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Over centuries, the palace in Nesvizh was the residence of one of the richest and most influential dynasties in Europe: the Radziwills. In our modern days, the magnificent restored castle is Belarus' hallmark.

Historical heritage of Belarus

All our attractions definitely deserve close attention and study. Meanwhile, some of them are recognised as particularly unique on a global scale. These are four objects: the Mir and Nesvizh castles, Belovezhskaya Pushcha and the Geodetic Arc Struve.

They are already on the UNESCO World Heritage List but many more objects claim for this status. What Belarusian sights have a chance to supplement the World Heritage List? → 7



Fighting for every life

A conversation with the WHO Director-General and a meeting on a draft decree on social support for certain categories of citizens: the most important events on the President's work schedule last week

The telephone conversation was initiated by the leadership of the World Health Organisation. WHO Head, Tedros Ghebreyesus, asked Aleksandr Lukashenko to talk about the situation that is currently developing in Belarus, and also asked what kind of support his organisation can provide, stating its readiness to ensure such assistance if necessary. The theme of the fight against coronavirus was also tackled on the same day at a meeting in the Palace of Independence, where a draft decree on social support for certain categories of citizens was discussed. How we have built a three-level system of combating COVID-19 and who will be able to count on state assistance: these questions were raised during the meeting. The President emphasised that the main thing in the current situation is saving lives.

Complete understanding

The President told Tedros Ghebreyesus about the work of the Belarusian healthcare system as a whole, alongside the strategy and tactics chosen by the country in countering the spread of the virus. He underlined that, to date, anxiety is mostly caused by pneumonias, the treatment for which is given the greatest attention. The main task is to fight for every life, preventing a jump in the mortality rate by any means.

Tedros Ghebreyesus noted that, in a pandemic, each country uses its own methods against the struggle, and its own response to the situation; common recipes and rules do not exist here. The Head of WHO thanked the President and authorities of the country for their deep involvement in the process, of which he is well aware.

The visit of the WHO mission, which worked in Belarus in April, was also discussed, with Mr. Lukashenko thanking Mr. Ghebreyesus for the experts' visit. The Head of the WHO, in

turn, expressed gratitude for the reception of their specialists and their working conditions, expressing his intention to continue to support Belarus.

The President invited the WHO Director-General to visit Belarus. Tedros Ghebreyesus accepted the invitation, promising to come to our country after the end of the pandemic.



Tedros Ghebreyesus

Targeted support

At the meeting, the President was presented with a draft decree on social support for certain categories of citizens. Obviously, in this difficult time, when the economies of many countries are simply curtailed, the topic is becoming particularly relevant. Here the approach is important, initially demanded by Aleksandr Lukashenko and which he adheres to today: it is not worth relying solely on outside help, it's necessary to make efforts oneself. This applies to both people and enterprises. According to the President, it is necessary to support those who need support and who also motivate themselves. It's necessary to look for a job themselves.

The Head of State recalled the restaurant business as a good example. Some companies in the current situation quickly reoriented and mastered a new form of work: the delivery of finished dishes to homes, enterprises and hospitals. The potash industry is also seeking options. For example, Belaruskali is negotiating with China and other countries

on supplies while the situation is much more difficult for Belavia Airlines, since the objective situation in the world does not allow it to work.

"Yes, today it's impossible to deliver products anywhere on the markets. But we must agree. In a week or a month, markets will open, and you will have a ready contract, you will deliver your goods. And

this is also a form of work," the President pointed out. "After all, we did not close a single production, not a single restaurant, not a single cinema; we did not close anything at all and did not restrict anyone. We just warned people: take care of yourself."

Belarus' experience is in demand

Different countries have chosen their own path in the fight against coronavirus and its effects on the economy. Our country has made its choice. At the same time, the Belarusian response method was in demand by others. Aleksandr Lukashenko noted,

"The situation in Belarus today with viruses and other diseases that we have is tolerable. We don't say that everything is fine with us, that we have already beaten it. No. But the method that we have been using for the third month is bringing results. And other states took advantage of this method. Look at the western countries: they slowly opened up, their economies began to work and these are millions of people. While their mortality per day exceeds all deaths [from diseases

aggravated by coronavirus] in Belarus over these three months."

A very important remark of the President sounds here: in the current epidemiological conditions, the main thing is not statistics on the number of cases but saving human lives.

"All these indicators, COVID and even pneumonia, how many we had yesterday, how many there are today and what the dynamics is, this will all go away and everyone will forget it. But the dead people, whom we could save, but did not save, this will remain. It's necessary to demand from the Healthcare Ministry and doctors the preservation of people's lives. I spoke about this in church recently, and I take this seriously."

Particular attention will be paid to older people, including those who are single, who are now recovering from coronavirus infection. The President instructed the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and personally Irina Kostevich to take this issue under control.

A little later, Irina Kostevich spoke in more detail about the changes that the draft decree on social support of certain categories of citizens implies. According to the Minister, it's planned to support such categories as large families, people with disabilities and parents raising children with disabilities. The adoption of additional measures to support them



Irina Kostevich

in terms of pension provision, social protection and medical care is also being discussed. For example, it is suggested to improve approaches to state targeted social assistance for large families.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Economy: trends and prospects

By Svetlana Mikhovich

Aleksandr Lukashenko received a report from Prime Minister Sergei Rumas at the Palace of Independence. Among the issues highlighted by the President for discussion were January-April 2020 economic figures, talks with the IMF and natural gas supplies. "We analysed the first quarter. April was not an easy month, due to certain circumstances, which are very serious for our export-oriented economy. Therefore, I would like to see the results of those four months and the main trends that worry us," said the Head of State.

The state debt was in focus. "What is the situation and how are we going to pay off the

debts?" he asked. "The third topic is the IMF. I have instructed the Government to deal with



Sergei Rumas

these issues. The matter also concerns other international banking organisations who are ready to finance us during this time, including for healthcare," the President stated.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also focused on another important issue: the price of Russian natural gas supplied to Belarus. "Yester-

day [May 13th], I received information that Russia is selling natural gas in Europe during this difficult time at a price under \$70: \$65-68, but not at \$127 — as to Belarus. What is the situation here and what can we expect in the future? I raised this issue during the EAEU video conference. Very soon we will have another video conference in the same format. I would like to know what has been done so far to reduce the price of natural gas for Belarus. Such things are not acceptable. I am not even talking about the year of the 75th anniversary [of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War] when Germany gets natural gas at a price under \$70, according to the information I receive — but not at \$127, which is the price set for Belarus," the President said.

After reporting to the President, Sergei Rumas talked to journalists. The Prime Minister noted that, in January-April 2020, the sectors of agriculture and construction acted as drivers of growth. IT is traditionally demonstrating good results in the service sector. Other sectors have been more or less affected by the crisis associated with the global coronavirus pandemic.

"Industry has slowed down by 1 percent and among the most affected are catering and the tourism industry. Retail sales have decreased slightly," Mr. Rumas said, adding that a gradual restoration of these industries is expected in the summer, "We expect that, from July, the economy in the affected sectors will begin catching up with the first half of the year and improve the

figures. You can see that countries are opening up, already there is demand for our products. Accordingly, we are already expecting growth from sectors such as industry, in June-July."

According to Mr. Rumas, the second package of measures to support the economy was also considered at the meeting. It is now being finalised in the Council of Ministers. He also reported that one of the President's questions related to public debt. "From January-April, the Republican and local budgets ran a surplus. In both cases, the surplus of about \$245m equivalent has been registered and this suggests that expenditures and budget revenues are balanced. Belarus is now fully and on time paying off all external loans," he announced.

President pays a working trip to Vitebsk Region to investigate the progress made in the development of integration structures in the agricultural sector of the area

The format of these Friday trips has become traditional in Aleksandr Lukashenko's schedule. Working visits around the country don't simply aim to investigate the situation but are an opportunity to raise the most pressing issues in a particular area, assess the situation and set tasks for authorities at all levels.

Recently, the Head of State went to the Vitebsk Region — to discuss the progress of spring field work and the socio-economic development of the region. Most importantly, the President assessed the effectiveness of combining agricultural enterprises into integration structures. The decisions made at the time have proved correct and Aleksandr Lukashenko noted,

“Perhaps we have found the land form: an integration structure. I see that it is land-based. Feed comes from the land, and then milk and meat — for processing. After processing, these are sold and money comes from where the milk and meat have come from. This is normal. In this way, we'll be able to revive the Vitebsk Region in five years.”

Basis for good jobs

The country's northern region is sometimes called the zone of critical agriculture. Its climate features, not always optimal structures of acreage, a high concentration of unprofitable organisations have resulted in the past in a range of serious problems accumulated in the agro-industrial complex of the region. In late November 2019, Aleksandr Lukashenko held a large meeting in Vitebsk, where he considered the idea of a radical reform of the agro-industrial complex with the local authorities. It was about creating a super-holding that would occupy two-thirds of the region's territory. The President did not support the idea of unnecessary add-ons and sent them for revision. As a result, a decree ‘On Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Vitebsk Region’ was signed in February. It aims to improve the efficiency of management, create conditions for the development of agriculture in the Vitebsk Region, and attract investment.

Land concerns

Thanks to the document, seven agro-industrial associations have been created in the Vitebsk Region to date and, recently, the President visited the agricultural organisations that are part of Moloko JSC. Aleksandr Lukashenko appreciated positive changes in the land management in the region and was able to assess the state of affairs there from a helicopter.

“Of course, these are patches and we'll do nothing as this is a contour of fields. However, it's clear that the situation has improved. If you prepare for har-

vesting properly, crop well — you'll have grain and feed. Organisation is needed. We should not stop in any case,” he said.



BELTA

tions for keeping cattle, “Well done, it's clear from the first glance. Importantly, everything is well-thought-of and follows the technology. This is the way to go.”

Speaking about the decision to create integration structures in the region, the President expressed confidence that it was timely and came from real-life situations.

The President was shown various pieces of agricultural equipment produced at the enterprises of the region, and he also visited a robotic complex for milk production which uses modern technologies.

vesting properly, crop well — you'll have grain and feed. Organisation is needed. We should not stop in any case,” he said.

The Chairman of the House of Representatives, Vladimir Andreichenko, oversees the Vitebsk Region. He confirms that the situation is developing well so far. The foundations for good work has been created and, later, the Chairman of the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee — Nikolai Sherstnev — mentioned figures indicating that the overall dynamics in the region in Q1 2020 was positive.

Life-based decision

While visiting Moloko JSC and talking about the development of integration structures in the region's agro-industrial complex, the President stressed that support and money will be allocated primarily for promising projects and directions, and if the economic approach to business is seen. “Money will be available if there's a result. I cannot invest in businesses that don't offer any hope,” he said.

At one farm, Aleksandr Lukashenko praised what he saw, noting good condi-

In search of a profitable market

During his working trip, the President held a meeting in the Vitebsk District, receiving reports from the Agriculture and Food Minister — Ivan Krupko — on the situation in agriculture. Issues highlighted at the meeting included spring sowing, harvest forecasts, exports of agricultural products and the domestic market.

The Minister reported that, in January-April, farms of all categories ramped up production. In January-March, exports rose by almost 10 percent year-on-year.

As for these exports, Aleksandr Lukashenko wants the industry to look for the best price conditions on the international market. “The main thing is to sell goods at a good price, not cheaply,” he said.

According to Mr. Krupko, there is no wariness in terms of exports: contracts are in place which are being implemented. Supplies to the domestic market are stable. In turn, Governor Nikolai Sherstnev reported on the socio-economic development of the Vitebsk Region, noting the overall positive dynamics in the first quarter.

Learning from experience

The President noted that the experience of the Vitebsk Region in creating integration structures in agriculture should be further expanded to other regions of the country. He stressed,

“People should come to you and learn from you how to organise similar integrated structures and revive unprofitable enterprises as one unit.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko described what he had seen as part of his working trip, saying, “This is what all of the Vitebsk Region should be like, but even better in terms of quality, technologies, productivity and efficiency.”

According to him, focus should be placed on the equipment. “The holding companies (integrators), meat processing plants should be the most technologically advanced to be able to produce the finest goods from raw materials supplied by farmers, which will enjoy high demand,” the President emphasised. He also pointed out the need to ensure a high quality of products because only then they will be in demand in the domestic and foreign markets alike.

Aleksandr Lukashenko instructed to apply the best practices of the Vitebsk Region in setting up integrated structures in other areas if needed. “Do not think that this concerns only the Vitebsk Region,” he noted.

“We can establish similar integrated structures in Mogilev and Minsk: bind unprofitable enterprises as a source of raw materials and meat or milk processing companies together. At least one structure in a region should be set up. They will be useful everywhere, even in some of the Grodno Region's districts.”

The President intends to continue visiting enterprises that are part of integrated structures during his working trips to see the state of affairs first-hand. “If we implement this, if we succeed, it will yield results,” he said. “If we can revive the agricultural sector even in the Vitebsk Region... Put everything in order for people to work here with pleasure, for youth to flock here — they will,” the President believes.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the pandemic and the hysteria over it have also changed people's way of thinking. “They have come to understand that we need to hold onto the land. People are re-evaluating their actions and principles and this benefits the agricultural sector,” he said.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Focus on joint strategies

The Central European Initiative (CEI) member states should focus on developing joint strategies for the economic recovery of the region, Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei said at the CEI extraordinary summit held via teleconference last week

The teleconference discussed ways to address social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vladimir Makei informed the participants of the summit about measures taken in Belarus to stem the spread of the infection. He also emphasised the need for concerted international effort to overcome social and economic

aftermath of the crisis.

The Minister called on the CEI member states to come up with joint strategies for the economic recovery of the region. “It is important that borders should remain open, markets accessible, and people and goods should be able to move freely across the borders and small and medium-sized enterprises should receive support,” he noted.

Vladimir Makei expressed solidarity with the other CEI member states affected by the coronavirus pandemic. “Our words of compassion and support go to all the countries hit by the coronavirus, in particular Italy. We welcome the first man-

ifestations of economic recovery and removal of some restrictions all over the region. We hope that this return to normal life will be irreversible and we will survive this crisis becoming more united and resilient to future challenges,” he said.

The Minister underlined that, in the fight against the coronavirus, no one should be left behind, including at international level. “Concerted effort is the only way to overcome the negative impact of the pandemic,” he believes.

As Mr. Makei noted, Belarus remains committed to co-operation with the other CEI member states, the WHO Secretariat, the European Union, the European

Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other interested parties while addressing social and economic consequences of the pandemic. “This is a long battle ahead from the point of view of health and economic recovery and we will be able to succeed only if we stay united,” he added.

Taking part in the summit were prime ministers of Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, North Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, Ukraine, deputy prime ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Serbia and Poland and representatives of the foreign ministries of Hun-



gary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The discussion was also joined by the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement — Oliver Varhelyi, the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) — Suma Chakrabarti, and the WHO Regional Director for Europe — Hans Kluge.

Based on materials of belta.by

Solo of the golden pipe

At the end of April, the President signed a decree on the implementation of the project dealing with the construction of the Gomel-Gorki oil trunk pipeline. It will be the first pipeline in the country designed exclusively for internal transit.

By Ruslan Proleskovsky

A connection element is needed

The idea has been discussed in specialist circles for many years. It considered combining the pipelines of Gomeltransneft Druzhba and Polotsktransneft Druzhba (which were separate enterprises at that time). However, it did not come to realisation because there was no need. The stability of supplies and reliability of Russian partners were not in doubt at that time.

Times have changed, as confirmed by recent negotiations between the parties, which went on long and hard. As a result, Belarusian refineries at the beginning of the year faced a shortage of raw materials. The subject of disagreement was the price of supplies of Russian Urals crude oil extracted in Western Siberia. Hydrocarbons go directly to the Novopolotsk and Mozyr refineries through the Unecha-Polotsk and

Unecha-Mozyr pipelines. The branching of the major pipeline also occurs in Russian territory.

“The new pipeline will become a connection between the southern and northern strings of the oil transportation system,” Andrey Karaban, the Deputy General Director of Gomeltransneft Druzhba JSC, explains the main purpose of the project.

“This will enable us to pump raw materials between the Novopolotsk and Mozyr oil refineries, without depending on anyone. Moreover, as a result of the reorganisation last autumn, Polotsktransneft Druzhba became a branch of Gomeltransneft Druzhba JSC.

This makes the combination of the two pipeline systems even more logical.”

Currently, if necessary, oil is transported in tanks by rail, which presupposes additional costs. Piping is the least costly and yet the most convenient and safe way of transportation. It’s planned to pump up to 6 million

tonnes of oil per year through a pipe with a diameter of 530mm.

The need to look for alternatives

The Head of State determined the concept of diversification of oil supplies. It should be ensured that 30-40 percent of the refined oil will be purchased in the Russian Federation while about 30 percent must be supplied from the Baltic side and the same amount through Ukraine.

“The pipeline will be laid in stages from south to north. The route, originating in the Gomel Region, will pass through Buda-Koshelevo, Chechersk, Korma, as well as the Cherikov, Slavgorod and Krichev districts. Near Gorki, the pipeline will join the existing Unecha-Polotsk oil pipeline.

This path was tested back in 2011 also against the background of disagreements with our Russian partners. At that time oil was pumped from the Black Sea through our southern neighbours to the Mozyr Oil Refinery.

The Gomel-Gorki pipeline will enable us to deliver hydrocarbons to Naftan from the Baltic States through Poland and from the Black Sea through Ukraine, as well as Belarusian oil extracted in the Rechitsa District. This will help to partially diversify supplies and avoid the dependence on transportation issues. In turn, the leadership of both refineries was given the task of organising the storage of strategic reserves in tank farms to the amount of about 1 million tonnes of oil.

From south to north



Aleksandr Kushnir

When planning the project, several options were considered. The choice was made in favour of the 207km long route. One of the advantages of this option is the absence of water barriers. Without affecting water protection zones, the oil pipeline will be laid between the Sozh and Dnieper rivers.

The task is within their power

The project consists of 12 phases. Alongside the linear part, the construction of an intermediate oil pumping station and the reconstruction of two already operating ones — Gomel and Gorki — are envisaged. The estimated cost, including filling the pipe with technological oil, is about \$120m. It’s worth noting that this is their own funds, without the use of loans or budget money.

Belorusneft Production Association has been identified as the general contractor of the facility, with the company currently developing project documentation. It’s planned to begin construction and installation works on the site on November 1st while commissioning is scheduled for 2023.

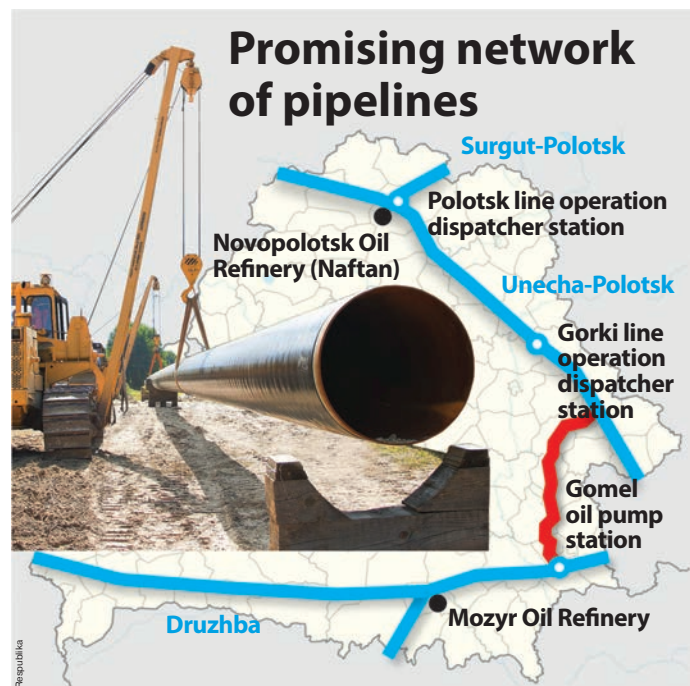
We’ve never had to construct oil pipelines in the history of our sovereign country. However, specialists quite successfully reconstructed the existing pipe-

lines that have been in operation since the 1960s, replacing sections of the pipeline 20-30km long (where repair was not economically feasible). Therefore, the current task is quite within their power. Incidentally, technologically building such objects from scratch is faster and easier than repairing old ones.

“The main feature of such projects is the use of the most advanced technologies, equipment and other achievements of the sci-tech progress,” summarises Mr. Karaban. “The construction of the Gomel-Gorki oil pipeline will not be an exception in this regard.”

One of the key factors that can affect the pace of work is the situation on the world oil market. The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact. The demand for hydrocarbons in the main consumer countries fell, which led to a decrease in transit volumes. Moreover, this year will go down in history as the time when the exchange price for black gold first fell to negative values.

Nevertheless, Gomeltransneft Druzhba JSC is optimistic about the future. At the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumption will return to its previous level. And according to some forecasts, they may even increase, which will help compensate for involuntary losses. Specialists are sure that the Gomel-Gorki oil pipeline will not stand idle.



New complexes for drying wood to be launched in Brest Region’s forestries

By Igor Svetlov

This year, the Brest State Forestry Production Association has scheduled the launch of four modern drying complexes, one of which is already active in the Drogichin forestry. Production is set up at full capacity and, in the near future, the dryers will be put into operation by Stolin and Telekhany forestries. In summer, a similar complex is likely to open in the Brest forestry.

“Thanks to modern drying complexes, the safety of the products will improve. Dried wood is less susceptible to fungal lesions and blueing. This will also increase the volume of transportation of products and sales with a higher added value,” said Ilya Shpak, the Deputy General Director of the Brest State Forestry Production Association which plans to buy production equipment this year.

Modernisation is on the way

A pellet plant will soon open in the Pruzhany District: commissioning works are already underway at the company. In addition, two Russian-made tracked snowmobiles will be purchased for the Polesie forestry in summer; one vehicle will service passengers and the other will act as a fire truck.

“The Polesie forestry needs these all-terrain vehicles to help extinguish the fires which often occur due to the complex terrain — such as floodplains and swampy areas. Conventional equipment often can’t get close to the embers,” Mr. Shpak explained.

Video surveillance systems and communications equipment in the frequency range of 146-174 MHz are being supplied to forestry enterprises. Such radio equipment is necessary for faster spread of information about fires and has already been bought by the Polesie forestry, with Gantsevichi, Lyakhovich and Baranovich next in line.



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Fakel's bright glow

Minsky Avenue hosts its first project: a groundbreaking ceremony for SINOMACH mini-park at the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Park

By Ilya Kryzhevich

The first stone of the future Fakel (Torch) object has been laid. The project will be a platform for sci-tech co-operation and innovative developments. It is implemented by a subsidiary of a resident and one of the largest shareholders of the Industrial Park — Chinese SINOMACH Corporation.

SINOMACHBEL JSC — which will implement the project — has become a resident of the Great Stone this year and, as expected, Fakel will create additional opportunities for the implementation of the *One Belt, One Road* initiative. After completion of the facility (scheduled for 2022), it will provide a research platform for high-tech projects in various fields

of research. The construction site of the project is located in front of the entrance to Minsky Avenue in the Park. It is from there that the planned development of nearby sites will begin.

The solemn ceremony was opened by the Deputy Economy Minister, Yelena Perminova, who said, "Laying the first stone of such a project is evidence that we can resist external factors and, even today, in an economically difficult situation, purposefully, step by step, build the city of the future for the benefit of our nations."

According to the official, construction of the Fakel involves not only \$20m of investment and creation of more than 200 new jobs, but also ensuring sci-tech competitiveness for innovative developments.



Fakel is a future research platform for high-tech projects in various fields of study

In turn, the Head of the Administration of the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, Aleksandr Yaroshenko, noted that SINOMACH is one of the largest state corporations in China, it played an important role in the formation and development of the Great Stone Park. He added that the corporation will very soon start to implement the project.

"Scientific research in such areas as optical technologies, mechanics, electronics and new materials is now in de-

mand in practice. Of course, we are all sure that such a project will strengthen the image of the Park as a centre of innovation and will strengthen one of the main projects of the Great Stone," Mr. Yaroshenko added.

Jiang Janin, the General Director of SINOMACHBEL JSC, stated, in turn, that the Fakel project is another major investment initiative of SINOMACH Corporation which indicates its firm confidence in prospects of the Great Stone.

Made in Belarus online



By Olga Korneeva

"Seeing the interest in online resources, we have decided to look into this option and analyse the existing solutions and approaches. We have discussed this with our Belarusian enterprises and have decided to set up the first virtual exhibition of domestic manufacturers *Made in Belarus* centred around agricul-

The first virtual exhibition of Belarusian manufacturers *Made in Belarus* will open on June 16th, as announced by the Director of the Belinterexpo exhibition operator at the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BelCCI) — Yevgeny Vvedensky — during the *Exhibitions: What is Happening Now and What Will Be Expected Tomorrow* stream

tural and food products. The event is scheduled for June 16th," Yevgeny Vvedensky noted.

The exhibition will take the form of an online platform consisting of company stands grouped in two pavilions. Every stand will feature a video greeting from the participating company, virtual exhibits, documents and images with various business offers, as well as contact details. The platform will also have a chat to enable representatives of companies to communi-

cate with visitors of the exhibition.

The programme of the event will also include an online international agricultural forum of agricultural and food enterprises to discuss issues facing the sector in the production and sales of goods.

Made in Belarus is an established brand. Around 200 events in 60 countries featuring several thousand Belarusian companies have been held within the framework of the project. Over \$217m of contracts were signed at such events last year.

STATISTICS

Foreign investments in Q1

From January-March 2020, foreigners invested **\$2.8bn** into the real sector of the Belarusian economy (apart from banks). Among the main investors in Belarus were economic entities of Russia (**35.7** percent of the total), Cyprus (**15** percent) and Austria (**8.4** percent). Foreign direct investments (FDI) made up **\$2.1bn**, or **75.1** percent of the total foreign investments. In Q1 2020, Belarusian organisations (apart from banks) invested a total of **\$1.5bn** abroad. Belarus mainly injected in the economic entities of Russia (**81.4** percent of the total), Ukraine (**6.1** percent), the UK (**5.2** percent). FDI accounted for **95.6** percent of all the investments that went abroad.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Borisov named Belarus' capital of culture for 2021

The decision was made during the videoconference board meeting of the Culture Ministry. The *Capital of Culture of the Year* Republican campaign is held by the Culture Ministry and interested agencies since 2010. Mstislavl and Glubokoe also applied for the title.

Every host city implements innovative projects to display its cultural identity, develop and popularise the traditions and achievements of national culture, revitalise creative enterprises and increase the attractiveness of tourism.

Polotsk was the first capital of culture of Belarus in 2010 and, in 2020, Lida bears this title.

Belarus' first driverless electric bus tested in Great Stone Park

The electric bus is based on technology from Singapore. The maximum speed a prototype can develop is 40km/h. The safe operating speed is



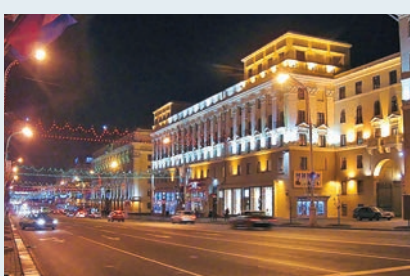
lower, at about 25km/h. Driving range per charge is about 180km. Charging time is no more than 4 hours.

Work on such transport began at the end of 2019 when a decision on 5G test zones was made. The commercial operation of unmanned transport is possible in the near future: firstly, it will be tested at the Industrial Park. Then the traffic police will study the issue and identify what needs to be changed in the legislation for commercial operation of unmanned vehicles.

Minsk's Nezavisimosti Avenue may be included in UNESCO World Heritage List

The capital's avenue — which has preserved the ensemble of post-war architecture — could be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The process is already underway: a draft protection zone is being prepared.

According to Natalia Smolskaya, the Head of the Arts Department of the Minsk City Executive Committee's Culture Department, architects



are currently working on clearly defining the boundaries of the avenue and its detailed description, including all the landmarks, as well as applying the information received to all the necessary plans.

Belarus starts importing oil from the USA

Delivery of American oil is part of the state strategy to diversify supply sources and secure steady functioning of the oil processing complex of Belarus in 2020 and subsequent years. A tanker with 80,000 tonnes of Bakken crude oil from the USA for Belarus will arrive in the port of Klaipeda in early June. "This competitive deal, by USA energy trader United Energy Trading, with the assistance of American Getka and their Polish partner UNIMOT, strengthens Belarusian sovereignty and independence and demonstrates that the United States is ready to deliver trade opportunities for American companies interested in entering the Belarusian market," TASS announced, citing the US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo.



Aleksey Vyzmitinov

ECONOMY

The Minsk Times
Thursday
May 21
2020

5

Student from China: ‘It’s safe here’

The life of foreign students in Belarus is not on pause: they study, play sports and fall in love

More than 20,000 foreigners study in our country. They choose Belarus for its European education, comfortable educational and living conditions. Although coronavirus has changed the process of education, life continues. The young people tell us how they feel in our country.

By Anna Osokina,
Olga Pasiyak

Keep quiet, classes are on

Merdzhen Khanova came from Turkmenistan. The first year student at the Belarusian State University’s Journalism Department explains, “I decided to stay when the pandemic started. I have many dear people in Belarus whom I didn’t want to leave. My family reacted calmly: my safety is key for them.”

In the meantime, study continues and Merdzhen notes that the University supports its students who’ve come from outside Minsk and Belarus. “It’s very important for us. It’s quiet here, everyone remains calm and studies online,” she adds.

Actually, distant learning is not new for students; lecturers have long offered them the chance to complete part of their work on the Moodle distance learning platform. Almost everyone knows it well. Classes are held in the format of video conferences using various messengers and social networks.

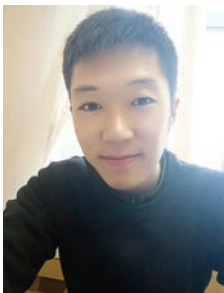
“To diversify not only the learning process, but also my free time, I ride a bicycle. Running in the morning is very important for me. In the evening, we watch and discuss movies and books in Russian, write posts on social networks. In my opinion, this helps improve our knowledge of the language,” the girl notes.

Strictly on schedule

Uktam Baltayev and Dovran Ibragimov study at the Maksim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University. They also came from Turkmenistan and, in a few months, they will become certified specialist teachers of biology and chemistry.



Dovran Ibragimov (left) and Uktam Baltayev



Lukhai Xiao



Sarah Haputantri

It was not so easy to enrol, they admit.

After graduation, young teacher Uktam is already being awaited at his native school where he studied, while Dovran plans to continue studying for a master’s degree. The guys had no doubt about whether to leave Belarus because of the coronavirus situation since the educational process is in full swing.

When asked about their leisure time, the students laugh: it’s hardly possible to find free time as, in the final year, all their time is devoted to studies. Even online classes are organised strictly to a schedule. Their usual days have not changed.

“So as not to lose shape, we go to the gym, of course,” smiles Dovran. “We love various ball games and sometimes we rent scooters or bicycles: there is a park with a bike path near our hostel; we can enjoy nature there. Importantly, we have the com-



Merdzhen Khanova



Owusu Samuel Gyedu

pany of our Belarusian friends; since the beginning of our studies, we’ve got many of them.”

Closer to China

Lukhai Xiao knows Russian grammar very well and writes exceptionally proficiently. No wonder, because the young man is a first year student of the Maksim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University’s Philology Department; prior to this, he attended a year-long preparatory course. “I want to be a translator,” said the young man, sharing his plans.

At the moment, while universities have temporarily switched to distance learning, he studies where he lives: in a rented apartment. He says he has a very good hostess who reminds him of his own grandmother.

In Belarus, he has not only friends but also a girl-friend who is a student too. Thanks to the new educational format, he has more time for his unusual hobby: Chinese, English and Russian calligraphy. The student is not in a hurry to go home, explaining, “Minsk has already become my hometown, it doesn’t

matter if there is coronavirus now. I feel very safe here. In my opinion, it is much more dangerous to fly in such a situation.”

Almost doctors

Owusu Samuel Gyedu came to study at Vitebsk’s State Medical University from Ghana and will soon finish his sixth year, with the ‘Medical Care’ specialty. Afterwards, he’ll go home to work as a doctor. “I always wanted to help those who need it, and I decided to do it through medicine. This is my dream, so I am seriously studying to become a real doctor,” he explains.

The young man lives in a hostel and, over the years of study, has found many good friends among Belarusians, with whom he walks around the city in his free time. One of their favourite places is Pobedy Square.

Sarah Haputantri is also at the finish line: as the Medical University proudly admits, the girl is the single alumnus to receive a diploma with honours. She was born in Sri Lanka and wanted to be a doctor from an early age. She now plans to take an internship and become a paediatrician.

Despite a tough schedule, Sarah tries to keep up with everything. “In Vitebsk, all my friends are from Sri Lanka, though, in Minsk, there are many Belarusians whom I met at various UN conferences. I like to spend time with my closest friends. I look forward to seeing them in restaurants, cafes, or just at home when the coronavirus outbreak is over, to watch movies and cook delicious food together. It’s so great!”

Night of Museums online



National History Museum

National History Museum screens folk rock opera *Charadzei (Sorcerer)*

the legendary Prince Vseslav Charodey of Polotsk. It was premiered in 2016, at the Belarusian State Philharmonic and later the performance was staged about a dozen times at different theatres and in different versions.

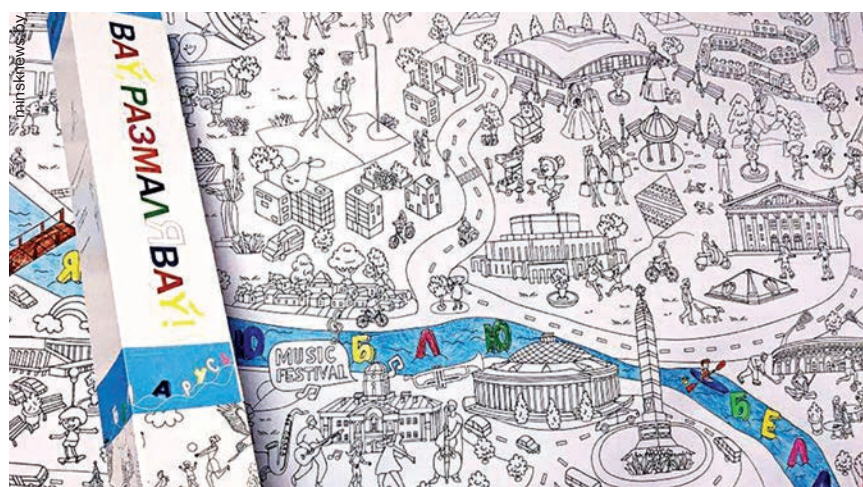
The online event featured acoustic versions of several scenes from *Charadzei*. The vocalist of the *U Neskladovaye* band — Yekaterina Potyus — performed the main role: Goddess Mara, who embarked on a journey to find Vseslav of Polotsk, also known as Vseslav the Sorcerer, performed by a vocalist of the *Kupalinka* ensemble, Vladimir Stepankov. As part of the show, they met with his granddaughter Yevfrosiniya of Polotsk, Prince Nikolai Radziwill Cherny and other landmark personalities. After the online opera, the broadcast continued from the courtyard of the National History Museum where a night concert was organised.

The multi-camera high-resolution broadcast enabled each viewer around the world to join the first Belarusian online *Night of Museums* — to enjoy everything that was happening in the exhibition halls from different angles while staying at home.

By Kristina Khilko

Every May, a unique event — *The Night of Museums* — is organised to show all the possibilities of modern museums and attract as many visitors as possible. This year, museums have prepared special online programmes: i.e. the National History Museum has joined the video service and the team of the folk rock opera *Charadzei* to prepare a musical performance. Its free live broadcast was available to everyone around the globe.

Charadzei was composed by a Belarusian screenwriter and producer — Roman Orlov, based on chronicles that mention



Paint the capital

By Irina Sergeeva

Belarusian capital releases a large educational colouring book of Minsk: *Wow! I’ve Coloured It!*

It took several months to create the colouring book. Its format is A0, 84cm x 119cm and the book features over 20 sights of Minsk: the monument to Yakub Kolas, the Red Roman Catholic Church, the Museum of the Great Patriotic War History and others. The choice is not accidental since the authors focused on the educational aspect.

“In the world’s education systems, much attention is paid to close connection with the surrounding world and the teamwork of completely different people. This is what we focused on when creating our colouring pages. Children will be able to

colour it with their friends or together with their parents, while discussing the history of the landmarks. The project will also appeal to adults,” Diana Khachatryan, one of the authors, comments.

Similar works are available in Russia, the UK, Armenia and France. The project authors wanted to show their vision of the capital of Belarus through illustrations. They are convinced that such a guide generates love of the native city, its architecture and people.

“The colouring book encapsulates the atmosphere of Minsk and Belarus — featuring musicians at the Town Hall, the image of Guslyar (a gusli player) from the graffiti on Oktyabrskaya Square and a rushnik (handwoven towel). It’s impossible to confuse the energy of this city with any other,” Ms. Khachatryan adds.

Our eternal values

What objects are in the UNESCO World Heritage List and what are the plans for the future

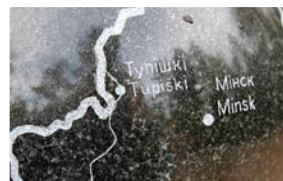
Undoubtedly, all our attractions deserve close attention and study, but there are those that are recognised as especially unique on a global scale. This refers to four of our sites already included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, as well as those that can be added to it in the future.

By Kristina Glushko



Geodetic Arc Struve

The world famous geodetic construction appeared on the List in 2005. The Struve Arc was created in the 19th century and stretched for 2,820km, named after the outstanding Russian scientist, Vasily Struve. At his direction, the first geodetic points were laid along the 25-degree meridian of east longitude. Initially, the arc consisted of 265 points, which were marked in different ways: iron crosses, stone pyramids and granite cubes. There are 31 points in the country, with five of them being on the List — this is more than other countries.



Mir Castle

Built at the beginning of the 16th century, the castle complex was included in the List in 2000 due to architecture which combines Gothic, Baroque and Renaissance features. The site is the most characteristic and expressive of the medieval castles of our country, surprising by the degree of preservation of its stone structures erected during the first stage of construction (in the beginning of the 16th century). The castle is built of simple red brick, decorated with openings and decorative bands. The area of the premises underground is several times larger than the part of the structure above. The height of the castle towers is about 25m while the width of the walls is 3m.

Belovezhskaya Pushcha



The Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park was listed in 1992 as a natural heritage site. According to international scientists, this biosphere reserve is the remnant of a primeval forest. Now it occupies an area of about 160,000 hectares, with rare rocky oaks and the only natural population of white fir in Europe. One can see the giant trees here, which are 400-600 years

old; they have been growing in the forest since the time of the kings and nobles who hunted on these lands. The pushcha is also home to the largest bison population in the world, with wolves, lynxes, deer, roe deer, wild boars and white-tailed eagles also living here. Many representatives of the flora and fauna of Belovezhskaya Pushcha are listed in the Red Book.

Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve

The country's most famous palace and castle complex was included in the List in 2005 as one of the largest landscape parks in Europe and the only fully preserved Radziwill residence. Due to several reconstructions, the castle combines the features of the Renaissance and Baroque, as well as Rococo and Classicism. There is a whole city under-

ground, with stables, cellars, crypts and secret tunnels. Near the ancient castle buildings there is a magnificent park; in the 19th century, it included English, Japanese, Castle, Old and New Gardens. There is a legend that the castle is home to the most famous ghost of our country — the spirit of Barbara Radziwill, or, as she is also called, the Black Lady.



PEARLS OF OUR ARCHITECTURE

5 landmarks are candidates for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Culture Ministry is preparing a file for each of them, after which it will be examined by an expert commission.

The Avgustovsky Canal

is a shipping canal located in the Grodno Region of



Belarus and the Podlaskie Voivodeship of Poland. Its length is 101.2km, with 22km running through our country and about 79km in Poland. The canal connects the Vistula and Nieman rivers, is a monument of hydraulic architecture and is located in a specially protected UNESCO area.

St. Boris and Gleb Church

in Grodno is one of the surviving architec-



tural structures of the country from the period of Ancient Rus, the only surviving monument of 'Black Russian' architecture. Together with the complex of monuments of the Zamkovaya Hill, it's declared a historical and architectural reserve.

The Saviour Transfiguration Church

in Polotsk is a six-pillar single-domed church, built in the middle of the 12th century. This is the best preserved monument of ancient Polotsk architecture.



St. Sophia Cathedral in Polotsk — an architectural monument of the 11th-18th centuries — is the very first stone building in the country. The temples are presented as sites of the material heritage of St. Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya.

Fortress-type buildings for worship



The Church of Nativity of the Virgin Mary in the village of Murovan-ka, Grodno Region, is a monument of Gothic-Renaissance architecture.



The Church of St. Michael the Archangel in the village of Synkovichi, in the Grodno Region, is one of the earliest Gothic Orthodox churches in the country.



The Church of St. John the Baptist in the Kamai agro-town of the Vitebsk Region, built in 1603-1606, is one of the oldest Catholic churches in the country.

Polesie wooden churches



The St. Nicetas Church in the village of Zditovo, in the Brest Region, was built in 1502 on the right bank of the Mukhavets River in the tradition of Western Polesie architecture.



The Holy Transfiguration Church, located in the village of Khmelevo, in the Brest Region, is a monument of wooden architecture of the 18th century.



Eurovision: Europe Shine a Light

EBU decided to cancel the Eurovision Song Contest 2020 in Rotterdam in its usual format in connection with the difficult epidemiological situation in the world. Instead, viewers could enjoy a special show without a competitive principle.

Eurovision: Europe Shine a Light project, designed to pay tribute to the victims of the coronavirus and those who fight it, was watched by residents of 45 countries.

A two-hour TV show *Eurovision: Europe Shine a Light* was broadcast live from a television studio in the Netherlands. Hosts Chantal Janzen, Edsilia Rombley and Ian Smith connected via TV with participating countries and were able to gather millions of viewers around the world.

The pre-pandemic 2020 favourites included the nerd-disco gem *Think About Things* by Iceland's *Dadi og Gagnamagnid*; the bodice-ripper *Cleopatra* by Azerbaijan's Efendi; and the auto-tuned hallucination jig that is *Uno* by Russia's *Little Big*.

In the weeks leading up to the show, several *Eurovision* performers past and present participated in sweet, low-key home concerts. Fans who missed the signature pyrotechnic drama also turned to *Eurovision*.

During the programme, all 41 songs that had been chosen to take part in the *Eurovision Song Contest 2020* were honoured in a non-competitive format. Participants from the past were also invited to make an appearance. Together, the artists performed *Love Shine a Light* from their respective home countries. Clips of *Eurovision* fans singing along to *What's Another Year* by Johnny Logan, which won the *Eurovision Song Contest 1980* in The Hague, was shown as well.

Economy to open gradually

The Head of the European Council urged the EU countries to open the borders as soon as possible

EU member states should open their borders as soon as possible, which have been closed since mid-March due to the coronavirus pandemic. This was stated by the Head of the European Council, Charles Michel, speaking at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels.

"Taking the necessary precautions, we need to reopen the European borders as soon as possible," he said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the bloc previously experienced economic slowdowns but the economy has never come to a standstill as it has in the past three months due to COVID-19.

Von der Leyen spoke at a plenary session of the European Parliament where she announced the EU economy and society will open carefully and gradually.

Supply chains are broken because of the coronavirus, she said, and demand is at the point of collapse.

She acknowledged that member nations have varying capacities to combat the pandemic and said countries and regions with service-oriented economies, such as tourism, have suffered more from the pandemic.

Von der Leyen pointed out that a planned COVID-19 economic rescue package will be integrated into the EU's budget for 2021-2027.

The European Commission also set out plans for a phased restart of travel this summer, proposing a gradual lifting of borders in an attempt to kick start a tourism sector hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is not going to be a normal summer... but when we all do our part we

don't have to face a summer stuck at home or completely lost for tourism industry," Commission Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager noted.

"Today's guidance can be the chance of a better season for the many Europeans whose livelihood depends on tourism and, of course, for those who would like to travel this summer," the Danish official added.

Travel and freedom of movement restrictions aimed at combatting the virus have already had a devastating impact on Europe's tourism sector, which in total accounts for 10 percent of GDP and 12 percent of jobs.

Southern countries in particular, like Greece, Italy and Spain, Europe's top holiday destinations, are already struggling with debt and the impact of the pandemic.



Remarkable floating parks

Copenhagen is getting a network of incredible floating parks. The architect-designed islands will be used for swimming, boating and even farming.

The Danish capital is set to get a 'parkipelago' right in its city centre. It'll be a series of man-made islands or floating parks available for anyone to use for relaxing, swimming (the urban waterways in Copenhagen are clean enough to practise your butterfly stroke in), boating, stargazing and even farming.

According to the Copenhagen Islands project designers, Marshall Blecher and Studio Fokstrot, the islands will create 'swim zones, floating saunas, floating gardens, floating mussel farms and a floating sail-in café, all free to be explored by the increasing

number of kayakers, sailors, GoBoaters, tourists and fishermen in the harbour'.

They are designed to create more public spaces in the city, but have also been constructed with rising sea levels and future environmental challenges in mind. Planted with bushes, grasses and trees, they are also intended to attract and support wildlife, while the underside of the islands should be an ideal environment for seaweeds and molluscs.

The islands can be moved around to popular as well as less-explored areas of Copenhagen's harbour — and can be grouped together for festivals or events.

One island — CPH-Ø1, which is a wooden platform topped with a single linden tree — is already bobbing in place, and is set to be joined by three more floating companions this year.

Encouraging social distancing

Singapore is piloting the use of a four-legged, dog-like robot called Spot to promote safe distancing in parks, gardens and nature reserves

The National Parks Board and the Smart Nation and Digital Government Group are trialling Spot over a three-kilometre stretch in the River Plains section of Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park for two weeks during off-peak hours.

Spot was originally developed by US company Boston Dynamics and is fitted with safety sensors to detect objects and people in its path. Unlike wheeled robots, it works well across different terrains and can navigate obstacles, making it suitable for a park setting. The robot has been enhanced by GovTech Singapore, the lead agency for Singapore's Smart Nation ini-

tiative, with additional functionalities such as remote control, 3D mapping, semi-autonomous operations and a people-counting video algorithm.

It will broadcast a message to remind park visitors to observe COVID-19 safe distancing measures, and in-built cameras with video analytics will be used to estimate the number of visitors in parks.

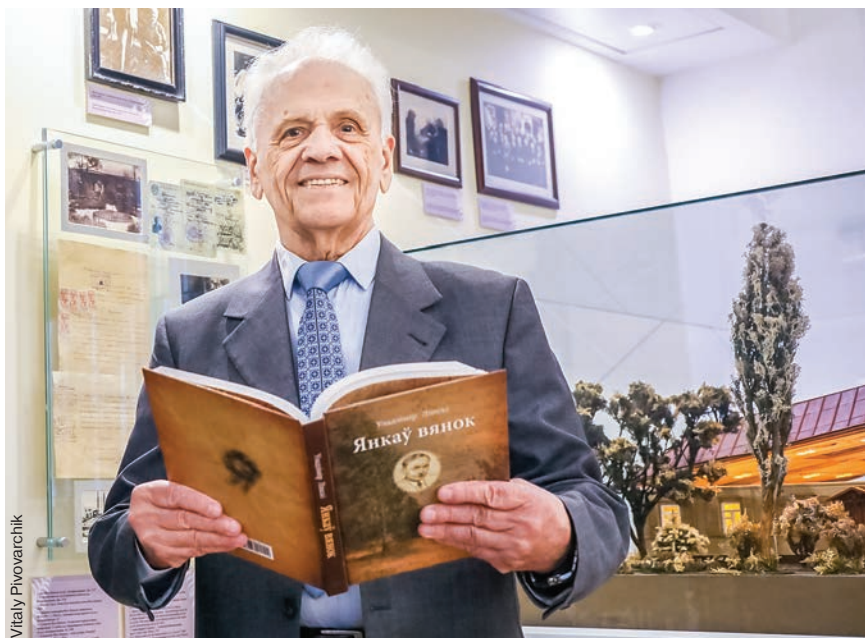
A spokesperson for GovTech Singapore said, "It is not for enforcement. It only plays a recorded message exhorting park users to keep a safe distance. Its camera is only used for people counting as it makes its round through the park."



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Positive mood is a cure

I can't believe that the famous writer and public figure, Vladimir Lipsky, has celebrated such an honourable anniversary: 80 years! Even today, despite the unfavourable times of the global pandemic, when some are giving up, the Editor-in-Chief of *Vyaselka* and *Busya* magazines, the Chairman of the Belarusian Children's Fund and the founder of the All-Belarusian Festival of Folk Humour in Avtyuki, has both worries and plans, but keeps his youthful and creative mood.



By Lyudmila Rublevskaya

He immediately shared one piece of news: Adukatsyya i Vykhanne Publishing House has released a new book by Vladimir Lipsky, *The Tsar* — a historical novel set at the beginning of the 17th century.

It's so well decorated that I can't let it out of my hands and put it under my pillow for the night. This is my first novel. The result of five years of my life... Once I read the so-called 'Diary of Maryna Mniszech', which describes how Maryna goes to the coronation in Moscow. I was greatly impressed that the would-be queen passes through all Belarus, stopping at 21 places: cities, towns, and villages. Actually, I've travelled to all these twenty-one spots. In fact, it turned out to be a book about Belarus in 1605.

Just imagine, Maryna Mniszech stops in Brest with her two thousand carts and more than two thousand people. She spends two nights in Brest, in the fortress. I've studied everything about the fortress then and who welcomed the guests. Then she visited Kamenets, Shereshevo... Today it is just a village. But when I arrived there I saw it's a unique place! The streets converge on the square where the old wooden chapel is located. The famous icon-painting workshop used to function in Shereshevo. Next stop was Novy Dvor, situated in the outskirts of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Maryna Mniszech stays a night there, then the convoy turns and goes to Ruzhany, to the Sapega residence, where, most likely, Lev Sapega himself welcomed the guests. Then she attended Molchad and Mir... Afterwards the procession made a circle, and Maryna spends two nights at Radziwill Sierotka in Nesvizh. Then follow Nikolaevshchina, Koidanovo, Minsk...

Is there a love story?

Obligatory. I write about young, creative and educated people. Literary critic Mikhas Kenka translated the novel into Russian, and it will be published in Moscow. I believe that writers should fill in the blank spots of our history.

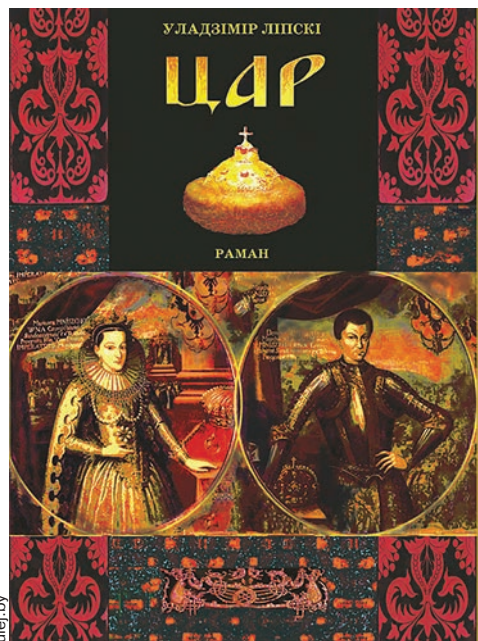
But, as you prove by your own example, it's important to start from your small homeland...

Of course! I dream of my village of Shelkovichy and of its people, who are already all in the cemetery. Only one neighbour Kolka is still alive. Our house stood next to his house and an oak still grows there. We fenced off this oak, marking the beginning of the Shelkovichy oak grove, set up a gazebo and planted a linden alley with the help of local schoolchildren.

What other trees could Lipsky plant? We've dragged a boulder on which a granite slab will be attached, bearing the names of all the families who lived in the village. Everyone must do something for the memory of dying villages. I often recollect my childhood... How we caught loach, how we were mowed with

son, don't get lost in Minsk!' I remember this all my life. There is a portrait of her hanging in my office... And I tell her all the time that I haven't got lost.

It's a pity that this year, because of the epidemic of coronavirus, you won't be able to collect the entire Lipsky family together, as you often do.



Numerous awards of the Honoured Culture Figure of Belarus, Vladimir Lipsky, include the State Prize of the Republic of Belarus, the International Albert Schweitzer Prize, the Russian Literary Award of Alexander Green, the Award of the International Association of Children's Funds, alongside the Yanka Mavr and Vasil Vitka Literary Prizes.



the adults, how we were mounding up potatoes. They once announced at school that we should grow corn and the best squad would go to Minsk. I organised a squad and we took care of each plant. I wanted to see Minsk so much, but it didn't work, someone in the area grew bigger corn.

But, nevertheless, you did see Minsk... You once said that your father sold a calf for fifty Roubles and sent you to study.

Yes, he sent me to the Food Industry College. Neither I nor my fellow villagers had an idea what kind of technical school it was, but I was going to Minsk! The whole village accompanied me to say goodbye. At the end of the village, my mother looked up from the crowd — she was short and slender — stretched out her hands towards me and cried: 'My

I called this virus 'Kazyura' in my tale, there is such a hero — Kazyura, who harms children. Yes, Kazyura cancelled my birthday, but I didn't, I just shifted it! So, I remain young.

You do swimming, as far as I know...

I was even a champion of Belarus! Five years ago, the Swimming Federation invited me to take part in the competitions in Brest, and in my age category I swam 50m freestyle in one minute one hundredth of a second and became a champion. Nobody has yet beaten my record. I swim all the time, only this... Kazyura has stopped me for a while.

How does the Belarusian Children's Fund, headed by you, work?

Still active. Not without reason, a few years ago, the foundation received the Presidential 'For Spiritual Revival' Award. Let me remind you one of

the recent projects — 'I See'. We visited the schools in three regions: Gomel, Brest and Vitebsk, examined the eyesight of children, covering a total of 50,000 schoolchildren. It helps me that I'm a member of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child. We also maintain contact with the International Association of Children's Funds, I'm also a member of the Presidium of this organisation, headed by the famous Russian writer, Albert Likhanov.

How did it happen that Ivan Shamyakin invited you to work in the Writers' Union?

In the Central Committee of the Komsomol I was assigned to supervise the youth and children's press and I began to work closely with writers. And gradually I found myself on the path that I wanted back in school. I was published in 'Vyaselka' and my first book for children appeared. Then Ivan Shamyakin invited me to the post of Executive Secretary of the Union. At that time, Tank, Shamyakin, Sachenko, Vertinsky, Chigrinov, Makal and Gamolka were working there... I still write about our meetings, conversation and trips. Then Shamyakin recommended me to the post of Editor-in-Chief of 'Vyaselka', where I've already spent 41 years. Recently, an April issue was released with another my project — 'I Live Here' — where I talked about my native Shelkovichy: 'Seven Wonders of My Village'.

In short, despite everything, are there many new projects?

Sure! We are trying to make the 'Busya' magazine, which I created for the youngest, expand its audience and cultivate a love for the native word. I've also prepared the diary entries entitled 'Every Day is the Last'. This year, I have another important event — in September, my wife Nina and I are celebrating our diamond wedding, being together for sixty years!

How did this happy marriage begin?

At the technical school, I was the editor of the wall newspaper. A pretty female student from another department brought an article. I asked her to rewrite it five times: I was so afraid I'd miss the author. Everything worked out well: a son, a daughter, three grandchildren... My son is an architect; as an artist he has illustrated several of my books. My daughter is a biologist. I have books about all the children and grandchildren, they are my characters who taught me how to be a children's writer. Of course, we're all concerned about the current situation... But I believe that a positive mood is the major cure.

More than movies

In Soviet times, Belarusfilm was unofficially called Partizanfilm — which was not accidental. Along with film adaptations of novels, popular children’s films, fascinating comedies and exciting detectives, a significant place in the Belarusian archive is occupied by films about the war. This theme was firmly established at the studio in the 1940s.

During the Great Patriotic War, Belarusian cinematographers were among the first to shoot front-line reports. They created a partisan film chronicle of the Republic and, in peacetime, turned to feature films about the war.



During the Soviet period, such famous films as *Konstantin Zaslunov* (1949), *The Clock Stops at Midnight* (1958), *The Third Rocket* (1963), *Through the Cemetery* (1964), *Alpine Ballad* (1965), *I Come from Childhood* (1966), *Ruins Are Shooting...* (1972), *Flame* (1974), *Long Roads of War* (1976), *Black Birch* (1977), *Go and See* (1985), *War Does Not Have a Woman’s Face* (1981-1984), *A Sign of Trouble* (1986), and others. Sceptics have repeatedly turned to the domestic filmmakers asking them whether the time has come to stop shooting films about the war, constantly returning to partisans, fights and fires. However, a playwright and screenwriter — **Aleksei Dudarev — has a reply. “This topic hurts,” he said and, with this in view, Belarusfilm has not put aside the theme of war even in times of sovereign Belarus. Below we’ll remember Belarusian war films shot in the 21st century.**

By Lyudmila Minkevich

In August 1944 (2001)

As the title of the film suggests, the events take place in August 1944. Enemy agents are operating behind the Soviet lines in liberated Belarus. A radio station regularly broadcasts encrypted radio messages with extremely important information about Soviet troops. Counterintelligence officers from SMERSH, three young officers led by captain Alekhin are instructed to find the enemy’s intelligence group as soon as possible.

The film is based on Vladimir Bogomolov’s *The Moment of Truth* (*In August 1944*) novel by a talented director, a People’s Artist of the BSSR — Mikhail Ptashuk. By an unfortunate coincidence, he died in a car accident on the way to the ‘Nika Award’ ceremony, at which his *In August 1944* was nominated in several categories. The film starred famous Russian artists: Yevgeny Mironov, Vladislav Galkin, Aleksei Petrenko and Aleksandr Baluyev.

You Are Tasked (2004)

The plot circles round three Kuprevich brothers. In June 1941, police lieutenant Aleksei Kuprevich is sent from Minsk to Western Belarus where a gang was operating in one of the villages. But the war begins, and Aleksei and his brother — senior police lieutenant Piotr Kuprevich — are tasked to destroy a German assault force which landed near Selishche. Their younger brother, Volodya, who lives with their parents in occupied Minsk, helps the undergrounders.

The war adventure drama was directed by Yuri Berzhitsky — featuring Vitaly Khodin, Valentin Klementyev, Albinas Kelyaris, Valeria Arlanova, Natalia Vintilova and Svetlana Kozhemyakina.

Dnieper Frontier (2009)

A heroic defence of Mogilev — the so-called Dnieper frontier — has become the basis for the film. The enemy offensive here was stopped for three weeks by civilians and Red Army soldiers. The main character — battalion commander Aleksei Zubov — led the 172nd rifle division in fierce fighting. In the division’s hospital, located in Mogilev, the commander meets a nurse — Zoya Sintsova, who has been in love with him since before the war.

The film’s budget was about \$6m and, up to now, it’s the most expensive work in



Over a hundred films about the war shot at Belarusfilm



Poster for *In August 1944*



Poster for *In the Fog*



Poster for *Brest Fortress*

the history of sovereign Belarus. Directed by Denis Skvortsov, the film features Igor Sigov, Kseniya Knyazeva, Anatoly Kot, Anna Gorshkova and Nikolai Kozak.

Sniper. Weapons of Retribution (2009)

In 1942, the group of senior lieutenant Yashin face a cunning enemy — German captain Karl Kleist, near Stalingrad. Sniper

Alesya Mikulich is killed in the trap, while Yashin is badly wounded. After the Great Patriotic War, Yashin works as a commandant in a small German town located next to a medieval castle. German drawings of V-2 missiles are found in the castle and soon it appears that they are guarded by a group of snipers under the leadership of Karl Kleist. Yashin is given an opportunity to avenge his murdered love.

The film is shot in two versions: for cinema and TV. Directed by Belarusian Aleksandr Yefremov, it features an international cast of actors from Belarus, Russia, Poland, Germany and Lithuania. Among them are Dmitry Pevtsov, Maria Mironova, Pavel Kharlanchuk, Anna Khitrik, Vldas Bagdonas and many others. Curiously, some scenes were shot in Mir Castle.

Brest Fortress (2010)

The film is dedicated to the heroic defence of the Brest Fortress which was first to be attacked by German-fascist invaders on June 22nd, 1941. Those events are described with documentary accuracy. The film describes the three main centres of resistance led by regiment commander Piotr Gavrilov, commissar Yefim Fomin and the head of the 9th border post — Andrei Kizhevato.

At the initiative of the TV and Radio broadcasting organisation of the Union State, the film was directed by Russia’s Aleksandr Kott. The shooting took place for several months in the Brest Fortress-Hero Memorial Complex and unique elements were built especially for the project, including an exact copy of the Kholm’sky Gate. The project features popular actors Andrei Merzlikin, Pavel Derevyanko, Aleksandr Korshunov, Yevgeny Tsyganov, Anatoly Kot and others. The film has many awards from different festivals, including the ‘Golden Eagle’, ‘White Elephant’ and ‘Nika’ prizes.

In the Fog (2012)

The drama takes place in 1942, in German-occupied Belarus. Railway worker Sushchenya is falsely accused of collaborating with the occupiers. Two partisans come to his farm to kill him but, in hope of proving his innocence, Sushchenya tries to make a moral choice in immoral circumstances.

The film — produced by several countries — is based on the story of the same name by Vasil Bykov and directed by Belarus-born Sergei Loznitsa, from Ukraine. It stars Vladimir Svirsky, Vladislav Abashin, Sergei Kolesov, Nikita Peremotov, Yulia Peresild, Kirill Petrov and others. The film participated in the main competition programme of the 65th Cannes Film Festival to be awarded a special ‘FIPRESCI’ prize.

Showing oneself off

Why Belarusian athletes go online

By Dmitry Komashko

ANASTASIA MIRONCHIK-IVANOVA, TRACK-AND-FIELD

32,100 followers on Instagram

My husband registered me on social networks. He says, "Why don't you unwind, why don't you show your training? Everyone does..." I have a child, and there is not much time left. If you notice, I often post just a couple of photos and small comments. Perhaps later I will be able to devote more attention to this part of my life, but in any case, I think it wouldn't hurt many of our athletes to become more open. One girl from the USA even wrote to me: 'Nastya, you're a bomb! You've shaken Belarus!'

How do you come up with ideas for photos?

Each shot is an instant moment from life. The photos usually reveal me, although there are some pictures in which I just try on some kind of image. Often stylists come up with it. The last photo shoot, for example, was held at the Dina-mo Stadium in dresses. Then there will be a similar session in a sports style. Photographers tell me that they have a feeling that I have been shooting for a long time and have learnt to feel the shot almost professionally. But I'm probably just a good actress!

Has life changed after you started to be active on social networks, telling us about yourself?

There are more compliments. Many ask for advice on how to maintain their shape and eat right. Some also ask about cosmetic procedures. There are so many questions that I have to apologise that I can't immediately answer everyone. Now, however, the season has stopped due to the epidemic, so I have a little more time. It's possible to try to post something. Moreover, promotional offers appear: cosmetics, and even car sharing...

I suppose they don't just write compliments to you. After all, they can start discussing different parts



Instagram photo of Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova

of your body on the Internet. How do you feel about this?

This is the flip side of fame. Everyone can express their opinion, but within certain boundaries. It's worse when people cross these, and this, alas, happens often. I feel sorry for such people. Perhaps

they need to look inside themselves and reconsider their lives. Fortunately, there are still more good comments.

Is there an image you've wanted to try yourself for a long time?

In the style of a strict teacher. I must admit it wasn't comfortable undressing for the stylists, but they wanted to see me like that. I had to agree. I'll say right away however; there's definitely not going to be a nude shoot. There is an idea though to do a photo shoot in linen embroidery. It's the Belarusian style. I believe one can present oneself with modesty, but still striking and beautiful.

MARIA MAKHARINSKAYA, TRAMPOLINING

10,000 followers on Instagram

At first, I was just pleased that I was interesting to so many people: they follow me, subscribe to my pages and write in the comments. I even missed the moment when the number of subscribers approached 10,000.

You have two active accounts. Why?

I wanted to separate sport and everyday life. But this is not an attempt to please everyone: rather, a desire to please myself. Moreover, I was lucky: my good

girlfriend is a photographer. From time to time we meet and shoot something: for me it is something like an outlet in life. Although I'm not striving for the modelling business. This is probably just an easy form of narcissism!

Can you remember the most unusual photo shoot?

The first photo shoot! I'd just got to know my current friend and she offered to take a picture of me in a bath with milk. Perhaps these photos can still be found somewhere on the Internet. For me it was an unusual experience; moreover, I shot without any makeup.



A photo from Maria Makharinskaya's personal archive

Is it possible to earn money on social networks?

I had a couple of shoots for which I was paid. I was advertising Belarusian clothing brands. As one of the ways to earn money, this has its place, but to provide for oneself, you need to immerse yourself completely in this process. Honestly, I can't imagine how it's possible to 'promote oneself'. Probably, some shocking shooting is needed, but so far I'm not close to this. I don't really want to glorify myself with photos in a swimsuit. Immediate speculation will begin, why I decided on such a shoot and what goals I pursued. A large number of subscribers is also a great responsibility.

COMPETENT OPINION

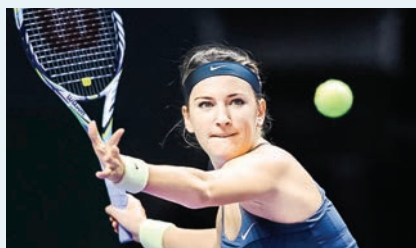
Irina Konon, sports psychologist:

With the help of increased activity in social networks athletes now to some extent compensate for the lack of emotions. Before that, they had preparation for competitions: constant goals and plans. Victories, defeats and constant communication are now nullified because of the stop to the season. Social networks have become a kind of compensation, the ability not to lose contact with the fans and to preserve their social environment. And this communication does not unleash emotions or distract from main tasks. On the contrary, in the current situation, a silent and isolated existence would be far more dangerous. This is especially true for young girls: they are by nature more sociable, like to show themselves and want to be in the spotlight. Therefore, among Belarusian athletes, these are women who are more active in social networks nowadays. One should, of course, remember the concept of Internet addiction. But, like any other addiction, this phenomenon is provoked by idleness. When the usual routine returns to sport, when athletes are constantly busy, they simply will not have time for anything else.

ARENA

● **Victoria Azarenko joins top 5 best tennis players in the world since 2010**

The ex-number one racket in the world, Belarusian Victoria Azarenko, entered the top five players with the most points in the ranking of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), since 2010.



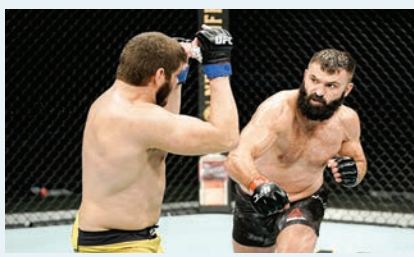
Over the past decade, at the WTA-sponsored tournaments, Victoria Azarenko has scored 39,235 points. She has many glorious victories, including two championship titles at the Grand Slam tournaments — the Australian Open in 2012 and 2013.

Ahead of the Belarusians are US Serena Williams (66,308 points), Czech Petra Kvitova (46,385), Romanian Simona Halep (44,590) and German Angelique Kerber (41,090).

● **Mixed-style Belarusian fighter Andrei Orlovsky wins the UFC Fight Night 171 tournament in Florida**

It was the 50th fight for the 41 year old Belarusian athlete. His opponent in the over 93kg weight category was the 34 year old Brazilian, Philippe Lins, who made his debut in the league, but nevertheless was called the favourite of this match. The fight lasted all three rounds and Orlovsky was unanimously recognised as the winner by the judges (30-27, 30-27, 29-28).

Before the fight, the Belarusian athlete, nicknamed Pitbull, had 28 victories (17 by knockout) and 19 defeats. The Brazilian fighter has won 14 victories over his career



(4 of which were by submission: surrender of the opponent) and lost three times.

● **Belarusian handball player Gleb Garbuz recognised as best player in the Swiss Championship**

This season, the 26 year old Belarusian also turned out to be the leader in the Swiss Championship scorers, scoring 163 goals. Gleb Garbuz played for the Kriens-Luzern club, which took third place, gaining 32 points across 24 matches. First place is occupied by Schaffhausen, which boasts 44 points, followed by Winterthur, with 34.

The Swiss Championship was interrupted in mid-March due to the spread of the coronavirus.

● **136th session of the International Olympic Committee to be held virtually for the first time due to restrictions in connection with the coronavirus pandemic**

This was announced by the President of the IOC, Thomas Bach. The decision was made by the IOC Executive Board on May 14th. It is planned that the 136th session will be held on July 17th, the press service of the NOC of Belarus reports. The work will be organised remotely through a secure electronic system.

The IOC Executive Board also approved a change in the timing of elections to the commission of athletes of the organisation, postponing them until July 2021.



Aleksey Stolyarov

Photo of the week

Gentle rays of spring sun breaking through the branches at the blooming and scent-laden Central Botanical Garden

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On May 21st, 2010, the reconstructed monument-chapel to the heroes of the Patriotic War of 1812 was solemnly unveiled in Polotsk. The monument, erected in 1850 and designed by architect

Fixsen, was dismantled in 1932. Five more such monuments, erected in the middle of the 19th century in places of the most significant battles with the French, suffered the same fate. Only a monument-chapel in Smolensk has survived to the present day. It was this monument and archival materials that served as the basis for creating an exact copy of the work of Fixsen. The height of the monument is about 24m and its weight is approximately 110 tonnes.



On May 22nd, 1990, the Museum of the History of Medicine of Belarus (Known as the Republican Museum of

the History of Medicine of Belarus) was founded on the site of the museum complex at Minsk's Medical Institute. It was opened for visitors in 1993. Since 1994, the museum has been a member of the European Association of Museums of the History of Medical Sciences and, since 2006, a structural unit of the Republican Scientific Medical Library.



May 24th is the Day of Slavic Written Language and Culture. It's celebrated in Belarus and other Slavic countries in honour of the Slavic enlighteners and preachers of Christianity — the brothers Kirill and Meffodiy, who gave the Cyrillic alphabet

to the Slavic world (in 863) and laid the foundation of Russian and other Slavic literature. The Greek brothers translated the Gospel, Apostle and Psalter into the Slavic language, thus contributing to the introduction and spread of Slavic worship.

On May 24th, 1975, the USSR launched the Soyuz-18 spacecraft, manned by the crew comprising the Belarusian

commanding officer Piotr Klimuk and flight engineer Vitaly Sevastyanov. The ship was docked with the Salyut-4 orbital station. The total flight time was about 63 days. A Hero of the Soviet Union, pilot-cosmonaut Piotr Klimuk, was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union twice (1973, 1975).



Piotr Klimuk

On May 25, 1930, the State Institute of Phthysiology, Orthopaedics and Neurology was founded, known as the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Traumatology and Orthopaedics since 2007. The Centre provides the entire cohort of highly qualified specialised medical care for children and adults. This is Belarus' leading trauma and



orthopaedic clinic in the field of diagnostics, treatment and subsequent rehabilitation of patients with diseases and injuries of the musculoskeletal system.

On May 28th, 1905, Yanka Kupala (real name Ivan Lutsevich, 1882-1942)

— a classical writer of Belarusian literature — first appeared in the press: he published his famous poem *Muzhuk (The Peasant)*, signed with the pseudonym 'Ya. Kupala' in the *Severo-Zapadny Krai* newspaper. This was his first appearance in print. The newspaper was published in Russian, but Kupala's poem was published in the original.



On May 28th, Border Guard Day is celebrated in the Republic of Belarus. On May 28th, 1918, the Council of People's Commissars adopted the Decree on the Establishment of the Border Guard. After gaining independence, Belarus kept the tradition of celebrating Border Guard Day as a tribute to the feat of Soviet soldiers. The holiday itself is aimed at demonstrating the combat power of this kind of troops, as well as at raising the morale of soldiers who perform their official duties for their homeland and state.

