

The first Vienna Ball in the history of modern Belarus was held in Minsk



Geo-tourism involves travellers visiting places with unique natural features



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Hockey unites us



Minsk has hosted the 16th Christmas International Tournament of Hockey Amateurs for the Prizes of the President of Belarus, with the Belarusian team celebrating victory for the thirteenth time in the history of the competition → **3**



Instilling faith, hope, love and kindness

By Olga Korneeva

Orthodox Christians celebrated the holy holiday of Christmas, with President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko attending the Church in Honour of the Reigning Icon of the Mother of God, on the site of the St. Elisabeth Convent in Minsk

In his speech, the President addressed not only those who came to the church, but also everyone who celebrates Christmas. "It's a holiday that instils faith, hope, love and kindness in our hearts. It seems to me that this holy place, this monastery in which we are now, is the embodiment of these kind and bright words," he said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that 2019 was not an easy year for the country, and for each person individually, it has developed differently. "But the most important thing that happened last year is our great assets and achievements: we've maintained peace



and tranquillity on our land — interfaith and interethnic peace is something for any state to be proud of, and above all, our Belarus," stressed the Belarusian leader.

The Head of State first of all thanked the Orthodox pastors, as representatives of the mass faith in Belarus, for the peace and tranquillity that reigns in the country.

The President congratulated all those in attendance at Christmas, wishing everyone the most important thing — health — and asking people to take care of themselves and their children. As always on such a day, he lit a Christmas candle and gave the icon of the Nativity of Christ to the church. This painted icon by the Belarusian artist, Andrey Shcherbinin, reflects the greatest event — the coming to the Earth of the Son of God in the cave in Bethlehem — Christmas — the feast of the great renewal of the world, a day of salvation and universal joy.

The President received, as a gift, the icon of Saint Yevfrosiniya, Mother Superior of Polotsk, created by the church craftsmen.



Among the participants and guests were the President of Belarus — Aleksandr Lukashenko, the Head of Government — Sergei Rumas, the Chair of the Council of the Republic — Natalia Kochanova, the Head of the Presidential Administration — Igor Sergeenko, representatives of state administration and the diplomatic corps. However, the main people drawing everyone's attention at the party were, of course, the young debutants who had received an invitation to the ball thanks to success in their studies, creativity, sports, scientific and social activities. They were young people, university students and pupils of other educational institutions. Overall, more than 360 took part.

In accordance with strict ballroom traditions, the evening opened with a *Polonaise* performed by debutantes in snow-white dresses with miniature bouquets in their hands and young men in black tailcoats.

The President warmly welcomed the participants of the Vienna Ball at the Palace of Independence. He noted the importance and beauty of setting another New Year tradition, created just a year ago.

The Head of State addressed the invited guests, "I am pleased to welcome all the participants of today's ball. It's thanks to them that youth, talent and beauty reign in this hall. I'm especially happy to see our debutantes here, though their first steps give no indication that they are new-comers. On the New Year's Eve exactly a year ago, we held our first Belarusian ball in the Palace of Independence. We revived one of the most beautiful dance traditions — which is close to Belarusians — that has been at the heart of European culture for many centuries."

According to the Head of State, the first Vienna Ball in the history of modern Belarus is held in the Palace of Independence in the context of the continuity of time-tested political etiquette. "However, please note that this is a continuation of the glorious tradition of last year. In its classic, refined atmosphere, we continue our successful bilateral dialogue with our Austrian friends. We pay tribute to the world-famous cultural heritage of the friendly country, included in the UNESCO list," he

noted, particularly stressing the charitable focus of the event. Mr. Lukashenko expressed gratitude to the organisers of the gala evening: the Austrian Embassy and the Austrian Ambassador to Belarus, the AI company, the Kupala Theatre and its Director Pavel Latushko. He sincerely thanked the sponsors for supporting the *SOS - Children's Villages of Belarus* project.

"Our tradition of giving an invitation to the Palace of Independence to the best representatives of the talented youth of the country will be a great addition to the classic canons of the Vienna Ball," said the Head of State. "I don't think our Austrian friends will be against these innovations."

The President addressed the young participants of the ball, "The main decoration of this solemn evening is you — winners of competitions and Olympiads, winners of international competitions, and special funds' scholarship holders. Undoubtedly, you are the best of the best, but never get conceited. I look at you with great pleasure now: you are very young, happy, with intelligent, beautiful eyes. I look at girls in beautiful ball gowns and young men in tailcoats and dress uniforms. I am very proud, as you know, of the beauty of our people. You are the embodiment of them today. I know that this beauty is harmoniously combined with intelligence, education and hard work. These are the qualities that the Belarusian nation is famous for. These are the qualities that make us special and distinguish us from other nations. Our country has created all the conditions for your talents to be revealed. No matter what you dream about, no matter where you strive, do not forget that we are Belarusians and we have a common country and homeland. Keep in touch with it. Remember, if a person breaks away from their roots, they lose the ground under their feet and, most importantly, their source of spiritual power. Our homeland, large and small, is here. The hope of the nation should determine the vector of development for both the near and distant future. What our country will look like in the future depends on your aspirations."

The President addressed warm words of congratulations on the upcoming New Year and best wishes to the guests.

First in history

The first Vienna Ball in the history of modern Belarus was held in the official ceremonial hall of the Palace of Independence

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Austria to Belarus, Aloisia Worgetter, said at the Palace of Independence that she would like the Vienna Ball to return to Minsk once again, "On behalf of the Austrian delegation, I want to thank you, Mr. President, and all the participants of the ball for this amazing evening! It is a great joy to be here and see how amazing the Austrian traditions are and the love for [your] elegance and beauty. It's enough to recall the name of Michal Oginski, whose beautiful polonaises open balls." Aloisia Worgetter presented the Head of State with a symbolic gift — a ball-shaped crystal vase from the Neman Glass Plant full of 'Mozart' chocolates, saying, "The word 'ball' in German stands for both a ball and something which is turning, whirling and returning. These Austrian sweets in a crystal Belarusian ball are an amazing combination: a combination of Belarusian and Austrian. This is symbolic. I would very much like this Vienna Ball to return again and again to Minsk."

The Head of State guaranteed that the Vienna Ball will become traditional in Belarus, "We will hold this wonderful event every year, if you will support us in this filed — as you are doing this now. I will be only grateful for this."

The President said that, following his request, a film will be made about the first Vienna Ball — to be presented later to each participant, "You just can't imagine, especially young people — and adults — that we are writing our history. This will be a beautiful page of your life, which you can always show to your children, grandchildren, relatives and friends."

The Chair of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, Natalia Kochanova, told us before the start how she rehearsed a dance with Igor Sergeenko, the Head of the Presidential Administration. "We rehearsed a few times, and it helped us a lot. It's true. He was doing great!" she said, adding that she was excited, "Excitement is natural: this is such a responsible event! I don't often dance... We want to look decent — especially in a company of so many successful young people."

Based on materials of sb.by

The year starts with hockey

The 16th Christmas International Tournament of Hockey Amateurs for the Prizes of the President of Belarus has ended in Minsk. It has become a tradition in our country to start the year with hockey and, this time, 12 amateur teams from around the world gathered at the Chizhovka-Arena to compete for victory.



The President's team wins the tournament for the 13th time

By Tatiana Pastushenko

During the opening ceremony of the Christmas tournament, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, "On these New Year festive days, Minsk almost lives and breathes star hockey. The Christmas international tournament for the President's prize has once again brought us together. This competition for the faithful warriors of the folk ice game has long been called the unofficial amateur world championship. Today it's popular and recognised all over the world, with its own traditions and symbolism."

The participants were highly representative: hockey players from Russia, Germany, China, Finland, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the national squads of the Balkans and the Baltic States, Ukraine, the USA and Belarus, the teams of the International Ice Hockey Federation appeared on the ice.

The Head of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), René Fasel, also came to Minsk and noted that the Christmas tournament is becoming an ever larger event each year, "Hockey players who represent more than twenty countries have gathered here. This is a kind of unity — a large family has returned to the ice. I'm grateful to the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, for the idea of holding such an event and, more importantly, for its successful implementation over the past sixteen years. Perhaps it's worth giving it official status and conducting it under the auspices of the International Ice Hockey Federation."

The tournament was swift. After three days of the preliminary stage, the semi-finals were played, and on Christmas day, matches for bronze medals and finals took place. This time, bronze went to ice hockey players from the United Arab Emirates, who defeated the Finns in a decisive match. The winner of the 16th Christmas International Tournament of Hockey Amateurs this year was the President of Belarus' team, who defeated the Russian amateur squad in the finals. They now boast 13 victories in the tournament's history.

Over the years, the Christmas tournament has been sincerely enjoyed by all the fans. For them, it has become an opportunity to see real hockey stars of the past on the ice. This year, for example, Olympic champions Aleksey Zhitnik and Aleksey Kovalev arrived in Minsk, as did world champions Richard Lintner and Rastislav Pavlikovský, former NHL players Jim Slater, Curt Fraser, Ivan Novoseltsev and others. Finnish hockey player Sami Helenius also played many games in the NHL, and when he arrived in Minsk, he said, "I played in the Christmas tournament for the fourth time and I really like it here! This is a cool tournament, especially for players who are slightly over 40 years old. Here, the speeds are not as high as at the professional competitions, so for me Minsk is a place where I can play hockey. Every year the tournament becomes more and more interesting, with the competition growing and new teams appearing. I must admit that in summer I'm already waiting for January so I can return."

Hockey is far from being the only component of the Christmas tournament. Each year, titled hockey players conduct master classes for children who perform in the Golden Puck Republican competitions for children and teenagers for prizes from the President of Belarus. Moreover, during the *Christmas Tradition* campaign they visit children who are without parents and live in orphanages and social shelters, to offer gifts. The gifting event was held for the eighth time. In previous years, the participants of the Christmas tournament attended the orphanages in Minsk, Radoshkovichi, Molodechno and other places and have helped more than 700 children. This year, they visited the pupils of four family-type orphanages in Minsk's Frunzensky District. Together with the children, they competed in relay races and competitions, talked and



took pictures with the youngsters. The Baltic national team player and the General Manager of the Estonian national ice hockey team, Jüri Rooba, said, "We all came to Minsk to perform at the Christmas tournament. But competition is far from the most important thing. Hockey unites us, we enjoy the game, and it's great that during the tournament we can take part in such wonderful promotions."



It's not only the Christmas tournament that's being talked about in Minsk. They also looked to the future: next year, Minsk and Riga are preparing to host the IIHF World Championship. The participants of the current tournament thanked our country for the warm welcome and high level of organisation of the competition; they had no doubt that the world forum would also be held at the highest level. René Fasel was sure of this, "In 2014, Minsk had a wonderful tournament — encompassing a truly fantastic atmosphere and crazy fan support. Of course, a lot depends on how the host team performs. I hope your team will play good hockey. As for the organisation, I'm completely sure that it will be a great competition, both in Minsk and in Riga. Undoubtedly, Belarus will be the epicentre of the world forum and many foreign hockey fans will come here to support their teams. In addition, decisive matches will be held at the Minsk-Arena."

New gas field in Siberia



Yangpur Oil Company, representing Belorusneft in Russia, has begun to extract gas from six new wells, located at the Metelnoye field in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District, enabling them to increase extraction five-fold, said the company at a briefing

Having won the tender, the company acquired the right to develop the Yuzhno-Tydeottinsky licensed site for the first time, where the study, exploration and production of hydrocarbons will be carried out.

“In general, the Belarusian school of oil industry workers has demonstrated great potential,” said Mr. Polyakov. “Active work on the Russian market gives not only high economic rewards, but also a new practical experience, which is no less valuable.”

In total, in terms of oil, gas and gas condensate production, the past year for Yangpur was a record one. The company has been operating in Russia since 2013 and during this time it has become one of the leaders. At the recent *Exchange Commodity Market — 2019* forum in Moscow, the company was recognised as the best independent seller in the ‘Natural Gas’ category.

By Ruslan Proleskovsky

Two lines for gas treatment and gas condensate stabilisation units were put into operation, enabling the extraction of 1.5 million cubic metres of gas and 170 tonnes of gas condensate per day.

“A number of formations were tested, confirming the reserves of about 4.5 billion cubic metres of gas and more than 300,000 tonnes of gas condensate,” said the Director of Yangpur Oil Company Aleksandr Polyakov.

“Both products are very popular in the Russian market.”

In 2020, tests of the upper beds will be carried out, as well as the continuing reconstruction and construction of new facilities.

By early spring, the launch of the third production line is scheduled, enabling the company to reach output capacity and almost double daily production. In total, this year, it’s planned that up to 700 million cubic metres of gas and almost 83,000 tonnes of gas condensate be produced at the Metelnoye field.

Turbine-shaped memorial unveiled

A memorial in the form of a steam turbine installed on the site of the Brestskie Teplovye Seti (Brest Heat Networks) branch

By Olga Korneeva

The idea of an unusual monument came from the team at Brest Heat Networks. After dismantling the old turbine, the power engineers decided to keep part of the machine that carries

the younger generation of power engineers as it has been transformed into a visual aid,” explains the Director of the branch, Kazimir Medovsky.

The heating turbine was produced at the Kaluga Turbine Plant and installed at the Brest Thermal Power Plant in



New heights at the airport

In late 2019, Minsk National Airport welcomed its five millionth passenger of the year

By Natalia Yemelyanova

This was Andrey Prokopchik, from Grodno, who was returning from Frankfurt to Minsk on a Lufthansa flight. After being recorded on the information database at the airport, Andrey learned about his special status on the plane. When the aircraft landed, the flight crew called his name and asked him to approach a man waiting for him at the ramp.

Mr. Prokopchik was greeted at the airport with a red carpet, music and flowers. In the VIP hall, he cut a red ribbon symbolising the five millionth passenger, along with the airport management, a representative of the airline and the Director of the Aviation Department of the Ministry of Transport and Communications — Artem Sikorsky. As an honorary passenger, he received a certificate for annual free access to the VIP and business lounges of the airport, a cake and oth-

er gifts, reported the airport’s press service.

Andrey admits that such a ceremonial return home was a complete surprise to him and very pleasant on the New Year’s Eve. “I’ve never won anything in my life before,” he smiled.

Andrey was born and lives in Grodno. He works as a consultant in the financial sector and, due to his occupation, often goes abroad. “I travel by plane about twice a month — most often to Russia, Ukraine and Western Europe. I like Minsk National Airport: it’s large and quite comfortable,” he says.

It was the first time that Minsk has welcomed its five-millionth passenger. This means that our airport has moved to a new category of airport — accepting 5-10m passengers a year. A decade ago, the airport served only about a million passengers a year. Minsk is ready to welcome even more guests and a second runway has been built for this purpose.

light and heat to people. The dimensions are impressive: its height is 2.5m, width — about 3m, length — 4.4m.

“When time came to change the old equipment, we realised that we could not just scrap the turbine, which has worked without failing for almost 400,000 hours. It’s part of our history. That’s why we decided to give the installation a second life. Now it has new functions: it has ceased to produce energy, but it serves to train

1959. With a capacity of 6 megawatts, it has produced over 2bn kW/h electricity during its operation.

“There are no such monuments in the Republic that would clearly show what energy looks like. This is the personification of our energy system. I believe that — by preserving history and tradition — we will be able to advance, develop and improve the company,” said the General Director of Brestenergo RUE, Sergey Shebeko.

Construction nearing completion

Mozyr Oil Refinery completes construction of H-Oil heavy oil residue hydrocracking plant

By Igor Svetlov

Such facilities as a water recycling unit, a local condensate station, a flare system, a control room with a distributing transformer substation and tank farms are nearly ready. 520 pieces of equipment have already been installed in the facility's technological blocks.

Construction and installation works are nearly completed on the second most important piece of equipment at the heavy oil residue hydrocracking plant — a hydrogen plant. Underground utility systems are now in place while the surface and access roads have been concreted. The foundations have been laid and metal structures and equipment installed.

The same can be seen at the sulphur production plant. Process equipment is being trialled and any issues fixed. Preparations for start-up and commissioning are currently in progress.

Work on the tank farms of the H-Oil heavy oil residue hydrocracking plant are nearing completion. Communications between various plants — external water supply and wastewater pipelines and connecting roads — are nearly ready.



As previously reported, the H-Oil heavy oil residue hydrocracking plant at Mozyr Oil Refinery comprises an integrated hydrocracking unit, a hydrogen plant, a sulphur plant and 21 off-plant facilities. The implementation of the investment project will allow for an increase in the output of light oil products, which are more expensive and sell well on the market, an increase of up to 70 percent and increasing the crude oil upgrading index to 90 percent. The project is expected to cost over \$1.2 billion.

Mozyr Oil Refinery was commissioned in 1975 and was converted into a public joint stock company in 1994. It specialises in refining oil and making and selling oil products.

Head guest

By Olga Korneeva

Belarus participates in 2019 Sanya International Cultural Industry Fair (Hainan Province) as the main guest

The delegation comprised representatives of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee and Grodno City Executive Committee, as well as businessmen of the region and was led by Belarus' Ambassador to China — Kirill Rudy. Attending the opening ceremony were Sanya Mayor A Dong, a secretary of the Communist Party's committee of the city of Sanya, a secretary of the Communist Party's committee of the Hainan Province, diplomats from Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Lithu-

ania, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Lesotho.

In his welcome speech, Mr. Rudy laid out Belarus' priority areas in co-operation with Sanya and the Hainan Province, which include tourism, cultural exchanges and trade — primarily in Belarus' eco-friendly products, and interregional ties.

Visitors to the Grodno Region's pavilion were invited to taste products of the region's leading meat and milk processing companies. The delegation of the Belarusian region also visited Haikou, the capital of the Hainan Province.

A memorandum of understanding was signed to establish twinning relations between Grodno and Haikou.



Belarusian textiles at Frankfurt exhibition

By Irina Sergeeva

Orsha Linen Mill and Lenta JSC take part in Heimtextil 2020 held in Frankfurt am Main

In particular, the Orsha Linen Mill presented the best samples of environmentally friendly linen fabrics, towels, tablecloths, blankets and bed linen. In turn, Lenta JSC introduced visitors to a wide range of its own products. The company is a major manufacturer of textile haberdashery in the Republic. It produces various ribbons, curtains, tablecloths, napkins, bedspreads and towels.



The exhibition was also visited by representatives of the Baranovichi Cotton Production Association, Mogotex JSC and Slonim Worsted and Spinning Factory.

Heimtextil Frankfurt is the largest international exhibition of home textiles and fabrics — held since 1971. It presents new trends and innovations in the textile industry and, thanks to a large number of exhibitors and visitors from five continents, the exhibition has become an important event for manufacturers and distributors. In 2019, more than 3,000 companies presented their innovations at *Heimtextil* and almost 70,000 guests attended the event.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Belarus presides over the EEU for 2020

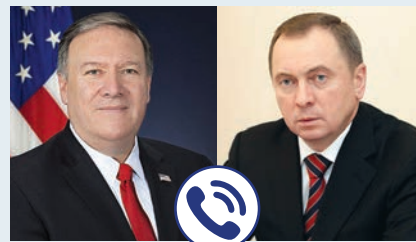
Belarus has taken the helm of two major international unions. The Eurasian Economic Union solves economic issues in the post-Soviet space, while the CSTO deals with security.

The Supreme Eurasian Economic Council will be headed by Mikhail Myasnikov. Right now, the EEU is on the threshold of solving infrastructure issues, they relate primarily to the rules of mutual trade of five countries: Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

Together with Tajikistan, these five countries form another organisation: the Collective Security Treaty. Belarus' representative Stanislav Zas has already assumed the post of CSTO Secretary General.

Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei talks to US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo by phone

During the conversation, the Head of the US Foreign Ministry explained the reasons for postponing his visit to Belarus.



Due to the situation with the US Embassy in Iraq, Mr. Pompeo is forced to stay in Washington. The Belarusian side confirmed its readiness to welcome the US Secretary of State on mutually acceptable dates, and noted the importance of an open exchange of views on the development of bilateral relations and the situation in the region and the world. When discussing the situation in the Middle East, Mr. Makei expressed condemnation of any actions that violate the privileges and immunities of diplomatic missions provided for in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Investments in the Great Stone Park during the project's realisation exceed \$520m

Summing up the results of last year, the Industrial Park notes that, from the beginning of the project to December 2019, \$526.4m was invested into it. This year, the second stage of the Park's development over a total area of 860 hectares is to be launched; the focus is placed on the development of infrastructure for a multi-modal logistic terminal. The number of the Park's residents has



increased 2.6 times compared to the beginning of 2018: 60 residents from 15 countries are registered there. It is expected that, by the end of 2020, at least 80 residents will be registered in the Park with a declared investment of \$1.5bn. The number of employees of the Park's enterprises will reach 3,000.

Minsk is among CIS' top 3 cities for travel to New Year and Christmas fairs

"The rating is based on the analysis of the popularity and uniqueness of New Year and Christmas festivals and fairs," states the TourStat agency.

The top three New Year and Christmas fairs include the *Journey to Christmas* festival in Moscow, the Christmas fair in St. Petersburg and Christmas and New Year fairs in Minsk.

"At the fairs in Minsk, tourists and citizens are welcomed at wooden houses with street food, sweets, mulled wine and gifts, photo zones, streets with winter houses and sparkling avenues," note the list compilers.



Magic days in the calendar

It was noisy, fun and cheerful in the Palace of the Republic, when the lights of the country's main Christmas tree were lit for almost two and a half thousand boys and girls. Those were excellent pupils and winners of creative competitions, young researchers and athletes who have won awards at national and international competitions, alongside youngsters from cadet schools and children from large families, as well as those who have unfortunately found themselves in orphanages, boarding schools and rehabilitation centres. They all are different, but everyone knew the words of the New Year's song by heart and they were united in their belief in the fairy-tale and faith in miracles given to them by the organisers of *Our Children* campaign.



membered forever. This is a little something we can do so that all the children of the Earth know they are needed. We, adults, for the most part live and work for a happy future for these children."

On New Year's Eve, every child must know for sure that they are loved and appreciated. Every year, civil servants, parliamentarians, athletes, businessmen and artists respond to the President's call to make a special holiday for each child. Summing up the intermediate result of the *Our Children* action, Aleksandr Lukashenko addressed the audience, "I really believe in you. And I know that in the future you will become very good people: honest, kind and hardworking. I know that you will do something very important and useful for your country."

The President asked the youngsters, "Be sure to respect your teachers. It's vital. Today they are with you: educators, mentors, and teachers. They chose this noble profession, dedicated themselves to you to help you acquire important knowledge, reveal and develop your talents, and find your place in life. May everyone's successes be the best thanks for their work."

FIGURES

Our Children campaign continues in January. More than **15,000** children will have taken part in it at Republican level and over **230,000** — at regional level. In total, more than **870,000** boys and girls are expected to attend the event.



By Yuliana Leonovich

Before the performance, Aleksandr Lukashenko personally congratulated the boys and girls who had come to Minsk from all over the country, "It is important for me, the President, to do everything to bring into every child's life magic in the form of attention and generosity, unexpected gifts and meetings with kind-hearted

and receptive people. This is the way our holiday should be celebrated and you, my dear children, your mentors and teachers, must remember that good people surround you. If you really want something and work hard for it, you will surely get everything you desire."

The charity holiday at the Palace of the Republic was the culmination of the generous Republican project — *Our Children*. Over the last twenty-four years, from a modest initiative, the project — taken under the patronage of the President in 1995 — has grown into a tradition, warming the hearts of thousands of children on these winter days. The Head of State emphasised that on the Eve of the New Year holidays there is no mission more pleasant than giving good, surrounding those who need it with love, "This is the purpose of the charity marathon that has been held in

Belarus for a quarter of a century already. You know that it's entitled *Our Children*. And I'm here on my own behalf — and I think you will support me — I want to thank all those people who responded to my call to visit children in orphanages and family-type homes. This way, through acts of kindness, we continue the best traditions of Belarusians who have always treated every child like their own."

Today, the state pays special attention to those who need a holiday like no other. These are not only pupils of social centres; they are also small citizens of other states. The Head of State recalled, "Youngsters from different parts of the world come to us for recuperation, for example, from Japan, China, Syria. Children from more than 40 countries of the world visited the Zubrenok Republican Centre. And to all of them, not only we, adults, but first of all you, children, gave your smiles and your kindness will be re-

Hot time for Father Frost

Father Frost's Residence is visited by up to 6,000 tourists a day during the New Year and Christmas holidays

By Svetlana Savelieva

From the first ten days of December through until January 14th, it's a busy season in the Father Frost's Residence in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. The flow of letters has increased many times: and now their number is measured in bags. To deal with the correspondence, the good wizard is assisted by Mother Winter. According to her, every year more and more letters arrive. "Both children and adults believe in miracles. Recently, a lot of letters have come from young people aged 18-25. Turning to Father Frost, they predict next year, telling us their plans and asking us to wish them good luck. It does work, because later, letters of thanks arrive," the wife of the owner of this fabulous estate tells us.

As far as Father Frost himself is concerned, his time is scheduled in minutes, because it's necessary to pay attention to each visitor: to wish their dreams would come true and to congratulate them on the New Year. The magician admitted that the past year turned out to be very busy

and the number of tourists to the estate has increased. "This year has been special because of the dry and warm weather. They say there is a direct correlation between the employment of Father Frost and winter weather. I don't deny it, in fact, because of the influx of guests, there was practically no time to deal with the weather," he complained.

In the coming year, Father Frost wishes all Belarusians much happiness and good luck. He believes that it is not worth mentioning the fact that this year is a leap year. "I would like it if, after the year has passed, no one would say that it was bad, that there was trouble, and that something did not work out. In my opinion, this is the 366th day that can be spent with benefit and joy. Moreover, February 29th will be a day off," said Father Frost.

In his estate, miracles await at every turn. For example, one can make a hundred wishes: the first — on the meadow of twelve months, the second — at the New Year tree, the third — near the symbols of the Eastern calendar and on the bridge —



Aleksey Stoljarov

the remaining 97 (by the number of logs). On the site one can meet a magic moose, which, according to legend, comes to life on New Year's Eve and helps Father Frost deliver gifts. And recently, an unusual device for measuring the magical power of one's desires has appeared on the estate.

"Father Frost decided to acquire scientific instruments, because not all modern guys just believe in magic. They need to be convinced of this and miracles must be visualised. The first device is a miracle meter. It reads desires from children's letters (or 'quazhels' — units of measurement of magic forces which

are contained in letters). One can see their number by lowering the envelope into the miracle meter. Father Frost needed 99,999 'quazhels'; it took so much magical power to get all the presents under the tree on New Year's Eve," explains Mother Winter. She added that the high-tech line will soon be replenished with a fear meter. One will need to touch it with one's hands so that the arrow indicates the level of fear. The secret of getting rid of these fears will be told to visitors by Baba Kargota.

Last year, more than 100,000 Belarusian and foreign tourists visited Father Frost's Residence in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha.

Exclusive experience guaranteed

It's a new trend: geo-tourism involves travellers visiting places with unique natural features. An increasing number of countries are joining the geographical marathon. Belarus is no exception. We also have something to offer tourists: national parks, nature reserves, mining facilities and unique outcrops. The country has everything necessary to develop as a tourist destination.

By Violetta Dralyuk

Emerald network

Many natural attractions of Belarus are included in the Emerald Network of Specially Protected Areas. A number of them are found in Polesie, such as the Pripyatsky National Park. The Turov Lug (Meadow) Biological Reserve is a special point of attraction for 'professional' and amateur tourists in the floodplain of the Pripyat River, where over a million wading birds stop on their migration routes, with different species of waders prevailing, many threatened with extinction. In addition, it is also here, in spring, that the largest concentration of ruffs in Europe can be seen.

Natalia Karlionova, a Candidate of Biological Sciences and leading researcher of the Scientific-Practical Centre for Bioresources at the National Academy of Sciences, explains, "On the Turov meadow alone — which covers 140 hectares, up to 120,000 ruffs gather. The birds come from Africa, travelling from their wintering places to the tundra of Eurasia. As the ringing campaign shows, ruffs are found from Scandinavia to Yakutia. Migration is a difficult time for birds and stopping points such as the Turov meadow are very important for them: here, they can rest and gain strength. However, the number of such places in Europe is declining and, with this in mind, it's important to protect the Pripyat floodplains and maintain them in their original state."

The Turov meadow is also a point of attraction for terek sandpipers and ring plovers. In addition, great snipes also stop here. Ms. Karlionova continues, "During migration, four great snipes were ringed by our specialists, one of them was later caught here, near Turov. Interestingly, in two days of non-stop flight, the ringed bird covered 5,500km, at a speed of 120km/h."

It is not surprising that dozens of ornithologists from different parts of the world come to Turov in spring. The



BELTA



planetabelarus.by

Sandpiper Festival — held in this Polesie town — has helped promote this 'birding Mecca' for several years.

Stone on stone

There are many boulders of different shapes and sizes in Belarus. They appeared in the country many millennia ago thanks to glaciers. Nikolay Grechanik, a Candidate of Geographical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Geography and Nature Management at the Brest State University, believes the numerous glacial boulders of the Kamenets District have great geo-touristic potential. According to scientists, each stone here boasts a long geological history.

"In this sense, the Kamenets District can be seen as a model. Here, glacial deposits are represented by different types and these objects are interesting not only as monuments of nature but also as keepers of local legends. The *Journey to the World of Geology* route has been developed in the district, enabling tourists to get to know the authentic legends through these boulders,"



dkneft.by

he says, describing one of these stone rarities. The stone has a sort of hatching on its surface. According to legend, in ancient times, fabric was brought to the boulder and left. After a while, it transformed into a finished product. Some of the stones feature some semblance of ancient ornaments or signs and are also called 'poklonny' [which people bow in front of]. Pilgrims love coming here as they believe that washing with



na-svabde.com

GEO-PEARLS OF BELARUS

- Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park
- Pripyatsky National Park
- A meteorite in Bragin
- Krasnoselsk chalk quarries
- Turov growing crosses, etc.



BELTA

water from the stone's holes can cure eye diseases...

The interest in the geological route is growing but, as Mr. Grechanik admits, these are mostly day trips. To make the geographical uniqueness of the district more lasting for tourists, it is necessary to develop the appropriate infrastructure along the route.

In search of black gold

A few years ago, Belorusneft set up a Neftyanoy route, under the aegis of its own *Belarus N* tourist project, with the focus on field development. Those travelling to the daily routine of Belarusian oil producers.

The path consists of several key points: a drilling rig, a rocking machine for oil pro-

duction, a photovoltaic station and Rechitsa's Oil Museum. In the classic version, everything begins with a gas station. From there, a tourist group begins the route, given information on the way about the district, oil production and everything related to oil. Guests are primarily taken to the operating drilling rig, where the black gold is mined in shifts. Here they can observe the process and, on the rig, they undergo a ritual of initiation into oilmen (like the latter, they have to smear themselves with oil). Tourists are also taken to the Sunny Beach spa where oil is used as a medical treatment — globally known as naphthalan therapy. This is an example of a single venue guaranteeing an exclusive experience, emotions and feelings. The idea is also promoted by geo-tourism.

THE MT REFERENCE

Geo-tourism — as a new holiday destination — emerged in the late 1990s and immediately gained popularity in the world. It is now attracting an increasing number of people passionate about exploring the environment, culture, aesthetics and heritage of different unique places. The ideology of the new type of recreation is that such tourism can become a powerful positive force to contribute to the preservation of nature and development of the identity of small districts.

New Year's Eve 2020 celebrations and fireworks around the world

Fireworks, countdowns, and celebrations took place across the globe, as people bid farewell to the year 2019, and welcomed 2020

New York City's Times Square reportedly had more than one million people gather to watch the ball drop, where many had been waiting since the early morning to snag a spot. Fireworks illuminated the skyline over the Las Vegas Strip during an eight-minute-long pyrotechnics show put on by Fireworks by Grucci titled *America's Party 2020* during a New Year's Eve celebration. About 400,000 visitors gathered to watch more than 80,000 fireworks shoot from the rooftops of seven hotel-casinos to welcome the New Year.

After a year filled with protests, Parisians celebrated 2020 together with a light show at the Champs Elysees, illuminating the Arc de Triomphe.

Londoners celebrated with fireworks surrounding the London Eye, followed by a parade for New Year's Day. Thousands of people lined the Thames as London kicked off the new decade to the roar of football anthems such as *Three Lions* with the festivities providing a prelude to the Euro 2020 football tournament.

Berlin's new year kicked off with fireworks above landmark Brandenburg Gate in the New Year on January 1st.



Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, as hundreds of thousands gathered downtown to watch the spectacular display.

Australia ushered in the New Year with a huge fireworks display in Sydney, despite the calls to cancel the event as devastating bushfires raged across the country. Southwest of Sydney, the city of Melbourne lit up for 2020 at midnight, too.

People in Japan flocked to temples and shrines, offering incense with their prayers to celebrate the passing

For nearly ten minutes, fireworks lit up the sky over Dubai's

of a year and the first New Year's Eve of the Reiwa era.

As the most populated city in New Zealand, Auckland always puts on a good show and the Sky Tower display was spectacular as half a tonne of fireworks burst from the landmark towering over the city centre. Thousands gathered around the tower, where — for the first time — lasers and animations accompanied the fireworks display.

Thousands of South Koreans filled the downtown streets in Seoul ahead of a traditional bell-tolling ceremony near City Hall.

Meanwhile, about 3 million people welcomed 2020 at Brazil's iconic Copacabana beach as almost 15,420 kilograms of colourful fireworks went off for 14 minutes after midnight, with Rio de Janeiro holding one of the biggest New Year parties in the world.

Prince William announces Earthshot Environment Prize

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have announced a global prize to tackle climate issues, pledging 'a decade of action to repair the Earth'

Five winners will receive the Earthshot Prize every year between 2021 and 2030. The cash prize will be for individuals or organisations who come up with solutions to environmental problems.

Prince William said the world faces a 'stark choice' to continue 'irreparably' damaging the planet or 'lead, innovate and problem-solve'.

The prize is set to launch officially later in 2020 — a year that will also see the Convention on Biodiversity in

China in February and the COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November.

A series of challenges will be announced, aimed at finding at least 50 solutions to the 'world's greatest problems' including climate change and air pollution.

More than 60 organisations and experts were consulted in the development of the prize. It will initially be run by the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, but could become an independent organisation.

Kensington Palace said it would be supported by philanthropists and organisations.



NASA satellite captures new image of Marree Man

NASA confirms one of the greatest modern art mysteries is still going strong in Australia

A pilot discovered the mysterious 2.6-mile-long geoglyph of an aboriginal hunter in 1998, etched into the earth, and to this day no one knows how it got there.

The Marree Man gained new life in 2016 when a group from the figure's namesake town of Marree ploughed the lines to keep the man from fading due to erosion. Now, NASA is sharing an image taken in June showing the success of their efforts.

So far, the restoration team's belief that their preservation will last longer than the original holds up. They created wind grooves, designed to trap water and encourage the growth of vegetation, according to NASA. They hope that eventually the man will turn green.

Many have tried to discover the origin of the Marree Man.

Dick Smith, founder of Dick Smith Electronics and Dick Smith Foods, decided to tackle the mystery in 2016, and for two years his team pored over all the evidence to see what they could find.

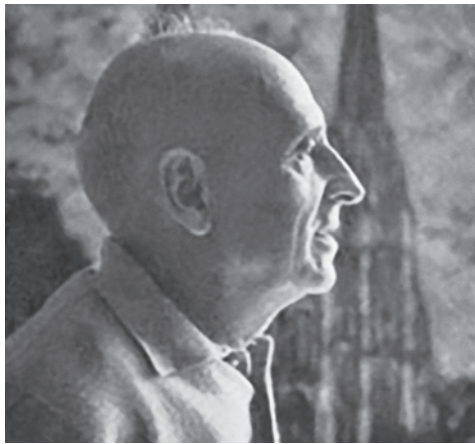
He believed it was professionally done, so in 2018 he offered a reward of \$5,000 Australian Dollars (\$3,712) for anyone with information regarding its existence.

No one has come forward, but several believe it was made by an artist living in Alice Springs, though other clues suggest the creator may have been an American.

Regardless, the Marree Man mystery lives on.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies





Return to historical homeland



Schraga Zarfin. Leading to the Light grand personal exhibition officially opens at National Art Museum — dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the artist's birth

By Svetlana Savelyeva

This is the first solo exhibition of the artist in Belarus. Schraga Zarfin sought first of all to convey his spiritual and philosophical problems. One of the leading themes in his work was the landscapes of France which became his second homeland. He was also an excellent colourist and used a unique palette, all the time being in search of expression. The exhibition, organised at the National Art Museum and with its support, includes works by the master from the Belarusian museum's archives, as well as works from private Belarusian and foreign collections.

"The National Art Museum of Belarus is proud that the first personal exhibition of Schraga Zarfin in the post-Soviet space is being organised here. The artist's paintings are kept at the collections of the Rothschilds, Chaplin's family and Helena Rubinstein. There are three works in the collection of our museum as well. Zarfin's artistry always arouses genuine interest among the young people who come to our museum," said Nadezhda Usova, a leading researcher at the National Art Museum.

"This is the first such solo exhibition of Schraga Zarfin in Belarus; previously, some of his works were shown at group exhibitions. This is an event for the country. Our audience loves Zarfin very much and it has now got a chance to see 52 of his works for the first time. Never before we had such a possibility," adds the project's chief curator, Yuri Abdurakhmanov.

Actually, most of the artist's works are shown to the public for the first time. "Moreover, these works have not been exhibited, nobody has seen them before as they were not showcased," he noted. "Schraga Zarfin's artistry always arouses increased interest of Belarusians at all exhibitions dedicated to the Parisian school. His meditative, often mysterious paintings reflect a long and difficult path of spiritual searching, which the artist has taken himself and along which he leads his audience," said Mr. Abdurakhmanov.

The aim of the exhibition project is to make Belarusian art accessible to everyone, to integrate it into the cultural code that will unite different people living in Belarus and abroad. "Schraga Zarfin's solo exhibition in Belarus is my grandfather's return to his historical homeland," said the artist's grandson, Yves Dulac. "This is my third visit to Belarus, and every time I discover something new. It was not for nothing that I brought my daughter with me this time. I had the good fortune to grow up among the works of Zarfin in his studio, but rarely saw so many at the same time as at this exhibition."



THE MT REFERENCE

Schraga Zarfin was born on January 7th, 1899 in Smilovichi in the family of a leather merchant. He began drawing in early childhood and, in 1913, entered the Vilno Art School named after academician I. Trutnev. In 1914, he emigrated to Palestine, served in the British army, fought for the liberation of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire and lived in Berlin. The artist moved to Paris in 1924, where he collaborated with the fashion house of Olga Albi. In the 1930s, Zarfin actively worked as a textile artist. Critics called him a virtuoso of fabric design. During WWII, almost all of his works of the

1920s and 1930s disappeared without trace, only sketches for fabrics miraculously survived in a number of private archives.

During WWII, Zarfin initially served in the French army, then demobilised and participated in the Resistance Movement. During these hard times, three of his solo exhibitions took place: in Grenoble (1941) and in Lyon (March and July, 1942). It was at that time that Zarfin developed a technique that later became his signature style: he managed to mix gouache and oil paints. The artist's post-war work increasingly bears the imprint of a

tense inner life, especially after the news of the death of his parents in the Smilovichi ghetto. It was only in the 1960s that Zarfin managed to overcome an internal spiritual crisis: his works gradually began to shine with a beautiful blue colour, filled with peace and tranquillity.

Schraga Zarfin died after a long illness in 1975 and was buried in the cemetery of Rosny-sous-Bois. All his friends and relatives noted his mysticism and desire for intellectual communication. The artist read widely and travelled, getting to know new people and places.

CULTURE

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Craft with therapeutic effects

Artist Olga Ugrinovich and her Christmas angels teach people to believe in miracles

By Yuliana Leonovich

Clay pots and plates have existed for thousands of years but ceramics with a twist are now both high art, ritual and meditation. Olga Ugrinovich knows exactly how to mould one's own dreams so that they come true.

During the Christmas and New Year holidays, the most popular ceramics specialist in Belarus (although Olga herself prefers the word 'artist') invites you to art therapy master classes in her art salon — The Art House of Ugrinovich — to create a Christmas angel. Our ancestors (and Olga after them) believed that these winged helpers, made with one's own hands, would invariably bring happiness to the house. The main thing is to make them with the right message and mood.

On the eve of one of the most important Christian holidays, our reporters joined the master class to feel the suppleness of clay and its healing heat with their own hands.

Olga Ugrinovich has been engaged in ceramics for a long time and her works are easily recognisable by their botanic patterns. The main motifs — our 'valoshki' (cornflowers), wild strawberry flowers and the outlines of the forest fern (familiar to every Belarusian) —

are essential, especially loved by the foreigners who eagerly buy Ms. Ugrinovich's pieces. "I would like to travel as often as my works do," says the artist. Her plates, cups and, of course, angels can be found all over the world. But most of them are in the homes of ordinary Belarusians, who have been visiting the artist's salon for many years.

"I have been creating angels for a long time, since my studies at the Academy of Arts. The protective angel is a very powerful symbol, so the demand for master classes is always great, especially on the eve of the Christmas holidays. I recently had a group who'd decided to celebrate their friends' birthday in this way," she explains.

According to Olga, clay is a very sensitive material and it's better not to work with it in a bad mood. Moreover, it is so flexible that it will immediately realise any artist's dreams, "Each angel has their own 'job' and even facial features. For example, my personal talisman is an artist angel

with a palette in his hands. Some mould a figure with the features of a much-loved person, while others create a muse, for example, with a musical instrument, which will help them on their creative or professional path."

The guests of her master classes sit quietly and obediently, as if they're having a lesson. But here they are not students; they are artists, though only for two hours. Pieces of clay, water and even rolling pins are on the table. Most of them have not held clay in their hands since childhood. One confident movement, a second, and the hands no longer tremble. Sturdy hands are a necessary skill to work with clay. The most difficult thing is to work with the small parts. Olga warns, "I would even say that it's not traditionally a woman's occupation to work with clay. It's more male labour. But, on the other hand, this is art, creativity, and this is from our female beginnings."

Olga Ugrinovich painted her first plate when she was five years old. Her father, Vladimir Vikentievich, often took her to work at the Academy of Arts and, to keep her busy, gave her a clay plate and paints. The artist still keeps this as a family heirloom.



Aleksey Stolyarov

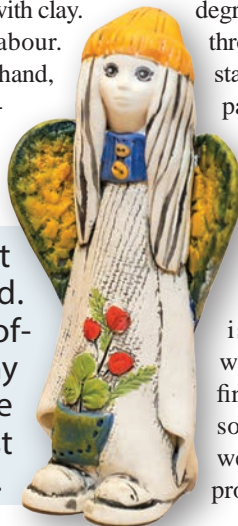
Olga Ugrinovich and her Christmas angels

The finished toy is fired in a specially adapted oven where the temperature is almost 1,000 degrees. The angel charms go through all the technological stages — firing, drying, and painting — at the production site. The workshop masters take into account the customers' wishes regarding colour of eyes and hair.

"Painting the finished item is delicate work, and a novice would find it difficult. Therefore, so that the angels rejoice, we trust this process to the professionals."

Olga even came up with a definition for the charms made under her leadership — 'angels of joy'. The artist believes that the good thoughts embedded in them will certainly lead to the goal of happiness, light and, of course, love.

"I also believe that if you put positive energy into your work, then it will return to life. The main thing is to put a little effort into everything. Angels made of the most fragile natural material are kind of little helpers that will help you to go through life and will surely protect you from troubles and disappointments," Olga says.



Fairy-tale to touch

On the eve of the holidays, cards for children with visual disabilities — who cannot see to read the usual ones — were developed in Minsk. These tactile presents recreate creaking snow, woollen boots, the soft warm coat of Santa Claus and, of course, a bag of gifts... All the elements are made of different materials and, on the reverse is a poem in Braille. To make the required number of copies, the *Tactile Books* project team organised a special master class which lasted for two and a half hours.

By Nadezhda Dekola

Olga Vovk — a librarian and an organiser of the campaign — explains that all the cards are personalised. Moreover, Santa Claus' sack — though small — also contained a sweet surprise for the children.

The holiday card was based on Anu Stoner's *Little Santa Claus* and was minor part of the *Tactile Books* project aimed at promoting high-quality modern literature. It was initiated about 5 years ago by the authors of such projects as *ZaChtenie* and *Mivia*, in co-operation with the Scientific Library of BNTU.

While sewing and gluing, Olga told us about the making of such books. She studied these in libraries for the blind in Finland and Russia. "Much high-quality literature is published for children now. Illustrations are fully-fledged participants in a story as a rule; they complement the text and develop the plot. Unfortunately, blind and visually impaired children can't access these pictures and, with this in mind, we decided to correct the situation. We 'translate' modern children's books into a tactile form — sewing them out of fabric. Illustrations are made by the technique of applying different materials and are supplemented with text in Braille. The work is time-consuming. One page of a tactile book can contain several characters or elements and each must be thoroughly thought out and executed. At the initial stage, our main mistake was that we — librarians — wanted to make a tactile copy of a true book. However, this was a simplification," she said.

"What do you imagine when you hear the word 'home'?" Olga asked participants of the master class:

'a many-storeyed building', 'four walls' or 'a triangular roof'...

"Meanwhile, if we ask a blind man, they will say: 'It's a handle'. This is the first object they touch when approaching a door. If the handle is familiar, then it's home," she noted.

Each page of the tactile book is sent for testing to children with visual disabilities. If approved, then it can be produced in many copies. Even with volunteers, so far only three books have been made. In addition to Anu Stoner's, there are the *Stories of a Little Rabbit* by Katya Tolstaya and Herve Tulle's *Living Book*: four copies of each.

The main goal of the *Tactile Books* project is to conduct inclusive high-profile readings. "We want both a child who sees and a child who doesn't to read the same book — so that they will listen to the text and find illustrations on the pages without losing the essence of the story. It is difficult. We have not found any method for conducting such readings correctly. But it must be done. As the basis of shared experience



Vladimir Shapapak



and communication, the book has great potential as an instrument of inclusion," notes Olga.

The team organises readings with children in orphanages, schools and kindergartens — anywhere they are invited. Sharing experience is the key and,

with this in mind, they have announced the launch of the School of Tactile Books and the project's website already has a video on how to make similar books. The organisers hope this will help attract more enthusiasts to the production of tactile literature: these volunteers might have no opportunity to come to the master classes but could sew at home — like, for example, in Finland. A video of the inclusive high-profile readings will also be available soon.

Best athletes of the year

Freestyle aerial Aleksandra Romanovskaya recognised as best athlete of Belarus in 2019, according to a survey of journalists, traditionally conducted by the *Sportivnaya Panorama* newspaper

By Vadim Shundalov

The 23-year-old Minsker scored 510 points in the vote. Last year, she won ski acrobatics gold at the IS Freestyle Ski and Snowboarding World Championships in US Park City. In addition, the Belarusian won the World Cup in Moscow. Aleksandra also started the new 2019/20 season brilliantly, taking two silver at the first two World Cup stages in China.

Second place was shared by the duo of Marina Litvinchuk and Olga Khudenko in the rowing, where the girls scored 456 points. The rowers were triumphant at the 2nd European Games in Minsk, winning two gold medals, one silver and one bronze.

The World Championship in Hungarian Szeged was also successful for the sportswomen. The Belarusians earned two golds in 500m and 200m and were joint winners of the silver in the decisive race at 500m. In addition, Khudenko finished second in canoeing 500m (the Olympic distance), while Litvinchuk closed the top three in the canoeing singles 5,000m.

Tennis player Arina Sobolenko also had a very productive year; she is ranked third. Belarus' number one won three singles tournaments: in Shenzhen, Wuhan and the WTA Elite Trophy final tourna-

ment, as well as three tournaments partnered by Belgian Elise Mertens — in Indian Wells, Miami and the US Open. Arina finished last season being placed 11th in the world ranking, losing to Khudenko and Litvinchuk, gaining 454 points.

The fourth in the vote was the modern pentathlon athlete Olga Silkina, who received 397 points. The Gomel-born athlete performed sensationally at the World Cup in Budapest, where she won two gold awards.

Weightlifter Andrey Artyamov, who turned out to be the best among men, came fifth. In 2019, the Borisov-born sportsman pleasantly surprised everyone, first winning silver at the European Weightlifting Championship, and then a similar medal at the World Weightlifting Championship.

The 2008 Olympic champion received 392 points from journalists.

Vladimir Shantarovich (kayaking and canoeing) was recognised as the best coach of Belarus; the country's national beach soccer team was acknowledged as the best games team while the national kayaking and canoeing team is the best non-team sport squad of the year.

In 2018, freestyle athlete Anna Guskova was recognised as the best women's athlete, and trampolinist Vladislav Goncharov was recognised as the best male athlete.



Aleksandra Romanovskaya



Aleksey Vyazmitinov

Football's Star Ball

Belarusian football has summed up the year and brought it to an official close. The *Star Ball* — 2019 ceremony — held on New Year's eve in the Falcon Club — brought together the best representatives of the football community, with the most distinguished being rewarded.

By Dmitry Komashko

As the Chairman of the Belarusian Football Federation — Vladimir Bazanov — noted, despite results that did not always justify the fans' expectations, the season brought a lot of great and significant moments. Those present recalled the new national champion, the U-17 team that made it to the elite round of the European Championship, and the girls who played for the first time at the top stadium to win recognition in the international arena.

For the national team, the past year was not their best. It was one which we might wish to quickly skip past and start afresh with a new year. Nobody wants to recall some events — i.e. the qualification for the European Championship, a single victory in a dozen of matches or our 87th place in the world rating. Issues of this kind are not for dwelling on as there are always those whose efforts deserve to be appreciated.

A midfielder of the national team and BATE Borisov — Igor Stasevich — was recognised as the best footballer of Belarus for the second year in a row. In addition, 34-year-old Igor was named best player and midfielder of the recently completed 29th championship of Belarus.

In other individual categories, the best sportsmen are as follows: goalkeeper Aleksandr Guttor (Dinamo Brest); defender Pavel Rybak (Shakhtyor, Sol-

igorsk); striker Ilya Shkurin (Energetik-BSU, Minsk). The latter also became the top scorer of the 29th championship of Belarus, scoring 19 goals in 26 matches, as well as the most valuable player at the last championship.

The best judging team of the championship of Belarus includes Vitaly Sevostyanik, Dmitry Zhuk and Vitaly Malyutin.

As for the team awards, the prizes for 'Fair Play' and 'Two Line-Ups' went to the holder of the silver medals — BATE Borisov, while the 'People's Choice Award' went to Dinamo Brest (Belarus' champions). Minsk's Energetik-BSU has been recognised 'For the Determination to Win'.

In the women's game, Anastasia-Grazhina Shcherbachenyha was awarded the title of the best footballer of Belarus in 2019.

In mini-football, Sergey Krykun was named the best and Valery Makarevich was recognised for his beach football performance. In addition, the prize 'For Contribution to Development of Mass Football' went to the Director of SOS-Children's Village of Maryina Gor'ka — Dmitry Koltovich.

A former BATE coach and now the head coach of CSKA Moscow — Victor Goncharenko — was named the best Belarusian coach. This was his ninth such award.

Fitting end to 2019

Belarusian Arina Sobolenko finishes the year in WTA's 11th place

By Igor Svetlov

The Belarusian number one scored 3,120 points in 2019. In the outgoing season, 21-year-old Arina won three WTA tournaments in the singles events, including the Hengqin Life WTA Elite Trophy Zhuhai. In addition, she joined Elise Mertens of Belgium to win their first Grand Slam title at the US Open in New York. Former world number one Victoria Azarenko is currently 50th, Aleksandra Sasnovich is in 62nd place, Olga Govortsova — 192nd, and Vera Lapko — 324th. Ashleigh Barty of Australia with a total of 7,851 points topped the final WTA rankings in 2019. Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic, with 5,940 points, was placed second. Naomi Osaka of Japan scored 5,496 points to finish third.

Spain's Rafael Nadal topped the final ATP rankings of 2019 with a total

of 9,985 points. He was followed by Serbia's Novak Djokovic (9,145) and Roger Federer of Switzerland (6,590 points). Yegor Gerasimov of Belarus was placed 98th, Ilya Ivashko — 131st, and Vladimir Ignatik — 309th.



Nikita Lobastov and Dmitry Lazovsky

Summarising the results

By Arina Novikova

Belarus wins 846 medals at major international sports events: world and European cups and championships

Among the medals won were 250 gold, 278 silver and 318 bronze. Belarusian athletes clinched ten (three gold, four silver and three bronze) medals in the Olympic disciplines. The 2019 world champion titles (in Olympic sports) were claimed by Aleksandra Romanovskaya (aerials), Olga Silki-

na (modern pentathlon), Marina Litvinchuk and Olga Khudenko (canoe sprint). Belarusians secured 46 (10, 20, 16) medals at the European championships (Olympic sports).

A total of 278 Belarusian athletes (28 sports) are gearing up for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Belarus has so far earned 66 Olympic places in 14 sports. The Tokyo Olympics qualification in some sports will complete in June 2020. The Olympics in the Japanese capital will be held from July 24th to August 9th.

Photo of the week



During Vitebsk Kalyady or Kalyady in the Dvina River Area Christmas festivities

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 12th January. *East-West*
Until 20th January. *Museum of Fir Tree Toys*

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 10th January. *Russian Impressionism*
Until 12th January. *Vladimir Rynkevich. Terrestrial and Celestial*
Until 19th January. *Oman: Pearl of the East. Handicraft Legacy*
Until 19th January. *Signs of Artistic Will*
Until 1st February. *Always Ready and Brave*
Until 1st February. *Schraga Zarfin. Leading to the Light*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 1st February. *Kalyady Calling*
Until 15th February. *Light and Air. Piotr Shapiro's Pictorial Art*
Until 17th February. *Encyclopaedia. National Project*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street
Until 19th January. *New Year. Anthology of the Holiday*
Until 19th January. *Exposition of Exit project*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

47 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 1st February. *Panna Doll'ya* international exhibition

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY

13 M. Bogdanovich Street
Until 12th January. *There Is Charm in Old and Forgotten...*
Until 17th January. *Kalyada Arrives on a White Sleigh*
Until 18th January. *Golden Sunrise of Belarusian Renaissance*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 12th January. *Dangerous Beauty*
Until 1st February. *Magic of Wild Birds*

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A M. Bogdanovich Street
Until 12th January. *Best Toys from USSR*
Until 12th March. *Robo Art*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 19th January. *Lady's Articles*
Until 19th January. *Minsk-Paris*

LIBRA

37 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 26th January. *Pablo Picasso. Paragraphs*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 ParizhsКОЙ Kommuny Square
10 and 11.01. *Swan Lake*
13.01. *Big New Year Ball at Bolshoi Theatre*
15.01. *Giselle, or Vilisy*
16.01. *Tosca*

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
10.01. *Two Souls*
11 and 12.01. *Paulinka*
11.01. *Prudok Radio*
14 and 15.01. *King Lear*
14.01. *Elza's Land*
16.01. *Legends of Kupala Theatre: I've Not Played Queens / Black Lady of Nesvizh*

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
10.01. *Doctor Raus' Career*
11.01. *This Is All She*
12.01. *Ticket to Brest Train*
14.01. *Serezha*
15.01. *Marriage with Wind*
16.01. *Suffering from Common Sense*

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
10.01. *Trickster Club*
11.01. *Bankrupt*
12.01. *Happy New Year!*
14.01. *Love Until Unconsciousness*
15.01. *Dear Pamela*
16.01. *Hotel of Two Worlds*

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Masherov Avenue
10.01. *A Very Simple Story*
11.01. *Abduction of Yelena*
12.01. *Unnamed Star*
14.01. *My Dear*
15.01. *Midnight Robbery / No. 13*
16.01. *Nobody Promised Easy Life*

MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
10.01. *Tristan and Isolde*
11.01. *Shalom Aleikhem! Peace to You, People!*
12.01. *The Bat*
15.01. *Gypsy Baron*
16.01. *My Dear Friend*

CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street
11.01. *Clinic*

BELARUSIAN ARMY THEATRE

3 Krasnoarmeiskaya 3
10.01. *Absolute Happiness*
11.01. *Last Ardent Lover*

MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
14.01. *Bridal Shower*
16.01. *Oscar and Pink Lady*

CONTEMPORARY ART THEATRE

5 Oktyabrskaya Street
11.01. *House Upside Down*
12.01. *#Getademacration*