



The triennial of contemporary art opened at the Palace of Arts in Minsk



Belarusian trade from the late 19th — early 20th century in old postcards and photos

INTERNATIONAL

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Artistes of the *Ternitsa* Belarusian song ensemble held the 'Zazhinki' folk rite at Gastellovskoe agricultural enterprise, in the Minsk Region

Harvest season

A rich harvest is ripening in Belarusian fields and the busiest season of the year in the country has started: grain crop harvesting is in full swing. The first fragrant sheaf of wheat, the first grain of the new harvest has laid the foundations for the Belarusian loaf of 2020. A thrifty and respectful attitude to bread, to wheat, to mother earth has long been natural for Belarusians. The beginning of the harvest season was accompanied countrywide by the beautiful folk rite of grain growers: 'Zazhinki'. Each district has its own traditions. Rituals differ but the beginning of the harvest was a significant event for our ancestors. It's wonderful that the connection between generations — coming from the depths of time — has not yet vanished.



Moving forward

Last week, the President tackled personnel issues. The Head of State appointed new ambassadors of Belarus to foreign countries, as well as new heads of some industries and enterprises, including the Board of the National Bank.



National Bank of Belarus

Diplomacy offers great opportunities

The Head of State has appointed new ambassadors to the USA, the Netherlands, Austria, the UK and Kazakhstan.

The First Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Yevdochenko, will become Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to the Netherlands.

The Deputy Foreign Minister, Oleg Kravchenko, was appointed Belarus' Ambassador to the USA. The Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Dapkiunas, was appointed Ambassador to Austria with concurrent accreditation in Slovenia. He will also be Belarus' Permanent Representative at International Organisations in Vienna and at the OSCE.

The Former Industry Minister, Pavel Utyupin, will become Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Kazakhstan, while the former Finance Minister, Maksim Yermolovich, was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland with con-

current accreditation in Ireland.

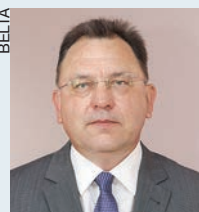
Belarus' Ambassador to the UK, Sergei Aleinik, will replace Oleg Kravchenko as the Deputy Foreign Minister, while the Ambassador to Italy, Aleksandr Gurianov, will become First Deputy Foreign Minister.

Later, Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei commented on the new appointments to journalists, saying, "The countries to which ambassadors have been appointed today play an important role both in the region and in the world as a whole. Our relations with them have been developing dynamically and progressively." He reminded journalists

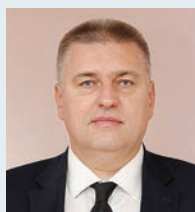
that Belarus has trade of more than \$3bn with the UK and over \$2bn with the Netherlands.

Other states are also of major significance in our partnership. "Our trade turnover with the United States and Kazakhstan reached almost \$1bn last year. Austria plays an important role for us in terms of economic co-operation and as a country that is the headquarters of many regional and international organisations (OSCE, several UN agencies). Interaction with them is of great importance," he said, adding that, most importantly, these countries also show interest in developing co-operation.

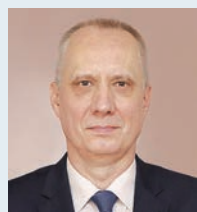
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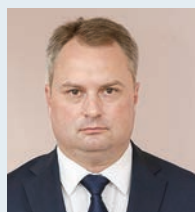
Andrei Yevdochenko



Oleg Kravchenko



Andrei Dapkiunas



Pavel Utyupin



Maksim Yermolovich

Banking system as the basis of economic security

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the appointments were a good excuse for a brief yet meaningful conversation with the National Bank top executives about the situation in the banking sector and in the economy as a whole. As he emphasised, the banking system is one of the key elements of the country's economic security, and this is especially felt during the current global crisis.

"A well-operating banking system had evolved in the country over the years of its independence. There are 25 banks in Belarus, whose charter capitals include not only Belarusian money but also Russian, Kazakh, Austrian and Swiss. It indicates the openness of the

Belarusian economy and the confidence of our international partners in its future. Otherwise capital would not be placed in our banks," the President said, adding, "I expect the National Bank to make decisive steps to further develop the financial system, primarily to support the real sector of the economy, bolster trust in the national currency and improve the protection of the population. The banking system should serve the Belarusian people."

Taking into account the fact that investment will be a priority in the next five-year period, the President called on the National Bank to consider making up for the lack of long-term and cheap money for financing investment projects, in particular those with a payback period of 7-10 years, like projects in me-

chanical engineering and the petrochemical industry.

The Head of State also touched upon the topic of further digitalisation of the banking sector, "Banks should not be detached from current trends. Moreover, they must become the engine of innovation. Especially in terms of digitalisation. Developments of residents of our Hi-Tech Park are already in demand by Swiss and American banks. Therefore, we need to make greater use of the Park's potential in practice."

In addition, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted Belarus' high position in the anti-money laundering rating. "We carry out gradual and orderly liberalisation of financial and foreign exchange markets. However, easing is not permissiveness,"

he stressed, noting that the work should be based on international standards, especially in the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. "Belarus ranks 21st in the FATF [Financial Action Task Force] rating — against Russia's 32nd position, Swit-

" I expect the National Bank to make decisive steps to further develop the financial system, primarily to support the real sector of the economy, bolster trust in the national currency and improve the protection of the population. The banking system should serve the Belarusian people.

zerland's — 35th, the United States' — 37th and China's — 84. However, the example of Belgazprombank shows that there is a lot of work to do," the President said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, "The Chairman of the Board [of the National Bank] and the bank's management are personally responsible for what happens in our commercial banks. This situation should be a lesson for the new management of the National Bank. The staff in your structure are great but, unfortunately, the management has failed in not working proactively. I think you will draw the appropriate conclusions, and they will be instantaneous."

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



INTERPOL

Belgazprombank case: the President invites Interpol experts to Belarus

International experts from Interpol will be able to make sure that there is no political interference in the sensational Belgazprombank case — if they wish, of course. Aleksandr Lukashenko has once again demonstrated his openness by inviting foreign representatives of the bureau to Belarus, the Main Broadcast programme of Belarus 1 TV Channel reports.

By Yegor Nosov

The Belarusian leader made a statement about inviting Interpol experts to examine the materials of the headline-making criminal case on July 15th, while meeting with Vitebsk Region's activists.

The TV channel's reporters also recalled what the President had stated a month earlier during his visit to Polotsk. "It is now profitable to engage in politics in order to become a prisoner of conscience. That's why he went there. However, this won't help him... We will not make him a prisoner of conscience," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Later, specialists of the State Control Committee informed the public about new facts of the criminal activity of an organised group which comprised Belgazprombank's former and current employees. It was reported that new criminal cases were opened and about 20 persons involved were detained. In his speech to journalists, the State Control Committee's Chairman, Ivan Tertel, not only disclosed the details of

this criminal case but also showed the correspondents documents, including those handed over to the Belarusian law enforcement agencies from foreign colleagues, confirming the illegal activities of former head of Belgazprombank — Viktor Babariko.

On meeting the Vitebsk Region's activists, Aleksandr Lukashenko said, "I'm not going to go into details here but I simply want to say. If you think that everything that investigators tell you on TV is from a political order, I have nothing to discuss with you at all. There is no political order! There is no fear or danger. However, the thief should be in jail! Everyone is treated on equal terms. I want to repeat what I already said in Polotsk: none of these prisoners — there are already about 30

of them — will become prisoners of conscience."

The President stated his intention to invite Interpol specialists to Belarus, who will be provided with all the necessary investigation materials. Experts will then be able to give an unbiased assessment, as it was when representatives of the World Health Organisation were invited to the country against the background of coronavirus psychosis. "I ordered the investigators and the State Security Committee, the Prosecutor's Office to prepare all the materials — for Interpol specialists from the United States, Poland and Russia to come here. We will show them these documents. Is Lukashenko afraid of anyone, or is it really a criminal offense? We are open," the President stressed.

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Salaries, employment, prices

Difficulties as authorities' responsibility

Heads of central and local authorities were invited to the Palace of Independence. Addressing them, Aleksandr Lukashenko said that the work of the real services, finance, and social sectors must be closely monitored. The authorities' top task is to protect society from the negative consequences of any crisis — even if they are objectively explained by external factors. He said, "We never pinned our hopes on easy times. We must not do this in the future. However, the key task for all of us is different. At all costs, we must not allow the difficulties to be transferred to our people or even to be felt by them. No issues should concern them."

The President considers people should be reliably protected and managers should work with them honestly and openly. "If the effects are too severe, we must mitigate them as much as possible. To do this, we need to explain more to people what is happening in the country and in the world, and why we are making certain decisions... We must go to the people. Everyone should go to the people. We need to talk to them. It is necessary to explain our policy," he said.

The Head of State noted that working directly with people is an important feedback channel, "During the current election campaign, we've received many initiatives and requests from citizens. This powerful feedback channel should be used by economic services at all levels in their daily work. Everything that people spoke about and the order I signed based on the results of monitoring people's moods, must be perfectly executed."

Salaries, employment and prices are major state priorities

The meeting focused on the three most important issues that are constantly under the control of society: salaries, employment and prices. The Head of State noted that he has carefully studied all the

President meets heads of the economic bloc

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, "The socially oriented policy — centred round people, their interests and needs — has been and will remain the central link in making any decision. People have appointed us so that we would be guarantors of their security and peace of mind."

statistical and operational data, opinions and moods of people, saying, "I have not seen any special, striking results or successes in this work. The minimum that we promised has been reached. All regions and the city of Minsk paid an average salary of Br1,000 [over \$410] in May."

At the same time, the President once again stressed that the salary must be actually earned. He believes that all the conditions are available for people in agriculture and industry to get jobs and good salaries. "Take agriculture. We are harvesting an incredible amount. This has never before happened in the history of Belarus... If there is such a harvest, if



A good yield is likely this year

there are better figures regarding milk, meat and even exports of our agricultural products, then there must be money in the country," he stated.

As for employment issues, the Head of State noted no serious issues, "In general, there isn't a tragedy. We've managed to prevent a disaster — a slide into the unemployment pit, as has happened even in neighbouring states."

Media must work responsibly

Another topic on the agenda is that, in the current political situation, some media outlets have either reached the edge, or already crossed the boundaries of reason and engaged in destructive activities. The President demanded a strong response to such manifestations, regardless of the electoral campaign. He drew the attention of those responsible, including the Presidential Administration, to the need to pay closer attention to the information field. At the same time, not only the Internet but also traditional media — such as newspapers — are in focus.

"Look at the paper media. I've seen an issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belarusi* newspaper: You see, their leader, staying in Moscow or in the Kremlin, made a statement and tendentious information release has begun. Let them go to the field, where today there is a real battle, a struggle for the harvest. An unprecedented harvest is being seen now in the fields. Take a picture, tell us all about



this, show us a combine harvester that has already gathered a thousand tonnes of grain. Tell us about these simple people: workers who feed our country. Everyone will run to the shops tomorrow, including these scribblers, to buy bread for themselves, their relatives, friends and children," he said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko demanded that the responsible persons perform their duties without waiting for any special instructions from him.

"Look, we are the masters of this country. Perform your duties. If you can't, say you can't and then others will. Everyone in our Government and the Foreign Ministry is sitting and waiting for the President's command. What is this attitude to the country? BBC, Svoboda, Free Europe, and so on, all these streams... I'm not just talking about tendentiousness; they are calling for mass riots. Why do you put up with this? You accredited them here," he stated, drawing attention to the need to take appropriate measures in such cases, despite the pre-election period.

"Don't wait for the end of the election campaign. Expel them from here if they don't comply with our laws and call people to revolt... I will not say it again, despite the fact that we have entered this difficult electoral period, this is not the time to be insulted repeatedly. I'm already being smeared everywhere but they have also attacked the innocent chairs of precinct commissions who have families and children," said Aleksandr Lukashenko.

Based on materials of belta.by

Ready to defend the country

The President visited the 5th Independent Special Operations Brigade in Maryina Gorka — known as the elite of the Armed Forces of Belarus: the best of the best serve here. Such units always attract great attention since special operations forces are among the priority areas for development of the modern mobile Belarusian army, where ensuring the country's military security plays an important role.

Vadim Denisenko, the Commander of the Special Operations Forces, informed the Head of State of the structure, staff and main tasks of the brigade. The President then got acquainted with the weapons and equipment of the special forces units.

While inspecting the uniform samples — for ordinary soldiers and those designed for special operation forces — Aleksandr Lukashenko asked the military whether this uniform is comfortable and long-lasting. The soldiers and officers didn't voice any

complaints and noted that the new uniform is made of breathable fabric and wears well.

The President was also told in detail about weapons in use: machine guns, sniper rifles, assault rifles, grenade launchers and rocket launchers. The 'Viking' feed system — serviced for two years — caught Aleksandr Lukashenko's eye due to its artful mechanism: a gunman has a backpack behind with an ammunition belt loaded with 580 cartridges. These go through the belt in less than a minute.



While visiting Maryina Gorka, the President opened the 'AquaMarine' swimming pool and talked to local residents

The President called the 5th Independent Special Operations Brigade 'special' to our Armed Forces. He noted it was his fourth visit to the division and praised the military, "These are very highly-trained guys. I had much to do with them becoming that way."

Aleksandr Lukashenko also reminded those gathered that the country's Armed Forces have been modernised several times: they were adapted to the experience of waging war in modern conditions. "When I had to decide what Armed Forces we need,

especially after 2010, I realised that we need to have trained fighters in reserve, a brigade in the Armed Forces — just in case. It is undesirable, of course, that we ever resort to the Armed Forces. However, anything can happen. The United States is an example of this," he said, reminding everyone that the American President even had to bring the army out into the streets in some states.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Belarus' Foreign Minister, Vladimir Makei, paid a working visit to Latvia. In Riga, he held talks with his counterpart, Latvian Foreign Minister, Edgars Rinkevics, discussing a wide range of issues related to the development of political and economic contacts, including those between Belarus and the EU.

Maintain the trend of co-operation

Following the meeting, Vladimir Makei noted that Belarus has very good prospects for the development of further co-operation with Latvia. "Sadly, the situation with the pandemic has suspended our political contacts and political plans for some time, but I'm convinced that we will return to them when the situation improves. We are interested in close co-operation with Latvia in transport, logistics, transit, agriculture and high-tech: in all areas without exception," he said, adding that there are some concrete proposals for

developing contacts between Belarus and Latvia, as well as reaching a new level of collaboration.

"We also discussed the development of interaction between Belarus and the European Union. For us, the EU is an important foreign political and economic partner. We are interested to see that the ongoing trend of the development of comprehensive co-operation with the European Union and its member states continues and develops," Mr. Makei noted.

The Foreign Minister said that they also discussed such issues as regional se-

curity and the development of co-operation as part of the *Eastern Partnership* initiative — which is also important for Belarus. He acknowledged the productive nature of the projects being implemented within the *Eastern Partnership*.

Mr. Makei thanked his Latvian counterpart for an open and constructive dialogue, saying, "Only an approach such as this will make it possible to remove some concerns and decide how we should move on."

Based on materials of belta.by

We are happy to welcome guests



mfa.gov.by

Anatoly Glaz

Not only Belarusians, Russians and those from the EAEU states, but also foreigners from far abroad now monitor the news related to the Belarusian-Russian border with great interest. Over a month ago, Belarus and Russia signed an intergovernmental agreement on mutual recognition of visas and other issues related to the entry of foreign citizens and stateless persons on the territory of the member states of the Union State Treaty. That step — which attracted the attention of the leading global media — was immediately named 'a Schengen for two'. Is this comparison correct? When will the agreement enter into force and which countries are covered by it? To clarify these and other issues, we addressed the Head of the Information and Digital Diplomacy Office, Press Secretary of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry — Anatoly Glaz.

By Marta Astreiko

Mr. Glaz, why did we need an agreement on the mutual recognition of visas with Russia?

We are convinced that the agreement will have a positive impact on increasing the mobility of citizens: it will become much easier for guests of our countries to move, and they will be able to travel more. This is also another step towards further liberalising entry to Belarus. It is obvious that every year our country is becoming more open, happy to meet all respectable guests.

We will also not forget about the projected direct effect on improving transit and tourism potential, expanding inter-human and business contacts with foreign countries.

After the agreement enters into force, foreign citizens (stateless persons) will be able to visit Belarus if they have a Russian visa, and vice-versa — to visit Russia if they have a Belarusian visa for the entire period of its validity.

Moreover, the agreement applies to all types of entry visas. The control over the length of stay for foreigners will be carried out on the basis of border crossing stamps made by the competent authorities of the state of either party.

The document also solves the problem of foreign citizens crossing the Belarusian-Russian land border in recent years.

In other words, citizens of third countries will finally be able to cross the Belarusian-Russian border...

Quite true. Foreign citizens will be able to cross the Belarusian-Russian border in both directions along international railway and air routes, as well as along certain roads.



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Can we say that our countries are introducing an analogue to the Schengen visa?

No, we are not talking about the introduction of a single visa, but about mutual recognition of each other's visas. This scheme has proved simpler and more functional in this case.

The national legislation of our countries in this area is quite similar. Further convergence of visa procedures and visa tariffs occurred after the conclusion of the agreement between Belarus and the European Union on visa facilitation. Russia has had a similar agreement with the EU since 2007. In addition, over 80 percent of Belarusian visas are issued to citizens of EU member states at present.

Will the 'first entry rule' apply?

The 'first entry rule' is not envisaged by the agreement. If you have a Belaru-

sian visa, the first country of entry may be Russia and if you have a Russian visa — Belarus.

What documents, other than the national visa, are recognised as grounds for entry into the territory of the agreement's member states?

Foreigners will have the right to enter, leave, stay and transit through the territories of Belarus and Russia in accordance with the procedure established in the agreement, not only if they have a visa, but also a temporary residence permit, residence permit, or document for attending international events in one of the countries (Belarus or Russia). Foreign diplomats will be able to enter the territories of our countries if they have accreditation in one of them.

In this case, how will citizens of countries with which Belarus and Russia have a visa-free entry regime come into the country?

If Belarus and Russia have international agreements on visa-free regime with a third state, a foreign citizen (stateless person) of this state has the right to enter, leave, stay and transit through the territories of Belarus and Russia without a visa.

For example, Belarus and Russia have separately concluded agreements on visa-free regime with Israel and, on this basis, Israeli citizens will be able to visit Belarus and Russia without a visa and also cross the border between our countries.

Does this mean that an Israeli citizen can safely come to Minsk and go by car along the M1 highway to Smolensk to visit relatives?

Yes, that's right. They then will be able to return to Israel by plane from Russia.

What should be done if only one state has a visa-free regime in accordance with the international agreement?

In this case, the entry into the territory of one of the member states is visa-free, on the basis of the international agreement. Entry to the state with a visa regime is possible with national visas only.

For example, a Chinese citizen who arrives in Belarus without a visa in accordance with the agreement between Belarus and China will be able to enter the territory of Russia only if they have a Russian visa.

What will happen to the visa-free regime in Belarus for citizens of some countries when entering the national airport or the Brest and Grodno regions?

The agreement will not affect the visa-free regime imposed by Belarus on foreign countries unilaterally, including visa-free entry for citizens of more than 70 countries through the Minsk national airport for 30 days and to tourist zones of the Brest and Grodno regions for 15 days.

At the same time, such a unilateral procedure for visa-free entry, of course, restricts the stay for a foreigner only to the territory of Belarus or the corresponding region of our country. They will only be able to enter Russia if they have a Russian or Belarusian visa.

How will the agreement be applied to people whose entry is prohibited or undesirable in any of the countries?

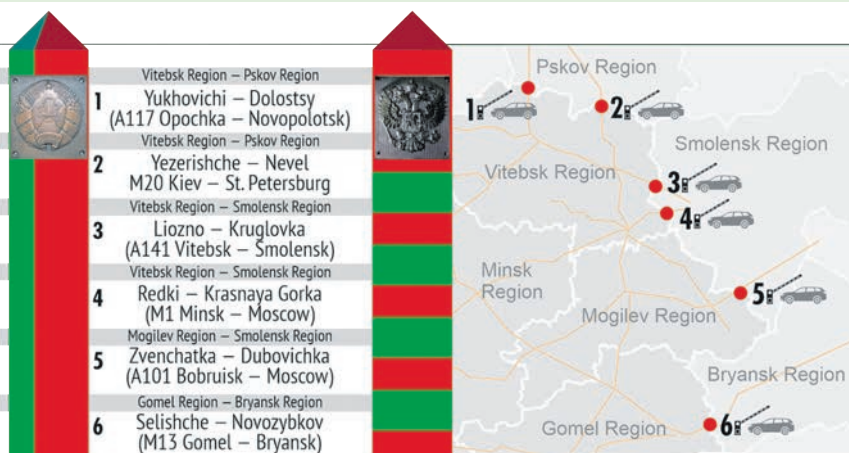
If a foreigner is prohibited from entering the territory of any of the member states (but is allowed to enter the territory of another member states in order to ensure national and other interests), then the person will be able to enter the territory of this second state. Of course, they stay will be limited only to this area.

Mr. Glaz, when will the agreement come into force?

The agreement enters into force 30 days after the date of receipt of the last written notification of the parties' compliance with domestic procedures. For Belarus, domestic procedures include the adoption by the National Assembly of the relevant law on ratification of the document.

Given the schedule of the Belarusian Parliament chambers, we can assume that the agreement will come into force by the end of 2020 — early 2021.

Highways available for foreigners to cross the Belarusian-Russian border



Advantages of electrification

Economical and eco-friendly: owners of electric vehicles receive green plate numbers

In March, the President signed a decree 'On Encouraging the Use of Electric Vehicles', outlining preferences for owners of electric cars. Among them are a zero VAT rate when importing a vehicle, exemption from payment of the fee for allowing electric vehicles to participate in road traffic and a free space in public parking lots. Since early July, electric car drivers have also enjoyed green plate numbers.

By Natalia Tychko

Present for his wife

The halls of the Inter-District Registration Department of the Minsk City Executive Committee's Traffic Police in 114 Timiryazev Street are full of people. Car drivers are receiving their new license plates. Among them are the owners of electric cars — including Valery. He's received plate numbers for a Tesla Model 3 Performance — a birthday present for his wife.

"With the abolition of VAT and duties, the final cost of an already economical electric car has become much more attractive. In addition, prices have fallen due to the coronavirus pandemic and, in the future, the freedom of 'fuel' for such a car from the oil market looks tempting," smiles Valery.

Dmitry Shinkovich has been thinking about buying an electric car for a long time. He lives in a private house in the suburbs of the capital, so he did not worry about where he would charge the car. Moreover, he admits that there are also many charging stations in Minsk. The man was encouraged to buy an eco-friendly means of transport due to the abolition of VAT and duties, as well as free parking spaces.

"The puzzle has finally come together, and I'm now the owner of an electric car. I've been driving for two days

and am very happy with the purchase so far," said Dmitry, sharing his impressions. "I fully charge the car in just 30 minutes and need to pay only \$1.25 (equivalent) for 100km travel."

Another advantage is the quick start of such cars. In this regard, eco-vehicles are comparable to sports cars. "If we talk about wishes, it would be nice to equip the national highways with charging stations in at least every 100km," Dmitry offered his views on infrastructure improvements. "Not all now dare

Obvious preferences

"Green plate numbers are intended for various categories of electric vehicles (cars, trucks, buses) and motor vehicles driven by an electric motor," explains a chief inspector for special instructions of the Interior Ministry's State Traffic Police, Anna Banadyk. "Black license plates are not prohibited for electric vehicles either."

Green number plates indicate that it's an electric car and such signs, for example, save time for car owners and supervisors in paid public parking lots.



Since early July, electric car drivers have enjoyed the advantage of using green number plates

to travel from Minsk to Nesvizh, for example, by such a car as it may need charging on the way."

Dmitry ordered his Nissan Leaf from America and it took one day to register the car at the border. Actually, like Valery, the man bought the vehicle for his wife. Interestingly, will electric cars in Belarus have women's faces in them?

The practice of using green plates is widespread in Europe and aims to visually identify an electric vehicle. It's possible to quickly see why the driver has not paid for parking or is driving in a public transport lane. Therefore, the traffic police recommends marking cars with new number plates. This will also help when travelling abroad.



40 sliding double doors are installed at each station

Attention on the screen

The stations of the first start-up section of the third metro line — 'Kovalskaya Sloboda', 'Vokzalnaya', 'Frantishok Bogushevich Square' and 'Yubileynaya Square' — will soon welcome their first passengers. Automatic doors are already installed at these four stations.

By Ilya Krasovsky

This security system is new for the Minsk metro and, thanks to the transparent glass safety barriers at the edge of the platform, no one will be able to get on the tracks intentionally or inadvertently.

Commissioning works are being completed at the 'Kovalskaya Sloboda' station which is beautifully ornamented by a series of graphic panels in the lobby and on the platform. The whole series is united by the general idea of plastic forms for forging products. Granite on the floor, ceramic porcelain tiles and metal on the walls and columns looks impressive and the futuristic atmosphere of the station's interior is supplemented with tinted safety screens equipped with light indicators. When the latter are red, it's prohibited to come close, but the way is open when they are green. The yellow indicator will light up when a train approaches the station.

The protective screen is 170 centimetres high and each piece weighs 200 kilograms. They are made of heat-proof unbreakable 9mm-thick glass.

"40 sliding double doors are installed at each station," explains the head of the 11th section of Building and Construction Department No. 2, Vladimir Kuznetsov. The experienced metro builder who, 38 years ago, laid the 'Pobedy Square' metro station adds, "We installed this system with an accuracy of up to one millimetre; a laser rangefinder was a great help to us."

In addition to the filigree installation, it was also necessary to correctly link the protective system with automatic train movement. Thanks to touch sensors, the screens open and close synchronously with the carriage doors. In case of emergency, the protective screens are equipped with emergency doors. The 'Antipanic' system works simply: the door is locked from the outside, but opens manually by pressing the handle from the inside: i.e. in case of an emergency. Any passenger — an elderly person or a child — can do this with minimal effort.

It is technically possible to install protective screens at existing stations but complex preparatory and technical work will be needed.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aleksandr Lukashenko to deliver State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly on August 3rd



The announcement was made on the National Legal Internet Portal. In accordance with a Presidential decree, the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic will convene for a third extraordinary session in Minsk on August 3rd, 2020 to hear the President's annual State of the Nation Address to the Belarusian People and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and to consider other issues. The Head of State previously said that the event was postponed because of the uncertain situation in the world regarding the pandemic and how it would have affected Belarus.

3rd Forum of Regions of Belarus and Ukraine to be held in Grodno from October 8th-9th

The city centre will host the event, with exciting events scheduled for Sovetskaya and Tizengauz squares, as well as Sovetskaya Street. A large-scale exhibition-fair of products of enterprises and organisations from the two states' regions will be held,



and diverse machinery will be showcased. Each region will demonstrate its peculiar attractions — such as industry, tourism or historical heritage. A gastronomic fest will be held in the city centre where guests will be able to taste national cuisine of the two countries. Traditionally, meetings of delegations, businessmen and the signing of various documents and contracts is planned.

East-West Chamber Orchestra conducted by Rostislav Krimer nominated for prestigious Opus Klassik European Award

A famous Belarusian musician, Rostislav Krimer, has been nominated as the 'Conductor of the Year', alongside Mariss Jansons, Paavo Yarvi, Simon Rattle and other famous conductors. East-West Chamber Orchestra — a resident of the Yuri Bashmet International Festival — is nominated as the 'Orchestra of the Year'. In addition,



tion, the orchestra's CD with chamber symphonies No. 1 and No. 3 by Mieczyslaw Weinberg is nominated in the 'Symphonic Performance of 20th-21st Century Music' category.

Ban on entering Belarus can be checked online

From July 1st, foreign citizens and stateless persons planning to visit Belarus can learn about the presence or absence of their personal data in the list of persons whose entry to the Republic of Belarus is prohibited or undesirable. This information is available for a foreigner or their representative free of charge on the official website of Belarus' Interior Ministry. To do this, it's necessary to visit the 'Services — Online Services' and then — 'Checking the Ban on Entering the Republic of Belarus' (<https://mvd.gov.by/ru/service/26>) and fill in all the fields in the proposed form. As a result, a message will be displayed — generated from the information provided.



Aleksey Matyush

ECONOMY

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Yury Mozolevsky



Oleg Rummo

By Anna Osokina

A turning point

Back in 2008, Belarusian surgeons were preparing for their first liver transplant operation. 2008 was declared the Year of Health and, several years before that, the President had set a goal to significantly reform the healthcare system. Much money was invested in opening new centres and re-equipping clinics, and doctors were expected to show that these efforts and resources were not in vain.

“Preparation for the first operation took almost two years — from the moment when it was decided that I would lead the preparation process for the transplant to the operation itself,” Mr. Rummo recalls. “We gathered together a team, prepared the necessary equipment, thought about how to better organise the cases, practiced operations in the pathology office and studied abroad.”

The first internship took place at the end of 2006: it was a trip to Moscow’s V. Petrovsky Surgery Centre. For several weeks of our stay there, our doctors got the clear idea that the main deterrent to performing such operations in Belarus was the lack of highly qualified specialists, while everything else could be organised.

“We put a stake on young doctors, those who have worked for several years after graduating from University. They very easily perceived everything new that needed to be mastered, knew foreign languages and also very much wanted to get new knowledge, do something meaningful, take their place in the profession,” Mr. Rummo says, adding, “After the successful operation, there were a lot of emotions, especially when we reported our success to the President. He was keenly interested in how our first patient was recovering. On the one hand, this was a huge responsibility, because we understood that there was no turning back now: we had declared ourselves, the whole country knew about us. On the other hand, we felt great support from the Head of State, and the meeting was very warm. Aleksandr Lukashenko clearly stated his position: Belarus has all the possibilities to be a developed country in general medical terms and in transplantology in particular. He made it clear that the country will do everything possible to realise such plans and save people’s lives. That’s how it all started.”

To live is the key

“Now we conduct absolutely all operations known globally — for adults and children. Our smallest patient was a four-month-old baby, the oldest — a 79-year-old man. We try even in the most severe cases, fighting for people’s quality of life. It is a great achievement that, after operations, our patients live a full life: work, travel, women give birth to children. More than fifty babies have been born to mothers who have undergone organ transplantation. Among them, 9 patients

From ground-level to great heights

Only 12 years ago, it was barely possible to talk about our success in transplantology. Only kidneys were occasionally transplanted. When a team of Belarusian specialists performed the first liver transplant operation in 2008, it became the starting point for the development of a whole medical discipline. Since then, more than 5,000 heart, kidney, lung, liver and pancreas transplants have been performed... Oleg Rummo, the Director of the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre for Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology, a Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor, corresponding member of the National Academy of Sciences and an Honoured Doctor of Belarus, who recently celebrated his 50th birthday, tells us of the difficulties that doctors faced in the initial stages and what this branch of medicine is now striving for.



In the operating room of Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre for Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology

“ Belarus ranks 9th in the world in terms of development of donation and transplantation. At the same time, we are not only at the forefront for a certain period of time, but we are also making plans for the future, building new centres, scaling them up with the most modern equipment and fighting for each patient.



Pavel Chuliko

— after liver transplantation, and one of them experienced a combined operation: her liver was transplanted together with the kidneys (this operation is unique on a global scale). After that, the woman gave birth to two healthy children. This is not the only unique surgical intervention by our doctors. However, the key is not that we have done something new, but that these people are alive now!” Mr. Rummo states.

Sustainable development

Oleg Rummo says with confidence that Belarusian transplantology is currently developing in accordance with all world trends and is already a ‘teacher’ for others. “Over the years, many specialists from the former Soviet Union have visited us for training and are now implementing our technologies. In addition, we have saved a huge number of patients from other states. For example, this year, for the first time a citizen of Azerbaijan received a lung transplant,” he explains.

It was very convenient that, last year, lung transplantation became applied widely. The aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic will also affect transplantologists. Those patients who were saved, but whose lungs were severely

damaged, will need to have transplants. Therefore, special attention is paid to this area at all stages.

“Transplantation of all organs continues even in an epidemiologically difficult period. In the first five months of the year, 150 kidney transplants were performed, 42 liver, 22 heart, 5 lung and 2 pancreas. True, it’s more difficult and stressful, but it is still our task, and we must fulfil it,” Mr. Rummo notes.

Obstacles as an incentive

“A person exists to overcome difficulties,” believes Dr. Rummo. “When there are no obstacles to achieving goals, everything is taken for granted and not appreciated. Of course, from the very beginning when the system was first created, it was not easy for all of us. However, we have shown everyone what we can do. Since 2008, we have performed 5,000 transplants, while last year was the most ‘fruitful’: 528 operations, including 374 kidney transplants, 93 — liver and pancreas, 52 — heart, 9 — lungs. These are a good European result: more than 56 operations per million people. We are significantly ahead of all our CIS neighbours.”

“Our team has been growing all this time. This is a really happy time when

everything is working out and new ideas are emerging. Sooner or later (there is no other way), you move to the stage of stabilisation. Here it is important to find new incentives, set new tasks, and inject ‘fresh blood’ into the team — be ready to develop high-quality specialists which are in great demand globally. To earn more money, to realise some of their ambitions, some will still leave but we need to make sure that they are replaced by specialists just as good,” says the doctor.

He continues, “I have never had any plans to leave the country — for several reasons. Firstly, I do not identify myself with any other country except Belarus. My roots are here, my whole life is built here and I love my homeland. Secondly, my elderly parents live here. Thirdly, my team is here. When you are the ‘face’ of the team, you have certain responsibilities. You can’t let your people down.”

Looking into the future with optimism

Though the Belarusian transplant service has achieved impressive success, hard work in this area continues.

“We are now seriously studying the response of the body to an alien transplant.

Our specialists are also engaged in the creation of artificial organs, as seen all over the world currently. A fully-fledged artificial ‘substitute’ has not yet been created anywhere but some success has already been achieved: there are individual cell complexes that prolong the viability of the organ for a while — so that a person can wait for a transplant,” says Mr. Rummo.

One of the long-awaited events is the construction of a new building which will be commissioned next year. This will be the most modern medical module in Belarus. In 2021, construction of a high-tech haematology block will begin; here, bone marrow will be transplanted.

“A bone marrow transplant programme has operated for 25 years in our country. However, the existing venues no longer correspond to modern realities. We’ll start construction next year using the funds we’ve earned, as well as a loan from a commercial bank. We will use the money we earn later to make payments. I think we should go on a commercial footing. The state has already invested enough in us and we need to earn money not only to update the material base, but also to pay decent salaries to our doctors,” the official adds.



Yury Mozolevsky

Best of the best in visual arts

The triennial of contemporary art opened at the Palace of Arts: the Republican exhibition has brought together applicants for the 2019-2020 National Award in Fine Arts. Artists and sculptors, creative photographers and designers, installation authors and art critics are competing for the highest award in 10 categories.

By Irina Ovsepyan

Among the organisers of the competition are the Culture Ministry, the National History Museum, the Minsk Regional Executive Committee and the Minsk City Executive Committee. Traditionally, artists who live permanently in the country and Belarusians who live abroad can participate: this year, applications were received from all over the world, including Japan and the United States, from wherever Belarusian artists live and create. The professional jury will have to work hard until August 7th when the results will be summed up and the winners of one of the most prestigious creative competitions in the country will be named.

“In total, we’ve received 358 applications in the ‘Painting’, ‘Graphics’, ‘Sculpture’, ‘Design’, ‘Contemporary Art’, ‘Art Photography’, ‘Monumental and Monumental-Decorative Art’, ‘Art Study and Criticism’, ‘Decorative and Applied Art’ and ‘Creative Debut’ nominations,” said the co-ordinator of the competition, Daria Ovchinnikova. “The participants include masters and young but already established artists. The



selection was very serious and, as a result, 92 works are competing for the National Award in Fine Arts.”

The competition traditionally gives the chance of the first serious career achievement for talented youth under 32 years of age; a special category has been created for promising newcomers, and the best of the best will receive the coveted ‘Tree of Art’ statuette on a par with recognised masters. In addition, the National Award annually attempts to update the important topic for



ordinary viewers — which often remains unnoticed — of modern art criticism. During the last biennale, the organisers openly complained that there was not enough intelligent criticism and scientific work but, this time, there has been a pleasant revival in the field of modern research.

“The ‘Art Study and Criticism’ category is becoming more popular and rich in projects,” states Ms. Ovchinnikova. “A large number of participants

— which makes us very happy — have also applied to ‘Art Photography’: this area has also become extremely popular. Entrants in the ‘Contemporary Art’ section are also amazing: the exhibition presents wonderful installations. The designers are also worth attention.”

In addition, during the National Award ceremony, the winners of the ‘Patron of Fine Arts’ and ‘For Contribution to the Development of Fine Arts’ were awarded.

Go to the palace to enjoy the exhibition



By Natalia Yemelyanova

History of Krichev Shipbuilding thematic exhibition launched at Potemkin Palace in Krichev — dedicated to the 235th anniversary of the city's shipyard

The show features exhibits from the museum’s collections, a variety of scientific and auxiliary materials that tell the history of shipbuilding in Krichev.

“1785 is known as the year of commissioning for the shipyard in Krichev. Its construction was initiated by the then owner of Krichev and the entire Krichev Starostvo [a type of administrative unit], Grigory Potemkin-Tavrichesky. It was he who was there at the origin

and formation of the Black Sea fleet of the Russian Empire, the ships for which were built in Krichev,” said the Director of the Historical Museum of Krichev, Vladimir Mishchenko.

At the Krichev shipyard, it was mainly cargo vessels, kayaks, small galleys and warships that were built. In 1786, one of the key ships — Desna — was built here for the journey of Yekaterina II along the Dnieper, from Kiev to Kremenchug.

“Later, 13 more sailing and 12 rowing vessels were built here. At that time, Krichev was a true cradle of the Russian navy. Our city was known far beyond the borders of the Russian Empire,” Mr. Mishchenko added. The exhibition will run until mid-August.

Modernised National Centre for Genome Biotechnology opens at the Genetics and Cytology Institute of Belarus’ National Academy of Sciences



Vitaly Pivovarchik

Decode any genome

By Irina Sergeeva

Construction works has been underway for the last two years and, as a result, modernised laboratories with the advanced scientific equipment have now opened. The centre fully meets the world requirements for PCR laboratories [PCR is a molecular biology technique].

“Genome biotechnology is viewed as very promising all over the world and is actively developing. The research of Belarusian scientists is not inferior to foreign work; we have a powerful biotechnological science industry. The opening of the modernised centre will enable us to reach a new level in the field of studying the genome of humans, plants and animals,” said Vladimir Gusakov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences.

In line with issues set to be solved at the centre, zoning of premises has been performed and a special ventilation system and airlocks are now available. The newly-conducted modernisation will significantly improve the quality and competitiveness of work and increase the volume and range of services provided for genetic analysis.

At the moment, the facility offers services in genetic testing of the predisposition to more than 20 socially significant diseases. Almost 17,000 genetic passports have already been issued. The upgraded centre will expand the range of services. Determination of individual genetic features of metabolism of vitamins, alcohol, cholesterol, skin aging and hair condition, as well as decoding the complete human genome will be possible.

scitechdaily.com

Postcard from the journey

The European Space Agency has released the first images of the Sun taken by its Solar Orbiter

This is the closest any camera has ever been to the Sun, with the satellite just 77m kilometres away from it when the photographs were taken — about half the distance between Earth and the star. “It’s as if the spacecraft had sent us a postcard from its journey,” said Daniel Müller, Solar Orbiter Project Scientist at ESA.

The satellite was launched on February 10th, 2020, and made its first up-close approach to the Sun in mid-June.

In the lead up to the big reveal, Mr. Müller said, “The first images are exceeding our expectations. We can already see hints of very interesting phenomena that we have not been able to observe in detail before. The 10 instruments onboard Solar Orbiter work beautifully, and together provide a holistic view of the Sun

and the solar wind. This makes us confident that Solar Orbiter will help us answer profound open questions about the Sun.”

The Solar Orbiter has six telescopes that capture images of the Sun and four in-situ instruments, which monitor the environment around the spacecraft.

Data from both instruments enables the scientists behind the mission to study the solar wind (the stream of charged particles from the Sun) and how this influences the entire Solar System.

The images seen today are the result of technical tests known as ‘commissioning’ to ensure all parts of the spacecraft are working. Scientists say that as the Solar Orbiter gets closer to the Sun, the images will become sharper.



Volunteer arrested over Nantes blaze

French authorities have charged a Rwandan church volunteer who confessed to setting the 15th century Nantes Cathedral on fire

An illegal alien from Rwanda has confessed to setting the fire that severely damaged a Gothic cathedral in the western French city of Nantes, his attorney said.

The 39-year-old, who volunteered at St. Peter and St. Paul Cathedral, has lived in France for several years and was eventually denied asylum last year. Police arrested him last Saturday after laboratory analysis determined that arson was the likely cause of the blaze.

Nantes’s public prosecutor Pierre Sennes said that the volunteer had been notified in November 2019 of an order to leave the country, after officials refused to grant him residency.

But so far ‘he has not elaborated in detail on his motivations’ for setting the blaze, Sennes said, adding that a psychiatric evaluation has been ordered.

“My client is co-operating,” his lawyer said, without speculating on what prompted the act. “Obviously it was a relief for him to show, as he would say, his repentance. As a believer, it’s important for him to show this effort.”

The church volunteer faces up to 10 years in prison and 150,000 Euros in fines.



Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel do an elbow bump at the European Council in Brussels, Belgium

EU leaders reach landmark 1.82 trillion Euros budget

Speaking to reporters, European Council President Charles Michel called it a ‘good deal’, stating that ‘Europe is solid’

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, meanwhile, underlined important concessions made in the search for a compromise, saying she regretted the cuts to ‘modern policies’ in research and innovation. French President Emmanuel Macron called it an ‘historic day for Europe’.

The recovery plan includes 390bn Euro worth of grants and 360bn Euro worth of loans due to a compromise with the so-called frugal four, now five, countries — Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

The recovery fund had originally set 500bn Euros to be handed out as grants and 250bn Euros in loans, which was supported and pushed by a close Franco-German alliance.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel had reaffirmed her support for ‘substantial parts of grants’ to be handed out to countries most severely-hit by the economic

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“That is the answer we need for an exceptional situation,” she said, adding that ‘exceptional situations also require exceptional efforts’.

Meanwhile, Austrian Prime Minister Sebastian Kurz shared a photo of the ‘frugals’, stating that the final package was a ‘good result for the EU’.

Now the deal will have to pass the scrutiny of the European Parliament, which will shortly convene a special plenary session.

The summit has seen walkouts and pointed jibes, with most admitting that there were tense moments in discussions. The focus of much of this was on the Dutch Prime Minister, his negotiating stance has earned him the monicker Mr. No.

While media narratives of summits usually cast it as a battle that is either won or lost, the political wounds of this summit may cut deeper than before.

Paris Plages opens with floating cinema

Paris Plages (Paris Beaches) opened this year with an outdoor movie showing on the banks of the River Seine, as the city is coping with the COVID-19 pandemic

MK2 Cinemas partnered with the city of Paris to organise this year’s event. “It’s been years, we’re creating operations to take the cinema out of the cinema rooms as a promotion tool, and after the few months of confinement, we thought we needed a way to tell to the people and to tell to the world that cinemas are open in Paris, that Paris is one of the worldwide capital of cinema, and also to create a way for them to enjoy with their families a magnificent night,” said Elisha Karmitz, CEO of MK2 Cinemas.

On July 18th, people watched the 2018 French comedy *Le Grand Bain* from boats or on deck chairs on the

Seine’s banks. Some said they felt safer at an open-air screening.

“I already went back to the cinema once, wearing a mask, but I have to admit there is still some apprehension to go back to cinema,” said Luc Bouvier, an attendee. “But here, since it is an open-air screening, there are less doubts, we feel safer.”

Paris Plages is an annual event held in July and August during which roads along the River Seine are closed to turn the waterfront into beach front.

The event was initiated in 2002 by the newly elected Socialist Mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, to help people cope with the hot summer in the city.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

When products were appreciated and minds open

Trading Minsk from late 19th — early 20th century

Last Sunday, Belarus celebrated Trade Workers Day. Interest in the exchange of commodity and material values has existed since at least the Stone Age. It's true that trade is the engine of progress. Time passes and products on the retail shelves change. However, the latter — even if in a virtual form — occupy the same place in people's lives: as important as it was thousands of years ago. However, at present, only archaeological artefacts can tell us how trade looked centuries ago, though Belarusian trade from the late 19th — early 20th century can be seen in old postcards and photos.

By Galina Ulitenok

More convenient trade in a prominent location

In the late 19th — early 20th century, the development of industry in Belarus was accompanied by an increase in business activity, expansion of the domestic market and trade, primarily, in large cities. In Minsk, the central part of the city developed as the main shopping enclave and the most popular shops were situated in Zakharyevskaya, Gubernatorskaya, Petropavlovskaya, Podgornaya, Preobrazhenskaya, Bogodelnaya streets, and Sobornaya Square. Signs were everywhere. In Gubernatorskaya Street, there was a Siberian fur store, a hat shop, Drubin's sausage store, a haberdashery and printmaker — Ivanov's services. A bookshop, a tobacco shop and a copper shop were also found there, in addition to a linen shop for a decent dowry. However, even the latter was less remarkable than a household shop selling typewriters, bicycles, motorcycles (!), guns (!!) and revolvers (!!!). Shopping has always been considered a difficult and tedious business and, for potential customers not to get too tired to reach the retail counters, a horse-drawn tram route was launched.

The 'shop landscape' of Zakharyevskaya Street was no less impressive; every possible item was offered for sale — even fresh milk from the cow that stood there! Apart from that, the literature and paper stores — situated close to the Eden Theatre, as well as the Nauka store (near the art department) and a perfume store offered their products... The Ruger House traded caviar, fillets, salmon and canned fish. Cafes, restaurants and pastry shops were also common. One of the photos features the F. Vengrzhetsky sweet shop, with a roofed veranda, which was very popular in those days. In front of it, there's a seller of newspapers which were a new product then.

Small but central streets were as busy as the main ones. In Shkolnaya Street — stretching from the Sobornaya Square down to the Nemiga, furniture and textiles, honey and wine, and other important goods for daily and occasional use were sold.

Good products and nice prices

The city's so-called Bernardine shops, which were rented out by the city administration, were amongst the most crowded places. To expand their area, the authorities bought several neighbouring land plots, including one near the Cathedra

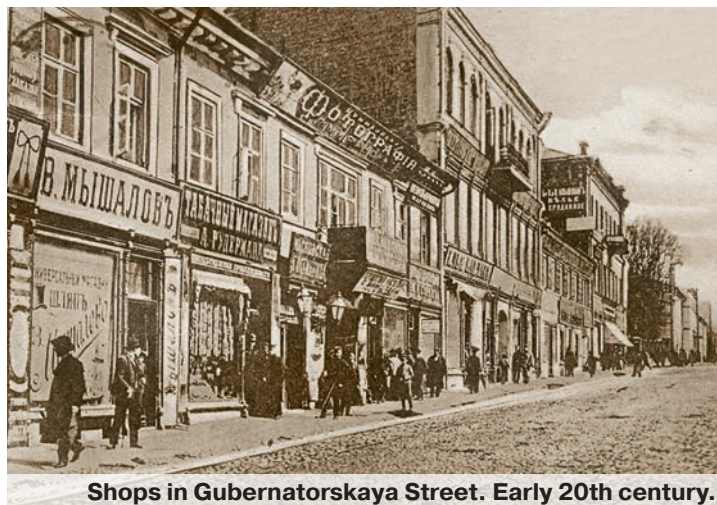
In the late 19th century, there were more than 2,000 shops and retail stores in Minsk



Shops of Shmelev's porcelain and Kreindel's colonial goods in Zakharyevskaya Street. 1918.



Vengrzhetsky sweet shop. Early 20th century.



Shops in Gubernatorskaya Street. Early 20th century.



Tsarfin's manufactory store and Tasman's furniture store in Shkolnaya Street. Early 20th century.



Shops on the corner of Gubernatorskaya Street and Sobornaya Square. Early 20th century.



Minsk. Merchants' rows. Early 20th century.

larly active, there were real traffic jams due to the flow of horse-drawn carts.

There were several large markets in the city, with Nizhny, Troitsky and agricultural stalls being the most popular. There were also specialised bazaars: selling fish, dairy, and horse. The fish selling rows were located next to the St. Yekaterina Church on a wooden platform built directly above the Nemiga. However, during the flood, when everything was covered with water, trade stopped. The meat market was closer to the Svisloch River, while traders of vegetables and herbs — who were mostly urban gardeners and farmers from nearby villages — put their products on the ground between the meat-selling rows and the river. The sale of meat created a terrible unsanitary situation, and the authorities tried to deal with it, but their intention to move the meat rows away from the centre and the river was not appreciated by the traders and buyers. The square near Lavsky bridge was used by sellers of milk products.

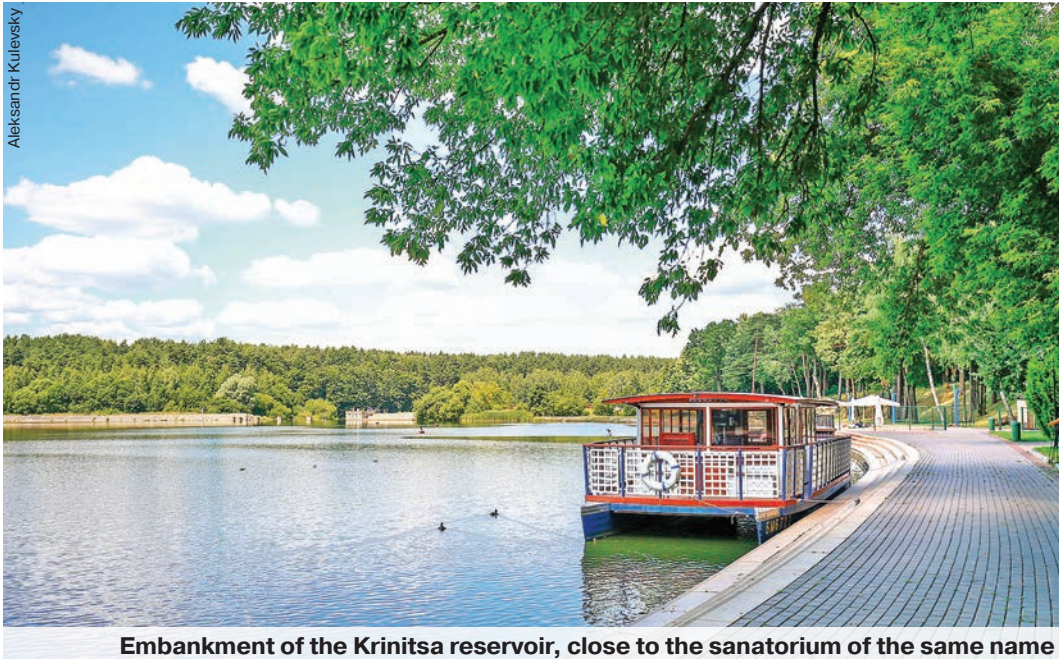
A true 'heart of Minsk' was created on Nemiga. Trading houses, wholesale, intermediary and banking offices and credit institutions that monopolised trade were becoming widespread, with syndicates and joint stock companies emerging. Minsk was already looking into the future — with its hypermarkets and huge shopping malls.

Postcards from the collection of Vladimir Likhodedov

dral, in 1896, though the church was not very willing to accept the deal, as well as stone shops from the Jewish community where primarily everyday goods were sold. In 1910, the Minsk city authorities rented 111 shops and 80 retail spaces in the merchants' row (Z. Shibeko, *Minsk a Hundred Years Ago*).

However, food trade prevailed — as was to be expected. To buy food, people went to Katerininskaya and the neighbouring Staro-Myasnitskaya and Kozmodemyanovskaya streets. People need food all time and, accordingly, the place was always noisy. On weekends and holidays, when the traders were particu-

Places to relax and recuperate



Embankment of the Krinitza reservoir, close to the sanatorium of the same name

Domestic demand on Belarusian health resorts is growing: they are already almost 70 percent occupied



Ruzhansky sanatorium

By Olga Korneeva

In May, the Republican Centre for Health Improvement and Spa Treatment of the Population stopped sending all categories of citizens to Belarusian health resorts; as a result, sanatoriums continued working at minimum capacity, using pre-purchased vouchers. “At the moment, we can see a significant increase compared to the period when we almost stopped working. The occupancy rate of Belarusian health resorts is increasing daily and already exceeds 67 percent,” the Centre’s Director, Gennady Bolbatovsky, has announced.

A record growth in open sales of vouchers was registered in the beginning of the third week of the month: on July 20th, 7,500 vouchers were sold to legal entities and individuals and the figure rose to 8,500 on July 21st. Moreover, 1,200 foreigners are currently recuperating at Belarusian health resorts (out of a total of 17,000 guests), and their number is also growing.



At Priozerny sanatorium

As for the depth of sales, there are generally no mass cancellations of reservations for August and September, including from Russians who are in no hurry to cancel trips. According to Mr. Bolbatovsky, the 100 percent occupancy is not an ultimate goal since it’s unachievable



At Priozerny sanatorium

with the temporary recommendations approved by the Healthcare Ministry and heads of the Republican Centre: measures including social distancing, increasing the intervals in conducting medical and other procedures, and anti-epidemic measures.

“However, the almost 70 percent occupancy we see now will enable our organisations to work with a positive economic result,” concluded Mr. Bolbatovsky.

TOURISM



Assistance for sightseeing

Publishing projects for local historians, tour leaders and visitors presented in Minsk

the *Mir. Castle* book — a richly illustrated edition that would make a great gift for visitors to the country.

“Anatoly Fedoruk’s *Old Manors of Grodno Region* was also published, becoming a true bestseller,” Ms. Sadovskaya said. “We receive 10-15 calls daily from people asking where to buy this edition. It’s a sequel. The first part was released in 2014.” Great research work lies at the heart of Anatoly Fedoruk’s books. The materials will be very

Land series dedicated to the Year of the Native Land. The series is expected to continue.

Ms. Sadovskaya also recommended the *Minsk. A Reference Book for Tourists* guidebook by Nikolai and Yevgeny Chirskys, *Minsk. The Heritage of the Belarusian Capital 1918-2018* two-volume book by Viktor Korbut and Dmitry Lasko and *Minsk. The Heritage of the Old City*.

try, and also Belarusian cuisine. There is no doubt that the postcard sets *Minsk* and *Belarus* will be of great interest to tourists.

Olga Vanina, the Director of the Petrus Brovka Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House, highlighted Nikolai Pivovarov’s *The Manors of the Vitebsk Region* — a reference book that provides a map of the old manors in the region and also describes their condition. The author worked on it for about 10 years. “The book is well illustrated, but we did not aim

By Natalia Yemelyanova

According to Anzhela Sadovskaya, a senior specialist at the Belarus Publishing House, such books are published in three languages — Russian, Belarusian and English — to make them available to domestic and foreign readers. *Under the Belarusian Skies*, by famous photographer Anatoly Kleshchuk, is among the recent projects of the publishing house. This is the fourth edition with completely new photographs that capture the beauty of the nature, flora and fauna of Belarus in different times of the year. Recently, the Belarus Publishing House has released



useful for guides who develop routes around this region.

More than 10 books have been published in the *Travelling Around the Native*

Another edition worthy of attention, according to Ms. Sadovskaya, is the *Belarus Welcomes* guide translated into English, French and Chinese. It describes the sights and architecture of all regions of the coun-

to make it a presentation edition. It caters for guides, those who work with children, cultural institutions and people who are interested in local sights,” she added.

Always ready

While training is just beginning again all over the world, Belarusian athletes are breaking records: several national, Olympic standard and world-class results. Swimming and athletics are the two biggest medal-winning sports in the Olympic programme and, with this in mind, the competitions held in Belarus recently say much about the readiness of our sportsmen.



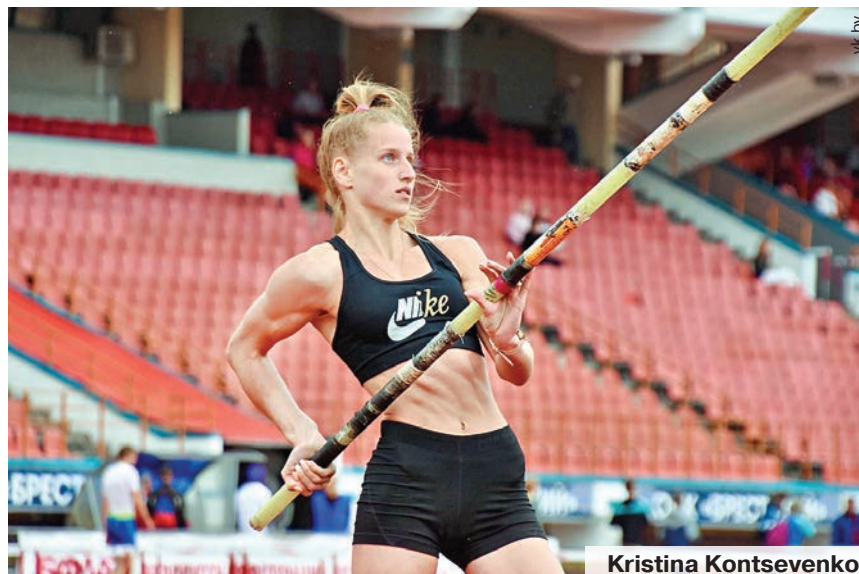
Anastasia Shkur dai

By Dmitry Komashko

Swimming: running on the waves

The Belarus Cup has been the first and only tournament for swimmers this season. However, it has demonstrated that our leaders were fully prepared for the postponed Olympics. Anastasia Shkur dai was the key star of the competition week. We're already used to the fact that this girl is a talent but she continues to surprise, updating national records at almost every distance. The Cup has become a logical continuation of this trend: she broke her junior record in the 100m freestyle distance and was 1.5 seconds quicker in a similar distance in the backstroke (in comparison to her previous national achievement). Moreover, Anastasia covered 100m butterfly in 56.95 seconds, though never before has a woman finished quicker than in 57 seconds, in Belarus. She wasn't, in fact, far behind the men. Her new record would have brought her fourth place at the last World Championship and fifth at the Rio Olympics. The sportswoman is not yet 18 and, with this in view, her speeds look fantastic.

Against this background, the repetition of the national record in the 100m breaststroke performed by Alina Zmushko looks routine: her 1.07,51 is 'only' 15th place in the World Championship. The main hope of Belarus in Tokyo is Ilya Shimanovich; this time, he's decided to save his strength and perform only in the non-Olympic 50m breaststroke distance. However, even there, he covered the pool from side to side in 26.83 seconds — 0.02 seconds faster than last year when he was placed fifth at the World Championship in Gwangju. The results surprised even the acting head coach of the national team, Andrey Lipnitsky, who said, "We expected that Ilya Shimanovich, Anastasia Shkur dai, Yevgeny Churkin and Alina Zmushko would perform well as usual. All of them not only met expectations, but managed to surprise us.



Kristina Kontsevenko

Shkur dai impressed even at distances in which she previously failed to perform well. So far, these results are not recognised by the International Swimming Federation but help us to understand the level of the athlete and get confidence in her preparations. In the 100m backstroke, Anastasia dropped more than a second from the national record and is now only about a second behind the world record. It is important to understand that she has trained without overseas camps and competitions, though Shkur dai and her coach are ready for her to swim even faster."

Athletics: jumping over yourself

By coincidence, the athletes also held their Cup in Brest almost simultaneously with the swimmers. They as just as surprised with the results. Here, the main character is Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova. In recent years, so many events have happened in the life of this athlete that there would be enough for a book: disqualification, return, a 2011 World Championship medal which found Anastasia years later... The Belarus Cup demonstrated that the athlete's statements of her desire to push the world's jumping leaders off the podium were not mere bravado. With the 6.93 — shown in Brest — Anastasia would

have taken second place at the World Championship in Qatar to confidently secure qualification for the Olympics. At the moment, Tokyo's results for Mironchik-Ivanova exist in absentia: official recognition of qualifying results in athletics will begin only in December.

Alena Dubitskaya and Tatiana Kholodovich demonstrated international level results. Dubitskaya even pushed the shot to a personal record: 19.27 metres! Alena should not worry about the Olympic standard: she made it with room to spare last season. The current figures inspire us to believe that, in Tokyo, she'll not simply enjoy the Japanese cuisine. In Rio, the sportswoman would have been placed among the top six and, at the last World Championship (where Dubitskaya failed even to reach 18.90 metres), she would have won a medal. Tatiana Kholodovich and Elvira German could be positioned on the podium with the figures shown during the Belarus Cup, while 18-year-old Kristina Kontsevenko (pole vaulting) once again beat the junior and youth records of the country — this time, to 4.50m. However, she promised to take another step towards the Olympic standard (4.70) at the national championships which will take place soon: on the days scheduled for the postponed Olympics.



Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova

The head coach of the Belarusian national team, Yuri Moisevich, notes that the results may be even more interesting at Dinamo Stadium. "We have already seen very strong performances in Brest. Alena Dubitskaya updated her personal record, while Tatiana Kholodovich and Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova showed very strong results. Elvira German is very fast; she has improved her start and is now ahead of our best sprinter — Kristina Timanovskaya — at the distance of 200 metres. Moreover, she demonstrated a good speed in the 100m distance with hurdles. I'm convinced we'll see great results at the national championship as well. Firstly, this is the main event of the season which is planned to be held in an atmosphere as close to the international format as possible. Secondly, the Belarusian Athletic Federation's sponsors have prepared attractive monetary rewards for results close to the Olympic ones. I think this will be a good incentive for many athletes this season," he commented.

SPORT

ARENA

71 Belarusian athletes so far secured qualification in 15 sports for 32nd Tokyo Olympics

A year ahead of the Games, this figure is now final. Qualifying tournaments will soon be resumed to continue through June 2021. Belarusian athletes aim to earn some 100 Olympic berths.



The Olympic flame will be lit at the upgraded National Stadium in Tokyo on July 23rd, 2021. Competitions will be held at 43 facilities (of them eight are newly built, 25 — built earlier, and ten are temporary venues). The revamped National Stadium has already hosted its first official competitions.

Arina Sobolenko and Victoria Azarenko to play at WTA event in Lexington

Belarus' top player and world's number 11 — Arina Sobolenko — will join our Victoria Azarenko (ranked 58th globally) to play at the WTA event in Lexington. The tournament will also feature two former world number one players — Serena Williams of the United States (ranked 9th) and her sister Venus Williams (67th) and also their fellow American Sloane Stephens (37th). The tournament in Lexington which is due on August 10th-16th, will be the second post-pandemic event.

The women's tennis season will resume in Palermo, Italy on August 3rd-9th. The event — held at the Country Time Club —



will feature Arina Sobolenko and world number two (former number one) Simona Halep of Romania.

Competition for four

The new season of the UEFA Champions League will kick off with a preliminary round held in a mini-tournament format. Taking part in the event will be four UEFA lowest-ranked clubs of the last year. Initially, San Marino will face Northern Ireland and Andorra will take on Kosovo in the semi-finals. The final is scheduled for August 11th and its winner will be through to the first qualifying round of the Champions League scheduled for August 18th-19th. From this stage, Dinamo Brest will join. The Europa League qualification starts on August 20th — featuring Belarus' BATE, Shakhtyor, and Dinamo Minsk.



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Photo of the week

Fascinating sunset on Lake Naroch, Minsk Region

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On August 2nd, 1905, Ilya Grigoryevich Nekrashevich was born in Mozyr, Mogilev Region. He was a Belarusian scientist, a founder of the Belarusian scientific school of plasma physics, Professor (1960) and Honoured Scientist of Belarus (1972). He taught at BSU, worked at the Institute of Physics and Technology of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences and authored scientific papers on solid-state electronics, physics and plasma technology. He died in 1993.

On August 2nd, the Day of Paratroopers and Special Operations Forces is celebrated in Belarus, in line with the Presidential decree. It traces its history back to Soviet times: on August 2nd, 1930, a 12-person unit was parachuted near Voronezh as part of the Moscow Military District Air Force training. Today, the special operations forces are viewed by the country's leadership as one of the most reliable links in the national security system of the Republic of Belarus.



On August 2nd, Railway Workers' Day is celebrated in Belarus. This professional holiday was approved by the Presidential decree in 1995. The Belarusian Railway still plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the country, reliably ensuring the functioning of the economy and the population's need for transportation.



On August 3rd, 1935, Yegor Andreevich Tomko — Vice-Admiral (1988) and Hero of the Soviet Union (1978) — was born in the village of Leonovtsy, Miory District, Vitebsk Region. He served in the Northern Fleet as an assistant, commander of torpedoes and submarines, a chief of staff, deputy commander, a commander of the submarine division. In 1984, he participated in the preparation and conduct of the first deep-sea tests of the K-525 submarine in the Soviet Navy. In 1984-1992, he headed the Higher Naval School of Diving and died in 2008.



On August 4th, 1945, a branch of the Yanka Kupala State Literary Museum — Levki — was founded in the village of Levki, Orsha District. Here, in 1935-1941, Yanka Kupala worked and lived. In 1977, the exposition was updated and significantly expanded and, in 1982, a new show was created for the 100th anniversary of Kupala's birth. It now includes the poet's summer house restored according to photos and memories. Since 1978, the branch is part of Kupala's Levki Memorial Reserve.

On August 4th, 1945, a branch of the Yanka Kupala State Literary Museum — Vyazyinka — was founded in the village of Vyazyinka, Molodechno District, in the house where Yanka Kupala was born. Since 1972, it has been part of Kupala's Vyazyinka Memorial Reserve. The exhibition features memorial and historical-literary artefacts. The interior of the late 19th century village house is recreated (including a stove, furniture, a cradle



and homeware), the personal belongings of Kupala's parents are on show. In the second half of the house, where the poet's brother Mikhail once lived, there is an historical and literary part of the exhibition.



On August 5th, 1975, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus was awarded the Order of Peoples' Friendship for merits in the development of Soviet science, economy and culture and training of highly qualified scientific personnel.

On August 6th, 1840, Algerd Rishardovich Abukhovich was born in the village of Kalatichi, Glusk District, Mogilev Region. Jointly with F. Bogushevich, he was a founder of the fable genre in Belarusian literature. He authored such fables as *The Head, Court, A Wolf and a Fox* and others and also translated works by I. Krylov, A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, V. Syrokomlya. The writer's works and translations were distributed in manuscripts during his lifetime. He died in 1898.

