

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times



Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 11 (729) ● THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 2018 ● WWW.SB.BY



Svetlana Sakhonenko's gold finish



PyeongChang 2018™
PARALYMPIC GAMES



Team is true gold

The Olympics are both a fairy-tale and a life-affirming anthem, and the Paralympic Games even more so!

→ 10



Yuri Golub (R) and his guide, Dmitry Budilovich, at awards ceremony

Life doesn't stand still and the Constitution should take this into account

Over time, Belarus will reform its Fundamental Law



By Vladimir Khromov

On meeting the Constitutional Court judges the Head of State has underlined that Belarus is keeping its eye on trends, doing its best to make timely decisions, to develop the state. "Life doesn't stand still; it's changing quickly, so we must be prompt in adapting, with legislation reflecting current needs," Mr. Lukashenko underlined. "Society is changing, and we are changing. Of course, the Constitution should be the headliner of change in our society. Therefore, as I said at the meeting with MPs and judges, we may amend the Fundamental Law of the country in the future. It's very simple; don't speculate or look for fake news. Law making is a continuous process, covering all laws and legal acts. It's a living organism which should be improved and modernised, to keep up with our changing world."

Mr. Lukashenko noted the need to choose the right moment for amending the Fundamental Law of the country. "Talks on amending the Constitution cause 'Brownian movements' in our society. Certain politicised and interested circles become alert, so we must select the right moment for law reform, determining the major avenues," he explained.

The President recalled that measures have been afoot to develop advanced technologies, while improving economic relations, optimising the system of state apparatus, and expanding the functions of lo-



During meeting with Constitutional Court judges

cal authorities. "It's essential to analyse the relevant Constitutional elements," he added. "Our strong and independent Belarus should remain, prioritising honest, wise and successful people. The interests of the Belarusian people and the country should be the guiding principle in taking action to improve our Constitution."

In his opinion, Constitutional Court judges should objectively and thoroughly analyse the norms of the Fundamental Law, using their high status and knowledge. "It's necessary to evaluate their relevance, and their compliance with modern needs, and international approaches. If we decide to amend the Constitution, no one should reproach us. You should

study the best global practices. In fact, you know them. You know the leading countries and their constitutions, and we must use the best global practices. We shouldn't adopt other constitutional norms, to please others, without discernment, as we did at the dawn of our independence. It's up to us to develop our laws and, primarily, the Fundamental Law, for our country and people."

The Head of State emphasised that, in elaborating proposals to improve the Constitution, separate sessions and working groups aren't necessary. "We shouldn't set up constitutional commissions or anything similar; rather, we should suggest definite changes or corrections to the Constitution,

by looking at the future of our country," said Mr. Lukashenko.

The Head of State noted that the date for the meeting was chosen carefully, being Constitution Day. "For us, this day is special. A certain tradition has been established, of celebrating this day." The President commented that judges are tasked with upholding the supremacy of Belarus' Fundamental Law, and constitutional control over legislation. "Fair laws and clear rules are essential for the country, prioritising the wellbeing, legal and social protection of its citizens."

The effectiveness of the judiciary has significantly increased in recent years, noted the Head of State. "You don't just analyse legal norms. You

exercise preliminary control over laws before they're submitted to the President. Guided by the Constitution, you also make recommendations to law enforcers. This is very important for our legislative power."

The session tackled the conditions necessary for Constitutional Court judges to use their knowledge effectively. Prospects for court work were considered, as were other issues connected with the development of the judiciary and improved legislation.

Mr. Lukashenko expects proposals from the Constitutional Court on how to enhance the efficiency of the whole judiciary system. The President reminded that, recently, the results of law enforcement bodies' work were summed up, and the decision made to return to the activity of the judicial system. He asserted, "We need to do more than return. We need to analyse the work of the judicial branch. The Constitutional Court can look, independently, openly and substantially, at the work of courts of general jurisdiction, through the lens of applications it receives and its own achievements," stressed the Head of State.

Mr. Lukashenko instructed the Presidential Administration to use the experience and knowledge of judges to prepare a corresponding session, saying, "From an ethical point of view, no one will reproach them for analysis of the work of our courts of general jurisdiction; we'll analyse the activity of this branch of power."

Interaction in spirit of oncoming movement

By Alexey Fedosov

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Pankaj Saxena, is finishing his mission in our country, having worked hard to strengthen interaction between Minsk and New Delhi. As is common in such cases, the President invited the diplomat to the Palace of Independence, to thank him for his efforts.

Mr. Saxena's diplomatic work in Belarus began three and a half months after an official visit to Minsk by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee. His first duties included supervision of agreements reached during top level negotiations, followed by the overseeing of

more detailed joint plans agreed by the two sides during Alexander Lukashenko's visit to India last September (his third in over twenty-five years of diplomatic relations). The Ambassador has certainly been occupied.

"You've managed to do a great deal to bring our countries closer," commented the Head of State. "In recent times, our dialogue has been quite intensive. India is a very important country for us, with whom we'd like to enjoy warm relations. Please pass along my promise, to the Indian leadership, that we'll reverently observe all agreements."

The meeting also tackled foundations for developing business interaction. We have a long history of friendship and trustworthy relations, dating



Pankaj Saxena

back to Soviet times, which has shaped our two countries' position on major issues, within the international agenda. We support each other at international venues, including at the UN. Moreover, we understand each other well in bilateral political dialogue. This creates a good basis for further developing trade-economic collaboration, which has great potential.

The President told the diplomat, "We've suggested interesting variants for Indian business circles and the Indian state. We're very interested in Indian investments. If you wish it, we're ready to provide opportunities and the necessary preferences to establish an Indian technological park in Belarus, under the most beneficial conditions. We're also keen to set up joint ventures with your capital, in India, to produce goods vital to your economy: automobile and tractor building, as well as agricultural machine building. You're well aware of our opportunities."

Mr. Lukashenko suggested further developing interaction, saying, "You could invest money in Belarus and in open joint ventures, manufacturing goods

for sale to Europe and within the post-Soviet space. We can set up joint companies in India, to produce necessary goods, with subsequent technology transfer."

The meeting also tackled the expansion of collaboration in agriculture and pharmaceuticals, as well as the development of the Bremino-Orsha special economic zone. Mr. Saxena thanked his Belarusian partners for support internationally, noting that no 'irritants' exist in our relations. Speaking of agreements reached during Mr. Lukashenko's visit to India last year, he said, "These have given new impetus to Belarusian-Indian ties. India is implementing Belarusian-Indian agreements, as signed during the President of Belarus' visit to India, at top levels."



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, visits the interior troops military unit

From field rations towards contemporary weaponry

The Head of State often makes unexpected changes to his itinerary, which can cause anxiety for organisers; however, it enables the President to gain an objective picture, when places are less prepared for a top-level inspection.

By Vasily Kharitonov

Mr. Lukashenko arrived not at the front entrance of the military unit 5448, but at the courtyard, wishing to see the conditions under which machinery is maintained. The visit took place on the eve of 100th anniversary of the Interior Ministry forces. Having completed a thorough tour, he went to the canteen, asking about the usual dishes

served, and the most popular items. Hearing about cookies, chocolates and sweets, tinned meat, porridge and canned fish, Mr. Lukashenko familiarised himself with the work of the canteen and chatted with cooks, even sampling some dishes: ‘Leningradsky’ soup (meat soup with pickled cucumbers), beef in sweet and sour sauce, buckwheat porridge and a dried fruit drink.

The President then moved on to chat with military personnel and observe their training. Entering the military unit headquarters, Mr. Lukashenko heard about recent improvements to the service-and-fighting activity of internal troops.

The President also toured the barracks, to see the living conditions of soldiers, including the gym and leisure room, and attended a training class.

In the dormitories, most bedside tables had photos of family members and loved ones, as well as mobile phones. According to Yuri Karayev, Belarus’ Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs and Commander of Internal Troops, mobile phones aren’t banned, as long as they have no Internet connection facility. Social network communications are too much of a distraction.

Mr. Lukashenko noted that

this is a global trend, and slightly worrying, since mobile phones can be used, theoretically, to track soldiers’ movement, and draw conclusions on the unit’s actions.

The Head of State inspected uniforms and kit, seeing the various uniforms worn for particular tasks and conditions, all produced from high-technology fabrics, which ensure comfort and high functionality.

Victory congratulations for Presidential elections in the Russian Federation

By Vladimir Velikhov

President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, congratulates Vladimir Putin on his convincing victory in election to Russian Federation presidency

‘The result shows Russian citizens’ high level of trust and support for Russia’s promotion of its socio-economic development, and enhanced authority within the international arena. I’m convinced that the historical ties of friendship and mutual understanding between our nations will guarantee further expansion of Belarusian-Russian strategic partnership’, the message of greeting reads.

‘We hope that you’ll visit our country for the session of the Supreme State Council of the Union State, to discuss topical issues of bilateral co-operation,’ noted the President of Belarus.

Alexander Lukashenko has wished Vladimir Putin strong health, unflagging energy and every success, for the benefit of the brotherly people of Russia.

Vladimir Putin confidently won the Presidential elections in Russia on March 18th, as is seen from the preliminary results of the vote count.

According to the Central Election Commission of Russia (using new IT to process almost 100 percent of votes by Monday at 4am), 78.6 percent of voters cast their vote for the current president. Second place went to Pavel Grudinin (11.8 percent), a candidate from the Communist Party, while the leader of the LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia), Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, came third (5.7 percent).

Other candidates received modest figures: TV hostess Ksenia Sobchak (representing the Civil Initiative Party) received 1.6 percent; and Grigory Yavlinsky — leader of the Yabloko Party — received 1 percent. Receiving less than one percent of the vote were business ombudsman and Chairman of the Party of Growth, Boris Titov, Maxim Suraikin — who stood for the Communists of Russia Party, and Sergey Baburin, from the Russian People’s Union Party.

The new President of Russia was determined in the first round, having received more than half of votes. Nevertheless, the Chair of the CEC, Ella Pamfilova, has announced that the CEC won’t hurry to declare the final results, saying, ‘The official results will be summed up when the CEC receives paper protocols of vote count.’



BSU Centre in Ankara

Spreading the word, to mutual benefit

By Alexander Pimenov

Information and education centre launches in Turkish Ankara, organised by Belarusian State University

The Pre-University Education Faculty of the Belarusian State University has launched an information and education centre, operated within the office of Atlas Private Educational Services Company. Its aim is to promote educational and cultural ties between Belarusian and Turkish universities, with consultants offering information on BSU educational services. Information on admission to the Belarusian State University and other Belarusian universities will be available, while the centre may later offer Russian language courses to Turkish citizens.

The opening ceremony was a high point of the Belarusian State University delegation’s visit to Turkey, arriving to participate in the A2 International Education Fair of Turkey. Such fairs are held regularly, in various cities across Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. The event gathered over a hundred national, foreign and international organisations, from twenty countries, with educational institutions presenting their curricula, career development courses, and language schools.

The BSU information and reference stand attracted the crowds, with over a hundred job interviews held with potential alumni: 40 percent were keen to learn how to pursue graduate studies, while 60 percent were interested in courses, including Master’s degree programmes, in English.



Exports of dairy goods increased significantly last year

From our table to yours

By Kristina Svirina

Overall, the year was successful, notes Alexey Bogdanov, who heads the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Main Department for Foreign Economic Activity. He tells us, "Exports are growing in all directions: from America to Asia. In 2017, seventeen more countries joined our 'export box', including Austria, Finland, New Zealand, Indonesia, Egypt and Yemen. Export sales of agricultural products could reach nearly \$5 billion this year."

In recent years, sales of agricultural produce to Russia have fallen below their usual 90 percent, but the Ministry asserts that Russia remains our major customer, though others are still sought.

Since last year, seventeen more countries are importing Belarusian food

From Africa to Asia

Although Belarusian products are now sold to sixty-eight countries worldwide, the world market is dominated by transnational companies and manufacturing leaders. Belarusian companies plan not simply to trade in commodities (such as milk powder and frozen butter) but to expand their range and join networks. Mr. Bogdanov mentions three promising venues: Africa,

Asia and the Gulf. He adds, "China occupies a central position in the Asian market: in a year, our dairies have increased sales there 7.5-fold, selling not only dried milk but pasteurised (with a shelf life of up to one year). We'll also try selling our cheeses this year. In early 2017, the first batch of frozen beef is to be delivered by our two meat processing plants, but we also plan to sell canned products. By mid-2018, we intend to certify five poultry farms. At the moment, forty-seven dairy

plants and two meat factories export to the Chinese market."

Gulf countries (Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia) are another promising sector for exporters. This is a premium and profitable market, though it has its own features, which manufacturers need to take into account. First of all, a 'halal' certificate is needed, to confirm that food is produced in accordance with Muslim traditions. A co-operative agreement has recently been signed between the Meat-and-Milk Company

and Iranian IMEX: a true breakthrough. The latter will act as an intermediary, promoting our goods to the Iranian market, with the focus on beef and butter.

According to Mr. Bogdanov, the Iranian market has been closed for a long time, with non-tariff barriers affecting manufacturers. Also, there have been difficulties in obtaining certification. The agreement should remove all disputed issues. It is expected that Iran will also purchase Belarusian milk powder and infant formula and, in the future, cheeses. The Ministry has calculated that exports of agricultural products to Iran could reach \$100 million per year. The European market could soon be open to our domestic poultry, with Belarusian producers now aiming for EU certification.

Growing trade

In 2017, exports to the USA by Ministry of Agriculture and Food enterprises almost doubled

By Alexander Pimenov

"In 2017, we observed growth in export supplies of agricultural produce to all regions globally, with those to the USA increasing by 46 percent and to EU states by 25 percent. Moreover, exports of agricultural produce to CIS states (excluding Russia) doubled, and those to Asian and Oceanic states tripled. Meanwhile, sales to Africa rose by 11 percent," notes Alexey Bogdanov, who heads the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Main Department of Foreign Economic Activity.

An important strategy in diversifying agricultural exports is the expansion of advertising



campaigns abroad, participation in international specialised exhibitions, the development of electronic trade, and wider use of modern information technologies, to promote goods.

"In recent times, electronic trade has been developing well, and Belarus has no intention of being left behind. We propose to sell our goods via the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange. For example, the

Meat and Dairy Company and Chinese Drex Food Group Co., Ltd. have signed an agreement on the creation of a joint enterprise in Shanghai, aiming to promote Belarusian food goods to the Chinese market. It will be primarily involved in the promotion of agricultural goods via electronic trading," Mr. Bogdanov explains.

Swiss companies receive invitation

By Alexey Fedosov

Progress in negotiations on Belarus' accession to WTO discussed during official visit to Switzerland by Belarusian parliamentary delegation, headed by Chairman of House of the Representatives, Vladimir Andreichenko

The Speaker held a number of meetings, including with the State Secretary of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland, Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch. Discussion centred around Belarus' progress in gaining membership of the WTO and the possibility of Belarus participating in the Swiss import support programme, SIPPO. The meeting also tackled the most promis-

ing spheres and instruments for advancing mutually beneficial trade-economic relations, as well as top-priority steps for improving the legislation governing Belarus-Switzerland cooperation.

Mr. Andreichenko informed the State Secretary about Belarus' efforts to improve its business climate, including via legislation, and important projects, in which Swiss companies may be willing to participate. He also suggested broader use of experience sharing with successful Swiss-owned companies in Belarus.

Sessions of the Belarusian-Swiss committee on trade-economic co-operation are to meet regularly, with the next scheduled for H1 2018.

One energy unit combining three



Kirill Levkov

Most homes in Belarus use natural gas, with energy saving a priority. Belarusian developers at the Polytechnic Technology Park have created an energy-saving unit, which uses gas pressure losses in gas pipelines to produce electricity. The project is part of the state programme for innovative development for Belarus, for 2016-2020.

By Valeria Gavrilova

EnergoTech Scientific and Engineering Centre is working in the sphere of power engineering and machine building. Several years ago, young developers arrived at the technology park, receiving support for their innovative project. "At that time, solar and wind power began to arrive in Belarus. However, our climatic conditions don't allow us to reliably generate solar or wind energy with enough efficiency. We decided to use what we already have: a stream of natural gas in our pipelines. This energy isn't used to the full, so our application is significant," notes the Centre's Director, Kirill Levkov.

To deliver natural gas from the place of extraction to the consumer, the pressure in the gas and transport system is enhanced, using up to 10 percent of gas. Then, pressure is reduced while the energy used for pumping disperses. "We wondered how to recycle this energy and discovered units designed to work at big facilities, where hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of gas travel through per hour, and one can generate megawatts of electricity. However, few such sites exist. Nevertheless, thousands of smaller facilities exist in Belarus, where energy could be saved: gas-distributing plants, and gas-control units and stations. We began to develop a device to solve this task, taking into account all the peculiarities of our gas and transport systems," explains Mr. Levkov.

A prototype was created to test the theory and verify calculations, using compressed air (rather than gas), and generating up to 15kWt per hour of electricity. Developers then launched working models for the gas and transport system

Specialists have developed

a range of small 'TurboSphere' units, which can work at various facilities: from gas and transport companies to industrial enterprises, and producers of heat and electricity. Such units are called turbo-expanders. "The application of this solution at gas and transport system sites will enhance our use of natural gas. We've calculated that if ensuring the return of the spent energy in gas and transport systems worldwide with the help of such units we can completely satisfy Belarus' electricity needs, that's why we're engaged in this and believe that this is very promising," notes the Centre's Director.

The innovation combines three units: for heat-exchange, electricity generation, and a low-speed turbine (working autonomously, without the need for full-time



Gas pressure differences being used in this unit to generate electricity



personnel). This generates electricity via secondary energy resources, without consuming fuel, making remote facilities self-sufficient: an important factor for the gas industry. "Our technology enables us to generate 10kWt per thousand cubic metres of gas, allowing us to meet 15 percent of the electrical needs of housing and communal facilities, or industrial enterprises, and ensuring 100 percent autonomous electrical supply for the gas and transport system, including gas-distributing stations," added Mr. Levkov.

The project is a winner from the *ExpoLive* contest programme for EXPO-2020, held in Dubai, and organised by the UAE Government. "They organised a contest and have allocated funds for the best innovations worldwide. More than 600 applications were received from around the globe, with our project among the top twenty: the only one from the CIS and Eastern Europe. The programme is now being developed and we're cooperating with them," notes the Director of the Centre.

Energy Ministry believes that current tariffs are acceptable for electric vehicles

By Alexey Fedosov

Current tariffs for electricity allowing us to develop use of electric transport in Belarus

"The existing tariff for electricity

is cheaper for drivers than filling with petrol or diesel, inspiring use of electric vehicles," notes Belarus' Energy Minister, Vladimir Potupchik. He adds that the major cost is connected with the development of infrastructure, which

requires charging points countrywide. By 2025, Belarus hopes to have around 33,000 electric vehicles on the road: almost 31,000 passenger cars and almost 2,000 electric buses.

To finance the programme, the

Republican budget is being supported by outside investments, under public-private partnership. Electric transport should help protect the environment, due to the reduced use of carbon fuels, and reduced harmful emissions.

Digital medicine

Belarus joins international community of health protection experts

By Igor Selivanov

Within the *Health System Modernisation* project, Belarus is aiming to establish a centralised e-health system, promoting modern international standards. The Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Medical Technology, Informatisation, Management and Health Economics is now taking part in the *Health Level Seven International* project.

The international community of health protection experts launched in 1987 as a non-profit institution engaged in developing a comprehensive framework and standards for exchange, integration and retrieval of electronic health information, to support clinical

practice and management, provision and assessment of health services. The project provides support to over 1,600 members.

Russia now has an e-health system (applying international standards) and Belarus' joining will enable us to develop



a technical policy in the field of health informatisation, based on modern international standards. It should speed up the development of the centralised health

information system, while enabling us to implement international best practice in the sphere of health informatisation, giving us full access to the latest standards of *Health Level Seven International*.

Standardisation of technological processes in health



Medical institutions are increasingly being automated

protection informatisation will allow Belarus to create clear rules, while ensuring full access to IT solutions based

on the latest international standards, supporting best practices, to ensure efficient use of funds.

Shelves of Chinese Books project

By Olga Korneeva

Department of Chinese books launching in Minsk, following an agreement between Belkniga JSC and China National Publications Import & Export (Group) Corporation

Representatives of Belkniga JSC met with representatives of the Chinese delegation at the 25th Minsk International Book Fair, with both sides noting interest in opening a department inside one of Minsk's central book stores (run by Belkniga JSC) as part of the *Shelves of Chinese Books* project.

Representatives of China National Publications Import & Export (Group) Corporation have confirmed readiness to supply printed editions to Minsk, in Chinese, English and Russian languages, helping Belarusians learn more about China's traditions, culture, science, politics, education and history.

Visitors to the exhibition were keen to explore literature presented at China's stand and, after the negotiations, an oral agreement was made to launch mutually beneficial co-operation. A formal contract is now being negotiated.

Fortress reveals secrets

Archaeologists and divers continue underwater investigation of one of the most fortified castles from the Great Northern War (1700-1721), on the territory of Belarus. Recently, several mortar bombs were recovered from the Yaselda, near the village of Zhaber, in the Drogichin District.

By Ivan Kozlovich

An expedition to the ruins of the Vishnevetskys' former castle archaeological monument was organised by the Institute of History of the National Academy of Sciences, in partnership with Sea Pegasus diving club and participants of the SUV forum. Sergey Linevich — from the History Institute — headed the expedition, having many times visited Zhaber. He comments, "Our



Raising bombs from the water

work was preceded by reconnaissance trips; the first expedition to investigate Zhaber fortress took place in 2015. It quickly became apparent that the site is of great scientific interest to archaeologists. Our goal is to study the water fortifications of the fortress (which was destroyed in the 18th century). We're primarily focus-

ing on the drawbridge area. During our three expeditions, we've raised eleven bombs from the river bottom, as used by a siege artillery gun. One of them is now on display at Mir Castle and the others are undergoing laboratory tests at the History Institute."

A year ago, a group of bombs was detected in the

water. These were thrown into a ditch after the castle was destroyed in 1706, by order of Charles XII. Last February, we raised five 35-50kg mortar bombs. Some were prepared for battle but unused, making our discovery even more unique. We also raised a gaff and a large number of charred wood fragments, and fragments of brick, showing traces of strong overheating. This month, we've raised an anti-assault log: a sharp oak pile — used to defend the castle earthworks. Fragments of the drawbridge have also been discovered."

The recent expedition is the first this year and more will follow. Archaeologists plan to start detailed study of the ruins of the Vishnevetskys' former castle archaeological monument.

Robot in the operating room



New page in history of Belarusian medicine opens at Republican Clinical Medical Centre, under the President's Management Office, with robot assisting in surgery for first time

By Olga Savitskaya

The first collaboration between surgeons and artificial intelligence involved the removal of a gallbladder. Doctors admit to having positive impressions, since the robotic device ensures precise control over the camera, enabling visual movement and back-and-forth communication. The robot is equipped with easy-to-operate tools and has a comfortable operating position. There are plans to use

this beyond abdominal surgery, with the benefits obvious: modern technologies are allowing ever more complex interventions.

A robotic system is being purchased for the oncology service by late 2018, enabling surgery on small tumours, including within the prostate gland, which require delicate manipulation, to preserve nerves and blood vessels. Up to 300-500 operations are planned annually using robotic help.



A bird's eye view of Miory

Berry places are attractive

Unspoilt nature allures tourists to the town of Miory, located in the Vitebsk Region, in the north of Belarus



Miory waterfalls are man-made



Neo-Gothic churches are typical for northern Belarus

By Kristina Khilko

Touching Borisov stone

A glacier dragged giant stones to the Vitebsk Region a million years ago and, in pagan times, those boulders served as altars, where our ancestors brought gifts to the gods.

In the 12th century, Polotsk's Prince Boris Vseslavovich introduced Christianity to the region, with those pagan stones being cut into the shape of crosses, accompanied by the inscription: 'God helps servant Boris...' Pagan relics became Christian. However, tourists continue to make 'sacrifices' — putting coins in crevices to ensure prosperity.

Belarus has three iconic giants. The largest, Borisov, stone is found in Polotsk, near

St. Sophia's Cathedral, while another two are found near Miory: in the agro-town of Druya and in the town of Dina (the smallest in Belarus).

Trying 'red gold'

Where cranes live, cranberries grow, so the saying goes. This berry is named after birds in Belarus and some Russian regions. Marshes around Miory are rich in cranberries, with many local people taking holidays during harvest time, to pick berries. Belarusians come from all over the country, with experienced 'collectors' earning up to \$35 a day from this 'red gold'.

Cranberries are a favourite ingredient in regional cuisine, as around forty local farmsteads prove, serving delicious traditional dishes.

'Boiling' waterfalls

A lake with picturesque banks is situated in the heart of the city and it's a true pleasure to walk there on a hot summer's day. Don't forget to take bread for the swans, ducks and gulls. The Miory District is known for its waterfalls and, though they can hardly be compared to Niagara, those on the Vyata River, near Prudniki, are quite large. Amidst the surrounding flat landscape, the water appears to boil. In the 19th century, a water mill was built there and, a century later, a power plant began work, supplying the town and neighbouring villages with electricity.

Relaxing in the shade of oaks

Chistaya Dubrava (Clean Oak Forest), situated 50km

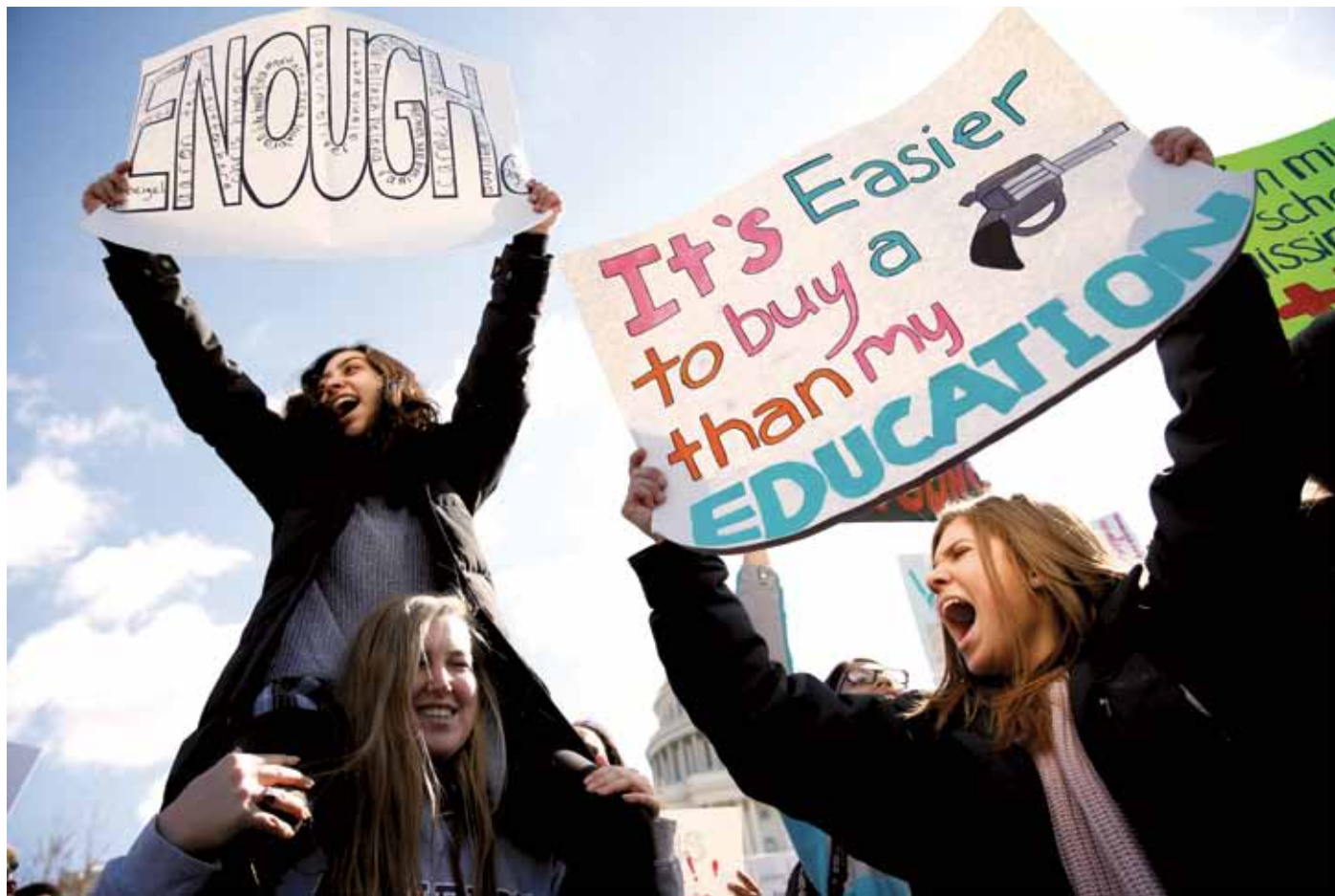
from Miory, is home to trees over three hundred years old. Tourists love to embrace these giants, making wishes and receiving positive energy.

Those interested in late Baroque architecture should visit Leonpol, near Miory, where the Lopatinski family lived. The estate has recently been downgraded, to a village, but, two centuries ago, its splendour was discussed breathlessly. The house boasted luxurious furniture and a huge collection of weapons. Meanwhile, its walls were decorated with paintings by Rubens. Peaches, oranges, figs and pomegranates grew near its windows. Despite the two wars of the last century, the house has survived well and it's a true pleasure to wander through its avenues, the

estate and its buildings having been designed by famous Italian architect Abraham Genoa.

Observing cranes' dance

Miory is translated from Finns-Ugric language as 'a lake in the lowland marshes'. Ornithology is the hottest hobby in Europe, gaining popularity countrywide. In September, Yelnya Reserve attracts scientists and the curious, from near and far, to watch the graceful dance of the Eurasian crane. Photography is particularly successful at this time, as birds from northern Scandinavia fly through Belarus, migrating to the warm weather of Africa. Yelnya marshes, among the largest in Europe, are a favourite place for them to rest.



Students from Washington DC schools protest for stricter gun control

Students walk out of school in nationwide gun violence protests

One month on from the Florida school shootings, US students stepped up their gun control campaign

A nationwide classroom walkout saw protests in Washington, where some sat down with their backs turned to the White House, and far beyond.

The message addressed to those in power was 'enough is enough'.

"We're turning our backs

against the people who won't stand up for us," said 18-year-old high school student Catherine from Maryland. "We're hoping that will get their attention and they will start to represent what we're fighting for."

Also in Washington, fellow Maryland high school student

Alexander, 16, said, "We want a bump stock ban. We want assault weapons bans in all states. We want our Congress people to stop taking money from the NRA. And finally, and most importantly, we want the background checks to be reinforced. We want more background

checks. We want it to be really hard to get a gun."

While many school districts gave their blessings for the protests, others warned of discipline for any students who joined the walkout, though many defied the warnings and left school anyway.



Java Jazz Festival brings much delight

The three-day event attracted some of the world's best known jazz legends from the 70s and 80s

Java Jazz Festival, a name presumably best said soberly took place in Jakarta. It's one of the largest jazz festivals in the world with 300 hundred artists playing in 90 different shows on 10 stages.

Some fans queued for hours just to get the change to see their favourite stars perform. For fourteen years the festival has been delighting jazz fans and this year

was no exception.

The Danish Radio Big Band, formed in the 1960's were one of the stars of the festival. With a body of work which includes more than 80 album recordings, they've played with stars like Miles Davies, Stan Getz and Joe Henderson.

Michelle Williams, the former Miss America pageant queen was another notable act present. Since receiving the crown in 1984 Williams has gone on to have a successful music and acting career.

Greek protestors clash with police

Dozens of Greek protestors clashed with police as they tried to storm a notary's office to prevent an e-auction of repossessed properties under the country's international bailout

The protesters, led by the left-wing Popular Unity party, chanted 'No home in the hands of bankers!' and threw eggs and garbage at a line of police guarding the office's entrance.

At least one protester was visibly injured in the scuffles, with blood around his eye.

The auctions, a condition of the bailouts Greece negotiated with the European Union and the IMF, have often been disrupted by leftist activists who say they are unfair and target the poor.



Notaries, who handle the auctions, boycotted them for months over safety concerns, but returned to work after the government said it would improve the process and increase security. Online auctions began in November.

Greek banks are saddled with more than 100 billion Euros in bad loans after years of financial crisis, mainly due to people's inability to repay mortgages. Popular Unity said four e-auctions had been scheduled to take place at the office targeted by the protesters.

Cryptocurrencies plunge on wave of bad news

Google said it will ban cryptocurrency-related ads, the IMF called for global regulation and members of Congress slammed them at a hearing

The penny dropped for cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin as prices plummeted on bad news from Google, international regulators and Congress.

Major cryptocurrencies fell by double-digit percentages on legitimate markets Wednesday after a triple whammy of adverse developments: Google announced that it will ban cryptocurrency-related ads, the International Monetary Fund called for a worldwide regulatory crackdown on cryptocurrencies, and members of Congress clobbered them at a hearing.

US import prices rise more than expected in February

US import prices rose more than expected in February as the largest increase in the cost of capital goods since 2008 offset a drop in petroleum prices, bolstering views that inflation will pick up this year

The Labour Department said that import prices increased 0.4 percent last month after a downwardly revised 0.8 percent surge in January. Economists had forecast import prices climbing 0.2 percent in February after a previously reported 1.0 percent jump in January. In the 12 months through February, import prices increased 3.5 percent.

Tesla says Model S, Model X production efficiency much improved

Tesla Inc. said the number of labour hours needed to produce its Model S and Model X cars have decreased considerably, following the latest report of quality problems that could prevent the carmaker from hitting its production targets

The electric car maker said that the production of 100,000 Model S and Model X vehicles is now possible in a two-shift cycle with minimal overtime.

Tesla said the company was churning out a high ratio of flawed parts leading to costly rework and production delays, citing several current and former employees.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Returning to admirers

Famous Russian artist Nikas Safronov admits Belarus occupies a special place in his life, speaking at the launch of his *Spring of Impressions* exhibition

By Alexander Pimenov

Nikas Safronov presented a portrait of the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, at the press conference, commenting, "This montage shows the house where he was born and the road along which he walked. This man has made the state strong."

The *Spring of Impressions* exhibition, subtitled as *Nikas. Painting. Optimism*, unites over a hundred paintings and graphic works. Among them are portraits of John Lennon, British Queen Elizabeth II and other prominent figures. The exhibition displays symbolist and cubist compositions, in addition to pictures using Dream Vision technology, for which Mr. Safronov is a Guinness Record holder.

This is the largest collection of Mr. Safronov's paintings, and has already toured Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Bahrain, with exhibitions in France, Italy and Germany planned. In Minsk, his works are housed at the Mikhail Savitsky Art Gallery. Interestingly, the latter is hosting an exhibition by Mr. Safronov for the first time, and has been visited by 20,000 people. We can say it's a success, with the show provoking discussion among Belarusian artists, as to the significance of Nikas' work. There's no denying that his works are unforgettable, yet Belarus doesn't own a single work by the talented artist. The show offers a unique



Taking picture of something interesting

possibility for us to view his works inspired by cubism, symbolism and Dream Vision. Nikas admits to many years of experimentation and research, with his Dream Vi-

sion series being the result of images that come to him between sleeping and wakefulness, in that half slumbering state. His *Morning Canal in Venice*, *Sunny Day Some-*

where in Italy, and *Italy: Noon* are prime examples.

The artist's recent works are in an impressionist style, with faces slightly blurred by mist, as if we might breathe



Nikas Safronov at his exhibition

that air. Meanwhile, for the Year of Dogs, Mr. Safronov has drawn a series of paintings featuring various breeds wearing human clothing. On April 8th (the artist's birthday), the series will travel from Moscow, arriving in Minsk.

Both a talented manager and the engineer of his own success, Mr. Safronov's personality is as interesting as his work.

What thoughts do you have on coming to Minsk?

People have been very warm. I've been able to meet up with those I've missed, who are hardworking, with pure souls. They love their country and are worried about it. I love Belarus as they do.

Will you sell your works to anyone who can afford them, or do you only sell to those you 'like'?

If they can afford to pay, it's fine. I'm involved in various charity projects, which requires a great deal of money. I think of people as being like the moon; we all have a dark side, but it can be turned away, so that we see the light.

Mr. Safronov has no difficulty making friends, as is proved by numerous photos featuring him beside such legends as Margaret Thatcher, Madonna, Jack Nicholson, Mikhail Gorbachev, Sophia Loren, and Jodie Foster. Mr. Safronov is full of pithy observations, including, famously: 'I sit down as a craftsman and finish my job as an artist'.

From a toy into an object of artistic merit

Unique masterpieces from Lego brought to Minsk

By Oleg Bogomazov

Art of the Brick. Art of Lego exhibition has already conquered the USA, France, Australia, Italy and various other countries. Now, it has arrived in Minsk, showcasing more than a hundred large-scale models of famous people, the Solar system, and the Parthenon. There are also pictures from Lego bricks, such as Gustav Klimt's

Kiss, Edvard Munch's *Scream*, and Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. The thematic halls are Painter's Studio, World Culture, and Emotions and States, while there is even a special zone for children, where they can create items from Lego.

Nathan Sawaya, a famous painter from New York, is behind the exhibition, which is touring the globe's top museums and galleries, including the Time Warner Centre in New York, Hollywood's Art and Culture Centre, and



Art of the Brick. Art of Lego exhibition in Minsk

the Spot Gallery in Paris. Mr. Sawaya was the first to create works of art from Lego, conveying depth and emotionality, while being understandable

and interesting to visitors.

"Lego bricks act as a bridge, connecting great art and pop culture, while creating new forms of art perception," notes

Maxim Berin, one of the organisers, inviting everyone to the Minsk Galleria trade and entertainment centre, which is hosting the exhibition.



Dmitry Loban at the finish line (second from the left)



A steep turn



Lidia Grafeeva on the distance

Team is true gold

The Olympics are both a fairy-tale and a life-affirming anthem, and the Paralympic Games even more so!

By Oleg Samsonov

PyeongChang has brought good news for Belarus, with several medals won by our athletes. Svetlana Sakhonenko has taken gold in the 1.5km classic ski sprint (among visually impaired athletes), along with her partner, Roman Yashchenko, who led her along the distance. Meanwhile, on the same day, Dmitry Loban took second place for those with disorders of the musculoskeletal system.

This was the second Paralympic gold for Svetlana Sakhonenko, who took first place in the 15km freestyle race, and

bronze in the 6km biathlon. It was Dmitry Loban's second Paralympics silver, having come second in the 7.5km biathlon on March 10th.

More medals followed later. Svetlana decided not to rest on her laurels, achieving one more brilliant victory in 7.5km classical style skiing, thus becoming three-time Paralympic champion.

Each Paralympic medal represents the blood and tears, desperation, perspiration and iron character of its victor. Not all with disability find the strength to live yet our Paralympic sportsmen have rewritten their



Yuri Golub and Svetlana Sakhonenko — champions of the Paralympic Games

Good position in medal standings

Belarus ranked eighth in PyeongChang Paralympic medal standings

Our national team has managed to earn twelve medals (four gold, four silver and four bronze), only surpassed by the USA, Russia, Canada, France, Germany, Ukraine and Slovakia. For the overall number of medals, our national squad is seventh, as the Slovaks have fewer medals but more gold awards.

Four athletes are responsible for these victories: Svetlana Sakhonenko, Yuri Golub, Dmitry Loban and Lidia Grafeeva.

The Paralympic Games have been extremely successful for **Svetlana Sakhonenko**, who won three gold awards and one bronze. Four medals went to **Yuri Golub**, who took one gold, two silver and one bronze. Meanwhile, **Dmitry Loban** earned two silver awards, and **Lidia Grafeeva** has two bronze.

This Winter Paralympics has been the most successful for our Paralympic athletes and much more 'productive' in the number of medals. Four years ago, our national team earned three bronze medals in Sochi.



Challenges on the track

destiny, achieving what they might never have without their disability. The team's successful performance in PyeongChang has huge significance, representing an entire mental attitude.

All who've contributed to the success in PyeongChang deserve our thanks. Paralympic Committee of Belarus Chairman Oleg Shepel states, "The

state has invested a great deal into Paralympic sports, so it has the right to expect results. However, even I hadn't expected such a great number of medals. I think this success is the result of the team's transformation. Six of the team's fifteen sportsmen are debutants. Svetlana Sakhonenko and Yuri Golub have been performing for sev-

eral years and are now true leaders but are assisting young athletes, helping them quickly find their place."

He added, "I'd like to thank our support staff. In PyeongChang, weather wasn't great for skiing, with conditions changing every half hour, but none of the sportsmen complained about their skis!"

‘It’s a real pleasure to see fans with Belarusian flags’

Darya Domracheva continues to please Belarusian sports fans, winning pursuit race at IBU World Cup stage, in Norwegian Holmenkollen

By Oleg Samsonov

Despite two misses at the shooting range, Darya managed to take gold. After the fourth shooting range, Domracheva was second but closed the 1.5 second gap behind Anastasiya Kuzmina of Slovakia in the last lap, to finish a staggering 9.2 seconds ahead! Kuzmina took silver, followed by Susan Dunklee of the USA.

Nadezhda Skardino had one miss and crossed the finish line in twelfth position: also, a success, taking into account that she started in 24th position.

Alexander Lukashenko congratulated Darya Domracheva on her pursuit race win, sending a greeting which reads, ‘It was a beautiful, impressive and, most importantly, encouraging race. I hope that you conduct the closing starts of the season with the same bright confidence’.

After this brilliant victory in the pursuit, Darya is in third place in World Cup standings. She comments, “It’s a pleasure to see our fans with Belarusian flags on the stadium, to please them and feel support from local stands. I enjoy hearing them shout my name with a Norwegian accent. In such moments, I understand that I’m not alone on the distance.”

Regarding her position in the World Cup standings, she adds, “I’m trying not to think about general qualification points. I’ll try to focus on each race. It’s already the end of the season, so there’s not long to go, but it’s impor-

tant not to think about points. It’s better to direct my energy where it’s needed.” In the World Cup standings, Darya

Domracheva now occupies third place, with 641 points. Anastasiya Kuzmina leads, with 727 points.



Darya Domracheva on medals podium

Competitions at Minsk-Arena bring intrigue

By Yegor Vetrov



Marina Zueva

Minsk hosts final stage of World Cup in Speed Skating

The final stage of this season’s World Cup included only athletes ranked in the top twelve in World Cup standings, in each discipline. The line-up at Minsk-Arena was intriguing in featuring athletes from the recent Olympics in PyeongChang, and Russians, many of whom had been banned from the Games, following International Olympic Committee sanctions. There were over eighty sportsmen from sixteen countries, including current prize-holders of the World Championship and the 2018 Olympics.

Belarusian Marina Zueva and Ignat Golovatyuk featured, with Mr. Golovatyuk gaining the opportunity to show his talents, and Ms. Zueva determined

to win a medal, having missed out on one at the Olympics: she finished the 3,000m distance eleventh and was fifth in the 5,000m race. Olympics medallists Martina Sablikova and Natalia Voronina (who finished second and third) were present, as was Canadian Ivania Blondin (fifth). Happily, Ms. Zueva finished second in her favourite distance!

The head coach of the Belarusian team, Sergey Minin, believes the medal will boost Marina’s confidence for the coming season. “For a long time, Ms. Zueva has been close to winning a medal, being ready to show her best performance. It was weighing on her mind, so to win — especially at home — is significant. Marina could cut her time by several more seconds. Moreover, from next season, many of her present rivals are likely to retire, so we’re full of optimism,” he says.

Following her successful performance at home, Marina Zueva has 180 points and is now 25th in the overall standings.

Belt champion at last

By Dmitry Komashko

Kirill Relikh brings home trophy sought for twenty years

Belarusian boxing has had prize winners and Olympic champions, winning world championships many times but the title of WBA champion has only once been claimed by Belarus, in 2006, by Sergey Liakhovich. Raising the trophy above his head, it was clear that Sergey valued the victory even more than Olympic medals. A few weeks ago, Kirill Relikh managed to repeat his success, in San Antonio, defeating Cuban Rances Barthelemy in twelve rounds. His opponent had never been beaten, making the trophy even more significant.

Kirill tells us, “It’s taken me twenty years to achieve this success. On winning the bout, I exclaimed: ‘Belarus, I’m a champion!’ I view myself as a patriot, being delighted to win this title for the country. I’ve had plenty of offers to change citizenship but this world title is the most important victory of my life. On lifting it over my head, I immediately set a new goal. I won’t rest until I combine titles and face the strongest opponents.”

The Head of the Professional Boxing Federation, Gennady Narkevich, presented Kirill with a Swiss watch engraved ‘World Champion’ at the press conference. He’s convinced that the lightweight boxer can defend his belt, adding that a team



Kirill Relikh with a champion belt

of promising young boxers are maturing in Belarus, soon able to repeat the path of our famous countrymen.

Ivan Baranchik — who almost simultaneously with Mr. Relikh’s victory became a contender for the IBF World Championship belt — is likely to enter the ring within the next six months. Mr. Narkevich hopes to witness the two box at Minsk-Arena, and Kirill mentions other, possible, events. So far, sportsmen are able to take part in the Olympics while continuing their professional boxing career, so the Belarusian champion may yet win an Olympic gold.

Kirill states, “Olympics are a dream for all athletes but I’ve

come to the conclusion that I shouldn’t focus on an Olympic medal. Actually, Olympic and professional boxing differ and my recent title doesn’t mean I’ll have an overwhelming advantage over rivals. Meanwhile, I’ll risk possible injury and inability to defend my belt.”

The Head of the Belarusian Boxing Federation, Dmitry Tikhomolov, is convinced that, even if the sportsman decides not to combine his performances, Mr. Relikh’s success will benefit Belarusian boxing. “I’m proud that someone able to rival the world’s great fighters has appeared in our country. We’ll do everything possible to ensure his success is known countrywide,” he noted.

Custom of the week



Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life in Strochitsy, near Minsk, hosts 'Calling of Spring' holiday

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS

20 Lenin Street
Until 25th March. *Form Sublimation*
Until 25th March. *Harmony*: graphics by Vladimir Vasyuk and ceramics by Tamara Vasyuk
Until 1st April. *Relax* art project
Until 15th May. *Serving to the Homeland*
Until 27th May. *Territory of Earthly Hopes*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marx Street
Until 30th March. *My Ikigai* Until 1st May.
Exhibition of Salvador Dali's graphics:
Divine Comedy

GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY MUSEUM

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 25th May. *Red Banner Belarusian Military District: History in Faces* Until 13th August. *Piotr Masherov: His Heart Beats for People*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 15th April. *Fiodor Yastreb's Poetic Palette*

YANKA KUPALA STATE LITERARY MUSEUM

4 Yanka Kupala Street
Until 16th April. *Awaken Zhaleika*

STATE MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY

13 Maxim Bogdanovich Street
Until 16th April. *Timkovichi: Treasury of Inspiration*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 16th April. *Treasury of Warmth* Until 18th April. *Look by Leo Timm* (Munich, Germany) Until 22nd April. *Nikas Safronov: Spring of Impressions* Until 13th May. *Bronislav Pilsudsky (1866-1918). From Sakhalin to Zakopane: Ethnographic Travel*

MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL CULTURE HISTORY

5 Muzykalny Lane
Until 25th March. *Female Image in Porcelain*
Until 27th April. *World of Sergey Drozdov's Author's Dolls*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN CINEMA HISTORY

4 Sverdlov Street
Until 31st March. *Ramūnas Danisevičius: Living in Time* Until 3rd April. Exhibition of Slava Novoslavsky: *Life of Beautiful*

CAT MUSEUM

23 Internatsionalnaya Street
Until 14th April. *March's Cats*

THEATRES

NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Street
22.03. *Carmen* 23.03. *The Nutcracker*.
Miracle of Folk Songs 24.03. *Iolanthe*
25.03. *Doctor Aybolit*; *Swan Lake* 27.03.
Tosca 28.03. *The Sleeping Beauty*; *Swan Lake*; *Musical Box* 29.03. *The Magic Flute*

BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
22.03. *Spring Colours* 23.03. *The Seventh Sky* 24.03. *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; *Merry Widow* 25.03. *Thumbelina*; *Anthem to Joy and Love* 28.03. *Cherry Orchid* 29.03. *Gala Musical*

MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
22.03. *Zoika's Flat* 23.03. *Lady for a Day*
24.03. *Magoc Rings of Almanzor*; *Viva Commedia!* 25.03. *Singer* 26.03. *Russian-Style Cabbage* 27.03. *Tricks of Khanuma* 28.03. *Red Hot Mamas* 29.03. *Pygmalion*

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
22.03. *Male, Singular*; *Zhmurik* 23.03. *Dunyushka and Koshchey's Kingdom* 25.03. *Fool* 28.03. *Warsaw Melody* 29.03. *A Man from Podolsk*; *Bigamist*

YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street
22.03. *School of Taxpayers* 23.03. *Weltmaster-Accordion* 24.03. *Black Lady of Nesvizh*; *ILI-ILI* band in concert
25.03. *Kolyady Night* 27.03. *Ursula Radziwill's Theatre* 28.03. *Inspector* 29.03. *Two Souls*

THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTORS

13 Pobediteley Avenue
22.03. *Even a Wise Man Stumbles* 23.03. *The Makropoulos Case* 24.03. *Seventh Planet*; *Pygmalion* 25.03. *A Very Simple Story* 26.03. *Master and Margarita* 27.03. *The Battlefield* 28 and 29.03. *Nobody Ever Said Life Would be Easy*

REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street
22.03. *Lift* 23.03. *French Dessert* 24.03. *Three Giselles* 25.03. *Eternal Song* 26 and 27.03. *In Search of Miracle* 28.03. *Wolf-Sailor*; *Medea Syndrome* 29.03. *Mask's Confession*

BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street
22.03. *Mann Ist Mann* 23.03. *Belvedere* 24.03. *Wash-Em-Clean* 25.03. *Merry Circus*