



Sociological research: more than half of Belarusians learn political news from the domestic state media

4



Belarusian picturesque lakes that adorn its majestic forests and endless fields are beautiful not only in summer

11

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 43 (1049) ● THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024 ● WWW.SB.BY



The renovated Traktor Stadium will become the home arena for matches of men's and women's teams of FC Minsk, its infrastructure will be used for educational and training process of the sports school, which is part of the club's structure. In the photo: pupils of FC Minsk children's and youth sports school.

New sports story

Belarus' strong social policy has long been a national brand. The renovated Traktor Stadium has opened in the Belarusian capital. On November 14th, the first day of the sports complex's operation, President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko visited the renovated stadium and the 50th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution Park (located nearby and also reconstructed). In the very near future, these facilities will become a place of attraction for many Minsk residents and guests of the capital. All the more so because the National Football Stadium, the construction of which has actually reached the finish line, is located nearby. All this together is a wonderful gift for our people. After all, what could be more valuable than human capital, a healthy and happy nation, without which a strong and effective state is impossible?

The Traktor Stadium was built in the 1950s and has undergone several renovations, the most recent of which was completed by November 7th, 2024. The sports facility was prepared to host football matches of the highest league of the Belarusian championship. There is a natural turf playing field with four running tracks along it, and two artificial turf fields for mini-football behind the gates. Over 5,800 fans can watch the game from the stands.



9 1771991 1297007 2 4043

'It is time to move from words to action'

The capital of Azerbaijan hosted the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29)



Dear friends!

There has been a lot of talk here about who has done what to improve the climate. However, I compare the recent period after our previous summit. It has only got worse — the war in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine, the war in southern Yemen. There are over 50 conflicts around the world that are severely impacting the climate on our planet. So, has it got better? Who is paying for emissions?

Suffice it to say that those — who were once so concerned about improving the climate — are absent from this conference today. Moreover, they are sabotaging it. There

is more to come after the [recent] presidential election in the United States.

The question arises: what is the effectiveness of our activities at such summits? Once, the President of France considered himself almost great for the Paris Agreement. And where is that President today? Is this not relevant? This is our effectiveness — our work. Therefore, there is nothing to report on now.

I would only like to congratulate my counterpart [the President of Azerbaijan] on the excellent organisation of this complex summit.

Yet, those who think they can get away with being absent from this summit today... They

Will it be possible to prevent serious disasters, or will such a large-scale event turn out to be merely declarative? Oftentimes, such events are just another expression of concerns, with no practical solutions following.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, in his speech at the World Climate Change Summit in Baku, deviated from his prepared remarks and spoke quite harshly on pressing ecological issues and the thoughtless policies of many countries:

will not get away with it! A storm in the United States, and recently in Valencia [referring to the flood] that caused casualties. This speaks to how we are 'improving' our climate.

I say this frankly because my country cannot be reproached in this regard. We strictly fulfil all the commitments we have undertaken. However, due to the rampant bureaucracy of the UN Secretariat, it is practically impossible to say anything meaningful in three minutes, so

I will limit myself to just a few proposals.

First. The climate has changed; this is a given. Therefore, the primary task is to realign national economies, especially agriculture, taking into account the changed conditions and adapting it to new circumstances. Belarus is actively engaged in this topic and is ready to share its experience.

Second. It is necessary to assist developing countries in gaining equal access to green

technologies without prejudice to their national interests. We must ensure that this assistance does not lead them into a state of dependency. All barriers that hinder international trade in technologies, the exchange of innovations, and best practices must be abolished.

Third. Today, we are already facing a situation where new products, marketed as more environmentally friendly alternatives, cause no less harm. There is an objective need for new approaches to the comprehensive assessment of the potential environmental impact of innovations throughout the entire life cycle of these products.

These and other areas require the consolidation of international efforts. Not just in words, but in action. It is time to move from words to action. Those who are to pay must pay, rather than hide away in their offices.

Thank you for your attention!
(Applause)



BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS

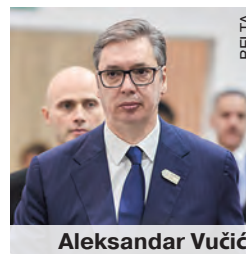
President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko held a series of meetings with his counterparts in Baku

During the negotiations between the leaders of Belarus and Azerbaijan, the intensity of meetings in recent times was particularly noted. In May of this year, Aleksandr Lukashenko made a state visit to Azerbaijan. At that time, the heads of state held productive talks focusing on trade and economic co-operation. Twelve areas were identified that are intended to advance the relations between the two countries to a higher level — both immediately and in the long term. "We agreed on many things. I believe we have everything necessary to move along this path," pointed out Aleksandr Lukashenko during his meeting with Ilham Aliyev in Baku. This autumn, the presidents of Belarus and Azerbaijan also had the opportunity to discuss various important issues in Moscow and Kazan, where they participated in the CIS and BRICS summits.



Welcoming the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed the need to intensify co-operation.

"It has been thirty years since we established diplomatic relations. A lot has been done, but serious changes have occurred both in our fate and in the fate of Serbia. This is all evident. Nevertheless, life goes on. I think we need to intensify our relations," emphasised the Head of the Belarusian state. Aleksandr Lukashenko proposed to activate the intergovernmental commission: its members are to conduct a review of bilateral relations and consider areas of co-operation. After the work at the intergovernmental commission level, the President suggested that Belarus' Prime Minister make a visit to Serbia. "There are many areas of cooperation. I understand Serbia and have often said that it is difficult for you, as you are practically isolated. This must be taken into account when shaping your policy. However, we cannot afford to lose old friends. Therefore, it is essential to maintain relations with Russia and Belarus. These are true friends, genuine friends, and in this regard, I believe Serbia will do its utmost," summarised the Belarusian leader.



President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko also met with President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa on the sidelines of the World Climate Summit in Baku.

The heads of state synchronised their watches on a number of issues regarding the development of bilateral co-operation and prospects for joint work on the African continent. "Mr. President, I am glad to see you active and cheerful, despite all the problems we face in the world," Aleksandr Lukashenko greeted his counterpart. "And my compliment to you, too. You look great. And younger, of course," reciprocated the President of Zimbabwe. The Head of the Belarusian state reminded of the proposal to expand collaboration by involving other countries in the region, particularly Mozambique, "I have an idea that we discussed with you some time ago. We should meet at your place, invite the President of Mozambique, and we will build our joint relations together. We will ensure that you have your own ports in Mozambique, and through them, we will liaise with you more effectively and actively."



PRESIDENT: EVERYONE REPORTS ON HOW GREAT THEY ARE WHEREAS IT HAS BECOME EVEN WORSE

Aleksandr Lukashenko clarified his position in a brief interview with journalists after his speech. The President of Belarus noted that the organisation of the summit, hosted by Azerbaijan this year, was brilliant. "That is the only thing that can be assessed positively. Yet, it was very expensive," the Head of State remarked.

In response to a question about the overall impression, the President said,

"Disgusting. I voiced only the theses because — due to the rampant bureaucracy of the UN Secretariat — it all seems useless. What can you say in three minutes? Everyone reports on how great they are. It has become even worse. I outlined three wars that significantly affect the environment. The Houthis are being pressurised for no one knows why, there is a war in the Middle East (with prospects for involving other countries) and a war in Ukraine. These are just the major ones, but there are over 50 of such conflicts. This primarily pollutes the atmosphere. I spoke about that in Dubai [at a similar summit a year ago]. The Belarusian leader added, "Who produces the most? Anglo-Saxons. Where are they? There are none [of them here]. Where is Mr Macron [the President of France], who was so much promoting himself through the agenda of the Paris Agreement? Where is he? He is not even here today. They treat this issue with disdain. And today's meeting is just another talking shop."

The Head of State was also asked whether he believes it is possible to stop the wars. "The reality suggests otherwise. Therefore, I have little faith in it," Aleksandr Lukashenko replied.

INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko was invited to an informal dinner by the President of the UAE, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, during his visit in Baku to participate in the Climate Change Summit. Among other high-profile guests were Crown Prince of Jordan Hussein bin Abdullah, Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama, as well as members of the UAE representative delegation.

According to the press service of the Belarusian leader, a substantial conversation took place during the dinner.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



‘We have to work harder’

The economy is the basis and foundation of relations between Belarus and Russia’s Smolensk Region — as stated by President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko during his meeting with Smolensk Region Governor Vasily Anokhin

The Head of State pointed out that the trade turnover between Belarus and Russia’s Smolensk Region once reached almost \$5bn, “It is just a gateway for Belarus to the huge Russia. As Putin and I agreed, the three regions — Bryansk, Smolensk, Pskov — should be closely connected with Belarus. Moreover, St. Petersburg, a city that is dear to us and familiar to us, is close by. They are ready to liaise with us across all areas. We’re also working with Sakhalin. Anyway, the basis is our neighbours, and the fact that we are falling down a little bit in terms of trade turnover, we need to figure out in the Government what the problem is there, and work hard to make sure that we have this \$5bn.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko named the creation of a MAZ service centre in Smolensk Region as one of the key areas of co-operation, “I don’t see any problems. We need to set up a service and maintenance centre. Otherwise, why would they need our MAZ vehicles if we can’t service them. Although Belarus is nearby, and we will always back it up, but it is necessary to have this site there as well.”

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko outlined promising areas of bilateral co-operation: joint assembly facilities, equipment supplies, machine tool construction, land reclamation, among others.

The Head of State named passenger transport among the most profitable areas of bilateral liaisons.

According to him, over the past two years, Belarus has supplied 55 MAZ buses to the Russian region. Electric transport supplies are also promising, and Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed in this regard, “This is the future. People in Smolensk Region, as well as in Belarus, will have to deal with these issues. We have certain competencies; we need to work together.”

The supplies of road and utility equipment also look promising. Given the fact that Belarus borders the Russian region, it will be beneficial for the parties to devel-

op co-operation in this area. Moreover, the Belarusian leader spoke of the necessity to establish service centres to maintain the machinery locally.

As noted by the President, it is also possible to create joint assembly facilities of Bobruiskagromash and MotoVeloZavod, “It is beneficial for us, we have supported these enterprises, and we continue doing this at present as well. We need to move along this direction. After all, Smolensk will always need agricultural machinery.”

During the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko also touched upon the topic of land reclamation: Smolensk Region is interested in this issue, and Belarus has relevant experience: the republic restored mobile reclamation columns after the USSR collapse. “We will always be engaged in land reclamation, our soils need this. We have passed this path, restoring the equipment — such as bulldozers, excavators, and drainers. Our Amkodor enterprise is



situated not far from you, near Orsha. If you need our experience and help to start with, then we are ready to provide you with all possible, appropriate assistance,” the Head of State addressed the Russian guest.

Belarus is also ready to supply fire-fighting equipment to Smolensk Region. As noted by the President, the republic already exports it to Zimbabwe, Vietnam, and China. Belarus

is ready to lend a shoulder in road construction as well as implementing turn-key projects and acting as a subcontractor.

In addition, Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke of machine tool construction.

“This is the future, no doubt. While in Irkutsk and Kazan, I talked with heads of enterprises, specialists, and aircraft manufacturers. They are very interested in machine tools,” he said.

The Head of State noted that there are no problems with the supply of Belarusian food to the Russian region: it is well known in Smolensk, and people buy it actively. Moreover, food supplies account for a quarter of trade turnover. Belarusians and residents of Russia’s Smolensk Region have always been friends and closely co-operated in all areas, and — as emphasised by the President — the freedom of movement should be ensured for the further normal development of relations.

strates full support in all directions, “We do not voice or show publicly all aspects because of the peculiarities of our time, but we have a lot to learn from you. We are doing a lot in this regard. If you are interested in something from us, then be aware that we are always your people, and are ready to lend a shoulder — even to the detriment of someone.”

The main foreign policy message of Belarus is that it is necessary to live in peace with neighbours, so the republic is calmly and purposefully trying to build relations with them. The Head of State, in particular, responded to the reproaches coming from some Russians that he is allegedly acting to please the West by pardoning certain ‘political prisoners’, and so on, “This is a primitive thinking, of course.

True, we have a country, and our main foreign policy message and our aspiration is that it is necessary to live in peace with our neighbours. They are God-given.

Well, can we change the fact that Poles, e.g., have lived with us for centuries?! The Polish leadership is taking such a dirty position towards Belarus today, but should Poles be to blame for this? For the most part, Poles want to live peacefully with us, and the same is true for Lithuanians, Latvians, and Ukrainians. Therefore, we are calmly and purposefully trying to build relationships with them. Nevertheless, our interests are above all. This is how we build relations with Russia as well. Therefore, there is no need to make any incomprehensible gestures on either side. There are two states, there is our common Fatherland — stretching from [Belarusian] Brest to [Russian] Vladivostok. This is our Homeland. It happened, not through our fault, that we have two states now: Belarus and Russia. I have never heard from the President of Russia that we must definitely live in the same state starting from tomorrow. Meanwhile, our co-operation is closer than if we lived in the same state.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated, “We have to move forward. I am in no case speaking of slowdown, there will be no slowdown on the part of Belarus. Speed is coming to the forefront. We live in the time when higher speeds are needed — so that those following us not trample us. We are ready for this.”

The Belarusian leader stressed that Russian President Vladimir Putin demon-

BEST MODEL OF FRIENDSHIP AND RELATIONS

The level of relations between the presidents of Belarus and Russia, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin, is a model for the heads of regions of both countries, Smolensk Region Governor Vasily Anokhin noted after the meeting.

According to him, almost every third or fourth family in Smolensk Region has relatives in Belarus, and this is a very significant factor for the further development of bilateral co-operation.

“The warm, friendly relations between the presidents of Russia and Belarus are a model of how we, the heads of regions, should build the same good-neighbourly, open relations with our colleagues from Belarus. The key thing that both sides are keen on is industrial interaction, because we have a lot of co-operative ties. First of all, we talked about the implementation of MAZ investment projects related to apron buses and the creation of a service and maintenance centre. We also tackled the implementation of projects in the field of agricultural machinery together with Bobruiskagromash. This is also very important. Our farmers use more than 70

percent of Belarus-made machinery,” the Smolensk Region Governor noted.

According to Mr. Anokhin, modernisation of the tram fleet through the use of tram renovation technologies is also on the agenda.

“Agricultural products occupy an important aspect in trade turnover,” the Russian governor emphasised. “Trade turnover in this area has already exceeded 50bn Russian Roubles. The key crops are flax and rapeseed. Our farmers are grateful for the seed material we receive from Belarus. We discussed the creation of a joint seed breeding centre between the Flax Institute in Orsha and our Smolensk State Agricultural Academy.”



Vasily Anokhin

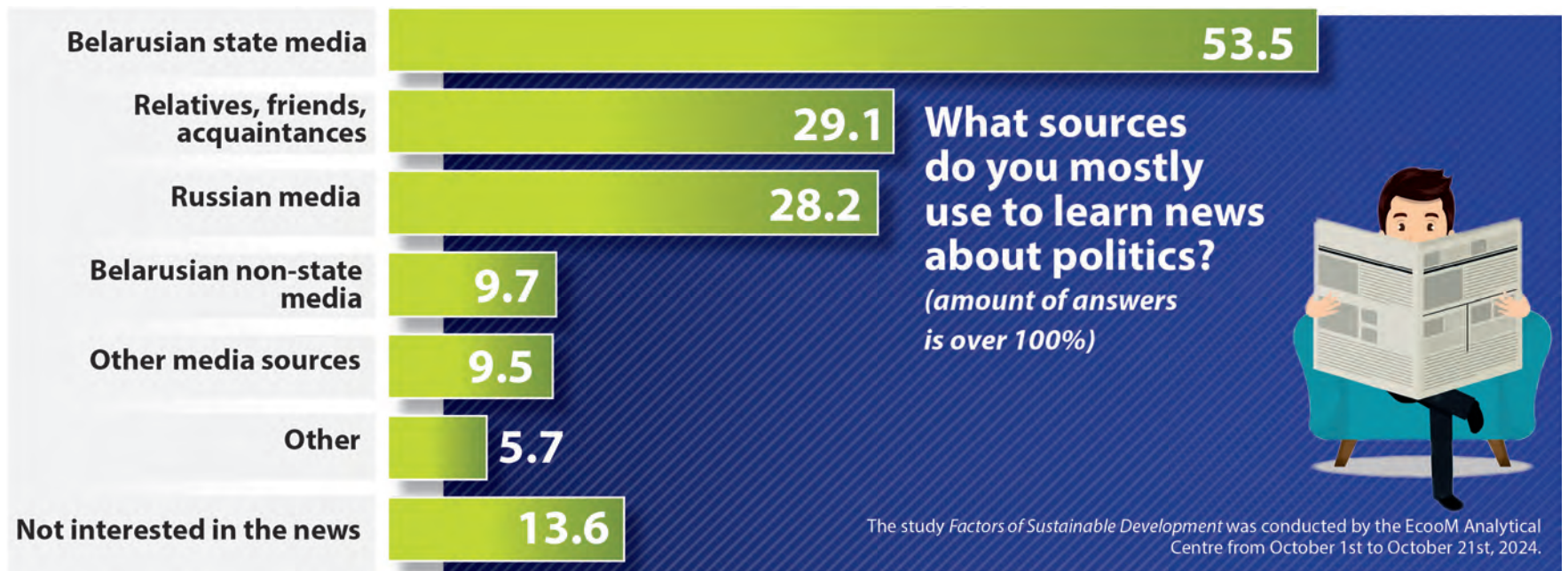
Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Food for thought

More than half of Belarusians learn political news from the domestic state media – according to a sociological research conducted by the EcooM Analytical Centre

Respondents were asked, “From which sources do you mainly get information about political news?” The answer provided by 53.5 percent was from ‘Belarusian state media’. Among the three most frequently heard answers, were also ‘relatives, friends, acquaintances’ (about 30 percent) and ‘Russian media’ (over 28 percent). Respondents could choose several answer options.



By Yevgeny Kononovich,
Yulia Demeshko, Dmitry Boyarchuk

Commenting on the results of the study, **Sergei Musienko, Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre**, stressed, “The high level of trust in state media shows that they have become better at their work. The timeliness has increased a lot. News items are interesting. There is a diverse agenda. The presentation of content is different: print press, television, Internet, and Telegram channels. These are all important elements that play a role.”



Sergei Musienko

As for such a source of information as ‘relatives, friends, acquaintances’, this is a special trend to be studied, the analyst noted, “It is not the main source of information. It is trust in communication between relatives and friends, people began to communicate more at work. This is the first time we have discovered such a trend, and it needs to be further studied. This is encouraging, because people communicate with each other. In my opinion, it’s positive and great.”

Mr. Musienko noted that there is also a category of citizens who are not interested in political news, “They are apolitical, indifferent. We must think about how to stir them up...”

Meanwhile, events such as the Unity Marathon, a truly nationwide flash mob — ‘НАДО!’ [It is Necessary!] — are just a way of probing and entering this category, which we have not yet reached through traditional media. This is an opportunity to include these people through other channels of influence.”

Preference for quality

Polina Vasilyuk, a member of the Standing Commission on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media at the House of Representatives, notes that the results of the opinion poll speak about the growth of information culture of Belarusians, about the responsible attitude of our people to information sources, “And this tendency is not surprising: we all remember how with the help of destructive Telegram channels, unfriendly forces tried to manipulate the opinion and behaviour of Belarusians, wanting to sow chaos and plunge our country into the abyss of internecine war.”

People began to understand that lack of information hygiene means exposure to any fake news that has nothing to do with reality.

It is impossible not to notice a sharp decline in trust in non-state media, the level of which is now three times lower than the opinion of friends and acquaintances. In turn, the quality of the work of state media, including in the virtual space, has greatly increased: they began to work proactively, promptly debunking fakes and offering citizens exclusive content that is supported by facts and, as a result, inspires people’s trust.

Svetlana Aleinikova, an analyst at the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Research (BISR), pointed out that the surveys commissioned by the BISR generally confirm the trend of increasing trust of the Belarusian audience in state media recorded by the EcooM Analytical Centre, “The results of other opinion polls correlate with the EcooM Centre data. In particular, in our survey, respondents were asked about their preferences and trust in state media in the context of covering the historical policy of the state. According to the data received, about 70 percent of citizens give preference to state-owned media. Another question in our research concerned the priority feedback channels of society with the state and government structures. Over 40 percent of those polled also see state media as such a channel. In the public’s perception, this is the most effective channel of communication between the government and society.”

According to the expert, the positive trend in the growth of Belarusians’ trust in state-owned media is due to several factors.

The specialist noted, “The first is the rehabilitation of the information space. The second is the dishonest policy of the so-called independent media segment. People begin to see manipulation, fake news, one-sided presentation or distortion of information.

The most important factor is the improvement in the quality of work of journalists and the entire team of state media, the emergence of new formats and interesting features. This really revitalises the information field, and people are more than happy to give preference to state media.”



Candidate of Legal Sciences, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Theory and History of State and Law at Gomel’s State University named after Francysk Skaryna, Tatiana Senkova, stresses that more than half of the respondents mentioned state media as a source of reliable information about political life.

“In the current realities of Internet dominance, I would call this figure very high. And the next column ‘relatives, friends, acquaintances’ is partly related to the first one. People discuss the information they have already received, but they prefer this style of communication. Perhaps this is also the format that state media could offer to such people. The same applies to users of non-state and other news sources. Some want to get information faster, others try to compare facts and hear an assessment from the outside. Such a minimum percentage is and will be in any country,” Ms. Senkova noted.

According to her, 13.6 percent of apolitical people is also not such a high level to raise questions about the civic awareness of the population.

“But these same people are extremely difficult to use for destructive purposes, and many of them simply have everything so good in their lives that they have no desire to be interested in politics in general,” she noted.

Letter and spirit of the law

Belarusian statehood is based on key principles such as patriotism, unity, and justice

In the autumn of 1939, a historic act concerning our people took place: Western Belarus reunited with the BSSR (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic). This was done in an entirely democratic and legally sound manner, even impeccably. This led to the cessation of Polonisation, national, social, and cultural oppression — all the discriminatory policies that the Polish authorities had pursued on our territory, grossly violating international and even their own legislation.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“National Unity Day reminds us that no borders, no trials can break the spirit of the people, as long as each of us holds our Belarus in our hearts.”

During the participation in the solemn event for National Unity Day, on September 17th, 2024

Numbers



In 1941, there were **4,192** Belarusian schools, **987** Polish schools, **173** Russian schools, **168** Jewish schools, **63** Lithuanian schools, and **43** Ukrainian schools operating in the western regions of the BSSR, with around **170,000** adults attending schools for literacy improvement.



Higher education institutions and theatres were established in every regional centre, **25** vocational schools were opened, along with **100** cinemas, **92** cultural centres, and **220** libraries.



The Red Army enters the territory of Western Belarus, 1939



Peasants from the village of Perekhody in Bia ystok District at a polling station during the election to the People's Congress of Western Belarus



During the election for deputies of the People's Congress of Western Belarus at one of the polling stations in Molodechno, 1939



By Vyacheslav Danilovich, deputy of the House of Representatives, Doctor of Historical Sciences

Serving the people

With the arrival of the Red Army, bodies of new authority began to form immediately in Western Belarus. Temporary administrations were established in voivodeships, district centres, and other towns, while in rural areas, peasant committees were created. They were involved, among other things, in organising elections for deputies to the People's Congress of Western Belarus.

All citizens who had reached the age of 18 were entitled to vote. In contrast, the previous Polish laws imposed significant social and property restrictions in this area.

September 17th, 1939 — the day of the liberation of workers in Western Belarus from Polish lords — shall be declared a national holiday’.

What does such unanimity among representatives of different nationalities and social groups testify to? It indicates that the power that existed in the interwar Polish state was not fair, even towards its own people, as it defended the interests of only the wealthy and the greedy, who profited from the exploitation of the masses of people.

We, people of Belarus, have learnt this historical lesson from our past. It is worth recalling the words of President Aleksandr Lukashenko that the authorities must not become detached from the people. That is why the Head of State consistently demands that officials meet with people, engage in dialogue with them, and, most importantly, listen to them. That is why Belarus is a state for the people.

Responsible approach

On November 2nd, an extraordinary 5th session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, chaired by Chairman of the Presidium Mikhail Kalinin, heard a state-

History teaches us that mere aspiration for unity is not enough; a leader is always needed around whom the people can unite. Thank goodness that present-day Belarus has such a leader represented by President Aleksandr Lukashenko, who has repeatedly proven that the interests of the people and the state have always been his top priority.



Important!

On October 22nd, **2,672,280 voters (96.7 percent)** participated in the election to the People's Congress of Western Belarus.

Many of them were voting for the first time. As a



result, the composition of the deputies reflected the social and national structure of the region's population: **563** peasants, **197** workers, **12** representatives of the intelligentsia, **29** civil servants, **25** artisans; and by national composition, there were **621** Belarusians, **127** Poles, **72** Jews, **53** Ukrainians, **43** Russians, and **10** representatives of other nationalities.

Mirror of time

ment from the Plenipotentiary Commission of the People's Congress of Western Belarus. The commission consisted of 66 deputies, and the statement was read by Sergei Pritytsky, the future Hero of the Soviet Union and statesman — at that time, a simple farmhand but a true Belarusian patriot — who had endured the trials of Polish prisons. Notably, he delivered the statement in the Belarusian language fluently, in the multinational capital of the Soviet Union — Moscow. This counters the thesis of historical falsifiers that the ‘bloody Stalinist regime’ suppressed all national identities. The deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR passed a law stating: ‘To satisfy the request of the People's Congress of Western Belarus and incorporate Western Belarus in the USSR, reuniting it with the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic’. The Supreme Soviet of the BSSR was invited to incorporate Western Belarus into the republic.

At the extraordinary 3rd session of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR on November 14th, the deputies, led by Chairman of the Presidium Nikifor Natalevich, passed a law stating: ‘To incorporate Western Belarus into the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and thereby reunite the great Belarusian people in a single Belarusian state’. The territory of Western Belarus, with an area of 100,000 sq. km. and a population of 4.7 million people, was incorporated into the BSSR.

Overall, the reunification of Western Belarus with the BSSR holds exceptional significance for the Belarusian people. This historical act corresponded to the interests of the majority of the region's population, prevented the threat of the Polonisation of Belarusians, and consolidated the Belarusian nation within a single state. Its impeccably democratic legal formalisation categorically dismisses any claims to the territorial integrity of modern Belarus as legally unfounded.

By a decree of the President dated June 7th, 2021, our country established a national holiday — National Unity Day — which is celebrated on September 17th. In this way, we restored historical justice and demonstrated that we have learnt yet another lesson from our past — about the exceptional importance of the unity of the people and the authorities, the state and society. This lesson comes from 1939, 1945, and indeed 2020 as well.

Today, we — the citizens of the Republic of Belarus — have already entered an exceptionally important electoral campaign for the Presidential election. We should take example from our ancestors, who approached their civic duties with the utmost responsibility and participated en masse in elections, consistently demonstrating patriotism, unity, civic responsibility, and a desire for creation. This was also the case in the autumn of 1939, amidst a complex geopolitical situation somewhat reminiscent of the present day.

HISTORY

The Minsk Times
Thursday
November 21
2024

5

Delicious premieres

By Galina Zhukova,
Sergei Grudnitsky

An international specialised wholesale trade show — PRODEXPO 2024 — has been held in Minsk. For the 30th time, this anniversary event brought together domestic and foreign representatives from the food market, academia, and trade organisations. A total of 160 exhibitors from Belarus and abroad presented their achievements, technologies, and new product samples. Participants included companies, holdings, and enterprises from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Vietnam, India, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and Sri Lanka.

The event's stature grows each year, with Belarusian products becoming increasingly recognised on the global stage. Next year, PRODEXPO will take on a completely new format as the construction of the National Exhibition Complex — which will provide the facilities needed for major events — is nearing completion. This was stated by Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Shuleiko during his communication with journalists on the sidelines of the exhibition.

According to him, PRODEXPO is not just a busy forum programme, numerous premieres, and a wide range of products on display. It is a fantastic opportunity to showcase advancements in technological processes, to discuss future work directions and trends, and to examine what is in demand on store shelves both in Belarus and abroad.

“Belarusian products are recognised worldwide today, and we are not limited to just the Union State; we are operating across various markets — from Africa to India and Vietnam. In terms of export potential, we expect to declare a growth of 116-117 percent by the end of the year compared to last year. This is a significant figure. And we are not only talking about meat and dairy products but also about confectionery, flour, and much more. The interest in Belarusian food products abroad is quite high, with many avenues open for exporting our goods,” revealed Yuri Shuleiko.

The Deputy Prime Minister remarked that this year has been successful for agrarians both financially and in terms of harvest output, “Belarus is an export-oriented country, and agriculture makes a substantial contribution to the country's export portfolio.”

A clear demonstration of our state's export potential was evident at the international trade show venues. This year, it has expanded in both scale and the number of participants. A total of 160 leading domestic and foreign producers showcased their achievements, technologies, and new product samples. The geography of participants was extensive, including companies, holdings, and enterprises from Belarus, Azerbaijan, Vietnam, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, and Sri Lanka.

There was a strong presence from representatives of the Russian Federation, who are keen to establish direct contacts with Belarusian producers, as noted by Oleg Zhidkov, Chairman of the Belarusian State Concern of Food Industry (Belgospishcheprom). These include regional networks that need high-quality products at affordable prices. While speaking with journalists, the head of the concern also shared insights about transformations in the confectionery industry, “New production facilities are being established to produce new types of products. We have already opened a line for the production of soft caramel in Ivenets. For Belarus, this is a new product that is en-

PROD
EXP
2024



tirely made from domestic ingredients. At a small yet significant enterprise in Narovlya, the modernisation phase of one of the oldest sections dedicated to producing toffee is nearing completion. They plan to launch an upgraded workshop with an automated production line in December. There are also projects involving larger enterprises, such as Spartak and Kommunarka. By the New Year's holidays, they will delight consumers with new types of products — including soft pralines, candies with nuts, biscuits, and soft caramel — made on modernised equipment.”

The sugar industry enterprises have also continued to develop in 2024.

Belgospishcheprom is working on organising production in a way that reduces production costs and expenses associated with fuel and energy resources, as these are among the most expensive factors that contribute to high production costs. This strategy is aimed at remaining competitive in external markets and ensuring affordability for consumers.

The international trade show has provided a unique opportunity for brand promotion and business partner networking for both those with experience participating in large-scale forums and those presenting their products for the first time.

It is already possible to point out significant interest from forum guests in various competitions, championships, masterclasses, and presentations. Among them are the international competition for the best packaging *SmakArt 2024*, the quality showcase for bakery and confectionery products *Smakota 2024*, featuring presentations and tastings of healthy eating bakery and confectionery products with recommendations from specialists, the confectionery master competition *Belarus in Space*, and more.

As part of the trade show, the Grand Prix winners of the international tasting competition *PRODEXPO 2024: Traditions. Quality. Innovations* were awarded. This competition included organisations from the food and processing industry, agricultural organisations, peasant (farm) enterprises, small business enterprises, and individual entrepreneurs producing food products. One of the prize winners that received the Grand Prix was Shklov Raipo [district consumers society] with their *Rainbow* dried crusts. “When choosing which products to enter in the competition, we focused on what is most in demand,” explained Nadezhda Makarovskaya, the head of the production laboratory at Shklov Raipo. “For several years now, ‘rainbow’ mixture bread has been a top seller. Not long ago, we decided to go further and make dried crusts with this same mixture, where all the ingredients are natural: carrots, flaxseeds, and sunflower seeds. Moreover, this novelty falls into the category of healthy eating.”

For the 30th time, the exhibition brought together food producers and suppliers from around the world, serving as an excellent demonstration platform to feature premieres of food and gastronomic innovations, as well as presentations of technologies and solutions for product manufacturing.



On the wings of vivid impressions and emotions, the festival week just flew by. The recent film forum, which was held under the *Cinema with a Quality Mark* motto, has predictably grown in scale and surprised with new products: 130 films from 48 countries! Film directors from China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe, and Mexico presented their film masterpieces. About 650 film screenings were held in Minsk and the regions, and more than 30,000 spectators attended the events within the film festival.

Films for everyone

What the 30th Minsk International Film Festival Listapad surprised and impressed with



By Olga Nevmerzhitskaya, Yuliana Leonovich

Starting opportunities

An opening ceremony matched the beautiful 30th anniversary of the festival: 2,700 spectators watched the original musical and choreographic show in the Great Hall of the Palace of the Republic. The same day marked the beginning of film screenings, which the organisers approached with special passion.

The Belarusian-Russian film *Black Castle*, based on the novel by Vladimir Korotkevich, opened the programme of the forum. Love and betrayal, treachery and thirst for money, the search for immortality mixed in an intriguing cocktail. The events of ancient times related to the Olshansky family, pages from the history of the Great Patriotic War and modernity are intertwined in the film.

The lively response of the audience was caused not only by the loud premiere, but also by the traditional award ceremony of cinema figures.

Since its inception, the festival has been held under the patronage of the President; therefore, on behalf of the Head of State, a special prize *For Preservation and Development of Spiritual Traditions in Cinema* is awarded on the opening day. This year, the award was conferred on Dmitry Kharatyan, People's Artiste of Russia.

Films won people's hearts

The Belarusian film forum has given way to more than a dozen famous films that are popular with view-

ers even today. Olesya Rulkova, Executive Director of the Minsk International Film Festival *Listapad*, considers that the competent jury deserves credit for this. According to her, at different times, numerous Russian movie hits became the best, "You can hardly find anyone who does not know the films *Brother* or *Voroshilov Sharpshooter*. These films received the Grand Prix and became iconic. By the way, the first to receive this award was Nikita Mikhalkov for his documentary *Anna: From 6 to 18*. Since then, *Listapad* has been discovering more and more new films, acting as a kind of quality guarantor."

Film directors whose works had received awards from other prestigious competitions also presented their films there. Among the internationally recognised films, the audience saw the drama film by Indian director Payal Kapadia *All We Imagine as Light*, awarded the Grand Prix at this year's Cannes Film Festival. The main feature film competition also included the work by Russian film master Bakur Bakuradze *Snowflakes in My Yard*, which won the prize in the Best Director category at the 26th Shanghai International Film Festival.

The competition of non-fiction films did not disappoint either. The documentaries raise both philosophical and purely mundane topics. Russian film director Oksana Semenova brought to the jury the work *Life Little by Little*, which narrates the difficult but happy fate of people with disabilities.

Best for children

The programme for the younger audience turned out to be no less intense, starting with a vibrant premiere from Belarusfilm. The animated film *Song of Sirin* — directed by Yelena Turova — narrates Slavic mythology.

In total, the young viewers of *Listapadzik* — the Children and Youth Film competition — were able to see seven children's films from six countries, the vast majority of them are laureates of reputable international film festivals.

Days with friends

The hallmark of the film forum is the Days of National Cinema. This year, the festival featured a programme of the best films from Russia, China, India, Iran, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Thus, filmmakers from the Celestial Empire participate in the Belarusian film festival annually. "Our countries are interested in strengthening friendship. This interaction has been developing especially actively in recent years. We plan to expand with new projects in the future," noted Valery Gromada, Belarus' First Deputy Minister of Culture.

In 2021, China — in liaison with Belarus, Russia and Germany — released the film *Persian Lessons*, shot in our country. The film took part in several international festivals, made more than \$5m at the Chinese box office, which indicates the prospects for further co-operation.

LISTAPAD 2024 GAVE AWAY PRIZES

The 30th Minsk International Film Festival confirmed the obvious: the big style of classical European cinema has again lost out to the young energy of Asian and African cinematography this season. Hence, there was no intrigue — the *Listapad* Gold Grand Prix was awarded to a recently shot film *Chang'an, Xi'an* by Chinese film director Zhang Zhong.

Another important award — the Best Actress prize in a feature film — attests to the high standard of Asian cinema at the current *Listapad* edition. The victory in this nomination was celebrated by Marissa Anita, who brilliantly played in the Indonesian drama titled *Crocodile Tears*. Notably, Anita is a well-known journalist and reporter in her homeland. Interestingly, after a month-long *Crocodile Tears* promo tour, she returned to work in the news department at the *SEA Today* TV channel.

As for the decisions of the jury members, prizes were given away to absolutely everyone who was able to liven up and refresh the artistic concept of *Listapad 2024*. The judges of *Listapadzik* were the first to report on the work done at the festival — the Grand Prix was bestowed upon the Russian film *Keep to the Sun* by Leonid Kulibaba, the film director from St. Petersburg. It is noteworthy that the opinion of the professional jury this time coincided with the

results of the children's jury voting.

The Russian film also got the Best Animated Film prize. The heart of the jury, headed by film director, animator Rim Sharafutdinov, was melted by *The Brook That Ran Back to The Mountain* directed by Aleksandr Khramtsov. In the documentary section, the Grand Prix was predictably won by the film *The Land of the Rescued Giant* by famous Belarusian

documentarian Igor Byshnev. *The Land of the Rescued Giant* is a story about the long and painstaking work to revive the population of Belarusian bison, which were once practically exterminated by man.

Another documentary by Russian film director Yulia Makarova received the Grand Prix of the National Film Schools competition. Her *Bitter Honey* about family ties, sense of duty and feelings of loss is a relevant and modern movie, yet the problems it raises are eternal. The film *Gandhi and the Grandfather's Tree* directed by Padmavathi Malladi from India, which secured the Grand Prix of the Victor Turov Cinema of the Young Competition, is also about true values.

The situation in personal nominations unfolded in an interesting way, as well. While the best actress was a representative of Indonesia, the victory in the Best Male Role in a Feature Film nomination belonged to Serbian actor Radivoje Bukvić — the star of the film *Guardians of the Formula*.

The jury, led by Chinese filmmaker Lei Han, unanimously recognised Alisher Khamidkhodzhaev, who worked on the film *Snowflakes in My Yard*, as the best cameraman of *Listapad 2024*. The Best Director prize, in turn, went to Mikhail Lukachevsky, the author of the poignant Yakut drama *Where the White Cranes Dance*.

BEYOND COMPETITION



The special prize of the President of Belarus For Humanism and Spirituality in Cinema was awarded to Russian film director Mikhail Lukachevsky

Producer and cameraman of the film *Where the White Cranes Dance* Semyon Amanatov received the honorary award from the hands of Igor Petrishenko, Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Minsk International Film Festival *Listapad*. The Yakut drama about a little boy experiencing the death of his mother was presented in the main feature film competition.





Trump's war on the 'deep state'

US President-elect Donald Trump has picked Elon Musk for a role in government cost-cutting, as part of his drive to 'dismantle' bureaucracy when he returns to the White House next year

Tech billionaire Musk, who has called for huge spending cuts, has been picked alongside biotech investor Vivek Ramaswamy to lead a new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). The acronym is a nod to Musk's favourite cryptocurrency, Dogecoin.

It's important to note that a department can't be created without congressional approval. Without that, DOGE will be a department in name only and act more like a consulting firm.

Trump compared the initiative to The Manhattan Project, the research programme during WWII that was responsible for creating the first nuclear weapons.

Musk said in the statement that 'this

will send shockwaves through the system, and anyone involved in Government waste, which is a lot of people'.

In his announcement, Trump acknowledged that it will 'provide advice and guidance from outside of government'. He said the initiative would help his administration 'dismantle government bureaucracy, slash excess regulations, cut wasteful expenditures and restructure federal agencies'.

He said Musk and Ramaswamy would work with the White House and Office of Management & Budget to tackle 'massive waste and fraud' in \$6.5tn (£5.1tn) of annual government spending.

DOGE launched a recruitment initiative for those interested in joining the ef-

fort to reform US government operations.

In a post on X, DOGE invited applicants to submit their resumes through direct messages on the social media platforms. However, candidates are required to have verification status on X, which comes with a minimum £8 monthly premium subscription. In addition, the department is looking for high IQ individuals who are willing to work over 80 hours a week.

"We are grateful to the thousands of Americans who have shown interest in helping us at DOGE," the post read. "We don't need part-time idea generators; we need super high-IQ, small-government revolutionaries ready to work 80+ hours a week on unglamorous cost-cutting."

Previously unknown properties of cancerous tumours

Scientists of the Saratov National Research University named after N. Chernyshevsky have found new optical properties of cancerous tumours in breast tissues

According to researchers, light penetrates malignant cells almost twice as efficiently as healthy ones, potentially allowing breast cancer in women to be diagnosed and treated using optical methods.

At the moment, one of the most promising ways to treat cancer is laser therapy — an optical method of treatment in which light is used to selectively destroy only tumour cells without damaging surrounding healthy cells. To do this, special drugs or nanoparticles that absorb light are injected into the tumour.

Scientists say that optical diagnostic methods, in particular, make it possible to distinguish healthy cells from cancer-affected cells based on their optical characteristics. Since breast tumour development is accompanied by changes in the structure and composition of the tissue in this area, its absorbing, scattering and refractive properties also change.

Breast cancer is a disease in which malignant cells in the breast tissue begin to divide uncontrollably and form a tumour. According to WHO, in 2022, there were 2.3 million women diagnosed with breast cancer and 670 000 deaths globally.



British Museum given its most valuable gift ever

The British Museum said it would receive 1,700 pieces of world-renowned Chinese ceramics worth around \$1.27bn, in the largest donation in its nearly 300-year history

The collection, which has been on loan to the British Museum since 2009, has been donated by the Percival David Foundation.

Examples from the collection include the blue-and-white 'David vases' from 1351, a tiny porcelain wine cup from the late 15th century known as a 'chicken cup', one of the most sought-after items in Chinese art, and 'Ru wares', artefacts dating back to the late 11th century.

"This is the largest bequest to the British Museum in our long history," said Chair of the British Museum George Osborne. "It's a real vote of confidence in

our future." Thanks to the donation, the British Museum said it would hold one of the most important collections of Chinese ceramics of any public institution outside the Chinese-speaking world, numbering 10,000 objects.

British Arts Minister Chris Bryant said the collection would 'educate and enlighten future generations for many years to come'.

The British Museum said it would loan some of the ceramics to the Shanghai Museum in China and Metropolitan Museum in New York to support exhibitions there.

Combating overtourism

Florence says it has 'too many tourists' and announces huge new measures

The beautiful capital of Italy's Tuscany Region, which draws in millions of tourists annually, is taking drastic measures to combat overtourism.

Florence's Mayor Sara Funaro and her cabinet have approved a 10-point plan that includes banning certain items from the city's historic centre, according to an announcement from City Hall.

This includes prohibiting key boxes on buildings and the use of amplifiers and loudspeakers by tour guides. These small boxes with digital pads, used by owners of short-term rental apartments like Airbnb to leave keys for guests, have become a symbol of local resentment towards tourists. The plan also includes limits on 'atypical vehicles', such as golf carts, which are increasingly used by tour guides to trans-

port visitors in restricted areas.

Despite the pandemic, the number of visitors to the city has bounced back impressively. This move coincides with Italy hosting the G7 tourism ministers in the Renaissance city, aiming to enhance its reputation as a top tourist destination.

Recently, locals protested by placing red 'X's over the keyboxes, expressing their frustration at how the stunning city centre, with its iconic palazzi and narrow streets, has been transformed into a hub of short-term holiday rentals, displacing residents and long-standing businesses. As per ISTAT, the national statistics bureau, Italy saw its highest visitor numbers in 2023, with 134 million arrivals and 451 million people staying in hotels or other registered accommodations.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Reconnaissance with question

In the recently published list of the world's strongest armies, according to the American magazine *U.S. News & World Report*, Belarus' Armed Forces took 12th place out of 89. It would seem an unexpected compliment from overseas military experts. But what in reality could they be guided by when making such an assessment?

By Anton Popov

Exploring the positions

If you look closely at the rating, you can see several important patterns. The top 12 is compiled in such a way that it contains most of the countries for which the United States does not have enthusiastic feelings: Russia is at the top of the list, China is the fourth, Iran is the sixth and Belarus closes the dozen. NATO is represented by the United States in the second position, as well as the United Kingdom, Germany, Türkiye and France. Stuck in the eighth place is Ukraine — a vassal of the western club — with the collective West's weapons and money, it solves the tasks set in Washington. At the same time, the rest of the alliance members mostly hang out somewhere closer to the middle of the rating and below.

Now, if we put everything together, we get a picture with several clear messages, at least one of which concerns Belarus. First, according to the American compilers of the list, NATO countries are militarily weaker than their opponents, which, naturally, should encourage the audience to desire to at least achieve parity by building up military power. Secondly, the ranking has demonstrated the tragic eight-point gap between Russia and Ukraine. It is convenient to use it both to justify defeats on the fronts and to explain to the audience why it is necessary to send even more weapons to the Kiev regime. After all, it is fighting with the absolute world leader in the military field. Thirdly — as far as Belarus is concerned — we are actively being moulded into an aggressor. Our country is certainly developing militarily, yet this potential is aimed exclusively at defence.

This motive is best traced if we refer to the previous ratings of *U.S. News & World Report*. Belarus' leap to the current 12th place began five years ago, just when the West began to create Belarus' image of one of the main troublemakers in the region. Until then, we confidently held the 41st position. At the same time, Poland, which is already investing billions in the purchase of weapons and expanding the army, is much lower in the ranking than us. The situation is similar with Lithuania and Latvia, which generally languish at the bottom of the list, while in reality they follow the Polish example.

What could be behind Belarus' high place in the American military strength ranking

The beneficiaries of such ratings are Western arms manufacturers and politicians who have merged in a touching symbiosis. The first, of course, need a bloody profit, which is growing day by day similar to the appetites of businessmen. The latter need to preserve Western hegemony, even by unleashing a global conflict.

Armour is strong

Military ratings should always be approached with a cool head since they can often serve someone's very specific interests. Anyway, be that as it may, the Belarusian Armed Forces today represent a powerful and flexible mechanism for deterring the aggressive intentions of the West. It is based on the professionalism of our military, the saturation of troops with advanced weapons and the presence of tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of the country.

The Belarusian Armed Forces are in perfect condition to protect the Motherland. By peacetime standards, they are compact, but in case of a threat of attack, it is possible to quickly increase their number at the expense of people who do not need to be taught to hold a machine gun in their hands.

The President began laying the foundation of our defence capability in the early years of his rule, when he did not allow the destruction of the vast Soviet arsenals that remained after the collapse of the USSR.

For the Belarusian army, reliable and powerful Soviet equipment became the basis for many years to come. Along with that, today we can rightfully say that Belarusian design engineers have not only developed the modernisation potential inherent in it, but also created their own school in many important areas.

The current military industry is a fusion of many different technologies. For the defence capability of the state, it is critical that the maximum possible number of equipment units be produced at enterprises within the country.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"In the name of peace, we reinforce and develop the Armed Forces, perfecting the entire military organisation of the state. Our nation needs to know and see that everything and even more is being done for the army, as well as the territorial defence forces and the people's militia, to be ready to defend the country. And you know that they are ready."

At the military parade dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from German Nazi invaders, on July 3rd, 2024

A striking example of this approach is the T-72BM2 tank, created taking into account the experience of the special military operation. Its closest analogue is the Russian T-72B3, which proved itself in battles in Ukraine as a reliable machine with terrifying firepower. However, the Belarusian model compares favourably with its counterpart with a number of domestic innovations.

Another example of armoured vehicles — this time fully designed and built on our own, without the Soviet reserve — is the Volat V2 armoured personnel carrier. This is the development of the MZKT designers, who previously created a family of very successful Volat V1 armoured vehicles. Belarus is one of the recognised leaders in the post-Soviet space in the production of wheeled armoured vehicles. The workhorses of Belarus' Special Operations Forces — the Cayman armoured reconnaissance vehicle and the monstrous 20-tonne Defender — say a lot.

Belarus also holds leading positions in the field of rocket science, which proves the huge scientific and industrial potential of our country. Probably everyone is familiar with the name Polonez — a multiple launch rocket system with a firing range of up to 300km, which, together with Iskander complexes supplied from Russia, guarantees unacceptable damage to any enemy.

NUMBER
90 percent of the implemented developments in the Belarusian Armed Forces are of domestic production

(from an interview with Vadim Denisenko, Commander of Belarus' Special Operations Forces, to the STV TV channel)

The special military operation has shown that drones have become one of the dominant forces on the battlefield. What was a rarity just a few years ago is

now an integral tool of any modern army. The armed forces, which are not equipped with UAVs and means of combating them, cannot even be called combat-ready today. This does not threaten the Belarusian army: the military-industrial complex consistently supplies units with a variety of unmanned vehicles. This topic is under the special control of the President.

Among the most significant unmanned acquisitions of the Belarusian army this year, it is worth noting the adoption of the Chekan V complex, which includes 7-10 kamikaze drones with a range of up to 25km. Elements of artificial intelligence are embedded in the UAV electronic 'brain', which allows performing tasks without an operator's participation.

The Belarusian army is strong today and ready to repel the aggression of any enemy, not to mention the sabotage raids planned by fugitives. However, the best scenario would be one in which the West would come to its senses and we would not have to defend our independence with weapons in our hands.



Yegor Yermaltitsky



Yegor Yermaltitsky



Yegor Yermaltitsky



Aleksandr Kulevsky



Aleksandr Kulevsky

FACT
The Belarus-made Hunter attack drone is one of the few unmanned helicopters in the world that exists 'in hardware' and demonstrates high combat qualities.

WEAPONSRY

Heavenly wanderers

Is it worth being afraid of asteroids?

In the history of the planet, catastrophes associated with boulders flying from space have occurred more than once

By Anton Popov

Stone guests

According to scientists, asteroids are quite large celestial bodies, smaller than planets, that do not have an atmosphere. Meteorites are even smaller bodies with a diameter of up to 30m and a weight of up to several tens of tonnes. Comets are somewhat similar to asteroids, but have elongated elliptical orbits, which allows them to stay away from the Sun for a long time.

A significant part of the stones flying to our planet from the depths of space burn up without a trace in the atmosphere. However, some still break through the Earth's shield and end up on its surface. According to scientists' estimates, every year, about 24,000 stone fragments with a total mass of more than 21 tonnes — and according to NASA, even 48 tonnes — fall on the Earth. Of these, only 800 are boulders weighing over 10kg. At the same time, only 10-20 meteorites are documented falling: most of them are either too small or sink into the oceans altogether, leaving no trace. Such luck — as in the case of the meteorite that fell near Berlin in January this year, when it was possible to film the fall and find the debris — is very rare.

The main components of a 'successful' asteroid include high speed, a large angle of entry into the atmosphere and a significant mass. The more impressive these indicators are, the more likely it is that a block of stone will reach the surface of the planet.

From the darkness of ages

The problem is that occasionally, something much more deadly than a ten-kilogramme boulder falls to the Earth. There are marks on the surface of the planet — astroblemes — reminiscent of ancient catastrophes.

Research conducted in Antarctica shows that there may potentially be a funnel

under the ice shell on Wilkes Land that exceeds the Vredefort crater with a diameter of 300km, which appeared almost two billion years ago on the territory of present-day South Africa. According to scientists, the diameter of the Antarctic astrobleme can be up to 500km. The collision occurred around 250 million years ago, which corresponds to the largest Permian extinction on the Earth, during which 96 percent of all marine life and 73 percent of terrestrial vertebrates disappeared forever.

The Chicxulub asteroid is much more famous. According to many scientists, it was its fall 66 million years ago in the area of the Yucatán Peninsula in present-day Mexico that caused the extinction of dinosaurs. This catastrophe was extremely important for the history of the Earth, probably causing the

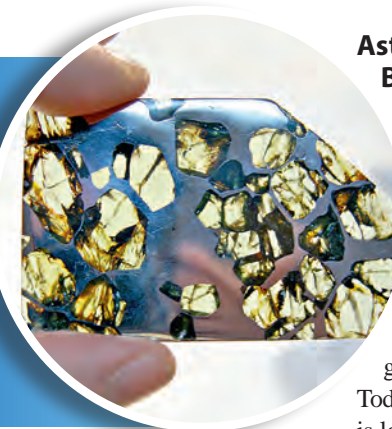
FACT

The Fukang is one of the most beautiful meteorites in history. Found in China in 2000, it consists of an iron-stone mixture interspersed with precious peridot and olivine crystals.

Don't look up

Messengers from the depths of space do not always appear in the form of gloomy murderers. There are enough examples of how boulders that have fallen to the Earth serve as sources of rare resources, help to better understand the universe, or simply give lucky people a chance to earn a good living.

A vibrant example is the history of the Sudbury Basin in the Canadian province of Ontario. It has become known recently that a great catastrophe occurred there 1.85 billion years ago. Nevertheless, since the end of the 19th century, nickel, copper, gold and platinum group metals have been mined around the crater.



For the sake of all mankind

As knowledge about celestial visitors accumulated and an understanding of the potential danger was formed, the opinion emerged that the Earth needs protection from asteroids.

The space air defence project has already passed its first tests: on September 27th, 2022, the NASA DART probe crashed into the Dimorphos asteroid at a speed of 22,500 km/h at a distance of about 11 million kilometres from the Earth. As a result, there was a successful correction of its trajectory.

Hitting an asteroid with an impact from the Earth is technically possible now, and even the cost of the venture is



FACT

The Hoba is the biggest meteorite that has been preserved intact after falling to the Earth. It fell about 80,000 years ago on the territory of present-day Namibia, where it remains to this day. Weighing 66 tonnes, it is the largest piece of naturally occurring iron on the planet.

quite acceptable — the DART mission cost \$330m. The main task is to detect the danger in time and give the correct coordinates for the kamikaze.

On the one hand, we already know about many objects potentially hazardous for the Earth; on the other hand, an asteroid like the 111-metre 2018 GE3 was spotted just a few hours before it swept 193,000km away from us.

Asteroids with Belarusian registration

The largest specimen registered in Belarus weighing 303kg was found in 1954 by a tractor driver from the village of Gresk, Slutsk District. Approximately, it fell during the last glaciation of this territory. Today, the extraterrestrial object is located in the museum of the Belarusian Research Geological Exploration Institute (BRGEI).

The date when the Bragin meteorite visited Belarus is known for sure. In the Ipatiev Chronicle for 1144, an entry was found: 'An omen occurred beyond the Dnieper and Kiev volost — a fireball fell from the sky, leaving a trace in the image of the great serpent'. Fortunately, it exploded five or six kilometres above the Earth and caused no damage. The first reports of the found parts of this iron-stone pallasite date back to 1803, and the last fragments were discovered in 1968. The total mass of the found fragments approximately exceeds 800kg.

Three more Belarusian meteorites were discovered in the villages of Zabrodye,

Zhmen and Cherny Bor. The information about another one — the Ruzhany meteorite, which fell on December 7th, 1894 — periodically pops up, yet not a single particle of it has been preserved.

The recent recorded case of a celestial stone flying over the territory of Belarus dates back to May 1st of this year. However, it has not yet been possible to detect fragments of the Bobruisk meteorite.

Another Belarusian trace in meteorite history was left about 42 million years ago, when a seven-hundred-metre giant found its last resting place here, having left a crater with a diameter of 17km. However, during the glaciation, it was almost erased by a gigantic mass of ice and was discovered near the village of Malinovka in Logoisk District only in the mid-1970s when drilling wells. Scientists even assumed that the formation of diamonds could be one of the consequences of the disaster, but, alas, they were not found there.

The threat from outer space is an absolutely real phenomenon. Although disasters caused by a stone mountain that suddenly appeared out of the interplanetary darkness happen once in millions of years, our civilisation had better think about protection systems. Building a 'planetary air defence system' would certainly cost much less than is spent today on military preparations around the world, and could become a unifying factor for humanity — no less important than space exploration or the fight against deadly diseases.

METEORITES POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS FOR EARTH

2010 AU118.

- The diameter is 1.9km.
- The weight is 9.7 billion tonnes.
- The expected collision is 2020-2112.

1950 DA.

- The diameter is 1.3km.
- The weight ranges from 2 to 4 billion tonnes.
- The expected collision is March 16th, 2880.

1999 RQ36 Bennu.

- The diameter is 510m.
- The weight is 60-78 million tonnes.
- The expected collision is September 24th, 2182.

2004 MN4 Apophis.

- The diameter is 370m.
- The weight is 2.7 million tonnes.
- The expected collision is 2036.

2009 FD. A binary asteroid.

- The diameter of the 1st is 120-180m; the diameter of the 2nd is 60-120m.
- The weight is 3.2 million tonnes.
- The estimated collision is 2198.

Belarus has been nicknamed the Blue-eyed country due to the thousands of picturesque bodies of water that adorn its majestic forests and endless fields. The lakes are beautiful not only in summer — during the off-season, one can organise a family picnic or a romantic date by the shore, and enjoy ice skating in winter.



BELTA

Unusual lakes in Belarus

By Sofia Arsenyeva

The **Naroch** is the largest lake in Belarus. It has the shape of a heart; not a metaphorical one, but a real one, like that of a person. However, you can only confirm this by looking at it from an airplane window. On its shores, tourists can experience the warm hospitality of local residents. Naroch is the only resort village in the country. Every year, around one hundred



Aleksandr Gorbash

thousand people come there to relax. The pine forests hide famous sanatoriums — there are 12 of them! — tourist bases, and campsites. Cosy restaurants and cafés offer mesmerising views of the water's surface, the end of which is not in sight. Autumn visitors traditionally stop by the local dendrological garden on their way to Naroch. It stands to reason — everyone wants to take vibrant photos against the backdrop of colourful foliage and wonderful flowers.

Belarus' Braslav Region is rightly considered the most lake-rich area of the country. There, each little village has its own body of water with the clearest, most transparent water, and in some places, there are several. Not all lakes have names — there are many without them. However, the most notable ones do receive names. Between the villages of Ratuny, Mutorovshchina, and Shaury lies one



olkat

of the most mysterious attractions in Braslav Region — **Lake God's Eye**. Its impressively perfect circular shape has remained unchanged throughout the centuries. Locals believe that the God's Eye watches over the lives of Belarusians from the heavens, reflecting on the surface of the earth. No one dares to swim there: the bottom is not visible, and the water is icy. Not far from the lake is a genuine Viking settlement. Once, the famous route from the Varangians to the Greeks passed through these lands.

The area of **Lake Glubelka** in the north-west of Belarus is less than a square kilometre. But how stunning it is! It looks as if someone has painted a heart in blue in the middle of a dense forest. Right in the centre is a small island that many say resembles an arrow.

Along the shoreline, the red-listed saw grass grows. In a word, romantic symbolism literally hangs in the air. The Glubelka is part of the Blue Lakes national landscape reserve. A popular eco-trail runs through the territory, featuring wooden walkways, mysterious sculptures, and

information boards. On the route, which is four, seven, or eleven kilometres long, you can see a dozen picturesque bodies of water. But be warned: you will have to work up a sweat as the eco-trail is rather hilly, with the highest point being 220 metres above sea level.



planeta.belarus.by

In many cities across Belarus, there are advertising billboards saying 'I love Belarus!', where instead of the word 'love', various natural phenomena and heart-shaped objects are used — from clouds to berries. The islet on **Lake Usaya**, located about thirty kilometres east of the town of Ushachi, could very well become the next advertising hit. This piece of land has an ideal heart shape from any angle — no need for Photoshop.

BY THE WAY

In the town of Zhlobin in Gomel Region, local authorities came up with a creative solution to get rid of a swamp in one of the courtyards by transforming it into a water feature in the shape of a heart. The artificial pond has become part of a park area, where many people often stroll, with a school and new multi-storey buildings nearby. Newlyweds from Zhlobin also favour this spot and come there for photo shoots.



Anton Stepanisichav

Lake Dolgoe is often compared to Lake Baikal due to its exceptionally clean water. However, its name does not fully capture its essence. This lake is, in fact, the deepest one in Belarus! In certain spots, it plunges down to 53.6 metres. Another record attributed to the Dolgoe by some experts is its age. During one of the underwater expeditions, a ledge was discovered that could have been a shore over 12,000 years ago.



Yegor Yermalitskiy

Photo of the week

Rostislav Matveyev, a baker at Minsk's Bread Factory No. 2, with the legendary 'Narochansky' bread — known and much loved in Belarus and many countries of the world. The factory bakes an average of ten tonnes of the 'Narochansky' bread alone per day!

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

On November 21st, 1914, the Teachers Institute — one of the oldest universities in Belarus — was opened in Minsk. In 1919, it was transformed into the Minsk Belarusian Pedagogical Institute, since 1993 — the Belarusian Pedagogical University, since 1996 — named after Maksim Tank. The BSPU is now the largest centre of continuing pedagogical education in Belarus.

November 21st is World Television Day. Television plays a huge role all over the world, influencing, among other things, the formation of public opinion and the upbringing of the younger generation. It is still the major source of content, a symbol of connection and globalisation.

November 21st, 1783 marks the first recorded manned flight in a hot air balloon. The Montgolfier brothers are among the pioneers of aeronautics. On the balloon they built, the balloonists reached a height of 915 metres and covered a distance of nine kilometres, and then landed safely. The flight summed up the biggest achievement of chemistry: it turned out that different gases have different weights. In the following years, many balloon flights were made in Europe.

On November 22nd, 1941, the *Road of Life* route began operating through Lake Ladoga during the Great Patriotic War. The siege of Leningrad was one of the most terrible but heroic pages in the history of the war. The waters of Lake Ladoga became the only transport artery connecting Leningrad with the country. The length of the road section passing through the icy lake was about 32km. The *Road of Life* route played a crucial role in supplying besieged Leningrad with food, as well as in evacuating residents from the city.

On November 22nd, 1944 the restored Kommunarka factory released the first 100kg of sweets. Confectionery production appeared in Minsk back in 1905. No one could have imagined at that time that a small enterprise would grow into a large factory Kommunarka. In 1941, in the very first days of the Great Patriotic War, the factory building was destroyed and its restoration began only in 1944, by local residents. Today, Kommunarka ranks as one of the best confectionery factories in Eastern Europe.

November 23rd is World Watercolour Day. Mexican watercolour artist Alfredo Guati Rojo (1918-2003) was the initiator of the holiday.

Watercolours are paints based on water soluble substances — adhesives of vegetable origin. The use of such paints allows achieving the airy and light effect of the image, and smooth transitions. Albrecht Dürer, Paul Cézanne, Karl Bryullov, Mikhail Vrubel, Ilya Repin, Wassily Kandinsky and many others are among particularly distinguished artists who worked in the watercolour technique.

November 25th, 1867 marks the invention of dynamite. The patent confirming the authorship and rights to manufacture this explosive was obtained on this day by Alfred Nobel, the Swedish chemist, engineer and inventor. Dynamite was used in the mining industry and road tunnel construction, yet it was the invention of dynamite as a weapon of terrorists that made the name of Alfred Nobel, who professed the ideas of pacifism all his life, known to the whole world.

November 26th is International Shoemaker Day — a professional holiday for craftsmen and artisans engaged in the design, manufacture and sewing of shoes, as well as shoe repair specialists. Shoe making and mending is an ancient craft, and initially, the work of a shoemaker involved difficult manual labour. Today, the shoe industry produces a huge variety of shoe products.

November 26th, 1894 is the date of birth of Ivan Papanin (1894-1986), a Soviet polar explorer, rear admiral, Doctor of Geographical Sciences, twice Hero of the Soviet Union. He was the head of the polar stations in Tikhaya Bay on Franz Josef Land and Cape Chelyuskin. He is the author of the books *Life on an Ice Floe* and *Ice and Flame*. A cape on the Taimyr Peninsula, mountains in Antarctica, and a seamount in the Pacific Ocean are named after him.

November 26th is World Information Day. Since the middle of the 20th century, the role of information has increased immeasurably as a result of social progress and the rapid development of science and technology. The inability to control the quality and volume of information received leads to so-called 'information stress'.

On November 27th, 1895, the Swedish chemist, engineer, and inventor of dynamite, Alfred Nobel, signed the latest version of his famous will, according to which most of his fortune was to go to create a fund and establish a prize to reward discoverers in the fields of physics, chemistry, physiology and medicine, as well as writers and those who have done the most for the benefit of the world over the previous year, regardless of nationality. The history of the Nobel Prize began with that will.