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INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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Uniform kit for the national Olympic team presented in Minsk

## It will be beautiful!

The Belarusian Olympic athletes will perform for the first time under the 'Team BY' brand at the Games in Tokyo, and their sportswear (also for the first time!) will be marked with the logo 'Made in Belarus': designed and sewn in our country.

The uniform for the Olympians was presented on the day of the 30th anniversary of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Belarus. → **10**



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# Co-operation in all spheres



Oleg Kozhemyako

By Polina Konoga, Varvara Morozova

**Belarus and Russian regions have been fruitfully liaising for a long time. The most important foundation for co-operation is personal interest and the desire to work on the part of the Russian governors and our country's leadership. At the Palace of Independence, the President welcomed a long-time friend of Belarus, Oleg Kozhemyako. That was not his first visit to the Republic. On greeting the Governor, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, "We are determined to achieve meaningful results. Neither the pandemic, nor external attempts to undermine the political situation in our country or in yours can stop us. The events of recent months have shown that, in the time of trials forced upon us from the outside, our two countries can count on each other's support and assistance."**

Projects in the construction sector and agriculture, purchase of Belarusian equipment and food were high on the agenda during Aleksandr Lukashenko's meeting with the Governor of Primorsky Krai

## Mutual interest

Oleg Kozhemyako previously visited Minsk last September. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, regional contacts have not been broken. The President stressed, "You have seen from your personal experience that our country is a reliable partner in all areas of co-operation. It will continue to be so. With your support, a number of important joint projects have been successfully implemented in Russia. Therefore, your interest in not reducing the dynamics of bilateral contacts, covering new areas, and looking for promising areas is absolutely correct."

Speaking about the turnover between Belarus and Primorsky Krai, the President stated that it has dropped slightly but the figures of early 2021 show a good trend, "We are able not only to reach that level of our economic co-operation, but also to surpass it. This January registered a three-fold rise against January 2020; it will be good to maintain this pace."

Speaking to journalists later, Mr. Kozhemyako revealed the secret of the growth of trade turnover: it's a desire to work and many years of partnership experience.

## Long-term projects

The President also recalled that, during the pandemic, our country did not introduce lockdowns, and our enterprises worked smoothly, so today we have all the opportunities to supply everything necessary for the needs of Primorsky Krai.

"You know very well what we can do. We are inter-

ested in supplying you not only machine-building products, but also food which Primorsky Krai has always traditionally needed. We are also ready to use our technologies — we already have experience in Sakhalin — to create appropriate facilities in all areas," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Residents of Primorsky Krai plan to buy more of our elevators. Actually, the Russian guest spoke not only about large-scale purchases with journalists but also about what people care about here and now. "Primorsky Krai consumers respect Belarusian products and trust their quality," he stressed.

According to the Governor, the first 200-hectare garden in thirty years will appear in Primorsky Krai: this research and experimental project is part of agreements signed between Belarus and the Russian region on seed production, potato growing, and development of fruit and vegetable farming.

Construction is another area in which Primorsky Krai is demonstrating interest. At the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko approved the participation of our builders in the construction of a cultural-exhibition centre in Vladivostok. It will feature expositions of the Tretyakov Gallery, the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, the Museum of the East, and also the Mariinsky Theatre Stage. The project is expected to start in April.

It was no accident that Oleg Kozhemyako said Belarus is the main and most important partner: 46 percent of Primorsky Krai's foreign trade with the CIS accounts for our country.

## Minsk — Astana: much achieved

### Aleksandr Lukashenko meets with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan

Belarus and Kazakhstan are long-standing allies. Our co-operation has a solid foundation, owing to good relations between the two countries' leaders.

By Dmitry Umpirovich, Varvara Morozova

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Kazakhstan to Belarus, Askar Beisenbayev, began his meeting with Belarus' Head of State with best wishes from President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Elbasy (Leader of the Nation) Nursultan Nazarbayev.

During the conversation, words of mutual gratitude were repeatedly voiced, which is not surprising since there are considerable successes in co-operation. Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke of them as follows, "We have achieved a lot in recent years in terms of integration, especially within the framework of the EAEU, and in terms of bilateral relations, trade and co-operation."

## Important focus

Facts and figures matter. In 2020, the trade turnover between our two countries reached \$847.9m: \$747.1m of exports and \$100.8m of imports. The distribution network of Belarusian enterprises in Kazakhstan includes more than 40 companies created with the involvement of domestic capital, in addition to over 170 entities of the dealer network. Seven joint assembly plants of Belarusian machinery and equipment, including MTZ, MAZ, Gomselmash and Bobruiskagromash, are operational. However, this is far from the limit of the possibilities.

Aleksandr Lukashenko believes that governments have things to work on, "Of course, we'd wish to strengthen our co-operation and expand our volumes. We are ready to create assembly plants and increase capacity of the existing ones."

According to the Kazakh diplomat, the emphasis should also be placed on deepening co-operation in the field of agriculture and the construction industry. A high-level meeting can also provide an impetus. Aleksandr Lukashenko's visit to Kazakhstan in 2019 is proof of this. Askar Beisenbayev spoke of this with reference to figures, "In previous years, the trade turnover was less than \$800m per year and, in 2019, it exceeded \$1bn for the first time to make \$1,200m. Sadly, the pandemic made its own adjustments last year, but co-operation between our two states is developing actively."

With this in mind, the two heads of state need to meet again in person. Aleksandr Lukashenko said, "It would be nice if the visit of the President of Kazakhstan to Belarus, postponed due to the pandemic, takes place. This would be a good impetus for further development of relations."

The Head of State also views the Ambassador's work as strong support for further bilateral co-operation. "I very much hope that we will still do a lot for the benefit of our two peoples," he stressed.



Askar Beisenbayev

## Thanks for help

In turn, Askar Beisenbayev had reasons to sincerely thank Aleksandr Lukashenko. "Kazakhstan and Belarus are friendly countries supporting each other in any area, including the international arena. I would like to express exceptional gratitude to you. 2020 was not an easy year, the year of fight against the pandemic when all countries isolated themselves, and we saw huge support from Belarus," the Ambassador said.

He especially thanked the Belarusian air carrier Belavia for keeping air transportation going in the early stage of the pandemic. That helped many Kazakhstani people return to their native country from America, Europe and even Bali, "This is the only national, state-owned airline that works for the benefit of the people thanks to your wise policy," the diplomat said.

However, this is not the only problem related to the coronavirus, which was solved with the help of the Belarusian side in general and thanks to our air carrier in particular. For example, one of the Belarusian enterprises, at the request of Kazakhstan, produced materials for infectious diseases hospitals under construction in a very short time.

"Thanks to Belavia, these materials were sent, and they were received by three hospitals under construction in the cities of Nur-Sultan, Almaty and Shymkent," the Ambassador added.

## Telephone conversation

Makei urges USA to assess situation in Belarus objectively

**On March 22nd, Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei had a telephone conversation with Derek Chollet, a senior policy advisor to the Secretary of State at the rank of Under Secretary, on the initiative of the American side — as the Belarusian Foreign Ministry's press service has announced**



The parties pragmatically discussed topical issues of the bilateral agenda, including the exchange of ambassadors. Vladimir Makei informed his interlocutor about the process of selecting a candidate for the post of Ambassador of Belarus to the United States. Derek Chollet, in turn, confirmed that the appointed US Ambassador is ready to arrive in Belarus.

As informed, the parties agreed on the need to maintain a dialogue, while acknowledging significant disagreements in bilateral relations.

In connection with a number of concerns expressed by Derek Chollet, Vladimir Makei urged the American side to objectively assess the situation in Belarus, and emphasised the counter-productiveness of attempts to exert pressure on the sovereign state.

In this context, the Minister drew attention to several carbon-copy statements by the US side. Vladimir Makei also warned the interlocutor against attempts to influence the work of law enforcement or the judicial system of Belarus.

The parties agreed that the mutually respectful dialogue maintained by Belarus and the USA in recent years has helped achieve significant progress in bilateral relations.





# Belarus is developing its own COVID vaccine

A third wave of coronavirus predictions, production of the Russian vaccine and manufacturing of Belarus-own's: the Healthcare Minister has made a report to the President

By Polina Konoga

Over the past year, we have all realised that the Belarusian healthcare system and the experience of fighting the coronavirus are truly exemplary. However, the most pressing issue on the agenda is the vaccination of the population and manufacturing of the country's own drug. Aleksandr Lukashenko commented on the topic,

*“The domestic vaccine is a matter of honour for Gusakov and Pinevich, the National Academy of Sciences and the Healthcare Ministry. The best vaccine in the shortest possible time is to be made. We say ‘the best’ since the precedent is already there... There are already many producers of these vaccines.”*

The President asked about the progress of the vaccination, noting that no hysteria is being seen in the country,



Dmitry Pinevich shows Aleksandr Lukashenko the ‘Sputnik V’ vaccine — bottled at the Belmedpreparaty enterprise

*“Everything is going smoothly. We have enough vaccines. We vaccinate those who want it: doctors, teachers, trade workers, those who are in close contact with others. We use Russian and Chinese vaccines. Other proposals are also in place but we still have enough available.”*

The Minister said that the overall vaccination will be launched in April. At the same time, the tactics will change: after medical workers and teachers, vaccination of older people will simultaneously begin. Belarus uses ‘Sputnik V’ and the inactivated ‘Vero’ vaccine by Chinese Sinopharm.

Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed gratitude to the President of the People's Republic of China and his friend, Xi Jinping, thanks to whom our coun-

try received 100,000 doses of vaccines for free. The Chinese partners are ready to co-operate with us in terms of further supplies of the drug.



As Dmitry Pinevich said, on March 25th, Belmedpreparaty began bottling the first industrial series of the ‘Sputnik V’ vaccine from the semi-product

of Russia's Generium. About 100,000 doses will be produced, later the monthly output will reach 500,000 doses. The vaccine is scheduled to begin use at the end of April, after its quality is confirmed.

At the same time, at another site of Belmedpreparaty, jointly with the Russian Rossium Concern, work continues to create production for the full cycle of the same vaccine: from growing the virus to bottling the finished product. The production of ‘Sputnik V’ is expected to start in Belarus this September, with a projected production volume of about 8m doses per year.

Dmitry Pinevich brought the very first released samples with him to the meeting with the President in a special refrigerator; the temperature inside it was 18 degrees below zero.

As the Head of State noted, the development of Belarus' own vaccine is a matter of honour. However, if help is needed, China, for example, is ready to support us and help in this matter.

The President asked about the timing — what level is the work of Belarusian scientists on the development of a domestic vaccine at, recalling that it was agreed to obtain our own drug next year.

The first sample of the Belarusian vaccine may appear by late August; this will be the so-called vaccine in vitro. According to Dmitry Pinevich, the vaccine production can be split into several stages: it's primarily necessary to get the vaccine in a test tube, then scale it up to a pilot industrial batch and only then start industrial production.

## New avenues for Union State interaction

The Head of State discussed the epidemiological situation in the world, as well as co-operation between Belarus and Russia in the production of vaccines, with the State Secretary of the Union State, Dmitry Mezentsev

By Yevgeny Kononovich

Dmitry Mezentsev is completing his diplomatic mission as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to Belarus, though he isn't ignoring the topic of Union State integration. Aleksandr Lukashenko addressed him,

*“We need to focus more — within the framework of the Union State — on projects with the regions... I think we have to open a new direction of liaisons with China: through to the Far East.”*

The President invited Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei, who was also present at the meeting, to use this channel, “To

supply our products through the Far East to Eastern China and the Asia-Pacific region is very interesting for us.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko doesn't rule out that, in August, he will be able to visit Primorsky Krai and discuss the topic of co-operation in more detail. Dmitry Mezentsev could be a great help in this regard: he has many



Dmitry Mezentsev and Vladimir Makei

years of working in the Irkutsk Region, as well as experience in leading the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation where China, along with Russia, plays one of the major roles.

Belarus enjoys excellent relations with other Russian regions and this potential should be used more actively, Aleksandr Lukashenko believes. After all, Russia is a huge country, and other economic and humanitarian issues are much easier and faster to solve directly than through the Government and the President of the Russian Federation.

At the meeting with Dmitry Mezentsev, the President also spoke about the terrorist attack that was prevented in Belarus, “March 25th is traditional freedom day. We calmly faced the

opposition when they celebrated this freedom day. They were walking along a fixed route but they had the intention to try to unsettle the situation. Spring is coming...” According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, all this is being monitored, including the information put on the Internet, “We know what they're doing. One message read: few people went out into the streets (there were almost no people)... I analyse the situation and think: among our protestors, there are many misguided people, but not all are idiots. They can't but see that these ‘runaways’ have settled in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine relying on their cash flows. However, no one has given 53m — as promised. They give something, but there is not enough for them [the opposition abroad — editor's remark]. From there, as you see, they continue demanding that our protestors pour out into the streets and shake up Lukashenko's regime.”

“The day before, they kept saying that ‘the authorities are preparing a provocation, that the authorities want to blow things up’. I was alerted by this, as they've begun talking about it, we need to stay attentive. And what do you think? Our police-

men — the former service of Nikolai Karpenkov (the Deputy Interior Minister and the Commander of the Internal Troops headed the Main Department for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption of the Interior Ministry until November 19th, 2020 — editor's remark) — have done well: they detected the terrorist!” said the President. “He put explosives in a trash can: if they had gone off, there would have been huge damage — on account of the metal or concrete. They discovered it beforehand, tracing him. The man placed the explosives and then the sappers came, defused them and began to trace him. He went to one of the military units and the police seized him there and handed him over to the State Security Committee. Horror! Just imagine how many people would have died and how many would have been injured if people passed by and an explosion happened...”

“The authorities would have been blamed for this,” Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei commented.

Dmitry Mezentsev, in turn, noted that — under these conditions — the union of Russia and Belarus on the foundations of the Union State is important.

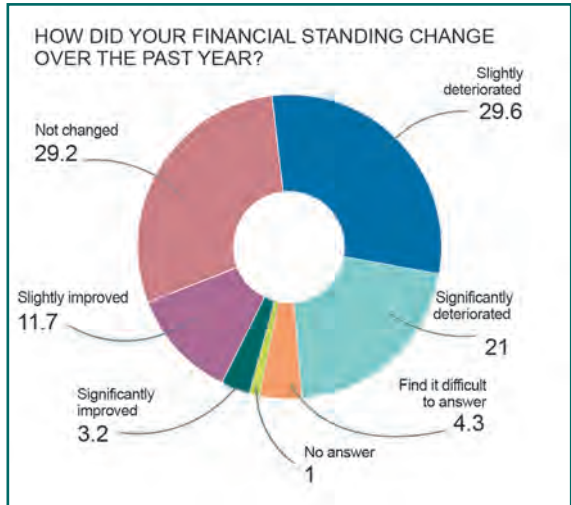


# Mirror of sociology

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The Minsk Times  
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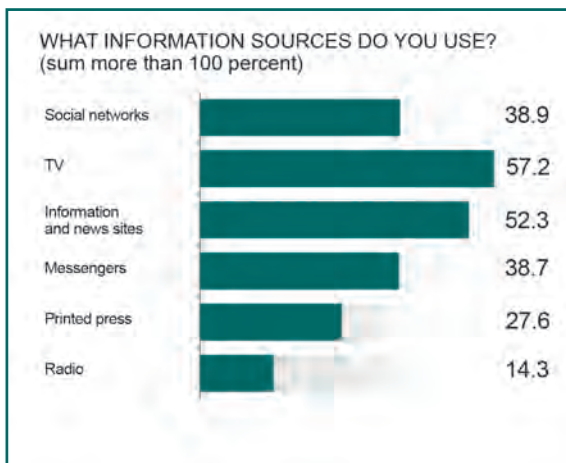
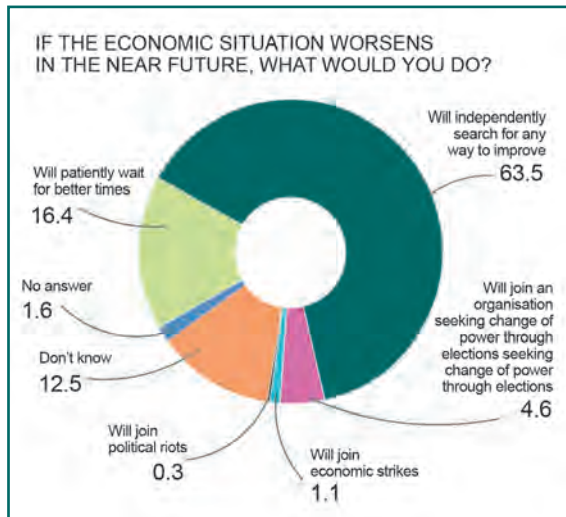


By Maksim Osipov

## The truth comes through comparison

The infographics demonstrate that, according to the results of the social survey, financial standing has not changed among 29.2 percent of Belarusians over the past year. It has improved and slightly improved among 14.9 percent, and Mr. Musiyenko pays special attention to this fact, “This has been a COVID affected year. Europe is at a standstill, with lockdowns common. People stay at home, with no work. However, in Belarus, our financial standing is viewed to have been improved or slightly improved among around 15 percent of the population. Do remember: this figure is shown from questioning almost 10,000 people. This is a very significant figure. What hasn’t changed is another high figure.”

The analyst believes that the results correspond well to the current situation since we’ve not seen any drastic changes in our life. “We don’t feel how Europe lives today. There, if you want to leave the house, you need to SMS the police to receive permission. If you need to buy socks at a shop, you get yourself registered and then you’ll be allowed to come in at a certain time, in line with appointments. It is necessary to get permission to go to the clinic or pharmacy. We don’t live like this. Those who talk about deterioration, don’t understand how it really happens. Cameras should actually be installed in Brussels or Berlin to shoot city life and then broadcast it on screens in our cities. The same should be done in the opposite direction: to show our life and roads full of cars. This is not seen there. When people without masks are beaten, it’s viewed as savagery for us but it’s the norm there. Italians are eager to come to Belarusian sanatoriums



for vacation. They have been isolated and under total control for up to almost 10 months.”

## Responsible approach and self-reliance

If the economic situation worsens in the near future, 63.5 percent of Belarusians plan to independently search for ways to improve their lives. Mr. Musiyenko views this circumstance as landmark, “This is the issue that the President drew attention to when he spoke at the Belarusian People’s Congress. He announced this figure from memory. It really attracts attention and sticks out in mind. In my opinion, this is a huge success.”

*People clearly realise that a lot depends on everyone personally. This is already a very high percentage. This means that the development of our state and society is moving in the right direction. People are increasingly realis-*

Another set of results from the *Social Thinking* Republican public opinion poll — conducted on the eve of the 6th Belarusian People’s Congress — has been published by the Belarusian Telegraph Agency which commissioned the study. Below are its results and estimates given BelTA by Sergei Musiyenko, the Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre, as well as other survey participants polled by the *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper.

*ing that they don’t need to stay idle and wait patiently for better times.*

The analyst also focuses on those respondents who said that they would join economic strikes (1.1 percent), political riots (0.3 percent) or an organisation seeking change of

the European Union. Here, almost 40 percent are negative and rather negative, against 30 percent of those who’ve found it difficult to evaluate; only 7.3 percent of respondents answer positively. Of course, the US actions are even less positive and rather positive are assessed at 11.6 percent. This is because the policy they pursue isn’t understood by the majority of society.”

The expert adds: this

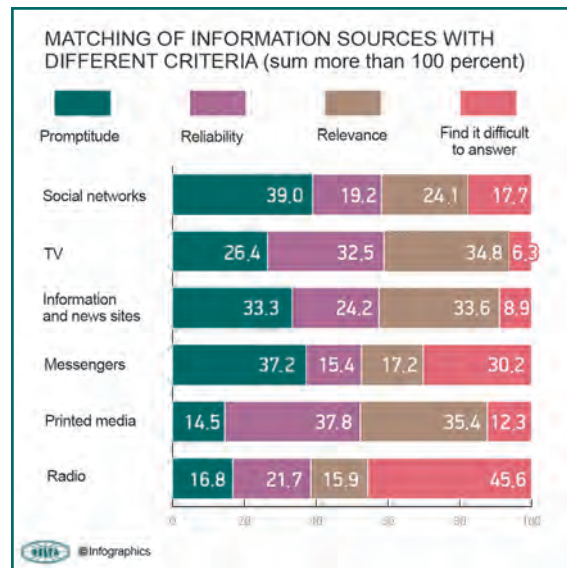
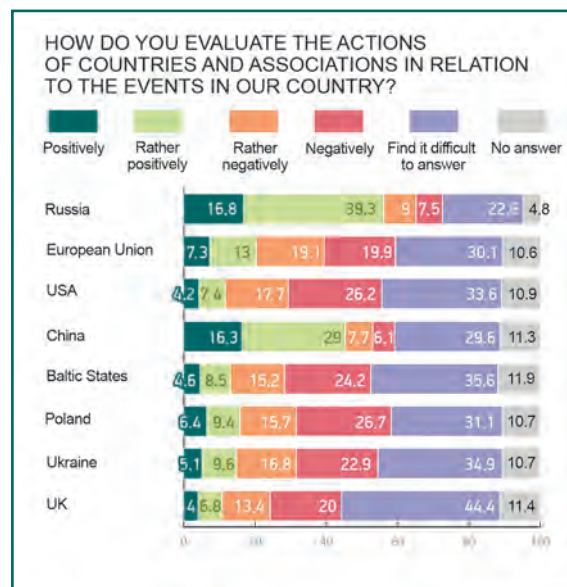
yourself to treat our country badly — and we see it. People’s assessment of this is unambiguous.”

## Media news

Another important set of data from the public opinion poll relates to the media. The infographics demonstrate how Belarusians responded to the question of what sources of information they use. Mr. Musiyenko points to

another aspect of the survey: reliability, promptness and relevance of such sources.

“This is a telling question. Look at promptness: social networks — 39 percent, messengers — 37.2 percent. In turn, reliability, respectively, is 19.2 and 15.4 percent. However, the printed media is highly respected and trusted: 37.8 percent. This is because its information is verified by the editor, deputy editor, publishing editor, correspondents and proof-readers. Who is overseeing this in a messenger? The speed is there, but what’s next? That is, you can be subscribed to a dozen such channels, but there are true questions about their reliability,” Mr. Musiyenko notes, also highlighting the aspect of relevance, “It’s 24.1 percent for social networks, 34.8 percent for TV, 33.6 percent for information and news sites and 35.4 percent for printed media. Actually, they enjoy confidence. As regards radio, 45.6 percent found it difficult to answer. That is, they either do not use it at all, or listen to musical programmes which are not a source of information. We see the processes that are taking place at present; radio is quitting our life — although we notice that radio broadcasts and Internet videos are still being prepared. These are in such a way becoming information and news sites as well. Perhaps, due to this, radio has such a significant share.”



*Social Thinking* research has been conducted by the EcooM Analytical Centre, commissioned by BelTA

also radically distinguishes the attitude to the position of China, “More than 45 percent of those asked consider it positive — which is comparable to Russia. The Baltic States stand apart. Both in general and reading each of these states, they are assessed very low: only 4.6 percent of those people we have talked about view their position positively (8.5 percent — rather positively). The population also clearly understands the position of Poland. As regards Ukraine and the UK, negative figures also prevail. This means when countries take an anti-position — not clear why, people pay attention and this fails to go unnoticed. You allow

## COMMENT

### Aleksandr Postalovsky, a leading researcher at the Belarusian State University’s Centre for Sociological and Political Studies:

First of all, such an indicator as citizens’ assessment of their well-being in the past year attracts attention. Almost 30 percent of the population say their economic position has not changed. Given the situation with the pandemic, complex domestic political issues in our country and the processes of economic turbulence observed in the world, these figures indicate that the state continues to effectively maintain the course of stability, as a result of which the state of affairs in the economy does not cause problems for the population. Belarus is also on trend with regard to the situation with the mass media. Surveys of the kind reveal the global process of digitalisation and convergence of national media. True, traditional media are inferior in popularity to messengers and social networks, but in terms of the reliability of information content, traditional media hold respected positions — thanks to the professionalism of their journalists. As for network resources, high-quality information content is not always present and this creates a field for the formation of fake news.





By Ilya Kryzhevich

# Stone adds to its weight

A new resident — implementing a project in the field of Chinese medicine — has joined the Great Stone Industrial Park

**The Pekinsky Avenue of the Great Stone Industrial Park has hosted a ceremony to welcome a new resident: it will deal with traditional Chinese medicine. At the first stage, Novoera Biotech will organise the production of medicines for treatment of coronavirus; they will later be exported to Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, India and other countries. As expected, production of medicines will launch this year.**

The resident company was established with participation of the Jintai Institute of Culture and Economics, Xishan Qingxue Chinese Medicine Clinic LLC and Xishan Qingxue Pharmaceutical Technology Company LLC.

The Head of the Industrial Park's Administration, Aleksandr Yaroshenko, has shared more details about the features and plans of the new resident. "It is planned to produce medicines and supplements — based on environmentally friendly natural materials collected in China. Moreover, they will be in demand for treatment of not only coronavirus but also other diseases: influenza and asthma. The cost of such drugs will be relatively low, also because their production will be established in the Industrial Park. This move will make them available to citizens. However, of course, these products mainly aim to be exported," he said.

Mr. Yaroshenko also announced that — for this avenue to develop further — a Eurasian Centre of Traditional Chinese Medicine is planned to be set up at the Great Stone, on the resident's site. It will develop co-operation with research institutes, healthcare establishments of Belarus and neighbouring countries to exchange experience in the field of traditional Chinese medicine.

The Director of the Jintai Institute of Culture and Economics, Cai Chuanqing, said the company will not simply bring in or grow varieties of Chinese plants in our country but is also interested in research and use of Belarusian

plants to create new drugs. "We are now very interested in birch sap and chaga. In addition, we are going to study more than 400 varieties of medicinal plants in Belarus in detail and, possibly, export some of them to China. Your

care Ministry's organisations will be able to help us legalise Chinese medicines in Belarus as soon as possible and simplify the procedures for their registration. This will become a new starting point for the development of phyto-



During the ceremony of signing and presenting the certificate of registration to Novoera Biotech LLC as a resident of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park



Sergei Mitsuievich



Aleksandr Kulevsky

phytomedicine also has very deep roots. We want it to help preserve the health of our two states' citizens. I also hope that the Health-

care Ministry's organisations will be able to help us legalise Chinese medicines in Belarus as soon as possible and simplify the procedures for their registration. This will become a new starting point for the development of phyto-

medicine both in Belarus and in other CIS countries," he added. The Deputy Healthcare Minister, Boris Androsyuk, said that

a commission will be created to facilitate the acceleration of registration measures for Chinese medicines. "These will follow certain limits, of course — since there are rules that cannot be deviated from. Medicines that a person takes must

not just a treatment system, but also the culture, philosophy, history and wisdom of the Chinese. Such medicine today is a synergy of great experience and innovation, which is attracting the attention of an increasing number of countries and people. I'm convinced the project will yield a high result."

In turn, Xie Xiaoyong, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Belarus, noted that it took just over a month to complete the transition from the initial intention to co-operate to the official agreement on the establishment of a resident company. "The entry of the project by the Jintai Institute of Culture and Economics in the field of traditional Chinese medicine into the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park is of great importance. It will be a breakthrough in business co-operation between China and Belarus in the field of healthcare, while promoting collaboration in the field of agriculture and foreign trade," he said.

At the end of the ceremony, a memorandum of co-operation was signed between Belarus' Economy Ministry, the Jintai Institute of Culture and Economics and China CAMC Engineering Co., Ltd. of the Sinomach Corporation.

The company won't simply import or grow Chinese plants in our country. It is also interested in the research and use of Belarusian plants to create new drugs on their basis.

be tested. However, it is quite possible and realistic to speed up these processes," he added.

Also during the ceremony, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to China, Yuri Senko, who attended the event online, said that this new resident's joining the Park is a significant event for the two countries as it opens a new direction of co-operation in the formation of a pharmaceutical cluster and development of Chinese traditional medicine. He explained, "This is

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Belmedpreparaty has begun industrial production of Russian vaccine against coronavirus



Industrial production of Russia's vaccine against coronavirus has been launched at Belmedpreparaty Republican Unitary Enterprise.

"The bottling of the first commercial series of the 'Sputnik V' vaccine from the semi-product of Russia's Genierium JSC, which is part of the Pharmstandard JSC structure, has begun. All the necessary preparatory work has been completed," noted the press service of the Healthcare Ministry.

According to Sergei Belyaev, the Director General of Belmedpreparaty RUE, the vaccine can be used to vaccinate the population from the last ten days of April after the results of quality control are received. The volume of production in future will amount to 500,000 doses of the medicine per month.

### First Belarusian Youth Parliamentary Forum held in Minsk

It brought together the most active young people from all regions of the country — parliamentarians, representatives of social movements and organisations. On arrival in the capital, the participants of the event laid flowers at the Victory



Monument. The forum programme was rich, with young people attending lectures on the image of a successful leader and creating a personal brand. Experts and teachers told children about the state system of legal information, the mechanisms of team building and promotion in social media while also touching on the topic of political rhetoric. The final of the *Team of the Future* competition and the selection of the best youth projects took place on the fringes of the forum.

A tour of the Palace of Independence was the final and brightest note of the two-day Youth Parliamentary Forum.

### Memorial Office of Honorary Metropolitan Filaret opened in Minsk

The Church-Historical Museum of the Belarusian Orthodox Church was created eight years ago with the blessing of the Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Filaret. On March 21st, on his birthday, on the site of the collection of church antiquities amassed during his lifetime, a memorial office was opened in the museum, enabling visitors to see the desk and chair behind which Metropolitan Filaret worked. The exposi-



tion presents personal belongings and awards donated to the museum by the Honorary Metropolitan himself, as well as guest books, handwritten documents, vestments, icons and objects of decorative and applied art.

The central place in the exposition is one of his favourite icons — the image of St. Philaret the Merciful.

### Inventory of springs carried out in Belarus for the first time

In total, 8,000 water bodies have been inventoried, which is 20 percent of the total amount in the country. During the first cycle, 3,298 rivers, 85 reservoirs, 1,931 ponds and 2,313 lakes were investigated, with 1,360 of them being located in the Vitebsk Region alone.

This inventory of springs in Belarus was carried out for the first time, and there is already data on 1,183 springs. Experts have found that up to 40 percent of them could become sources of drinking water. The highest capacity of a spring stream in the country — 50 litres per second — is seen at the Golubaya Krintsa spring in the Slavgorod District. The work conducted has resulted in the publication of



the *Springs of Belarus* book, containing information on all known sites.

The second cycle of works will continue in 2021-2025.





# Trust and responsibility

## Wochenblick: Belarus defies pandemic at a time of global alarmism

Very few politicians, government members, doctors, epidemiologists and scientists have spoken out against whipping up the coronavirus pandemic hysteria. One of those who went against the world's behind-the-scenes elites and sided with his citizens from the very beginning was Belarus' President Aleksandr Lukashenko, reads an article penned by Christian Muller in the Austrian *Wochenblick* newspaper.

**Instead of plunging his country into a state of apocalyptic fear and panic, Aleksandr Lukashenko repeatedly and convincingly spoke about the exaggerated danger of COVID-19.**

An unprecedented thing happened: a country in the centre of Europe suddenly broke 'the coronavirus ranks' and its President — with pragmatism natural for him and without hysteria — reminded people at every opportunity of simple rules of hygiene, which, together with other Belarusian traditional health practices like banya and 'one hundred grams', can defeat any virus, the journalist notes.

The European 'independent media' was literally in shock to learn that Belarus had been living a completely normal life from early April 2020: 'Shops,

mies on hold. This is the simplest thing one can do. We could also do this, within one day, but our country would not survive the economic shutdown.'

**Belarus faced international pressure that sought to force the authorities to impose strict quarantines, isolation and a curfew.**

In April 2020, a WHO delegation arrived in the country to inspect healthcare institutions in Minsk and Vitebsk — at the invitation of the Head of State. The Healthcare Ministry announced the start of large-scale testing for COVID-19. At that time, the Ministry assured that Belarus had enough PCR tests that were supplied both by domestic and foreign manufacturers. With more batches of tests on their way, their supply was expected to exceed demand. The country was busy introducing rapid tests that detect COVID-19 antibodies. This method of diagnosis is a faster way to test patients displaying

asked the Healthcare Ministry to share the experience. Meanwhile, the IMF continues to demand from us quarantine measures, isolation, a curfew. This is nonsense. We will not dance to anyone's tune.'

**Dictatorship looks different**

Today, against the background of world knockdowns, people live freely in Belarus, Christian

close the country today. If we had done this in February, March or April, we would have reaped the fruits: there would have been no jobs for people, we would have brought down our economy.'

**Recommendations instead of enforcement**

Two countries that are comparable in terms of population (Belarus has 9.5m and Austria

dations on organisation of the educational process in schools and universities.

Since the talk is about recommendations rather than requirements, no agency is authorised to monitor their implementation and especially to fine for the failure to follow them.

The Belarusian authorities have demonstrated that they trust the population and assign personal responsibility to each resident, and don't play the role of a supervisor. We saw all these during our visit to Minsk and Gomel.

Although warning signs about the observance of the mask regime are found in every store and institution, no one forces anyone to do this. Naturally, people are worried about their health. In a Gomel clinic, we talked to a nurse who told us that the requirement to wear regular medical masks in healthcare organisations concerns both patients and medical staff. When asked if she had heard that, in Austria, not only in healthcare organisations but also in schools and in transport, everyone is required to wear FFP2 protection class respirators, she reacted very emotionally, "How is it possible to work or study in these respirators? Why should this be done?"

Belarus is now vaccinating doctors and healthcare workers



# WOCHENBLICK



restaurants and bars are open. Stadiums are packed to capacity during the Belarusian Premier League football matches. Few people wear masks'. At the same time, the German Bundestag declared 'an epidemic outbreak of national importance' and, on March 25th, 2020, passed an action plan to combat the coronavirus, which led to catastrophic consequences.

In an interview after a hockey match, the Belarusian President warned that the coronavirus was no longer a pandemic, but a psychosis. At one of the meetings, the Head of State said, "The situation with the coronavirus in Belarus has not reached the point when we need to take draconian measures. In the wake of psychosis, the entire world put their econo-

COVID-19 symptoms and those who developed immunity after a mild case of the coronavirus.

By May, Belarus was second among the CIS member states in terms of testing. However, the country did not impose any restrictions, lockdowns, or other tough measures.

According to the journalist, in June, the International Monetary Fund offered Belarus a loan provided the country followed Italy's example and went into a strict lockdown. Aleksandr Lukashenko resolutely declined this proposal. He clearly and unambiguously stated, "The World Bank is ready to fund us ten times more than it offered initially as a token of commendation for our efficient fight against this virus. It has even

Muller writes. Until now, no lockdown has been announced here, no curfew or total quarantine have been introduced. All businesses, shops, recreation and entertainment venues remain open. The police do not find fault in streets with those who do not observe the distance or go out for a breath of fresh air during quarantine. Nobody forbids anyone to visit their parents, teachers do not throw tantrums about universal wearing of masks. No mass transition to distance learning in schools took place. The economy hasn't been closed, enterprises continue working, and there is no increase in unemployment. Back in October 2020, President Aleksandr Lukashenko said, "I want you to understand my position: I don't intend to isolate and

— 9m) demonstrate completely different indicators for the number of cases of coronavirus. For example, in Belarus, the total number of cases is 309,293, while there are 511,440 in Austria. This data speaks for itself. Everything that we have been told so far about the effectiveness of the measures taken by the government is fundamentally wrong.

The situation in Belarus is as follows. In connection with the growing number of coronavirus diseases, in November 2020, the Healthcare Ministry published recommendations on social distancing during the registration of cases of infection, rules on wearing masks in public places — banks, pharmacies, shops and in transport, as well as methodological recommen-

against coronavirus, as well as representatives of professions that are at risk: teachers, trade and transport workers. Later, all those who wish will be able to get vaccinated. The Healthcare Minister, Dmitry Pinevich, commented, "By the end of spring, we plan to vaccinate 1.2m people, and then reach the figure of 5.5m. It's unlikely there would be more than this since no total immunisation is envisaged. The issue isn't money, but expediency and contraindications."

Production of the Russian 'Sputnik V' vaccine will soon be established in Belarus. When the domestic demand for it is satisfied, the country will be ready to produce the vaccine for exports.

Based on materials of belta.by



# Spring solstice

## Folk Feast of the Forty Martyrs in Belarusian rituals and traditions



On March 22nd, on the day of the vernal equinox, the Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs ('Soroki') was celebrated in memory of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste or the Holy Forty, in the Christian folk tradition of the Slavs. According to tradition, this holiday was considered the second meeting of spring, being celebrated between the Meeting of the Lord and the Annunciation. Its main participants are children, and the main attribute is ritual pastries in the form of birds.



By Natalia Savelyeva

The Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs is celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox, as our ancestors believed that night and day meet at this time. Moreover, they also believed that on this day migratory birds returned to us from warm countries, carrying spring on their wings.

In the old days they said that 'the day and the night measure their strength'. In all rituals, the number 40 was given a special meaning, which was important in determining the weather.

It was believed that, in our latitudes, on this day 40 flocks of birds arrive from across the seas, therefore, the Belarusians called 'Soroki' a bird festival.

Teenagers and young people took part in all rituals of inviting spring, thus emphasising the youthfulness of the season. Young girls, gathered in small groups, climbed up the hills, and onto the roofs of sheds and sang inviting songs. These were special appeals addressed to the spring, with a request to come as soon as possible and bring gifts: 'a son for a young woman, a stick for a grandmother and a circlet of flowers for a young girl'. Each group of girls sang their part, and this polyphony echoed among themselves.

To speed up the arrival of spring, it was necessary to remove all obstacles from its path. So, the men had to throw the logs 40 times through the roof of the house or over a tree. The girls tore the same number of laces and strings. They believed that on this day a magpie brings exactly 40 twigs for its nest. In different regions of Belarus, it was necessary to eat 40 dumplings throughout the day.

People said: 'Magpies dragged the plough into the field'. More thawed patches appeared in the fields and

housewives baked pies for their men in the form of various household appliances as evidence that work on the ground was getting closer.

However, the main feature of the celebration was ritual pastries in the shape of birds. They baked buns with poppy seeds and honey on the eve of the festival. The children made these pastries with their mothers. The dough was fatless so as not to break Lent. It was rolled into a long stick and tied in a knot, flattened a little and it turned out to make the body and wings of the future bird. Later they made the head, decorated the wings and tail and put it into the oven. This pastry in the shape of birds with raisin eyes were called 'larks'. Sometimes a coin was put into some of them to attract luck. During the 'Soroki' holiday there was a tradition to toss these buns up in the air with the appeal: 'Larks, come fly and bring spring!' The first singing of a lark was considered a signal of readiness for field work. According to legend, God created a lark by throwing up a lump of earth. Its flight confirms this:

Children hang their birds on an oak tree so that the young tree wakes up and gains strength while baked larks were supposed to lure real birds.

After the larks were hung on the tree, a celebration began in the village with songs and round dances. There was also fortune-telling on 'Soroki': each unmarried girl made her own bun and laid them out on the towel while the men looked away. The men came up, chose

children and adults had to swing 40 times on a swing. They believed that this was a kind of cleansing from various diseases. There was even a competition between the young people: who would swing the highest and call the spring louder than others.

Both the elders and the younger were eagerly awaiting spring. There is a lot of work ahead — sowing. Moreover, there were special signs

clear, then in the summer a drought was expected. The snow on the roofs of houses that day showed that it would be delayed even before the Annunciation, while puddles on the doorstep foreshadowed that May would be rainy.

As the heat approached, floods began. In the southwestern regions, in many villages, people were preparing their boats, always keeping them in working order. They



the bird flies up to the sky, then it falls rapidly, like that very lump of earth.

While the young people were having fun, the youngsters with buns in their hands walked around the village, looking for a young oak tree.

the bird they liked, and with it, their girlfriend. They believed that after such a meeting, love should appear between the young people.

Another important rite of the national holiday is swinging. On this day, both chil-

on the 'Soroki'. If there is frost in the morning on the day of the holiday, the harvest will be rich while a warm wind promises a rainy summer. If in the period from Gromnitsy to the Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs the weather was

warned people not to come close to the river during the 'Soroki'.

Folk traditions are an integral part of our life. After all, the revival and preservation of traditions helps us not to forget who we are.





# Hunger set to soar

Acute hunger is due to rise in over 20 countries in the coming months

Yemen, South Sudan and northern Nigeria top the list and face catastrophic levels of acute hunger, with families in pockets of South Sudan and Yemen already in the grip of or at risk of starvation and death.

Although the majority of the affected countries are in Africa, acute hunger is due to rise steeply in most world regions — from Afghanistan in Asia, Syria and Lebanon in the Middle East, to Haiti in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Already, over 34m people are grappling with emergency levels of acute hunger — meaning they are

one step away from starvation. “The magnitude of suffering is alarming. It is incumbent upon all of us to act now and to act fast to save lives, safeguard livelihoods and prevent the worst situation,” said FAO Director-General, Qu Dongyu. “In many regions, the planting season has just started or is about to start. We must run against the clock and not let this opportunity to protect, stabilise and even possibly increase local food production slip away.”

“We are seeing a catastrophe unfold before our very eyes. Famine — driven by conflict and fuelled by

climate shocks and the COVID-19 hunger pandemic — is knocking on the door for millions of families,” said WFP Executive Director, David Beasley. “We urgently need three things to stop millions from dying of starvation: the fighting has to stop, we must be allowed access to vulnerable communities to provide life-saving help, and above all we need donors to step up with the \$5.5bn we are asking for this year,” he added.

The report recommends critical short-term actions in each hunger hotspot to address existing and future needs.

## ‘More grotesque every day’

The ‘inequitable distribution’ of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide is becoming ‘more grotesque every day’, the Head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) said, renewing calls for more solidarity

“The gap between the number of vaccines administered in rich countries, and the number of vaccines administered through COVAX is growing every single day, and becoming more grotesque every day,” WHO Chief Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus Adhanom said. “Countries that are now vaccinating younger, healthy people at low risk of disease are doing so at the cost of the lives of health workers, older people and other at-risk groups in other countries.”

COVAX is a vaccine distribution initiative co-led by the WHO. It aims for the COVID-19 vaccines to have been rolled out in all countries within the first 100 days of 2021, including in 92 lower-income economies, and for about 20 percent of the population of every country to have been inoculated by the end of the year.

About 448m doses of COVID-19 vaccines have so far been administered worldwide. The US, UK and EU/EEA together account for over 206m of the doses administered. Meanwhile, over 31m doses had been delivered to 57 countries through the COVAX programme.

Overall, only 0.1 percent of doses administered worldwide have been administered in ‘low-income’ countries, while ‘high-income’ countries (16 percent of the world’s population) account for more than half of the doses injected. Dr. Tedros stressed that ‘the inequitable distribution of vaccines is not just a moral outrage. It’s also economically and epidemiologically self-defeating’.

## Odd discovery

Discovery of a long awaited but totally surprising new particle, the Odderon

48 years after the first prediction, after a long lasting and intense international competition, four Hungarian physicists and their Swedish colleague published, for the first time, decisive evidence for the existence of an elusive new particle, the so-called Odderon. This result implies the existence of several, other, new kind of strongly interacting particle states, too.

“This result seems to be particularly important: as far as we know, this is a totally unexpected and surprising discov-

ery, based on recent measurements at the CERN LHC accelerator. Our result may open a new chapter in the study of strong interactions,” explains Tamás Csörgő, a physicist, a member of the Academy of Europe (London).

“The Odderon discovery marks an important milestone in our understanding of the deep mysteries of the strong interactions,” adds Roman Pasechnik, a senior lecturer at the University of Lund, Sweden.



## First ship tunnel

World’s first ship tunnel to be built under Norwegian mountains. Entry to the tunnel will be controlled by a traffic light system.

Norway has got the go-ahead to construct what’s being billed as the world’s first ship tunnel, designed to help vessels navigate the treacherous Stadhavet Sea.

First announced a few years ago by the Norwegian Coastal Administration, this mile-long, 118-foot-wide tunnel will burrow through the mountainous Stadhavet peninsula in north-western Norway.

Building this engineering marvel will cost somewhere in the region of \$330m and take between three to four years, with construction due to commence in 2022.

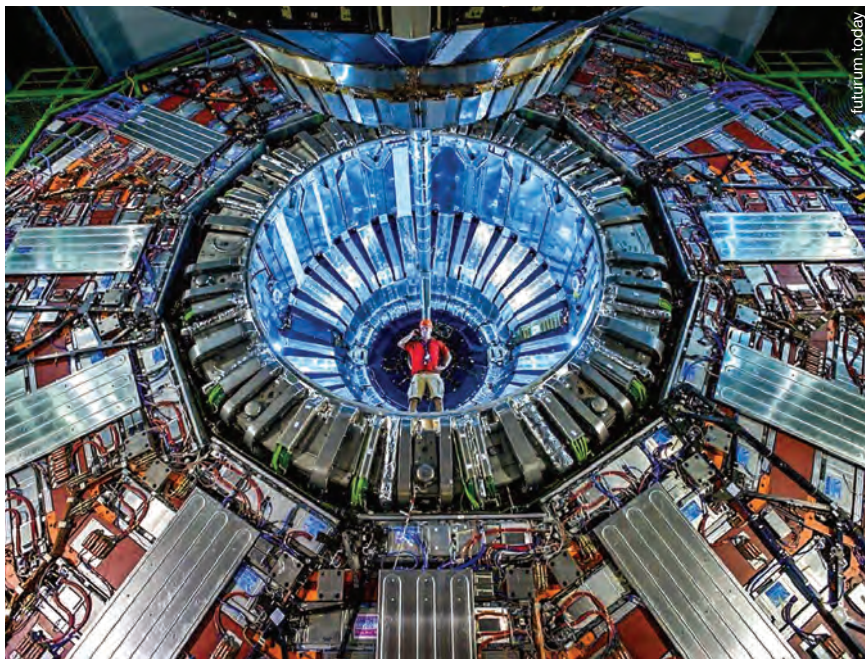
“It’s a project that has been planned for decades. So, it’s very pleasant to finally be able to start the construction work in one

year,” a temporary project manager, Terje Andreassen, said.

At the moment, ships navigating the surrounds of Stadhavet are often impacted by rough tides and bad weather. “The coastline outside that peninsula is the most stormy area in Norway, with the hurricanes,” says Terje Andreassen.

Making ship’s journeys safer and smoother could lead to a high-speed ferry service, and also strengthen the area’s industrial and commercial activities. “It will be connected better, it will be easier to travel,” he adds.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies





# When the soul sings

As a student, a hygienist doctor from Mogilev played the drums in a rock band and, a few years ago, decided to become a bell-ringer

**On weekends and holy days 29-year-old Zoya Oblamskaya comes to the church in honour of the Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, to ring the bells. A hobby, a change of occupation? Zoya chooses a more appropriate definition — a mission. The bells were installed in a small church on the outskirts of Mogilev a few years ago. One day the young girl asked the abbot of the church service if she could accompany the music. And so, without any preparation, it happened. Zoya continued and, in 2017, she graduated from the department of bell ringers at the Minsk Theological School to professionally inform parishioners about important church dates.**

By Tatiana Bizyuk

## Without notes and scores

A bell ringer is actually an invisible person: he has several hundred or even thousands of listeners, but he doesn't bow at the end of the performance or collect a standing ovation from the audience. Although playing without notes or scores on a dozen bells at the same time is a complex work of hands, feet, mind and soul. Is it for a delicate-looking girl?

"Why not," laughs Zoya. "When they find out what I do, almost everyone is surprised. They think it is physically hard work, but it turns out, anything is possible. Of course, when the tradition of bell-ringing was just emerging, the ringers pulled on the rope to swing the bell — which could weigh several hundred kilograms. Now a system of levers is used, to help the ringing. Even a child can manage it."

While studying at the Belarusian State Medical University, the girl didn't think that she would ever master such an unusual musical science. She was interested in a completely different direction. Together with fellow students,

Zoya Oblamskaya's current profession isn't connected with music. She works as a hygienist at the Mogilev Regional Centre for Hygiene, Epidemiology and Public Health. She is now on maternity leave, raising her two-year-old daughter Katya. How does she manage to cope with everything?

"I try," Zoya answers modestly. "Services are held in the morning and don't take much time, so it's still possible to devote myself to the vocation. When I don't have time to go to church, my father Sergei takes over. My dad works as an ordinary TV repairman. He has no musical education, but his hearing is perfect. I probably inherited it."

Playing without notes and scores on a dozen bells at the same time is a complex work of hands, feet, mind and soul



Andrey Sazonov

## For whom the bell tolls

We go up the stairs to the highest point of the church — the bell tower — which offers a stunning view. The young girl hands me headphones, because the power of sound is not for unprepared eardrums.

"Bells are divided into three groups: the small bells have the highest sounding tone in the selection of the belfry; those which have no specific function and serve solely to decorate the ringing; and festive church bell ringing made by one big bell (chime). In the church 'table of ranks' they are in the first place — in terms of size and seniority," Zoya conducts the educational programme.

"Each of them has its own note. Combining into one rhythmic picture, they invite parishioners to the church, indicate the most important moments of the service. Themed ringing is also different. During a funeral, for example, the sound moves from the smallest to the heaviest bell. Each ascending stroke marks the transition of a person from an infant to an adult, a venerable old man. The final blow to all the bells at the same time is the exodus of the soul, the end of life."

At first glance, the technique doesn't seem difficult. Various types of bells are distributed between the arms and legs and create a harmonious musical picture. The heaviest bells are 'controlled' by pedals

while fingers twist the ropes-strings of other instruments. Zoya skilfully changes their 'voices'. After the final performance, the sound envelops us for a few more seconds and then dissolves into thin air.

"Each bell ringer, despite the common traditions, has their own special style. It depends on a person's musical taste. After all, even in the classic ringing, you can bring something of your own," Zoya notes. "It's like with well-known compositions: it's unlikely that it would be possible to perform the same song for different people. So, it is in bell ringing. In girls it is, by the way, more tender, while young men 'sound' more strict, important, solemn."

The volume depends on the force of the strike while the range depends on the

size of the bell. Zoya managed to play on one of the heaviest, and also the oldest bell, in the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Khotimsk, during the National Bell Festival. The revival of the belfry of the church became the work of Father Kirill's life. He looked for bells in the most unexpected places: collection points for non-ferrous metals, even in landfills. Copper, covered with patina, they have survived a lot. That is why they sound especially good.

They say that this kind of music can heal and soothe. This is what you think about when you hear their unique bell 'song'. For Zoya, the ringing is a prayer in bronze, through it, she says, she brings her faith to people.



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yandex.net

they organised a rock group called *Will You?* and played at student evenings, performing the hits of *Metallica*, *Deep Purple*, *Anti-Flag*. Zoya was responsible for the drums.

At one point, as the girl herself calls this stage of life, while standing during the service, she thought: I have a sense of rhythm, I can handle drums, why not apply these talents to the ringing of bells?

At first, she played without any special education, using videos from the Internet and video tutorials. It turned out to be a beautiful, even melodic, but there wasn't enough technique. So, Zoya decided to study at the Minsk Theological School. The theoretical course and practice took six months.



Andrey Sazonov

CULTURE

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2021

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# It will be beautiful!

Uniform kit for the national Olympic team presented in Minsk

**"I wish I wore this outfit! I would like to always be an athlete, but my career is over... I will be happy for the athletes who will represent Belarus at the Olympics in this uniform; they'll look great!"** said the Olympic rowing and canoeing champion, Aleksandr Bogdanovich, after the presentation of the uniform kit for our national Olympic team. The Belarusian Olympic athletes will perform for the first time under the 'Team BY' brand at the Games in Tokyo, and their sportswear (also for the first time!) will be marked with the logo 'Made in Belarus': designed and sewn in our country.

The uniform for the Olympians was presented on the day of the 30th anniversary of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Belarus. Many guests were gathered at the anniversary — famous athletes, coaches, specialists. Welcoming them, the Head of the NOC, Viktor Lukashenko, noted that for the relatively short period of its independence, Belarus has achieved significant results in the international sports arena. He said,

*"High-quality infrastructure, professional coaches and talented athletes allow us to reach Olympic heights. The doors of the NOC are open to everyone: we welcome new initiatives and interesting projects, as well as fruitful and constructive work to strengthen the Olympic movement. We remain committed to hosting major sports events under the auspices of international federations, which draw a lot of attention in our country."*



For thirty years, a lot has really been done, as was noted by the veteran of the sports industry, Leonid Khromenkov, who was there at the origins of the creation of the NOC. Many sports facilities have been built, and great traditions have been laid.

"When the NOC had just started its work, times were different: there was lack of money. It was difficult to send teams to international competitions. Nevertheless, the state has always supported sports. At first, it was difficult with the uniform kit for the Olympic Games, but we collabo-

rated with Belarusian designers: then we set the tradition that all civilian and ceremonial clothes are sewn only by our specialists."

These uniform kits have now also been manufactured in Belarus. Its design was developed by the employees of the NOC together with the specialists of the private trade unitary enterprise, Solo-Pinsk, which is also engaged in sewing clothes for the Olympic athletes. Its General Director, Vasily Goreglyad, says, "We have been working on the design for about a year. The print on the outfit reflects our nature — fields, rivers, sun and also our identity. In the



Viktor Lukashenko

production of sports uniform, we paid attention to both convenience and colours, using only high-quality materials. The final number of kits has not yet been approved, since athletes are still selected for the Olympic Games, but we are ready to produce the required amount: raw materials and components have been purchased."

The uniform turned out to be not only beautiful, but also comfortable. An Olympic bronze medallist, Lyubov Cherkashina, says that, when the uniform was in the process of being created, it was shown to athletes. All their wishes were heard and embodied — the uniform kit consists of 44 items.

"It's great that designers and manufacturers listen to athletes and are not afraid to try new colours for us, to avoid classic combinations. Now, for example, a mint colour was slightly added to the uniform, probably, in order to cool us in advance before hot Japan," Lyubov says with a smile and adds,

"I think the concept of the Olympic uniform should influence the athlete. I remember my first

Games: when I was given the uniform kit, it was impossible to find a happier person! It's not like touching a dream, it's an opportunity to be in it and to get closer to your goal."

An Olympic handball champion, Andrei Barbashinsky, also notes a wide variety in equipment: in those days when he was a participant of the Games, this could only be dreamed of. Gymnast Yekaterina Galkina explains that the variety of kits will not only allow athletes to look stylish, but also make life much easier in everyday life, "The Tokyo Olympics will be unusual. As a rule, we arrive at the Games long before their start: for example, we arrived in Rio two weeks before the start. Naturally, in such competitions, the more clothes the better. There are plenty to choose from, and you don't need to wash so often. I've had no time to try on the uniform yet, but outwardly I liked it. It's somewhat similar to the one we had in Rio, but the mint green colour has greatly diversified the new look."

There's no doubt that our



Olympians will look stylish. First impressions are half the battle, but results are also vital. Lyubov Cherkashina suggests we don't talk about the chances for medals, nor outline the list of possible winners, "I would like to wish all athletes, even our rivals, the maximum success. I also want them, especially our Olympians, to return from the Games happy — this is important."



# Having the Olympics in our sight

## Women's biathlon team secured the maximum quota for the World Cup

Another biathlon year has become history, as the World Cup stage in Swedish Östersund completed another busy season. Each participant took their place in the ranking, and it's good to note that our shooting skiers didn't look like extras in the glorious company of the leaders of the world season. Dinara Alimbekova burst into the elite like a whirlwind, becoming the real discovery of the year. In almost every event, she was among the leaders, and more than once got into the flower ceremony and stood on the medals podium. The final chord of our new star also turned out well: in the mass event — crowning the season — the Belarusian biathlete managed to come to the finish line second despite the terrible weather conditions, thus ensuring herself a victory in the overall standings in the under 25 category!

By Sergei Kanashits

The progress of the men's and especially the women's biathlon teams of the country cannot but rejoice. Yes, our shooting skiers have a rich tradition, but only couple of years ago, the fans were in despair, scratching their heads: Daria Domracheva's leaving the track seemed like an irreparable loss. Moreover, our male biathletes were ironically compared with Ethiopian skiers: they ran as if they were seeing snow for the first time, shot at the white light as if it were a penny, the last line of the ranking became, alas, common thing for us. The problem was apparent, they knew about it, and, most importantly, they were engaged in solving it. In biathlon, they have long and painstakingly built a system of work, attracting scientific and medical laboratories to co-operate, developing children's sports and stimulating work on the ground while also taking care of the development of infrastructure. The current results are not a spontaneous surge, but a natural and logical effect of the work done. We would like to believe that these are only the first signs of the future really great success. And that the current generation of young talents, who are increasingly asserting themselves at the adult level, will be followed by a new wave — even more motivated and successful. There are all the prerequisites for that.

However, let's not put the cart before the horse, but summarise the results of the past season. Emotions in this case are not the best advisor and not the most objective informant, so let's turn to the figures, which, as you know, do not lie. Dinara Alimbekova held 22 individual races in the 2020/21 World Cup,

winning the sprint, twice being second in the pursuit and once in the mass race. She finished all events in the points zone (with amazing stability!), entered the top-10 ten times, and got into the top-20 five times. Moreover, there were two more silver medals as part of the relay team! Bravo, Dinara!

Anna Sola also had a wonderful season, boasting 19 personal races, bronze in the pursuit in Östersund, two hits in the top-10 and four more in the top-20!



Dinara Alimbekova and Anna Sola

**Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated Dinara Alimbekova on her success. 'Your successes and the honorary title of the best young biathlete in the world are an excellent role model for our youth, a significant contribution to the development of the rich traditions of the Belarusian biathlon school', reads the message. The President wished the athlete, her teammates and coaching staff health and new sports achievements.**



Dinara Alimbekova is the season opening

### SEASON RESULTS

#### Overall standings (men):

1. Johannes Bø (Norway) — 1,052 points, 2. Sturla Lægreid (Norway) — 1,039, 3. Quentin Fillon Maillet (France) — 930 ... 26. Anton Smolsky — 260 ... 34. Sergei Bocharnikov — 200 ... 56. Roman Yeletnov — 69 ... 58. Maksim Vorobei — 57 ... 77. Nikita Lobastov — 20...

#### Overall standings (women):

1. Tiril Eckhoff (Norway) — 1,152, 2. Marte Olsbu Røiseland (Norway) — 963, 3. Franziska Preuß (Germany) — 840 ... 7. Dinara Alimbekova — 734 ... 23. Anna Sola — 366 ... 30. Yelena Kruchinkina — 275 ... 45. Irina Krivko — 162...

Let's not forget about the World Championship, where she won the only medal for our team — bronze in the sprint. However, Anna Sola started the season unsuccessfully (66th, 45th,

42nd, 40th places), but she improved at the finish, becoming a noticeable figure on the track and one of the fastest biathletes in the world.

Obviously, Yelena Kruchinkina

### DIRECT SPEECH

#### Dinara Alimbekova, leader of the Belarusian biathlon team:

We have a very solid competition, and all the girls are strong. We can say that, at every stage of the World Cup, the competition increased. I set myself the task at the beginning to keep the blue jersey of the leader in the youth standings, and later — to win these standings. Before the start of the season, I couldn't even dream that there would be such results. I had plans to perform consistently and to get into the points zone. It so happens that I never fell out of this zone this season, which is very pleasing. I don't know how to describe it. I feel as if I'm in a dream. I'm very happy!

na can also add the outgoing season to her tally: 22 personal races and four hits in the top-10! Yelena has not yet reached the medals pedestal, but this is only a matter of time. Irina Krivko has 14

races, of which she finished five in the top-20. Perhaps, it wasn't the best year for the biathlete, but there are both objective and subjective reasons for this. It's encouraging, however, that Irina finished the season at a good level. Let's believe that next year (Olympics!) will be much more successful for her.

As far as men are concerned, the situation is as follows: Anton Smolsky (21 individual races, the best result is the 17th place in the sprint, finished the last four races of the season in the top-20, the worst place is 55th in the pursuit); Sergey Bocharnikov (19 races, the best result — 13th place in the sprint twice, four times in the top-20, the worst result — 64th); Maksim Vorobei (17 races, best result — 19th place in the sprint, the worst — 90th in the individual race); Roman Yeletnov (10 races, best result — 10th in the sprint, 18th in the pursuit, worst — 88th in the individual race); Dmitry Lazovsky (9 races, best result — 48th in the pursuit, worst — 96th in the sprint); and Nikita Lobastov (8 races, best result — 32nd in the individual race, worst — 78th in the sprint).

As you can see, the results are decent, although there is something for both men and women to strive for; they shouldn't rest on their laurels. But for all the other joys of the season, we won't forget to mention one more: the women's national team of Belarus took 5th place in the Cup of Nations, beating the Russians in a bitter struggle, which means that the next season it will be able to enter the World Cup with a full complement of athletes — six participants! Well done, girls!

## ARENA

#### Four awards claimed by Belarusian athletes at the FIG Rhythmic Gymnastics World Cup in Sofia

Alina Gornosko won the bronze medal in the all-round event. Belarusian girls won three more awards in the finals of individual events.

Anastasia Salos, who won silver, performed well with the hoop while another silver medal was added to her collection of awards after her ribbon performance. A further silver for the national team of Belar-



Alina Gornosko

rus was claimed by Alina Gornosko, who was second in the exercise with the ball. Gymnasts from 37 countries performed in Sofia. Ahead of the athletes is the second stage of the World Cup, which will be held on April 16th-18th in Tashkent.

#### Belarusian boxer Viktor Zuyev joined the AIBA Committee

Silver medallist of the 2004 Athens Olympics, Viktor Zuyev, was included in the Champions and Veterans Committee of the International Boxing Association (AIBA) on the initiative of AIBA.

Leading athletes are actively involved in the popularisation of Olympic boxing around the world. The opinion and experience of famous athletes of



Viktor Zuyev

previous years is very important for the progressive development of this sport. Viktor Zuyev is a two-time winner of the world championships and a four-time winner of the European championships. He finished his Olympic boxing career in 2015.





Vitaly Pivovarchik

## Photo of the week

First spring flowers

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

**April 1st** is Fools' Day — an international holiday celebrated all over the world. On this day, it's customary to play pranks on relatives, friends and acquaintances, or to make fun of them. This cheerful event became widely known and popular in the 18th century.



**April 1st** is International Bird Day, celebrated in connection with the signing of the International Convention for the Protection of Birds on this day in 1906. Its purpose is to preserve the species diversity and number of birds. The date of the event wasn't chosen by chance: as it's just at this time that migratory birds return from warm lands.



**April 2nd** is the Day of Unity of the Peoples of Belarus and Russia. It was on this day in 1996 that the presidents of Russia and Belarus, Boris Yeltsin and Aleksandr Lukashenko, signed in Moscow the Treaty on the Formation of the Community of Russia and Belarus. Exactly one year



later, on April 2nd, 1997, the Treaty on the Union of Belarus and Russia was signed, which gave new impetus to the process of comprehensive integration of the two states, and on December 8th, 1999 — the Treaty on the Creation of the Union State. Over the past years, the union project has proven its relevance and viability.



**April 2nd** is International Children's Book Day, celebrated on the birthday of Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) — a Danish storyteller. Its celebration was established in 1967 at the initiative and decision of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

**April 4th** is Geologist's Day in the Republic of Belarus. Geological research in Belarus began at the end of the 18th century by expeditions of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society. The professional holiday traces its history back to Soviet times, and in independent Belarus was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic on February 21st, 1996, emphasizing gratitude to all those who work on the drilling rig, in the fields of oil, salt, coal, iron ores, as



well as in scientific, design and production organisations of the geological industry.



**On April 4th**, Catholic believers celebrate Easter (The Feast of the Bright Resurrection of Christ) — a Christian holiday in honour of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The name of the holiday dates back to the Jewish Passover (Pesach), dedicated to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery. Easter is the largest and most revered holiday of the liturgical year for the entire Christian world, with painted eggs being its main attribute.

**On April 5th, 1971**, Valeria Arlanova was born — a Belarusian film and theatre actress, leading stage master of the Theatre-Studio of Film Actors in Minsk, Honoured Artist of the Republic of Belarus (2018). She was awarded 'The Best Actress' in the film *Guide* at the 4th *BRIGANTINA-2001* International Film Festival and the 1st International Festival of Professional Cinema Shot, alongside the People's Choice Award for her role in the film *Guide* at the 8th *Listapad-2001* International Film Festival of the CIS and Baltic States.



**On April 6th, 1921**, Aleksei Semenov was born (Bobruisk, Mogilev Region) — a full holder of the Order of Glory. During the Great Patriotic War, he was on the Karelian front from 1944. The commander of the sapper battalion, Sergeant Semenov, distinguished himself in July, September and October 1944 on the territory of Karelia, where he defused more than 1,000 enemy mines as part of the detachment, was wounded on October 6th during mine clearance, but completed the task. He died in 1951.



**On April 7th, 1926**, the Belarusian Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was founded as the Society for Cultural Relations between Soviet Belorussia and Abroad. Its origins were Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, Tishka Gartny, Mikhas Charot and other figures of Belarusian culture.



**April 7th** is World Health Day. On April 7th, 1948, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was established, and its charter came into force. Belarus has been a member of the WHO since its foundation.

