exciting episodes from the script. For him, such a serious film became a new step in learning about himself and his abilities. The guy considers it a great honour to take part in the filming, and after being transferred to the reserve, he plans to continue his career in the Belarusian film industry. Moreover, working alongside famous Russian artists was not in vain — it was a serious experience.

“It wasn’t easy. Playing a contemporary is, of course, easier. And here I had to get into the spirit of the era... I’m glad it worked out. There was a very positive atmosphere on the set. Regardless of status, stardom and age, everyone is the same. I remember with a laugh how they cheered me on when I first sat on a horse... There was a moment during a rehearsal: I flew out of the

saddle and fell. But everyone said: a very good sign for a future career! Of course, I later rehabilitated myself. As a result, I became a good rider,” Andrei recalls.

...A native of the Vitebsk outback. Parents are ordinary workers. What brought the graduate of the Verkhnedvinsk gymnasium to the cinema, how did he manage to pave the way to the big stage? Take the path that thousands of boys and girls dream of?

It turns out that Andrei has been interested in choreography since childhood. He danced and read poetry in the school assembly hall. He was the presenter at the holidays. After finishing nine classes, he entered the Vitebsk College of Culture and Arts. Then he successfully passed the competition for admission to the Academy of Arts and became a state-funded student at the Theatre Department. He received a specialty in acting. He was assigned to the Belarusian State Academic Theatre for Young Spectators. True, before the army he managed to work there quite a bit.

“I was cast in the role of Jurek in the *On the Other Shore* film in my second year at the academy. Interviews, castings, video business cards — the decision was not made immediately. I was very worried. And I was immensely glad to learn: I passed! For a second-year student, this is luck. My mother also cried with joy — she supports me very much. Of course, by that time I already had some experience in filming, but this role was the most significant. I hope it’s far from the last — I can’t imagine my life without cinema and the stage...” Andrei says.

Alas, our conversation in the outpost’s leisure and information room is interrupted: it’s time for Private Dudko to join his squad. My interlocutor immediately becomes serious: we’ll leave talking about movies for later. Quick preparations: white camouflage suit, machine gun, binoculars, walkie-talkie, signal pistol... A few minutes later, together with the dog handler junior sergeant Kirill Moskalenko and the Caucasian shepherd dog Tseriy, Andrei leaves behind the gates of the border outpost. At this moment, protecting the borders of the Fatherland is more important for the artist. Here and now. After all, real life is not a role. You can’t retake it...



INSIDE

The Minsk Times
Thursday
January 25
2024

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Participants of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos discussed how to return openness to the world and achieve greater responsibility in the face of global political, economic, physiological, intellectual and informational challenges

Critics say the summit is a meeting of the super-rich and that it fails to tackle growing global inequality.

“I think Davos is totally irrelevant,” said Rana Foroohar, a *Financial Times* columnist, whose book *Homecoming* argues that a new shift toward localisation is displacing the forces of globalisation that have been dominant over the past half century.

Rebuilding Trust was declared as the general theme of the WEF. Specific areas of discussion concerned security and co-operation, AI, job growth, climate and energy strategy.

However, behind big words and statements, real military security problems remain unresolved, including at least two bloody conflicts.

Kiev’s hopes that the problem can be settled by mechanically increasing the number of participants in the discussion looked ridiculous. It was indicative that the Chinese delegation — despite the titanic efforts of the Ukrainian representatives to lure it — completely ignored these useless political gatherings. Meanwhile, the assurances voiced by the US and the EU of complete and absolute support for Ukraine are already so routine that even the Western press did not give them any new deep meaning. Moreover, according to one of the Bloomberg columnists, the meeting in Davos demonstrated that Ukraine was in both a military and diplomatic impasse.

Meanwhile, the global capitalist elite is more concerned about the problems of

managing and manipulating society, as well as the opportunities for this provided by AI technologies. Moreover, there’s also the widespread loss of confidence on the part of citizens in elections — the main manipulative technology of the West, which for centuries has made it possible to maintain the dominance of faceless and irresponsible elites.

Though the forum has drawn many big names, there were also notable absences. Those skipping the gathering this year included US President Joe Biden, China’s Xi Jinping, Indian PM Narendra Modi, French President Emmanuel Macron and UK PM Rishi Sunak. That raises questions about whether Davos can hang on to its reputation as an essential event for the rich and powerful.

Adolescent alcohol use in Europe

More than a third of adolescents in the EU reported heavy episodic drinking, twice the number of adults

The rate of heavy drinkers among adolescents — those aged 15-16 years — is considerably higher than the adults in most European countries.

As early drinking is associated with drinking later on in life, this presents a serious public health problem on the continent.

Heavy episodic drinking among adolescents, which is defined as having five or more drinks on one occasion, ranged from 8 percent in Iceland to 59 percent in Denmark in 2019.

Four Nordic countries — Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland — recorded the lowest rate of heavy drinking among 15-16-year-olds. However, another Nordic country, Denmark had the highest rate of heavy drinkers.

The heavy drinking rate was below 25 percent only in five countries, the four Nordic ones and Portugal.

Besides Denmark, it was also over 45 percent in four countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Croatia.

Adolescents in France and Spain (both 34 percent), and Italy (35 percent) had lower rates of binge drinking than the EU average.

Heavy episodic drinking rates were higher among adolescents than adults in almost all countries across Europe, except Iceland and Norway.



NATO practising the beginning of World War III

NATO has launched its largest exercise since the Cold War

The North Atlantic Alliance has launched its ‘largest exercise in decades’, said NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Christopher Cavoli, adding that some 90,000 troops joined the *Steadfast Defender 2024* drills that will run through May.

More than 50 ships from aircraft carriers to destroyers are taking part, as well as more than 80 fighter jets, helicopters and drones and at least 1,100 combat vehicles including 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles, NATO said.

Cavoli said the drills would rehearse NATO’s execution of its regional plans, the first defence plans the alliance has drawn up in decades, detailing how it would respond to a Russian attack.

According to the Spanish ABC, NATO’s opponent in the exercise will be a non-existent state similar to Russia.

“They will simulate the outbreak

of World War III after an alleged attack against one of the NATO members by a fictitious enemy named Occasus, which strongly resembles Russia,” the publication reads.

NATO did not mention Russia by name in its announcement. But its top strategic document identifies Russia as the most significant and direct threat to NATO members’ security.

Moscow has repeatedly underlined that it does not pose a threat to any NATO member, but will not ignore actions that are potentially dangerous to its interests. At the same time, it is still open to dialogue, but on an equal basis, and the West must abandon its course towards the militarisation of Europe. As Vladimir Putin noted, Russia does not want a direct military clash with NATO, but if someone wishes, Moscow is ready for this.

South Korea bans sale and production of dog meat

The slaughter and sale of dogs for their meat is to become illegal in South Korea after MPs backed a new law

The legislation, set to come into force by 2027, aims to end the centuries-old practice of humans eating dog meat.

Dog meat stew, called ‘boshintang’, is considered a delicacy among some older South Koreans, but the meat has fallen out of favour with diners and is no longer popular with young people.

Under the new law the consumption of dog meat itself will not be illegal.

According to a Gallup poll last year, only 8 percent of people said they had tried dog meat in the past 12 months, down from 27 percent in 2015. Fewer than a fifth of those polled said they supported the consumption of the meat.

The new law focuses on the dog meat trade — those convicted of butchering dogs face up to three years in prison,

while people found guilty of raising dogs for meat or selling dog meat could serve a maximum of two years.

Farmers and restaurant owners have three years to find alternative sources of employment and income before the legislation comes into force.

According to government statistics, South Korea had around 1,600 dog meat restaurants and 1,150 dog farms in 2023, all of which will now have to submit a plan to phase out their businesses to their local authorities.

The government has promised to fully support dog meat farmers, butchers and restaurant owners, whose businesses will be forced to close, though the details of what compensation will be offered have yet to be worked through.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Global economic risks — 2024

What the rich are afraid of and what can compete with the existing model of the global economy

Global corporate players are paying increased attention to risk assessment — global, regional, national and commercial. Large companies, based on such systematisation, subsequently make decisions on transactions, including the financing of political projects and military adventures with the participation of NATO structures. This year is no exception. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, corporate and political elites identified the risks that they believe will have the greatest impact on the global economy. In other words, prevent them from earning even more!

By Aleksei Avdonin, BISI analyst

Where to expect a crisis

The risks identified in paragraphs 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17 will have the greatest destructive effect. But the likelihood of these risks occurring will be relatively low. The risk of 'Escalation or outbreak of armed conflicts' has the greatest probability and maximum destructive effect (probability – 25 percent).

Risks with the greatest probability of occurrence (points 1 and 2) will have a minimal effect of destruction, humanity (read: the world economy) will be able to quickly eliminate the consequences of such events.

If we aggregate all the above risks, it becomes clear what the owners of 'factories, newspapers, and ships' fear most. **They fear the destruction of the global economy created by Anglo-Saxon capital over the past 350 years.** This is expressed in the fear of destruction of global supply chains of goods and raw materials (items 7, 9, 10 of the risk table), as well as in the bankruptcy of the main creditors, which are now national states. In other words, the world's elites were worried that the growth of conflicts in the main logistics hubs (the Suez Canal to a greater extent, but threats are also assessed in the Panama Canal area, in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles) could collapse the world economy and finances. Everything that was created over centuries by adherents of the ideas of the East India Company (EIC) can disappear overnight.

When will the first trillionaire appear

According to a study by the international anti-poverty organisation OXFAM, Today, one percent of the world's population owns 43% of the world's financial wealth. Moreover, since 2020, five billion people have become even poorer, and the five richest people have doubled their fortunes over the same period, their earnings rate was \$14 million per hour. At this rate, in 10 years the first trillionaire will appear on our planet. At the same time, it will take 230 years for humanity to completely overcome poverty.

Trip to the European Union

The risks described above have already begun to actively materialise. Last week it became known that the energy corporation Shell had suspended shipments through the Red Sea due to fears of further escalation between the Houthis and the West.

The price of cargo transportation through the Suez Canal has already increased by 310 percent since November 2023, and cargo delivery times have increased by an average of ten days. In 2024, tariffs for sea freight from Asia to Europe may rise by another 60 percent, and insurance premiums will increase by 20 percent.

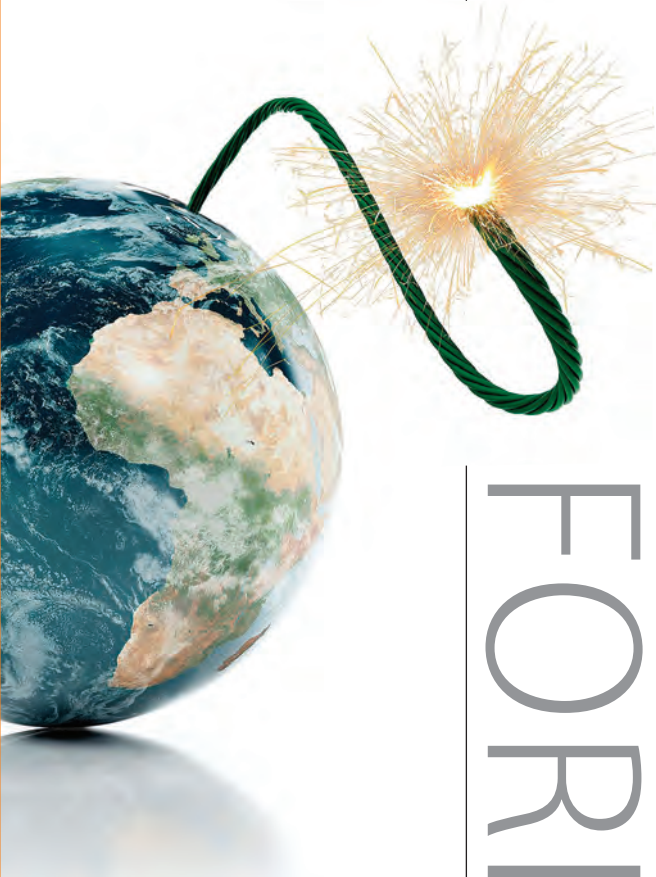
It is important to understand that the bulk of cargo moving through the Red Sea is delivered to Europe. Current processes will inevitably lead to an increase in the cost of living for Europeans — inflation will rise, incomes will fall, poverty and impover-



The President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"Facts show that the world is very restless. Maybe there will be more. Among the world leaders, Americans especially do not want multipolarity. They want to rule the world, as it was after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ukraine, the Middle East, already the border of the Indian and Atlantic oceans, the Houthis... We're observing demonstrative bombings just for the sake of the upcoming elections in America, they simply want to show their 'heroism', and how 'cool' they are... The whole planet could flare up. This cannot be allowed to happen!"

From the speech at a reception on behalf of the President of Belarus dedicated to the Old New Year on January 12th, 2024



FORECAST

ishment will everywhere accompany Europeans, which will inevitably lead to the 'launch' of negative socio-political processes.

The current situation in the Middle East is extremely beneficial for the United States and Great Britain. So they continue to undermine the economies of China and Europe. Goods from the Greater China are not supplied to the European Union, there is a shortage of components for production, including cars and equipment, and, as a result, the situation of European corporations and banks focused on the production of mass consumption products is even worsening.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Economic Relations of Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, clearly stated that **the European Union is becoming weaker economically and losing its weight in world politics.**

Decisive battle

At the same time, the 'interest' of the corporate elites of Europe in the militarisation of their economy and the transfer of production to the production of weapons and military equipment is growing. The United States is, as it were, 'pushing' Europe onto the path of war, similar to the situation in the 30s of the 20th century after the financial and economic crisis, or the so-called Great Depression.

Thus, French President Macron emphasised that France is making good progress in industry thanks to the transition to a military economy amid the conflict in Ukraine and the need to supply weapons there. In



particular, they talked about new deliveries of Caesar self-propelled howitzers, SCALP missiles and 'hundreds of bombs'.

Earlier, in September 2023, US Assistant Secretary of Defence Mara Carlin, speaking at Ronald Reagan University, said that Ukraine has become a laboratory for studying military innovation. On December 8th, 2023, US Secretary of State Blinken, at a meeting with British Foreign Minister David Cameron, said that about 90 percent of the American money allocated to Ukraine remained in the United States and went to the development of the American military-industrial complex.

Due to the dominance of the dollar, the United States was also able to finance its huge budget deficits. If the BRICS+ countries manage to create an alternative financial world, the dollar will collapse. This will lead to higher prices and interest rates in the United States, as well as complicate

the servicing of the gigantic national debt and ultimately provoke a default.

Thus, the risks of the global elites are associated with the desire to continue to maintain the opportunity to make money from the exploitation of entire states and peoples. However, the situation is changing, alliances of countries appear that oppose the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxons. The latter are not ready to simply give up their positions and are focused on the key 'battle' for their dominance.

Forecasts

According to World Economic Forum analysts, climate change will cost the world \$12.5 trillion and 14.5 million deaths by 2050. The most dangerous and frequent weather events will be floods, droughts and heat waves. The hardest hit regions will be Asia (losses could reach \$3.5 trillion), Europe (\$2.6 trillion) and South America (\$2.2 trillion).

Let's go sledding!



Strochitsy

In the suburbs of the Belarusian capital, an authentic corner with wooden huts, cobbled streets and windmills has been preserved. The Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Lifestyle reverently preserves the centuries-old traditions of the peasant way of life. And horses are her indispensable attribute. In the summer they give tourists rides on carts covered with fresh hay, and in winter — on painted sleighs. You can completely immerse yourself in a fairy tale — the museum team organises unique interactive excursions and conducts rituals. In winter, here you can meet Zyuzya (a mythical Belarusian character) or meet carolers with a nativity scene. Traditionally, bright and massive celebrations take place on the occasion of Maslenitsa.

Gorodnya

Do you dream of riding a troika with bells, with your manes flying and the snowy wind in your face? Go to the equestrian base near Mogilev in the village of Gorodnya. The spouses Peter and Natalya Ratosh have fourteen sorrel horses in their stable. Moreover, they are harnessed to the sleigh not only according to their temperament, but also according to color. “It’s both comfortable and beautiful,” the owners explain. Here you can arrange a luxurious photo shoot with handsome men of all stripes. Children and adults are taught horse riding.



Agricultural estates

*‘What a boon
Is a merry crackle of the stove’s flame.
How swell to ponder near a fire!
But listen, wouldn’t we desire
To ride in our open sleigh?’*

A country holiday in winter in Belarus is the ideal embodiment of Alexander Pushkin’s dream. Most farmsteads have long ago acquired horses, which they are ready to harness at the first request of the guests. After riding through snow-covered fields and forests, go to the bathhouse. Tea with jam and honey, patchwork blankets, sleeping on a high feather bed — all this is an incomparable pleasure. The classic was right! But the wonders of civilisation are also not alien to the owners of agricultural estates. Some locations already offer rides on modern snowmobiles. With breeze, drive and complete delight.

In the chilly winter season, it’s nice to rush along forest paths to the sound of bells. We’ll tell you where in Belarus you can find ancient fun these days.

‘Expedition’

Who doesn’t love smiling huskies? There is an unusual picnic hotel not far from the Belarusian capital, where these northern dogs are happy to give everyone a sleigh ride. There is no need to worry about the health of the dogs: huskies have mastered sleds for transporting people and heavy loads since time immemorial. An interesting observation: they take children for rides in the snow with special joy. One such winter trip will definitely guarantee an adrenaline rush and give you an unforgettable feeling of speed and complete freedom. A nice bonus will be the opportunity to take a selfie with the charming four-legged ‘cab drivers’. Huskies love to be photographed and when they take off, the ‘birds’ look directly into the lens from the camera.



Beresteysky Sleigh

A large-scale winter festival with the self-explanatory name *Beresteysky Sleigh* was held in Brest for the first time in 2022, and a year later in Baranovichi. This January, ancient Pinsk hosted a bright and large-scale event. The city above Pina River pleasantly surprised the guests. Fun festivities with singing and dancing took place in the central square and pedestrian streets. The Epiphany race and demonstration swims of local walruses took place on the embankment. But the main feature of the holiday was the carnival procession, at the head of which a ten-metre dragon ‘swimmed’. There were, of course, sleighs — historical and modern, used as photo zones and decoration of places to relax. The festival marked the beginning of a new tradition — a book of records for the *Beresteysky Sleigh* was opened. For this occasion, local chefs prepared a huge portion of porridge according to an old Polesie recipe. Another marvel is a giant samovar with a capacity of four hundred liters, from which 1.5 thousand people were given tea.



The Belarusian swimming championship among people with visual impairments and musculoskeletal impairments has ended in Brest. The tournament, which brought together dozens of Olympic reserve athletes in the regional centre, was extremely important for them. The Paralympic swimmers had their last competitions back in July — then they determined the fastest in the Open Cup of Belarus, so now the athletes were able to gain the necessary experience, and the coaches were able to see what condition they were in, assess whether they were ready to achieve the highest results at international competitions. Our team has three very serious starts ahead: at the end of March they are preparing to compete at the World Cup in Italy, on the 20th of April — at the European Championships in Portugal, at the end of August – beginning of September — at the Paralympic Games in Paris, where, as it is known that Belarusian athletes were admitted in a neutral status.

Our Paralympic swimmers are preparing for the main competition of the four-year anniversary

By Tatiana Pastushenko

The team leaders, notes the senior coach of the national in-vasport team Gennady Vishnyakov, confirmed their high level. However, the specialist says, “Adult swimmers should start much more often. Now we did not have the opportunity to export them abroad, but it is very important for them to sail in conditions of intense competition. This is especially true for swimmers like Egor Shchelkanov and Igor Boki — they love to compete with strong opponents.”

The last championship of Belarus allowed us to evaluate the nearest reserve. Dmitry Tikhane-nok, a guy born in 2009, swam very well in his distances. There is hope that he will soon be able to compete with Yegor Shchelkanov, who competes in the same class. Aleksandra Kozlova from the Gomel Region is very talented. The result of this athlete born in 2008 is now second in the world rankings. There is a good swimmer from Bobruisk, Yevgeny Kovalenok: he works with the first coach of Igor Boki and shows good results for his age. From the same city, Kristina



Jeschik, who also showed herself well at the championship in Brest. Minsk resident Anastasia Rasolko at this tournament exceeded the qualification standard, which would allow her to compete at the Paralympic Games. Unfortunately, our championship was not a qualifying one: we applied for such status for the tournament, but it was not satisfied.

Now the Paralympic swimmers will continue preparing for the World Cup stage, which will be hosted by the Italian city of Lignano. It is planned that Igor Boki, Vladimir Izotov, Yegor Shchelkanov, Maksim Vashkevich, Vladimir Sotnikov, Grigory Zudilov, Yevgeniy Kovalenok, Anastasia Zudilova, Aleksandra Kozlova, Anastasia Rasolko and Kristina Eschik will go there.

There, our athletes will not only compete with competitors from abroad, but will also under-

go medical classification in order to gain access to subsequent competitions — this procedure will have to be completed by both beginners and experienced swimmers whose previous ‘passes’ are already expiring.

The team’s main goal is, of course, the Paralympic Games in Paris. For swimmers, the qualifying period for the main competition of the four-year period ends earlier than in other sports — already January 31st.

“We have provided for all this. The Belarusian Championship could not be made qualifying, but the Open Cup of Belarus, which we held in the summer and to which the Russian team came with the strongest squad, had such a status, so the results of our swimmers went into the world rankings. Most of the guys are in the top eight in it. **Igor Boki** is



Alexey Talay also took part in the Belarusian championship. He won five gold medals, and in the main distance - 50 meters breaststroke - he was close to repeating the world record he set. In the center are Alexey Talai and Gennady Vishnyakov.

the leader of world Paralympic swimming in four distances at once. Yegor Shchelkanov is among the top three in four events, Maksim Vashkevich is in the lead at a distance of 200 metres in medley swimming, and in another event he takes third place... Several swimmers are in 5th–8th places. Unfortunately, due to various circumstances, Aleksei Talai was unable to compete in the National Cup. But now I was pleased at the national championship: I showed quite fast seconds for the current period, and at the main distance — 50 metre breaststroke — I was close to repeating the world record set by him,” Gennady Vishnyakov says.

Now eight of our athletes — including Dmitry Soley, Grigory Zudilov and Anastasia Zudilova, Aleksandra Kozlova — have already fulfilled the qualification standard for the Paralympic

Games in Paris. In general, says the senior coach of the national team, the athletes were inspired by the decision of the International Paralympic Committee on admission to international competitions.

– We lived in anticipation of this decision, and it was long. When we were informed that Paralympic swimmers would be able to take part in the Games, I will say without exaggeration, everyone felt great joy. This news gave a boost, the guys began to look at preparing for competitions in a completely different way. We understand that the Paralympic Games will be held in a difficult environment for us. The restrictions that have been introduced - the absence of an anthem, flag, national symbols — will leave a certain imprint on all of us. We are preparing the guys for the fact that there may be some small provocations in Paris. At the same time, collective responsibility has been introduced for violations: if one athlete does something wrong, the entire team will be punished, up to and including deportation. The conditions are very tough. Therefore, we are now explaining to the athletes the position of the International Paralympic Committee, which we are forced to accept. At the same time, we are clarifying all the details: what colour should our equipment, hats, glasses, etc. be?

Time for the fast and accurate

Raubichi will soon welcome the best young amateur biathletes from all over the country



By Tatiana Pastushenko

On the way to the finals, the guys go through qualifying stages: first, these are mass competitions in the districts, then — regional ones. Based on their results, the teams of each region and Minsk will include 24 boys and girls of three age categories: this year, schoolchildren born in

2013-2014 will compete in the junior group, 2011-2012 in the middle group, and 2009-2010 in the senior group. In some regions, district qualifying competitions are still ongoing, in some, regional competitions are already taking place. For example, the day before at the Sozh biathlon complex in Gomel, about 300 guys competed for spots in the finals.

There is less than a month left to wait until the start of the final stage of the republican biathlon competition among children and teenagers Snow Sniper for the prizes of the Presidential Sports Club. The culmination of the largest amateur biathlon tournament will again be held in Raubichi and will gather hundreds of children from all regions of the country on the tracks from February 16th to February 18th. Right now, thousands of schoolchildren are fighting for the right to compete in the decisive stage of the competition.

Very soon the regional stage will start in Chaussy, where the regional competitions ended the day before; the city competitions will take place in Minsk next week... It is planned that the selections will end in early February.

Head of the Information and Public Relations Sector — Assistant to the Chairman of the Presidential Sports Club for Sports Pavel Egorov says that the sports programme of the finals will not differ from what it was last year. The guys will determine the strongest in sprints, mass starts and mixed relay races, so all the guys, without exception, will be able to take part in the competition, “Before the start of the fi-

nal stage, training camps will be held. Children visiting Raubichi will receive equipment from the Presidential Sports Club and other souvenirs. From the very first day, a comfortable shooting range will be opened for them, where the guys, under the guidance of professional instructors, will become familiar with shooting from a small-caliber rifle (in the first and second stages they mainly use air rifles). Also, of course, the guys will be able to train on the ski slope.”

While the sports programme has remained unchanged, the Presidential Sports Club is experimenting with the cultural programme this year. As Pavel Egor-

ov said, children of all three age groups will take part in a sports and entertainment quest based on the famous TV show Fort Boyard. They promise a lot of interesting things to the audience.

“We, as always, are expecting a large number of fans in Raubichi. They will not only be able to support the competition participants, but also try themselves in various activities on sports grounds; a cultural programme has been prepared for them with the participation of Belarusian artists. Shuttles will be organised for spectators, so stay tuned, and we look forward to seeing everyone at the Snow Sniper!” Pavel Egorov said.



Photo of the week

The family of Belarusian local historian Alexander Galkovsky from the village of Sudily, Klimovichi district, runs a large farm and always encourages his fellow villagers, by word and personal example, not to be lazy and to work on the land. In the photo: daughter Daria Evers (Galkovskaya)

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



January 19th is Fire Service Day in the Republic of Belarus. The Belarusian fire service today consists of about a thousand combat units. The

structure of the Emergencies Ministry of Belarus has created and operates 17 special services, including firefighting and rescue services, chemical and radiation safety, engineering, diving, medical, explosives, aviation, search and rescue, parachute, pontoon, canine and other.

On January 20th, 1958, the first vehicle speed radars were installed in London. Over time, these devices have changed from huge stationary speed sensors to almost invisible cameras. Modern pulse radars have a sensitivity of up to five hundred meters and are capable of measuring the speed of several cars in a traffic stream at once.



On January 20th, 1919, the Belarusian State Museum was opened in Minsk. It contained valuable exhibits — handwritten and printed books, deeds of gift of



the 15th–18th centuries, icons of Belarusian icon-painting schools of the 15th–19th centuries, paintings by Belarusian artists, Belarusian national clothes, Slutsk belts, tools and household items. During the Great Patriotic War, it was plundered by the Nazi occupiers, most of the collections were lost. The surviving exhibits are kept in the National Historical Museum of Belarus.

January 21st is Engineering Troops Day in the Republic of Belarus. On this day in 1701, Peter the Great signed a decree establishing the first engineering school in Russia. Engineering troops took part in all battles to defend the Fatherland. The engineering troops also made a significant contribution to eliminating the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.



January 21st is World Religion Day. It is celebrated at the initiative of the UN since 1950. The history of human culture and civilisation is the history of religions. And the feeling of common faith, as history shows, is one of the leading factors uniting people. Therefore, the main idea underlying this holiday is that 'religion should serve as a reason for unity'.



On January 22nd, 1904, Arkady Gaidar (1904-1941) was born, a Russian Soviet children's writer, screenwriter and prose writer, journalist and war correspondent. Participant of the Civil and Great Patriotic Wars. During the Civil War, at the age of 15, he commanded a company, and at 17, a regiment. He is a classic of children's literature, known mainly for short stories about sincere friendship and military camaraderie. He was killed at the front.



On January 23rd, 1974, Postavy Museum of Local History was founded. The museum is located in a building that is part of the architectural ensemble of the central square of Postavy, built in the 60s of the 18th century by treasurer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Count Anthony Tyzengauz, designed by the Italian architect Giuseppe de Sacco.



January 24th is International Eskimo Pie Day — creamy ice cream on a stick covered with chocolate glaze. It is not known exactly who invented the Eskimo pie and when. According to one of the most popular versions, the author of



this type of ice cream is a certain pastry chef Christian Nelson, who came up with the idea of covering a block of creamy ice cream with chocolate glaze. And he called it Eskimo Pie. This happened in 1919, and three years later he received a patent for this 'invention'.

On January 24th, 1939, the State Art Gallery of the BSSR was founded in Minsk. During the Patriotic War it was plundered. After the war it resumed its activities. Since 1993 — National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus. The museum's collection includes works of Belarusian, Russian and Western European art and art of the countries of the East of the 15th–20th centuries.



January 25th is Students Day (Tatiana Day). On January 25th, 1755, Tatiana's Day, Empress Elizabeth of Russia signed a decree establishing Moscow University, and Tatiana's Day became the official university day; in those days it was called the Foundation Day of Moscow University. Since then, Saint Tatiana has been considered the patroness of students. The traditions of the holiday have been preserved to this day.

