

Minsk's Chizhovka-Arena recently hosted the 14th Christmas Amateur Ice Hockey Tournament for the Prize of the President of Belarus, attracting fans for four days of festive sportsmanship → **3, 11**



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Holy fire of candle warms with mercy

Orthodox believers of Belarus celebrate the great Christian holiday of Christmas



The scriptures name the birth of Jesus Christ as the beginning and foundation for other holidays. According to the Gospel, upon the instruction of the Roman Emperor Augustus, a population census was organised. Mary and Joseph were obliged to go to Bethlehem to register. However, no accommodation was to be had, due to the influx of people. They found a cave in which to rest, sharing it with cattle, and this was where Mary gave birth to her son.

Christmas is a holiday of invigoration and inspiration

President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, lights Christmas candle near Icon of Mother of God of Minsk, at Holy Spirit Cathedral

By Vladimir Velikhov



So many exalted faces at Holy Spirit Cathedral

The Belarusian Head of State met with the Metropolitan of Minsk and Zaslavl, the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, Pavel. Attending the event were representatives of Orthodox brotherhoods and sisterhoods, and Sunday school students and parishioners.

Alexander Lukashenko said that, on his way to the church, he had thought about various holidays. He declared, "There are holidays which we all celebrate: social and spiritual. Some social holidays are filled with spirituality, such as Victory Day and Independence Day." The Head of State stressed that such spiritual holidays as Christmas and Easter are celebrated by everyone.

He noted, "These holidays are days of invigoration and inspiration." In his words, these holidays are marked on different days by everyone, regardless of their religious confession.

The church's contribution to preserving peace in Belarus is huge, asserted Mr. Lukashenko, speaking at the Holy Spirit Cathedral. "The main purpose of my visit here is to thank Metropolitan Pavel, the priests, and everyone who carries the cross of God for the sake of the people's spirituality, for serving our people and the state. The church's contribution to peace and stability is huge, across this land lying at a crossroads. This is the contribution of all our confessions

and, especially, the priests of the Orthodox Church, as the biggest confession in our state," noted the President. "People respond with peace and do good. Please, do good and we'll cherish this peace." Mr. Lukashenko stressed that peace and calm are the most important virtues.

Mr. Lukashenko is convinced that the main achievement for Belarus in 2017 was to overcome negative economic trends. "The life is not easy but we can survive. This year, we must step forward to make our life not simply liveable but normal. We have everything necessary to achieve this. We must definitely take this step; in another year's time, we'll

have an absolutely different mood," said Mr. Lukashenko. The Head of State asserts that he'll do his best to give people a better life in Belarus and to show visitors that Belarusians are strong people, who live well and who are ready to welcome guests graciously. "Our minds are filled with hopes for a bright future, and I'm confident that these hopes will come true in the ongoing year," he concluded.

Metropolitan Pavel wished Alexander Lukashenko a joyful Christmas and 'God's help in his service, strong health and long life'. The President donated the Icon of the Nativity of Christ to the Belarusian Orthodox Church; made using

wax tempera techniques, it's similar to the Polotsk fresco and is typical of the Belarusian school of icon painting of the 12th century. The icon is a multi-figured composition, with meticulous details. Alexander Lukashenko received the icon as a gift from Metropolitan Pavel, who brought it from Jerusalem where it was blessed in the Holy Sepulchre Church.

The Icon of the Mother of the God of Minsk, at which the Head of State lit his Christmas candle, is one of the most important Christian relics of Belarus. According to Church legend, the icon was created by the Apostle and Evangelist Luke, who is also known as the first iconographer. Created in the 1st century AD, it was kept in Byzantine for many years and, then, in Kiev's Church of the Dime. In the late 15th century, during the raid on Kiev, the Mongol-Tatars stripped away its expensive casting and adornments and threw the image into the Dnieper River. According to legend, in 1500, the icon was miraculously found floating in the River Svisloch in Minsk, opposite the castle. It was noticed by residents, thanks to an usual light radiating and was solemnly taken to the fortified church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. In 1616, the icon was taken to Holy Spirit Monastery's church and, at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, was saved by believers. In 1941, it was taken to Saint Catherine's Cathedral. The church closed in 1945, and the relic was moved to the Holy Spirit Cathedral, where it remains, being much admired.

Excursion guides to have diplomas

By Alexander Pimenov

More foreign tourists in Belarus from this year

The decree has now entered into force, allowing longer visa-free stay in the Brest and Grodno regions, of up to ten days. Already, around 500 foreign guests from fifteen countries have visited Grodno, during the New Year holidays.

As to how to enhance tourist attractiveness, Igor Marzalyuk, a deputy at the House of Representatives, believes that good tour excursions are vital. He explains, "In order to give tourists a positive image of Belarus, we need to license excursions. At present, anyone can organise these: something that's forbidden in other states. For exam-



Tourists enjoy Grodno

ple, illegal tour guides are fined in Poland."

Having studied history, he's an advocate for tour guides having professional qualification, while bringing their own 'zest' to their programmes. Importantly, the factual content should meet certain standards, to ensure that tourists hear the truth.

The Code on Education needs to be a well-coordinated document. In spring, parliamentary hearings will take place on suggested amendments, as Mr. Marzalyuk tells us. "Education is a topic which should be discussed 'all together', with any changes in this sphere taking into account national and public interests."

Facts in favour of advancement

By Alexey Fedosov

Belarus' relations with USA demonstrate incremental advancement

Belarus' foreign policy and Foreign Ministry activity in 2017 indicates that the country's relations with the USA have seen incremental advancement. Belarus and the USA continue working jointly in spheres of mutual interest, such as trade and economics, humanitarian affairs, the fight against international organised crime, and exchange programmes for professionals. Interaction between experts has grown stronger.

In April 2017, the USA held the first ever Belarusian-American forum for small and medium-sized private companies, organised jointly with the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship. In June, Belarus' national exposition opened at the eMerge Americas exhibition of high-tech in American Florida, with several Belarusian business delegations visiting the

states of Arkansas, New York, Oklahoma and North Dakota through the year.

Belarus and the USA have successfully advanced co-operation in preventing the illegal transit of nuclear and radioactive materials, and in fighting high-tech crimes. Dialogue on human rights, which began in 2015, continued in 2017.

Belarus-Canada relations also advanced dynamically in 2017, with diplomatic and business contacts and liaisons between state agencies becoming more vigorous. Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister visited Canada last February, for the first time in the history of our bilateral relations.

In summer 2017, a Canadian delegation took part in a session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Minsk, enabling Canadian MPs to meet Belarusian colleagues. In December 2017, Belarusian and Canadian foreign ministers met in Vienna as part of an OSCE Ministerial Council session.

Longed-for and amazing event

Minsk's Chizhovka-Arena recently hosted the 14th Christmas Amateur Ice Hockey Tournament for the Prize of the President of Belarus, attracting fans for four days of festive sportsmanship

By Vasily Kharitonov

This year's tournament was unusual, as the President stressed, speaking at the opening ceremony. "The joint organisation of the Christmas tournament and the *Golden Puck* Republican competition has become a true present for us all. This is a double holiday for young ice hockey fans, demonstrating their best sporting qualities and determination to win, while enjoying the mastery of experienced players. The Christmas tournament in Minsk annually gathers our good friends and we especially welcome the Chinese team, participating for the first time."

The teams of Belarus and the United Arab Emirates came onto the ice first, for the President's competition, while young ice hockey players also began their event. Uniting the play of star veterans and children, the organisers wanted to promote access to matches for young players from the more remote regions,



enabling them to see ice hockey stars with their own eyes.

Chizhovka-Arena will soon host the 2nd European Games and the World Ice Hockey Championship, promoting an atmosphere of true diplomacy and amateur sporting prowess. The Christmas tournament (unofficially called the World Amateur Championship), featured many

previously famous players, allowing them the chance to meet up with old 'comrades' and coaches. Besides matches, they enjoyed excursions, showing international players the beauties of Belarus. Perhaps, Minsk's warm welcome will help us in being named to host the World Championship matches in 2021 (for the second time in eight years).



1. Support team from China
2. Alexander Lukashenko at tournament opening
3. Participants of *Golden Puck* tournament
4. Gifts to children from tournament participants

The recent delegation was rich in interesting guests, with the team from the Balkans including six heads of ice hockey departments. Some failed to appear on the ice: the Head of the Slovenian Ice Hockey Federation, Matjaž Rakovec, participated in the official ceremony only. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Israeli and the Bulgarian teams, Evgeny Gusin and Martin Milanov, took to the ice. The IIHF Youth and Junior Development Committee

members, Petr Briza and Aku Nieminen, came to Minsk for a workshop, while the Chinese were responsible for the major intrigue.

The Christmas tournament has featured unusual teams in the past. Not long ago, fans greeted with surprise representatives of the United Arab Emirates: last January, they captured bronze in Minsk. The Chinese team seemed exotic five years ago but is now demonstrating a serious attitude. Having received the right to host the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, the country has developed a state programme of ice hockey development. It has even established a professional hockey club in the KHL. Interestingly, at China's invitation, famous Canadian striker Phil Esposito arrived in Minsk. In late 1972, he became famous on both sides of the Atlantic, as the top scorer of the legendary USSR-Canada series. Mr. Esposito won the Stanley Cup twice and knows virtually everything about ice hockey. Despite this, the Minsk tournament was a surprise for him.

On tournament days, team representatives also took part in the *Christmas Tradition* charity campaign — organised by the President's Sports Club and the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation. Guests visited Minsk's orphanage #5, presenting gifts to children.

Phil Esposito: 'During the Christmas tournament, I'll ensure a good game'

The Christmas Amateur Ice Hockey Tournament for the Prize of the President of Belarus featured many hockey stars this year, including Alexey Yashin and Andrey Kovalenko among other, well-known players. Legendary Canadian team striker Phil Esposito arrived in Minsk, taking selfies with Czech players in the hotel lobby. The best striker of the 1972 USSR-Canada series chatted with us.

It's your first visit to Belarus. What do you know about our country?

I've travelled quite widely across Russia but am here in Belarus for the first time; Minsk was on my list of cities I wanted to visit.

Do you know many of our Belarusian players?

I can't usually recall their family names but I do remember a defender who played for Yaroslavl Lokomotiv: Ruslan Salei, who worked under my good friend, coach Brad McCrimmon (who also died in that terrible plane crash).

Are you primarily a fan of the Chinese team — upon whose invitation you've come to Minsk — for the Christmas

tournament?

Logically, I should support the Chinese, since I work for Kunlun Red Star. However, I'm no longer cheering for a particular team. I find it more interesting to observe players' performance. Contracts are currently very important for professionals; however, just look at how players' eyes sparkle at reaching the NHL. I'll ensure a good game for sports lovers; I want all the fans to enjoy our tournament matches.

You travel a lot and are a member of Beijing Kunlun Red Star's Co-ordinating Council. Do you plan to attend

the Winter Olympic Games?

I won't go to PyeongChang as I'm against the participation of professional players from North America in the Games. I declared this even before the Olympics in 1998, when NHL pros attended for the first time, in Nagano.

Meanwhile, the Olympic ice hockey tournament takes physical and emotional strength, and there's much tiresome travel involved. It's difficult to return a player to his former position in the club afterwards. In Russia, the calendar is scheduled with the Games in mind but the NHL remains on a very tight schedule.



Face-off from Phil Esposito

How often do you play hockey these days?

I rarely put on skates as I don't want to underperform. I skate from time to time with my grandchildren. Two of them love ice hockey, while the senior boys have turned to American football.

Story of budget

Belarusian parliamentarians are convinced that, in 2018, economic growth will continue

By Arseny Govorov

It's always a challenge to plan the family budget, so you can imagine the difficulty on a national scale, having to take into consideration world commodity markets, oil prices and the Dollar exchange rate. However, solutions usually become apparent by the end of the year. Late 2017 saw deputies adopt the major financial document of their parliamentary session, ready for the year ahead.

The Government has decided to play safe, preparing the country's budget for 2018 using a conservative scenario of economic development. Oil prices of \$43 per barrel have been used for calculations (at present, the price stands at \$65) and a Dollar exchange rate of 2,038 Belarusian Roubles or 62.3 Russian Roubles. Inflation is forecast at no higher than 7.4 percent, while the refinancing rate is expected to reach 11 percent.

Even against these cautious forecasts, the Belarusians economy is expected to grow by at least 1.2 percent, while state treasury income should exceed expenditure by Br734 million. If we enjoy higher oil process, a cheaper Dollar and more rapid growth of the Russian and European economies, then the budget surplus will be even more significant.

Naturally, the state will always spend its budget wisely, as the Chair of the profile Parliamentary Commission, Lyudmila Dobrynina, stresses. She explains, "The economy gained momentum in 2017, and the

additional income will be used primarily to increase salaries for those employed by the state. This is our key task." Financing of the educational and health spheres and formation of family capital are also priorities.

The Minister for Labour and Social Protection, Irina Kostevich, believes that average salaries should range from Br920-940 per month, with the amount above Br1,000 in the private sector. Those paid by the state are expected to receive Br700-760. Speaking of pensions, Ms. Kostevich stresses that these will rise in 2018 but their growth depends on economic growth. "Conservatively, pensions should increase



Everything should be taken into account in country's budget

by around 12 percent (or more if targets are met). In any case, pensions should be at least 40 percent of the average monthly salary."

The construction industry is also set to develop, with four million square metres of housing planned to be built this year, including around a million using state support. The state programme of accommodation construction is likely to be funded by citizens' own savings, as well as organisations' money and banking credits.

Apart from social guaran-

tees, the state has another priority: repaying debt. Finance Minister Vladimir Amarin sees no cause for fear, saying, "State debt service is completely overseen by the common revenue of the budget. Non-debt sources — comprising export customs duties on oil products and foreign exchange balances of the national budget accumulated as a result of Eurobonds placement in 2017 — will be used to repay foreign currency debt. This is a good safety cushion for our country."

Belarus has almost complete-

ly paid off its liabilities. It now has to complete a programme run jointly with the Eurasia Fund for Stabilisation and Development. Two more tranches (equal to \$400 million) are to be received. The economic security indicator regarding state debt will be fully met by late 2018. The draft budget envisages a limit of domestic state debt to Br10 billion (against a foreign debt limit of \$19.6 billion).

The size of the budget will depend on exporters' operations too, with the mastering of new markets a key target for 2018, alongside gaining an even stronger foothold in existing markets. Our comprehensive strategic partnership with China is vital, with exports of goods and services to this country set to exceed \$800 million this year, including increasing supplies of food, machinery and equipment. A joint facility to promote Belarusian food to the Chinese market is soon to be set up in China: in early 2018, Belarus plans to sell the first batch of poultry there, bringing our economic interests closer.

Inflow of foreign currency will contribute to the stability of the domestic currency market. In turn, stability of the Belarusian Rouble — maintained by balanced foreign trade — will ensure further reduction of inflation: the latter should reach the lowest ever level in Belarus by late 2018.

EXPERT OPINION



Vladimir ULAKHOVICH,

Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry:

Around 40 percent of Belarusian products are now exported to the Eurasian market. Of course, this entails certain vulnerability. Our task is not only to preserve the presence of our products there but also to expand it — primarily through the sale of high-tech and high-intensive products. Less than 30 percent of our sales are to the EU. The European market is very complicated, requiring certification, which is sometimes characterised by protectionism. This pushes companies to introduce new management cultures and marketing strategies, while improving products and moving towards price competitiveness, maintaining quality and offering 'value for money'. As I tell company heads, it's much easier for us to join other markets once we gain a certificate for the EU market. We're now trying to gain a foothold in Africa and have already organised business trips to Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Africa, Algeria, and Egypt. In 2017, we held an exhibition in Algeria and, this year, three trips to Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia are planned — after working out trading niches with our enterprises to gain the maximum benefit from these visits. We're also thinking of South Korea: a high-tech country with a niche for some Belarusian products.

Great Stone Park sets the example

Central avenues at Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park (now under construction) are named Minsky and Pekinsky. We all know that seeing is better than hearing a hundred times, so we set off to view the Great Stone Park for ourselves.

By Yevgeny Kononov

2017 has been a breakthrough year, with the number of residents rising from just eight in December 2016 to twenty-three by late 2017. Importantly, these aren't newcomers but strong, branded companies.

An increasing number of people are eager to join the Park, with at least a hundred world corporations expected to be registered by late 2020, bringing in projects worth hundreds of millions of Dollars.

Chatting with businessmen and investors, it's clear that people have long-term, serious intentions, thanks to the state's excellent terms: corporations are exempt from tax on land and real estate, and pay no profit tax for the first ten years, while paying just 9 percent income tax. Meanwhile, all imported materials and equipment are completely exempt from customs duties and from value-added tax.

The Great Stone has received guarantees for many years to come so it's hardly



At the entrance to the Great Stone Park

surprising that many businessmen are eager to gain a foothold there. Its doors are open only to innovative, knowledge-intensive industries that will bring billions of Dollars of export earnings to the country. One such is a Park pioneer: the commercial giant China Merchants Group, which boasts one trillion Dollars in capital and the world's largest merchant fleet. CITIC is soon

to join, assembling high-tech robotic equipment for rescue operations, while German Diefenbacher is also ready to take residency, producing composite materials. In spring, production of super-condensers for electric buses will be launched and the Americans will start producing lasers. Meanwhile, a Lithuanian company will be making environmentally-friendly packaging,

and Chinese investors are joining MAZ in producing internal combustion engines for heavy equipment. An agreement has also been reached with Russian partners to grow artificial sapphires: as used in microelectronics, optics, medicine and laser technologies.

A package of documents on business liberalisation creates additional advantages for attracting technology, capital and, most importantly, smart and talented people from all over the world. The experience of the Chinese-Belarusian Park makes it possible to better investigate this work. For example, founders, shareholders and investors of the Great Stone Park can now work for 180 days in Belarus without visas. Why not to apply this attractive norm Belarus-wide, for all major investment projects? It's an interesting topic for discussion.

Bidding welcomed but fur coats can never be cheap

Belarusian furs could return to world auctions

By Galina Kuntsevich

Diamonds are traditionally viewed as a girl's best friend but, in recent times, natural fur is joining them. How many Belarusian women yearn for a mink coat or a sable gilet? Our MT reporter has been studying the domestic market and the range of furs offered for sale in local shops, to learn how world mink prices are changing and why a high-quality product can never be priced cheaply.

Minks like protein

Those who've spent holidays at Turkish or Greek resorts will have seen how popular furs are; they're available in large malls and smaller shopping streets. Russian-speaking tourists often purchase new coats during their summer holidays, seeking out mink or fox, attracted by low prices. In fact, Belarus-made fur coats tend to be on sale there at a much higher price than we find domestically. There are fourteen farms breeding fur-producing animals — such as mink, fox and raccoon, with six major companies producing 90 percent of all our mink, under the Belkoopsoyuz name.

The Director of the Republican Association for Animal Breeding and Fur Processing (Belpushnina), Gennady Popov, admits that, although breeding animals for fur is viewed as a highly profitable industry, it's actually quite costly. "All over the world, fur animal farms are like factories, operating with major production facilities. Animals are often given food 'waste' to eat but minks are predators, so about 70 percent of their diet should include meat, fish, liver, offal or cottage cheese. We import up to 12,000 tonnes of frozen sea fish alone every year, also processing around 20,000 tonnes of meat, purely for this industry," he explains.

To understand the economy of a single mink coat, we need to begin at the start of the mink breeding year, in November, when farms prepare the food supply. In April, baby minks are born, with each mother needing to produce five young in order for a profit to be made (assuming stable demand for fur). Only four brings no profit, while less than four generates a loss. Weather conditions and cages can affect breeding, as can seemingly minor details. Each unprocessed mink costs around

\$25; comparable to European prices. If an animal is fed poorly or is kept in bad conditions, the quality of fur suffers, reducing its value, and ability to be sold.

If around 40-50 mink skins are needed for a single coat, the cost of raw materials alone is \$1,000-1,250. Meanwhile, this fur needs to be processed and dyed (if necessary), before being sewn and possibly transported for sale. An average length coat can cost \$1,500-\$1,700.

Mr. Popov concludes, "A high quality

around 1 percent of global sales. However, Belarus is among the top twenty exporters, selling to Russia, Italy, Greece, Turkey and China. Sadly, recent years have not been the best domestically, or internationally, for sales.

According to the National Centre for Marketing and Price Study, the global fur industry has been experiencing an upswing for some time, with steady demand,

FIGURES

Around half a million mink pelts are annually produced in the country, with the internal market using

50,000

and the rest being exported.

Last year, almost

145,000kg

of fur, tanned pelts and sewn goods were sold abroad.



natural fur coat does not come cheaply. Some dye low-quality fur or use paws and tails, which significantly reduces the cost, but negatively affects quality: such coats lose their fur and have poor seams, which results in 'holes' which are costly to repair."

Minks abound but fur coats aren't getting cheaper

Prices are steady, and rising, with the Belarusian fur industry remaining competitive globally, although local manufacturers account for only

particularly from Russia and China. Auction prices reached almost \$100 per pelt, which then raised world production from 50 million pelts annually to nearly 90 million, causing prices to crash. Our producers are now reluctant to participate in auctions, preferring to sell directly, and receive income without waiting.

As Belpushnina's Director notes, "Several years ago, 450,000 mink pelts were sold at the famous Finnish auction: Saga Furs. Over the past two years, supply has significantly exceeded demand, with overproduction reducing the price of very good quality mink pelts to just \$12-15 per piece. Many small farms have gone bankrupt while large companies have remained, absorbing great losses. The situation is gradually stabilising and prices rising

again, so I think our producers will return to world auctions. Pelts should fetch around 32 Euros at the forthcoming auction in Finland in March."

The National Centre for Marketing and Price Study asserts that overproduction on the world fur market has affected the country's fur industry. Warehouses are full of finished products, both domestically and abroad, with stocks exceeding 10,000: almost 25 times more than the average monthly output.

Despite this, fur products are retaining their price, with the industry of fur sales being no less costly than fur production. Belarusian fur coats are made in line with state standards and, accordingly, have a manufacturer's guarantee: coats are sewn from whole pelts and fur is guaranteed not to shed or fade.

Evidence of global warming

Grodno residents share photos of full-blown roses and winter harvest of forest chanterelles, via social networks

By **Tatiana Kondratieva**

Those brave enough to enter the forest this winter may have been rewarded with a crop of mushrooms, thanks to the abnormally warm weather. Even roses have begun to bloom, offering a lovely New Year surprise.

Dmitry Saskevich, the Head of the Grodno Regional Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring Centre, isn't greatly surprised, saying, "In recent years, we've seen warm winters and fewer frosty days with clear blue skies above. Several years ago, I also gathered mushrooms in the forest in December. Last December, the average temperature stood at plus 1.3 degrees (while the climatic norm

is minus 2.2 — a full four degrees warmer). Moreover, January began with temperatures seven degrees above the monthly norm! The first day of 2018 was the warmest since 1945, and we're expecting more mild weather this month, with temperatures around 1-2 degrees above average. The average temperature in decade is expected to be six degrees higher, while rain and sleet remain within the usual limits."

Our winters seem to be warm and wet, which can encourage coughs and colds, drowsiness and grumpy moods, while farmers find that plants are losing their frost resistance (due to lack of snow cover and subzero temperatures). Sadly, this leads to poorer crop yield.



Chanterelles in the forest instead of snow



January roses

Tikhon flies to Africa

By **Dmitry Antipov**

Migration route of birds from Red Book now available to view online, via APB BirdLife Belarus website, thanks to GPS-transmitters attached to eight greater spotted eagles nesting in Polesie and Belovezhskaya Pushcha

I'm sitting with Valery Dombrovsky, a senior research officer at the molecular zoology laboratory, at the Scientific and Practical Centre for Bioresources, of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, as he shows me the migration route south of the greater spotted eagle.

Eagle Tikhon, who spends part of the year in Stary Zhaden Reserve, recently crossed Syria and reached the Israeli-Egyptian border. Eagle Blond, who was nesting nearby, is now in Greece. The ornithologist explains, "We're doing all we can to preserve the population of greater spotted eagles, tracking their routes of migration, their wintering places, and where they mate and lay eggs. It helps us anticipate potential threats. We've made some curious observations. Until now, only Poles and Estonians (among our closest neighbours) were monitoring these birds. According to their data, these Red Book birds spend winter primarily in distant Sudan and Turkey, although younger birds may only fly as far as Turkey or Italy."

Facebook's shagreen skin

In his first statements about the goals of Facebook, the founder of the social network, US programmer Mark Zuckerberg, asserted: 'We're making the world more open and connected'. It was a statement that ignited optimism among millions worldwide.

By **Victoria Popova**

Whom among us hasn't, as a student, dreamt of an ideal world? Perhaps we imagined inhabiting space, among the stars and angels. Finishing his parental leave, Zuckerberg continued to insist that 'Facebook holds together the world'. The billionaire's comment sounded less romantic than a decade ago and some of us remain cynical, finding that reliance on social networks can isolate us as much as bring us together.

I've been using Facebook for seven years and, at first, viewed it positively, enjoying connecting with like-minded people and 'liking' their activities. However, far too quickly, I amassed five thousand 'friends' without feeling any the richer. I began to wonder about the 'real' people behind the names on Facebook. Also, how many of them watch our timelines silently? The thought is rather unnerving. A couple of years ago, an anonymous musical critic appeared in my social network and began to make friends with real, 'human' critics. They all seemed to get on rather well for a while, exchanging creativity and praise. However, I recently saw that my colleagues had given the anonymous friend the cold-shoulder.

Tarkovsky's *Solaris* demonstrated that leaving



Earth doesn't release from us our memories, nor from the need for a certain code of morality. In the largely anonymous space of social networking, people sometimes forget their manners, making statements they would never dare deliver to someone's face. A producer I know placed a frivolous photo of J. Lo on his page, which someone reported to Facebook the same day and resulted in his account being temporarily suspended, with a warning from the Facebook administration about conduct. It's all too easy for others to lodge a complaint about you.

Looking at the statuses of my friends, I've noticed a certain formality creeping in, and a reticence to say anything that may cause offence. The situation is aggravated by Facebook's filters. It would be laughable were it not so frustrating. The hospitable 'table-cloth' is gradually folding up. There have even been cases of people being dismissed from work following their posting of 'inappropriate' photos while out on the town. The social network is regularly cited as a reason for divorces and breakups, since people hook up with old flames (and new ones) and the evidence is often viewable on their pages!

Mark Zuckerberg has received enough threats to be obliged to employ sixteen guards for his home. Is this the open world we dreamt of?

Joint projects planned for June

Belarus and China to translate and publish more books by Belarusian and Chinese authors in 2018



Belarusian-Chinese youth forums have already become a tradition

By **Alexander Pimenov**

The year is likely to be rich in joint events in the spheres of publishing and information. Chinese publishing organisations are taking part in Minsk's International Book Fair in early 2018, which should result in new joint projects on translation and publishing of Belarusian and Chinese authors.

In May, a press tour of Chinese journalists to Belarus is expected to form part of the 22nd *Mass Media in Belarus* Specialised Fair. Meanwhile, the Year of Tourism will feature Belarusian-Chinese relations as its main topic. Joint competitions will be

held and new projects launched for major Belarusian and Chinese state media.

Belarus' Ambassador to China, Kirill Rudy, has pointed out the productivity of Belarus-China relations in the media sector and literature in 2017. Several events have been successful, including the first press tour of Chinese journalists to Belarus and the meeting of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko with Chinese journalists. The Belarusian delegation took part in the Beijing International Book Fair, presenting the country's best books and there was a contest of essays on the theme of Belarus.

Duke's ruins revived

A pearl of Belarusian architecture — Kossovo Castle — has opened to visitors, being completely restored within five years

By German Moskalenko

Along the road made of ancient brick

Until recently, driving along the picturesque hill, surrounded by pine forest, it was difficult to guess that a legendary castle used to stand there. Only its walls survived, but in poor condition.

Meanwhile, thousands of tourists have arrived in recent years at Brest Region's Kossovo to simply see the historical ruins. Travellers were walking along duke's ruins, imagining how everything was organised here in ancient time.

In 2008, a decision was made to restore one of the most mysterious buildings of Belarus. The park territory was beautified and now the castle is seen from afar in all its grandeur.

"In order to conduct restoration rather than to simply build 'something new' we searched for old bricks and used them in our work," notes the Director of Brestrestavratsiya, Vladimir Kazakov. "We have also conducted chemical research to reproduce brickwork mortar."

At present, guests of the castle are shown only several halls and they were opened during the stage of draft plastering. At the same time, works are being conducted over decorative finishing of walls in the 'ala Marconi' style. This Italian painter used to create castle interiors here. The castle quickly became one of the most visited sites of the region.

Twelve towers-months

There're many white spots in the castle's history. Its owner Duke Pusłowski ordered famous Polish architect to build it in the Neogothic style. However, through peculiar 'sharp' details we can vividly see the features of Middle Eastern medieval buildings which were built on Palestinian lands a thousand years ago by the Knights of the Temple. Who was a fan of the epoch of knights: a customer or an architect?

The castle once boasted twelve towers, with 365 battlements — resembling a stone calendar.

The central bastions were significantly larger and stronger, symbolising



Museum exhibition at Kossovo Castle

THEY SAY THAT

Bricks for castle construction were brought from abroad, each wrapped in paper. Previously, it was possible to stand on a window sill on the second floor, in the eastern part of the palace; if you clapped your hands, the vaults of the building 'sang'.

Meanwhile, the castle had a musical wall: on touching it, music began to play in all rooms. Perhaps this was caused by 'golosniki': clay pots used in ancient churches to promote the acoustics.

MYSTERIES AND LEGENDS

A fire-maned lion will meet you there... Launching the construction of the Kossovo Palace in 1838, Duke Wandalin Pusłowski decided to outmatch the residences of the Radziwills, Sapegi and other magnates of the Rzecz Pospolita.

What a castle can there be without legends? They say that at nights the castle was protected by a lion who lived in the winter garden. However, local residents preferred to keep away from the duke's possessions even in daytime. There's also a story about the underground tunnel. They say that it used to connect the Kossovo Castle and the Ruzhany Castle of the Sapegi family, which is located more than 12km away. They say that it was big, enabling even a horse-driven cart to move there. However, the tunnel hasn't been found so far.

The castle is also said to have its own ghost — the phantom of Duchess Pusłowskaja, eternally displeased by the dissolute behaviour of her son, Leon, who finally gambled away the castle. They say that guests too drunk or arrogant see the

ghost of the Black Lady, who remains angry with gambling drinkers.

During WWI years the castle was robbed. A collection of precious manuscripts and around ten thousand rare books disappeared, as did pictures, tapestries and almost the entire decoration. After the revolution the castle housed an agricultural school. In 1944, partisans attacked the German harrison which used to headquarter there. A fire broke out, burning walls and roof.



House where Tadeusz Kościuszko lived in Kossovo

REFERENCE

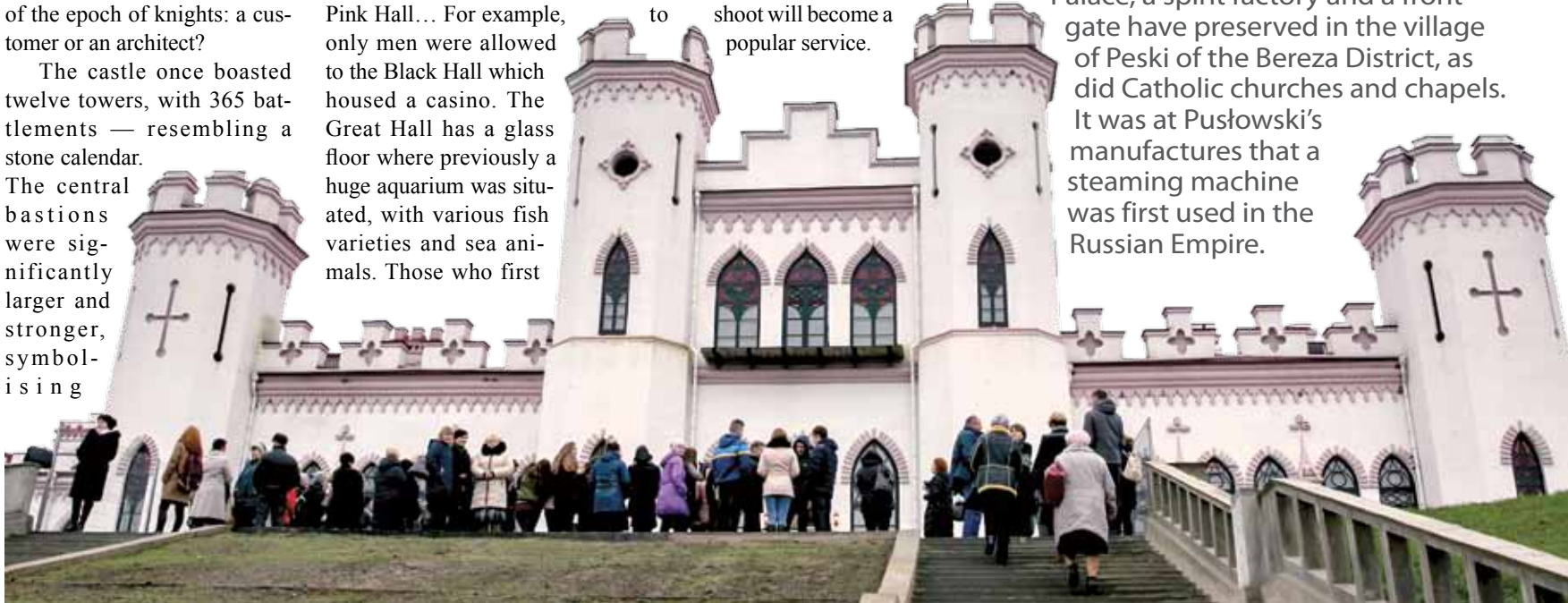
The Pusłowski family is a noble family of Rzecz Pospolita and the Russian Empire. Wojciech Pusłowski was a father of Wandalin, an industrialist, a leader of the nobility of the Slonim District. He owned the Kossovo settlement and other places in the Brest Region. Until present times the Kossovo Palace, a spirit factory and a front gate have preserved in the village of Peski of the Bereza District, as did Catholic churches and chapels. It was at Pusłowski's manufactures that a steaming machine was first used in the Russian Empire.

warm and 'bread' months: May, June, July and August. In total, there're 132 halls in the castle. Moreover, according to the architect's idea, at least twice a year the Sun should be in each of them and lighten all its corners. According to the legend, during this time, a holiday of this hall was organised, with balls and various decorations.

All rooms have their own names: the White Hall, the Pink Hall... For example, only men were allowed to the Black Hall which housed a casino. The Great Hall has a glass floor where previously a huge aquarium was situated, with various fish varieties and sea animals. Those who first

came into this hall, were very frightened.

The first stage of reconstruction has finished. They also promise to restore the winter garden and a park with fountains. There're also plans to open several hotel rooms and a restaurant. Using the experience of Nesvizh and Mir castles, it's believed that on-site registration of newly-weds with a costume ball and a photo shoot will become a popular service.



New face for palace following reconstruction



Lady Bird director Greta Gerwig accepts the award for best film at the 2018 Golden Globes

Three Billboards wins best motion picture

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri took home four awards at the 75th annual Golden Globes but it was the #MeToo movement that led conversation in a politically charged ceremony

The small-town drama won best motion picture (drama) as well as best screenplay, best supporting actor and best actress (drama) for Frances McDormand, who spoke about the importance of women

"I keep my politics private, but it was really great to be in this room tonight, and to be part of a tectonic shift in our

industry's power structure," said McDormand. "Trust me: the women in this room tonight are not here for the food. We are here for the work."

In the other individual categories, Guillermo del Toro won best director for *The Shape of Water*, the most nominated film of the night. Gary Oldman won best actor (drama) for playing

Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour*, while Saoirse Ronan of *Lady Bird* and Allison Janney of *I, Tonya* won best actress in a comedy/musical and best supporting actress, respectively.

As at September's Emmy Awards, the television categories were dominated by *Big Little Lies*, which won best limited series, and *The Handmaid's*

Tale, which was awarded best drama. Its stars did not go home empty-handed, either: Elisabeth Moss won best actress for *Handmaid's Tale*, while Nicole Kidman, Laura Dern, and Alexander Skarsgard were all honored in their respective categories for their work on the HBO adaptation of Liane Moriarty's best-selling novel.



A tense visit for the Turkish president

French president has welcomed his Turkish counterpart at the Elysee for their first official bilateral meeting since last May's French election

It is the first high-level one between the Turkish president and a prominent European leader after a war of words between Ankara and several EU capitals over Turkey's post-coup crackdown measures.

Turkey and the EU have been engaged in a diplomatic spat since 2016 after Brussels strongly criticised Ankara for mass arrests in the country

linked to the failed coup in July 2016.

For geostrategic reasons, however, Europe does not want to break away with Turkey. Diplomats say France is the right choice to gain momentum in ties between Ankara and Brussels. The Turkish government declared a state of emergency after the coup attempt and launched a huge crackdown on state institutions. Criticism over the Turkish government's crackdown on those it views as opponents spiralled into a war of words between Ankara and Paris before Erdogan's trip.

Stockholm metro station explosion kills one and injures another

One person died and another was slightly hurt after an explosion outside a metro station in a Stockholm suburb, police said

A man in his 60s died in hospital from his injuries after, according to witnesses, 'he picked up an object off the ground which promptly exploded'. Sven-Erik Olsson, a police spokesman, said.

A 45-year-old woman suffered facial injuries, police said.

The blast occurred last Sunday morning at Varby Gard station in Huddinge, south of the Swedish capital.

Police cordoned off the station and the square where the explosion happened as the bomb squad moved in to investigate.



"It is too early to say. Technicians are still working on it. Nothing indicates that the (injured) couple were targeted," said Olsson, who added there was nothing to suggest an act of terrorism.

French Alps remain on high avalanche alert

France is gradually returning to normal after the havoc wreaked by Storm Eleonor although the French Alps are on maximum avalanche alert following heavy snowfalls

At least three people have died and two more reported missing. These include a man found dead under a snow drift and a fireman who was swept away in torrential waters during a rescue operation.

A search is also underway for two men feared drowned in the Saône-et-Loire and Haute Marne regions.

Uber co-founder Kalanick to sell part of stake

Uber co-founder Travis Kalanick is selling almost a third of his 10 percent stake in the ride-share company

A consortium led by Softbank Group is buying a total seventeen and a half percent of Uber from Kalanick and other shareholders. The deal values the company at almost 40 billion Euros — 30 percent less than its most recent valuation.

The investors will also pump more than a billion Euros of fresh funding into the mobile app.

Twitter blocks account of Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party

Twitter has suspended the account of Greece's far-right Golden Dawn party amid a push to combat white supremacist and other hateful groups operating on the microblogging site

The move came two weeks after Twitter announced it had broadened its 'hateful conduct policy' to permanently suspend any account that displays 'violent threats, multiple slurs, epithets, racist or sexist tropes, incites fear or reduces someone to less than human'.

In a statement, Golden Dawn slammed the decision, saying the ban was orchestrated by 'the entangled news media and the corrupt political power which is controlled by the new world order'. "After Facebook of [Mark] Zuckerberg, after Instagram and all the corrupt media, it was Twitter's turn to target the party in a vulgar manner," it added.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



At the exhibition dedicated to Victor Gromyko's creativity

Rainbow light pours on Victor Gromyko's fate

Jubilee exhibition of People's Artist of Belarus and Great Patriotic War veteran, Victor Gromyko, launching in 2018, as part of series of exhibitions celebrating 20th century Belarusian pictorial art masters

By Victor Mikhailov

The exhibition dedicated to the great man's 95th birthday demonstrates only a small part of his legacy as a portrait and landscape painter. A master of narrative painting, he depicted the heroism and perseverance of the Belarusian people in the face of war's harsh realities. For many connoisseurs of art, his name is associated with monumentality, grandeur and vast landscapes, showing floating mist above ploughed fields, seen from above. He painted blue Belarusian lakes and flowering fields of flax, with solemn skies above. The National Art Museum of Belarus has about forty of his works, two of which adorn the permanent exhibition.

For many years, Victor Gromyko's calling card was his famous picture, entitled 1941. *Over the Pripyat River* (1970), which is held by the museum. Being a man of the military generation, he managed to convey the drama and the tragedy of war, achieving the sensation of a silent scream on canvas. He was just 18 when the Great Patriotic War began, interrupting his happy youth.

The Great Patriotic War inspired many of his works in the 1960s, including *Soldiers* (1967), and *Song of My Detachment* (1978), drawing on personal experience. These canvases engage us, enabling us to empathise with the tragic moments experienced by the artist.

An extract from V. Gromyko's *Rainbow Over the Road* book:

...German motorcycles rattled into the village one morning, just as I was preparing to leave. A drunken captain lumbered into the house, swinging a parabelum gun before my face. He was



Tragedy of war was key inspiration for painter

crying and delirious but I could catch some of his phrases: that I was a Komsomol member and that he was ready to shoot me immediately. He then took me to the barn, continuing his threats and cries. However, he asked no questions and I remained silent. In the barn, he pushed his pistol into my face and pointed at the dark corners. There, several days ago, I had hidden a three-volume book by Marx behind a lower beam, in the hay. Its seal and front inscrip-

chances of breaking the blockade. To escape the 'mousetrap' would be a challenge but we decided to forsake the main road and narrow-gauge railway line, choosing to push through the wood. There, it was impossible for partisans to break through, so there had been no need to locate firing points. We moved slowly closer to the road, creeping from one hiding place to the next, formed from trees felled in various directions. In some places, we had to climb over three or four fir tree trunks tangled in the overgrowth of bushes and underwood...

Victor Gromyko's extraordinarily eventful childhood and war-time youth — full of courage and bravery — found expression not only in art but in his three-volume autobiography: *Rainbow Over the Road*.

Despite his age, Victor Gromyko is actively engaged in public and teaching activities. For about 40 years, he lectured at the Belarusian Theatre and Art Institute, and was the Dean of the Art Department, then heading the personal art studio at the Belarusian Academy of Arts. In 2000, he was elected an honorary member of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.



Yugoslavian Landscape

tion indicated that it had been a school award for perfect studies, exemplary conduct and extensive public work...

...Rockets flew up one after another and we began to notice how the north-eastern part of the sky became lighter after the German observers calmed down, on the opposite side of the road. The night passed quickly, as did our

His landscapes of recent years have obvious emotional intensity, expressed through colour and bold images. His *Rainbow Over the Church* offers eloquent confirmation, while his Japanese themed *Indestructible Hieroglyph of the Pacific Ocean Coast* reveals a new angle to his creativity, exploring the features of other lands. He took this further in vibrant cycles, looking at Kazakhstan and Hungary. Self-knowledge is also clearly important to him in this huge, largely incomprehensible, divinely wonderful world. We see his sense of being tied to his nation's destiny; it shapes his spiritual maturity and his artistic path.

Young Victor Gromyko dreamt of seeing the world, inspiring the title of the exhibition dedicated to his 90th birthday. He is a realist and a romantic, having guided several generations of artists, with whom he shared his most intimate thoughts. His awards are the result of the love shown to him by his former students. He is thoroughly deserving of his 'People's Artist' title, as well as dozens of prizes.

Today, Victor Gromyko's art explores high moral ideals, sublime beliefs concerning the meaning of life, ideas of patriotism, and love for his land and his people.

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has congratulated People's Artist of Belarus Victor Gromyko on his 95th birthday. The Head of State notes that Victor Gromyko has made a significant personal contribution to the preservation and development of traditions of national pictorial art. His greeting reads: 'Thanks to your bright talent, outstanding works have appeared which have gained recognition in Belarus and beyond its borders'.



In the halls of Vetka Museum of Folk Art

Definitely much to look at!

How a small museum near Gomel became a world-famous sight

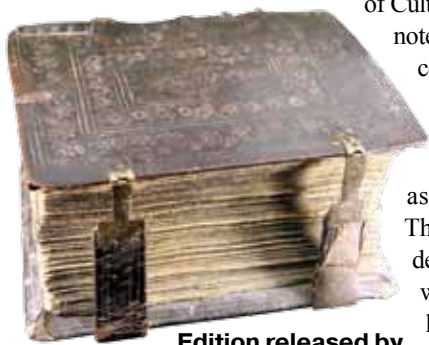
By Sergey Yemelyanov

If you want to learn about unique Belarusian culture, come to Vetka, some 15km from Gomel. Nowhere has as many rare items of needlework in such a small space as the Museum of Old Believers and Belarusian Traditions. The museum is world famous, with tour organised in four languages.

It's easy to find the museum, which stands on a clean street of modern buildings, some two-storeys tall, but none more than five. Many have beautiful carving work on their roofs and windows. Reaching Krasnaya (Red) Square, you'll find indescribable beauty: huge carved wooden gates, which lead into the museum.

"They were created by our founder, Fiodor Shklyarov," notes the director of the museum, Galina Nechaeva. "He was a perfect carpenter and carver. We've been working on these gates for almost two years (nine hours daily), with our main curator, Svetlana Leontieva. Shklyarov couldn't endure formalism."

The gates hide almost 12,000 exhibits: unique ancient books (even editions by first printer Ivan Fiodorov), rare icons and coins, beadwork, and gilded wood-carvings. There are various carved window surrounds and cornices



Edition released by Belarusian Suprasl printing house, in 1790

and, probably, one of the world's largest collections of 3,500 embroidered rushniks. There's so much to take in, but it's not just a case of looking into cases. You can see how ancient books are restored, including techniques of binding and illustration. You can analyse ancient signs on icons, and learn how to interpret motifs on rushniks and wood-carvings.

Motifs on rushniks

"Embroidery on rushniks is a separate world," comments Galina Nechaeva. "We've come to the conclusion that rhombus shapes are connected with virginity, and with fallow land, as well as with brides." She points to a wedding set and then one for funerals. "No single rushnik can combine the two, since they are incompatible. Most of our rushniks are from the neighbouring village of Neglyubka, where the traditions of weaving remain alive, thanks to Lyudmila Kovaleva."

"Any resident can come to our House of Culture's weaving room," notes Ms. Kovaleva. "Of course, children tend to weave. Sometimes, they ask to stay late, to weave more, as they learn quickly. There was a time when demand for handcrafted work fell away, but it's having a revival, with rushniks used at weddings, to cover icons at



Rich collection of 16th and 18th century black-letter books and manuscripts on show at Vetka museum



Gospel of 1575, published in Vilno

home, and to present bread and salt during solemn events. The motifs embroidered onto them date back centuries and, if we don't understand something, museum employees help us."

Carved windows

Restorer-painter Andrey Skidan is responsible for wood

carving, with the museum's collection including works by pupils of Fiodor Shklyarov, who used to collect samples from old, collapsing houses, on the outskirts of the city. After the Chernobyl catastrophe, when people moved en masse to other districts, many old wooden homes were abandoned.

"Previously, everything in Vetka was hand carved from timber," recalls Mr. Skidan. "Now, it's easier to decorate houses, using modern machinery, including those which can be used for carving, but the wheel is turning. We must preserve our collection, which is the largest of architectural carved items in Belarus."

Who will go to Lisbon: we'll know very soon

By Alexander Pimenov

Ninety-five applications submitted for participation in national qualifying round of Eurovision-2018 Song Contest

Among the contenders are solo performers and musical bands, not only from Belarus but from Russia, Ukraine, Tajikistan and Moldova. The number of applications may yet change, as not all will pass the audition stage. Some have sent folk com-

positions, which are forbidden by Eurovision rules. December 26th, 2017, was the deadline for submissions, but the Belarusian TV and Radio Company allows some leeway, to allow all applications to be considered, and to check for compliance with regulations and international rules.

The first stage of the national selection round will begin on January 11th, at the 600 Metres Studio, at the Belarusian State TV and Radio Company. Auditions are being broadcast live, accompanied by music and/or an instrumental recording. The professional jury will soon be



Naviband: Belarus' entry to Eurovision-2017

announced, to select finalists for the qualifying round. No more than fifteen will be chosen after the audition stage, and the finals of the national selection round will be held no later than March 1st — as a TV concert. Those

earning the largest number of points from the professional jury and TV viewers will take the winning title, officially representing Belarus at the international Eurovision-2018 Song Contest, hosted by Lisbon.

Success again on the hosts' side



Ice hockey players from President's team and Medved team, which won the Golden Puck tournament

President of Belarus' host team wins 14th Christmas Amateur Ice Hockey Tournament, defeating Russia — 6:1

By Kirill Karin

As is traditional, the teams of Belarus and Russia have reached the finals. Before this, in the semi-finals Belarusians confidently beat the Swiss



— 10:6, while the Russians easily defeated the Czech team — 9:3. Meanwhile, in the match for bronze, the Czech players beat the United Arab Emirates (11:2); afterwards, they complained that the score on the Christmas tournament board often fails to reflect the balance of forces on the ice.

Albertville Winter Olympics bronze-medallist Radek Toupal was in Minsk for the fourth time this year, praising organisers for their steadily increasing expertise. He announced, "Almost every team has guys who've managed to play at a high level. True, the score is sometimes too high but

these are the special rules which play an important role here. After all, the rules of amateur competitions differ from professional matches. If not, the Czech team would have occupied a higher position."

The finals were intriguing. Virtually the day before, a small sensation broke out in the decisive match of the Golden Puck children's amateur competition (included into the Christmas tournament programme this year). In the past, young ice-hockey players were regularly defeated by the 'Griffins'. Meanwhile, this year, the 'Bears' celebrated a strong-willed victory, to take gold.



Good mood during Belarus-Russia match

The President of Belarus' team finally won, taking four goals by the end of the first half, and keeping its lead until the final whistle. Andrey Glebov, Dmitry Meleshko, Yaroslav Chupris and Daniel Corso (twice) scored, with President Alexander Lukashenko sending the final puck into the net. Among the Russians, Olympic champion Sergey Svetlov managed to score by sending a puck

which lodged in the goalkeeper's pads.

Sergey Stas, who has played on both sides of the ocean and participated in two Olympic events, believes Belarus' success is down to thorough training. He comments, "We've been seriously preparing for this tournament. Although it's an amateur event, the level of its organisation and the attitude of participants are serious.

True, many lack speed but, as regards thinking, strategy and building combinations, these amateurs could give professionals a run for their money. We won but this was much more difficult than usual, as you can judge by the score on the board. Next year, the national team of China (which took part for the first time) will be stronger and the level of rivalry will be higher."

Freestyle medals earned at FIS World Cup stage

Moscow hosts FIS Freestyle World Cup stage, won by Olympic champion, Anton Kushnir

By Ivan Sobol

The Belarusian athlete received 126.55 points for his final jump, followed by Russians Ilya Bur



Anton Kushnir

Nikitin. Another representative of Belarus, Maxim Gustik, finished fourth, earing 118.14 points. Meanwhile, Stanislav Gladchenko was ranked sixth. Among the women, Alexandra Romanovskaya took silver, losing to American Kiley McKinnon, while Anna Guskova and Alla Tsuper finished in fifth and sixth places respectively.



Alexandra Sasnovich

More attractive place in ratings

By Sergey Grishin

Alexandra Sasnovich of Belarus has risen to 53rd seed, according to Women's Tennis Association

Last week, before the beginning of the Premier category tournament in Australian Brisbane, Alexandra occupied 88th position. Having claimed seven

victories and lost only in the finals, to Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, she has 'jumped' thirty-five places, to her highest ranking to date.

Belarusian Arina Sobolenko has also done well, rising from 73rd place to 69th, having defeated Canadian Eugenie Bouchard (seeded 83rd) in the 1/16 finals in Australian Hobart — 6:4, 6:3.

Failing to catch up with MAZ

By Inna Gorbatenko

MAZ-SPORTauto crew started 40th Dakar Rally, in Lima

It is one of the most difficult rally raids of recent years, covering 4,000km of terrain through Peru, Bolivia and Argentina, finishing on January 20th, in the Argentinean Province of Córdoba.

Around thirty employees from Minsk Automobile Works (MAZ) are taking part, including drivers, navigators and engineers, who have spent about a week in South Africa to acclimatise, prepare and test their trucks, which have arrived in the port before them.

This is the seventh time that our crew are taking part in the rally, having taken sixth place last year: the best placement to date for Alexander Vasilevsky's crew. This year, the team plans to win a medal at the Dakar.

Festivities of the week



Open-air folk celebrations, *Vitebsk Kolyady* or *Kolyady in the Dvina River Area*

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS

20 Lenin Street
Until 21st January. *Valery Shkarubo: Pictorial Art* Until 20th February. *Saints of the Undivided Church*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 14th January. *Krakov Kolyady Batleika*

BELARUSIAN STATE MUSEUM OF GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 31st January. *Fighting for Homeland*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 15th January. *Passenger from Nastrom*
Until 15th February. *Valery Slauk's Graphics* Until 28th February. Exhibition of experiments: *Science Museum*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 7th January. *Naked Nature*
Until 14th January. *Three Tortoises*
Until 4th February. *Reflection*

GALLERIA MINSK

9 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 14th January. *13th World Miracle*
Until 15th January. *Robots and Transformers* Until 15th January. *Museum-Factory of Fir Tree Toys*

LEONID SHCHEMELEV CITY ART GALLERY

10 Revolyutsionnaya Street
Until 14th January. *City Patterns*
Until 21st January. *Kolyady Miracle*

MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL CULTURE HISTORY

5 Muzykalny Lane
Until 21st January. *Kolyady Sketches-2017*

GAL-TVORCHESTVO

47 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 1st February. Exhibition of dolls: *Fragile Dreams*

CAT MUSEUM

23 Internatsionalnaya Street
Until 31st January. *New Year Season in Cat Museum*

HOUSE-MUSEUM OF FIRST RSDRP SESSION

31a Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 14th January. *Minsk 1917*

MUSEUM OF NATURE AND ECOLOGY

117 Kazinets Street
Until 25th March. *Water Residents*

PALACE OF SPORTS

4 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 10th January. *Minsk Christmas Festival*

BELARUSIAN STATE CIRCUS

32 Nezavisimosti Avenue
12-14.01. *New Year Fairy Tale in Circus*

THEATRES

NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Street
11.01. *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*
16.01. *Romeo and Juliet* 17.01. *Romeo and Juliet; Opera-Gala* 18.01. *Figaro's Wedding*

BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
11.01. *Sofia Golshanskaya* 12 and 18.01. *Jane Eyre* 13.01. *Tristan and Isolde* 14.01. *Silva* 17.01. *Golden Scattering of Operetta*

REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street
11.01. *Doctor Raus' Career* 14.01. *Portrait* 15.01. *Insects' Life* 16.01. *Three Giselles* 17.01. *Lift* 18.01. *Medea's Syndrome*

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street
11.01. *Pinsk Gentry* 12.01. *Jeweller's Jubilee* 13 and 14.01. *The Black Lady of Nesvzh* 14.01. *Art* 16.01. *Two Souls* 17.01. *Pan Tadeusz* 18.01. *Local Cabaret*

THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTOR

13 Pobediteley Avenue
11.01. *Mechanical Man* 12.01. *Even a Wise Man Stumbles* 13.01. *My Dear* 14.01. *Night of Chekhov's Miniatures* 15.01. *Master and Margarita* 16.01.

Forgetting Herostratos 17 and 18.01. *Wolves and Sheep*

MODERN ART THEATRE

5 Oktyabrskaya Square
12.01. *Two Henpecked Husbands* 13.01. *Mad Money* 14.01. *Comedy about Penny Pincher*

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
11.01. *Dowerless*
12.01. *Zhmurik; Tectonics of Feelings*
13.01. *Wide-Open Side-Scenes*
14.01. *Dreamworks*
16.01. *Love of Three*
17.01. *Bankrupt*
18.01. *Sanya, Vanya and Rimas*

BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street
11 and 12.01. *Belvedere*
13.01. *Wolf and Seven Goats*
14.01. *Morozko*

YOUNG SPECTATORS' THEATRE

26 Engels Street
11.01. *Savage Hunt of King Stakh*
12.01. *Doctor Not Upon One's Own Will*
13.01. *Thumbelina*
14.01. *Poliana*
18.01. *Taras on Parnassus*

BELARUSIAN STATE PHILHARMONICS

50 Nezavisimosti Avenue
13.01. *Twelve Months musical fairy tale*