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INTERNATIONAL

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Yelizaveta Sadovskaya — a pupil of Vitebsk's gymnasium No. 1, Arseny Lyutko — a pupil of Polotsk's gymnasium No. 1, and Alina Konyushkova — a pupil of Lepel's secondary school No. 1, were presented with a passport of the citizen of the Republic of Belarus on Constitution Day

We are citizens of Belarus!

On March 15th, the all-Belarusian campaign dedicated to Constitution Day — *We Are Citizens of Belarus!* — was held countrywide. In a formal atmosphere, 14-year-olds received an important document in each citizen's life from the hands of representatives of the legislative and executive authorities and honorary people of Belarus: a passport of the citizen of the Republic of Belarus. As is traditional, among the central figures of the patriotic project were the best representatives of the younger generation: excellent students, participants of scientific and practical conferences, winners and prize holders of subject Olympiads, Republican competitions, festivals and contests, as well as activists of the Belarusian Republican Pioneer Organisation and the Belarusian Republican Youth Union.



Security is in focus

Chairman of the State Security Committee, Ivan Tertel, reported to the President as part of a working meeting

The world has changed. Tensions and global conflicts are growing. The pressure on Belarus from external forces continues, while western partners don't shy away from sanctions and threats, inflaming the situation inside the country and through special centres that use various hybrid technologies. These and other topical issues were on the President's working agenda last week. Aleksandr Lukashenko received the Chairman of the State Security Committee, Ivan Tertel, with a working report. The focus was on the Committee's current work, the situation in the field of national security and protection of the Constitutional order.

By Yevgeny Kononovich,
Polina Konoga

In recent times, the State Security Committee has been recording unprecedented pressure on our country and plans to destabilise the situation in the near future. During his report to the President, Mr. Tertel outlined the main problems related to ensuring national security, the threats that are formed in the sphere of foreign policy and in the domestic situation.

"In general, we state that the situation in the country is stable," Mr. Tertel said. "At the same time, we pay attention to several points — primarily, an unprecedented pressure on our state from foreign partners, related to

the sanctions policy and other things. There are also attempts (reports have been made about certain people and plans) to destabilise the situation in the near future. We are talking about the period from March 25th-27th."

In addition, the State Security Committee has registered a growth in terrorist threats. "Unfortunately, they come from the territory of our neighbouring states," Mr. Tertel announced, adding, "In general, the Committee continues working. There is a definite instruction from the Head of State to minimise these threats. We will work hard, and we are focused on effectively solving problems. The situation in the country, according to our estimates, will be stable and law



Ivan Tertel

enforcement agencies have sufficient forces and means to respond to various threats."

Answering questions from journalists, Mr. Tertel confirmed the information previously announced by the President about the detention of a group of individuals and the seizure of their arsenals of weapons, "We've detained a group of people, seized a large number of weapons, ammunition and means of remote detonation of explosives. These are quite high-level professionals."

The Chairman of the State Security Committee drew attention to the fact (officially and unofficially, our foreign partners and the diplomatic corps also emphasise this) that the

acute period in the development of the situation, which was characteristic of the second half of 2020, has been exhausted, and the situation is stable. At the same time, foreign subversive centres and the special services behind them, as well as interested political circles, are making attempts to resume protest activity and destabilise the situation in the country in the spring.

"This was previously known as it has been announced for several months. We are ready for this and will take all measures to ensure that those individuals and organisations that make such attempts are held accountable in accordance with the law," Mr. Tertel stated.

FACTS AND DETAILS

The Chairman of the State Security Committee, Ivan Tertel, shared some details of his talk with the Head of State on the air of the Belarus 1 TV Channel. Below is a printed version of the interview.

On external pressure

Sadly, we face a situation when our country is being subjected to a policy of gross interference in its internal issues. We clearly see foreign countries' attempts to put pressure on our judicial and law enforcement systems — including with the use of the diplomatic corps.

I can't imagine such a situation, for example, in France, Germany or the United States. This is unacceptable. Moreover, we register — through the work of special services — financing of destructive activities on our territory; these ultimately should lead to destabilisation of the socio-political situation and to the resolution of issues in interests of other states on the geopolitical rift in which Belarus is currently located.

On the threat of terrorism

Over the past six months, we have seen a sharp increase in terrorist threats against our state from neighbouring countries. This is a well-known group of Olinevich — anarchists who lived in Poland and Ukraine, were provided with weapons. This is Avtukhovich's terrorist group. It's currently under investigation. Of course, in the activities of the special services, not everything can be revealed, but in due course our citizens will be able to see this in the

trials. From the territory of Ukraine, huge batches of weapons were delivered to our country for subsequent use in order to destabilise the situation. Terrorist acts were planned against objects of state agencies and individual officials — including the threat of the death of many people. Our Ukrainian partners at the Foreign Ministry level react sharply in these areas. For the Olinevich group and the Avtukhovich group, we sent specific requests with facts, phone numbers, and names of the persons involved through the Prosecutor General's Office. We haven't yet received any answers.

On the case voiced by the President during his visit to MotoVeloZavod

We have detained a group of people. Unfortunately, at the moment, in the interests of the investigation, I can't give their names and facts but I promise that, in the near future, they will be presented to the public.

Hideouts were found on our territory with a large number of explosives. There were, for example, tens of kilograms of tolite, much plastid, special weapons for reconnaissance and sabotage activities, remote means to undermine various objects...

These people have received special training, participated in various events on the territory of countries where there were armed conflicts.

On the 'hot' spring of 2021

At present, there are several so-called political emigrant, subversive centres abroad; here, the so-called 'fu-

gitives' reside. They are supported by foreign special services and financed by various funds. To date, the main flow of funds is directed to the destabilisation of the situation in the period from March 25th-27th. There is serious competition for these flows in Poland, Lithuania, Germany and other countries... The scenario is being developed abroad. In line with it, well known opposition representatives — Kostusev, Gubarevich and others, as well as the so-called 'co-ordinators' of house chats will become whipping boys.

It's envisaged that the organisers will receive the main financial dividends, and those people who attempt to officially organise the events will subsequently be responsible for taking people to unauthorised activities in streets with elements of provocation (with possible victims among ordinary citizens). An official application will be submitted for the event on March 25th. It is planned to gather people on Yakub Kolas Square and then march to the site near the Opera and Ballet Theatre. An uncontrolled gathering of people at the call of well-known Telegram channels and a clash with law enforcement officers will then follow. More severe scenarios are possible with the participation of third parties and possible injuries to people who will be present in the area.

The second scenario involves applying for official events close to Bangalore Square, followed by gatherings of people to unauthorised actions in the central areas of the city, with provocation of law enforcement agencies.

The third scenario involves (if the application is not approved) tracking the situation, information manipulation, focusing on house chats and co-or-

dinators, followed by calling them to unauthorised actions and clashes with law enforcement agencies in the central part of the city.

In this regard, we clearly understand our tasks, we know exactly who is planning this abroad, the channels of receipt of funds, we know the performers on our territory (including house and district chats) by name — who they lead, what actions they plan. We will act strictly, in accordance with the law.

On prevention

We work to prevent unrest. We also appeal to our citizens to protect their loved ones, especially minors, not to go to these demonstrations, to understand that it's beneficial to those who simply control the money. In the end, their goal is to earn money and, simply speaking, to destroy the reputations of these famous people, whose names I called, as well as those who allegedly control house and district chats.

On the information security concept

There are various mechanisms for using the information space for territorial activities. The events of recent months have shown that we need to respond flexibly to this: to take measures, on the one hand, in accordance with international standards, and to be clearly guided by our national interests, on the other hand. We know that the Internet is quite strictly regulated in Germany and some other countries. There are facts about the blocking of the American leader's accounts; there is no question of democracy in this case. National interests are the key.

Constitutional Commission commences its work

The Constitutional Commission — formed following a decision of the 6th Belarusian People's Congress and tasked to prepare proposals on changes to the Basic Law — has begun its work. The President met its members, noting the significance of the fact that the Commission is starting its work as the country celebrates Constitution Day.

Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated Belarusians on the holiday and addressed those present at the meeting, noting, "With the Basic Law, we have paved the way for the formation of the first sovereign state in our land. The significance of this Constitution will be probably defined primarily by this fact. The Constitution, adopted 27 years ago, has become a symbol of a new era, which is a free, peaceful, stable life for the Belarusian people."

According to the President, the state has been developing through all these years following the principles laid down in the Constitution. "We have achieved a lot, and life has often proved the rightness of our chosen path. Peace and order in our country, social harmony, which have been preserved despite numerous attempts of external forces to bring discord into our common home, have become the main indicators. Last year's events demonstrated the system's sustainability. This is due to nothing but the firmness of our stance and the principles of state-minded people, those who have saved the country," stressed Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The President added that all the most important regulations are envisaged in the Constitution but people following them is even more important. He pointed out that, at present, Belarusians have realised what they might lose: a peaceful life and their sovereignty. These are the main

values that stand above both political and personal differences in our society, "Time has again shown that the guarantor of these values is a strong government and people who protect their way of life and their ancestral traditions. While getting down to such a responsible and significant task — correction of the Basic Law — we must take into account all the lessons of the past, including recent ones. I have no doubt that each of you is aware of your role in this process. You will go down in history as co-authors of the amended Constitution. Most importantly, you take responsibility for the future of our country."

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that, when the Commission was being formed, the goal was



set to cover all walks of life and activities of society to take into account, as much as possible, the interests and the voice of every Belarusian. With this in mind, the Commission features representatives of state bodies, the



legal sector, public associations, various sectors of the economy and the social sector.

In his commencement address to the Commission members, the Head of State high-

lighted some essential aspects, "The activities of the Constitutional Commission should be transparent and open. The Commission should take on board people's initiatives, because the public should have confidence

in the results of this work."

He noted that many proposals to amend the Constitution had already been submitted during public debate at dialogue platforms, as well as through the parliamentary procedures and during the preparations for the 6th Belarusian People's Congress.

Importantly, as Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, the changes into the Basic Law do not mean that the acting Constitution has exhausted itself. "With this Constitution we have established ourselves as a sovereign, rule-of-law, independent, welfare state and, after more than 25 years, this document is absolutely relevant. Incidentally, a recent opinion poll has proved it," the President said, adding, "If I'm not mistaken, more than 65 percent of those polled don't deem it necessary to amend the Constitution. Each norm of the Basic Law should

serve the main purpose: to preserve the country for our children and grandchildren. We'll do this."

During the Head of State's meeting with the members of the Constitutional Commission, the Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly — Vladimir Andreichenko — noted, "The work won't be easy. It's necessary to ensure the further development of our state and society, while preserving sovereignty, civil peace and harmony. This is confirmed by the analysis of the proposals that were received during the dialogue platforms and sent directly to the House of Representatives. The main conclusion is that the majority of our population is against radical reforms. Almost no one doubts such immutable values as the country's independence, social focus, multi-vector foreign policy, development of friendly relations with Russia and participation in integration processes. People support the idea of preserving the Presidential Republic, realising that it guarantees the effectiveness of changes in the economy, state structure and social development."

With this in view, amendments to the Constitution should be approached very carefully, believes Mr. Andreichenko. "I'm convinced that the potential of the current Constitution is far from being exhausted and amendments should be carried out only on those issues that are really overdue and obvious," he said.

The nation's health is the most valuable capital

The President visited the Molodechno Central District Hospital. He thanked the doctors for their work in the pandemic and discussed the development of inter-district health centres.

The situation with the coronavirus in our country has stabilised but is this a ground to be complacent and neglect precautions? "The infection has not gone away yet," said the Head of State when he arrived at the Molodechno Central District Hospital. At the same time, he stressed that we know what to do. Doctors already understand how to deal with the infection which was unknown just a year ago. Aleksandr Lukashenko thanked them for this, explaining why he primarily came to the hospital, "Thank you for what you are doing in these difficult times — not so much for treating people but learning to cope very quickly with various diseases. Thank you for learning how to treat different people. We didn't understand anything about it, we didn't know anything — but now we've learned."

The Chief Doctor of the Molodechno Central District Hospital, Daria Kolyadich, informed the Head of State about the system of medical care in the district.

Molodechno isn't a small city and so it's on the site of this clinic that the formation of an inter-district centre of specialised medical care for residents of four districts is being completed.

This topic has been the focus of Aleksandr Lukashenko's attention for a long time. With this in mind, he reminded of his instructions to establish 11 centres of the kind countywide. Much has been done already and, according to the President, a great job lies ahead, "It won't be possible to develop district hospitals to the highest level; it's unnecessary. Huge funds are needed for this. Regional hospitals should delegate some of their functions to inter-district centres. Everyone wants to receive qualified medical care."

Ms. Kolyadich told the Head of State in detail how the district centre fought against COVID-19.

Aleksandr Lukashenko warned: we shouldn't relax. Recently, a British strain of coronavirus was detected in our country. The President believes there's no need to panic, the situation is under control.

There are fewer coronavirus patients in the Molodechno hospital now than at the 'peak' times but still they are here. Therefore — following the already established tradition of visiting medical institutions in recent times — the Head of State went to the 'red zone'. Aleksandr Lukashenko asked virtually each patient about the state of their health, their stay in the hospital and their recovery.

Nationwide vaccination will help defeat the pandemic. The vaccine was delivered to our country by the People's Republic of China. Our closest ally, the Russian Federation, also helps:



it has provided Belarus with the technology for the production of its vaccine. Moreover, the Republic has set a project to develop its own vaccine. The President noted that its production is in the near future, "By the end of March, we will produce our own vaccine [based on Russian technology] and I really hope that, in the second half of this year, we won't simply produce a vaccine using the Russian technology, but will make our own. Specialists are working on it now; I asked at the level of the Head of the Academy of Sciences. He promised me it would work and advised me not to worry."

During the conversation between the President and hospital staff, the question of whether he himself would be vaccinated against COVID-19 was voiced. Aleksandr Lukashenko replied, "I haven't checked but I hope I still have antibodies. I hope for the best and don't panic. I cannot afford to go into a panic. If the President starts panicking, you will follow suit, and then everyone will. I've made a decision that — since I have antibodies — I don't need to be vaccinated. However, the time will come when I'll have to."

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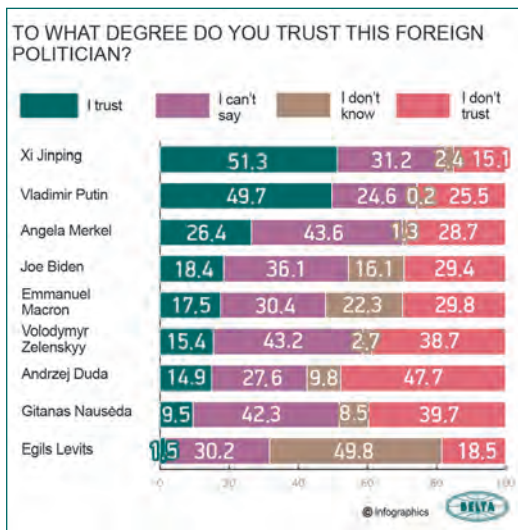
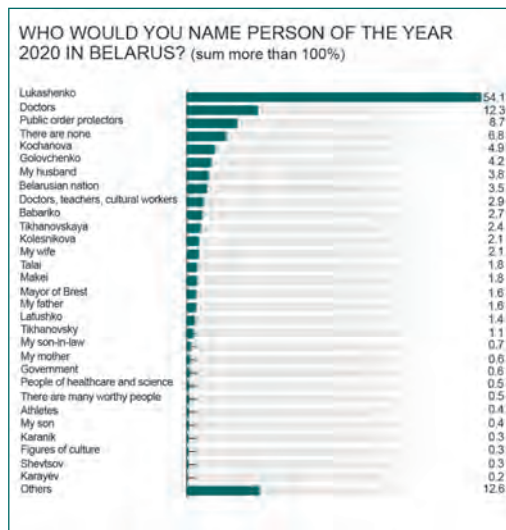
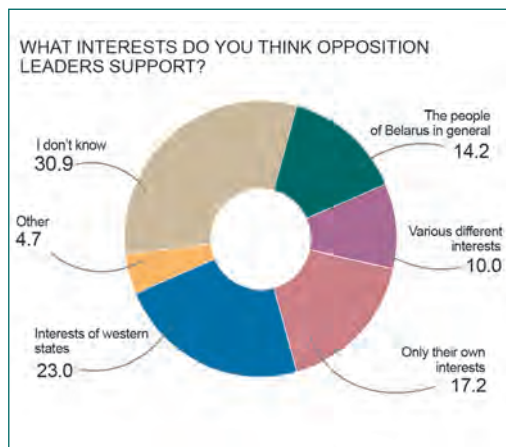
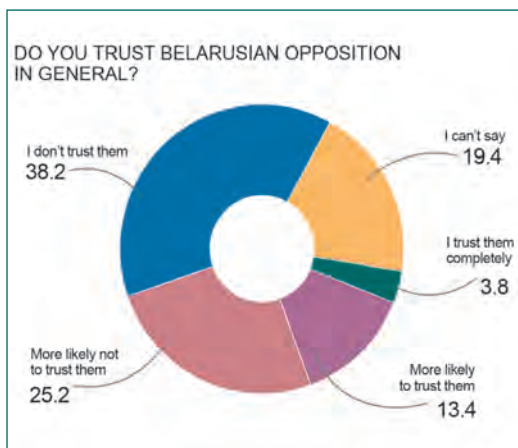
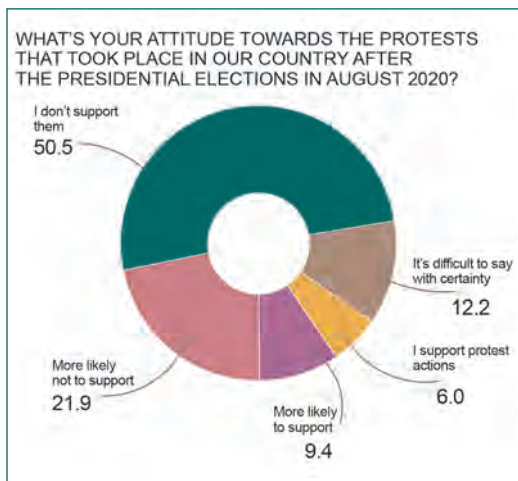
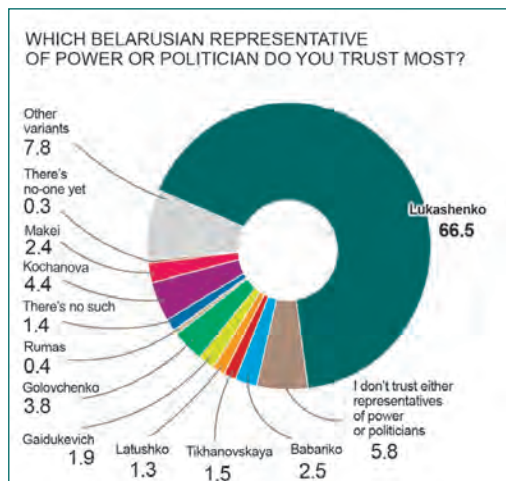
Social thinking. Focus

From January 12th to February 8th, 2021, the EcooM Analytical Centre with the involvement of the Ukrainian Politics Foundation and in co-operation with sociological centres accredited in Belarus, commissioned by BelTA, conducted a Republican public opinion poll, entitled *Social Thinking*. Using both paper questionnaires and tablets, 9,896 respondents were interviewed across 108 settlements in all regions of Belarus, observing the principle of representativeness for citizens from 18 years old by sex, age, education level, type of settlement and region of residence. The statistical sampling error margin doesn't exceed 2.5 percent. We bring to the attention of our readers the highlights of the survey.

By Dmitry Kryat,
Yevgeny Kononovich,
Dmitry Umpirovich

According to BelTA, the two-stage field study was preceded by a pilot telephone survey, making it possible to prepare the necessary tools and build tactics for collecting primary sociological information. At the first stage, a territorial survey of the economically active population was carried out, based on the results of which a decision was made to hold the second stage with a wider coverage of various categories of citizens. Alongside the filling out of formalised questionnaires, the interviewers were tasked with studying the needs and expectations of society and collecting suggestions from the population to improve government policy in various areas. The emphasis was made on open-ended questions, enabling the researchers to maximise the personal point of view of the respondents.

The results obtained make it possible to give an objective characterisation of the public opinion of Belarusians, says Sergei Musiyenko, the Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre. He commented on some of the data, in particular the fact that 5.8 percent of respondents don't trust any of the government officials and politicians, "This is a group of people that doesn't trust anyone, and it's necessary to take into account this opinion and understand that it exists. At the same time, it is good that Mr. Golovchenko receives a significant percentage, although he hasn't been working for long as PM. This means that you can see the results of his work and that of his press service. All this together gives a high percentage and not everyone who takes a new position immediately receives a significant rating. Ms. Kochanova, who conditionally holds second place in the rating, also took it not simply on the basis of her post. Her meetings with young people and students have attracted attention lately. Of course, we see involvement in the process. Mr. Makei is in the foreign policy field, and he often has to comment and speak. Let's recall his interview with his wife, which was widely discussed in society. Now we can say that his rating may be higher."



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

Sergei Musiyenko drew attention to the drop in the rating of trust in the so-called 'opposition leaders' who fled the country, "This is their activity, inaction or inability, when, calling themselves politicians, they couldn't become such. Or Mr. Babariko, who is excluded from the political field, but has more than those who constantly disrespect the

Motherland. People also notice such things." A person who wants to make your country worse, you, and your enterprises, cannot be trusted. That is, they do everything to please someone, but not the people. The Head of EcooM also noted that 72.4 percent of Belarusians don't support the protests that took place in

our country in August 2020, "When these things happened in Minsk, they called from other cities and said: what's going on there, I can't go to the theatre with my child. That is, they lived their lives in peace while the normal life of Minsk for some period was largely paralysed. People don't want to repeat this. For what? There is no goal, no

sense. We see in this group of answers a lack of understanding of what's happening. So, these support numbers reflect reality pretty clearly."

On the other hand, 30.9 percent of Belarusians do not know whose interests the opposition leaders express, and Sergei Musiyenko considers this very symptomatic.

"30.9 percent is a very eloquent figure," he said. "Whose interests do they defend? Naturally, not ours. At the same time, western countries are also clearly linked, as well as their personal interests. Because these squabbles cannot be hidden: confrontations, who is the leader? who will take the main prize? mutual accusations. People see these selfish interests of other countries. And this is a betrayal. After all, we are a country of partisans, not traitors."

Moreover, Belarusians are aimed at further building mutually beneficial co-operation with Russia — 71.2 percent, the European Union — 31.5 percent, China — 27.4 percent, the EAEU — 23.6 percent, the United States — 10.3 percent. Why is Russia in first place? The analyst's opinion on this matter is as follows, "Everything is clear. We are being given the Russian vaccine, we see support in a difficult period, a counter movement. Therefore, naturally, such a response is human. And at the same time, there is a drop in the indicators of the European Union, when it closes itself off from us, when we receive messages and threats from it."

Among foreign politicians, the most trusted are the leader of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping (51.3 percent) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (49.7 percent). The most distrusted among the population are the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda (47.7 percent), as well as the President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda (39.7 percent) and the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy (38.7 percent).

At the same time, Sergei Musiyenko noted, "Trust is confirmed by years of interaction. However, trust in a politician is trust in a country. We know that Lukashenko leads the trust ratings in Ukraine and among the leaders in Russia."

Market dictates conditions

This has been announced by the Deputy Industry Minister, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, on meeting Gomselmash JSC workers. According to the official, plans for the next five years envisage the creation of seven state corporations. "As a pilot project, a state corporation for agricultural machinery is planned and the basic document is currently being developed. The industrial, staff and technological potential of five holdings — Minsk Tractor Plant, Gomselmash, Bobruiskagromash, Lidselmash and Minsk Motor Plant — is to be merged. The circle of participants outlined is preliminary as it's yet too soon to speak of the project in detail — since it's at the pilot stage. We've just started to work on it," Mr. Ogorodnikov added.

At the same time, the Deputy Industry Minister stressed that it is already possible to say for certain what Gomselmash will represent as part of the state corporation. It will remain the same legal entity as it is now. A simple approach is planned: it always takes time and money to earn a name and credibility for a new brand, while

Gomselmash Holding to become part of a pilot state corporation in agricultural machine building



Gomselmash's products are well-known. With this in view, promotion of the state corporation will be built as the promotion of brands," Mr. Ogorodnikov explained.

The Deputy Head of the President Administration, Dmitry Krutoi, also noted that, in a difficult 2020, the global economy as a whole fell but the only players who resisted

and added from 10 to 15 percent to their main indicators were large conglomerates with billion-Dollar turnovers. "They occupy a third of the world's economy. Even in the crisis, they were able to earn more than everyone else. This is a real market and it should be taken advantage of. I think we'll find our niche here," he stressed.

Mr. Krutoi noted that the idea of creating a large state corporation in mechanical engineering was announced at the Belarusian People's Congress. Successful experience has been seen in Europe and China. Such a structure can help in specific areas: simplification of import purchases of raw materials and sales of products to non-traditional markets.

Gomselmash Holding is one of the largest manufacturers of agricultural machinery, a leader in the global market for combine harvesters and other complex agricultural machinery. The company produces model ranges of grain and forage harvesters, cob and potato harvesters, mowers and other agricultural machinery. Gomselmash vehicles work in the fields of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Argentina, Brazil, China, the Republic of Korea and the Baltic States. The company has a wide distribution network, joint ventures and assembly plants.

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Creative ideas are expensive

Start-ups and new projects are actively coming to the Hi-Tech Park

By Ilya Kryzhevich

Recently, the Supervisory Board of the Hi-Tech Park has decided to register 65 companies as residents. The HTP press service states that more than half of the new participants were registered last year and in 2021. At the moment, the project unites 1,021 companies.

Among the new participants, there are companies engaged in medicine, fintech, e-commerce, the gaming industry, transport, manufacturing and agriculture. For example, the Integration Distribution Projects company plans to develop software and equipment for paying for travel through biometric terminals

in the Minsk metro, and will also create a workstation for a border guard with a facial recognition system for use when crossing the border. In turn, Badrobot will develop a software and hardware complex consisting of a self-designed smart construction printer, embedded software and a CAD / CAM application for managing a construction printer.

Apart from Belarusian companies, residents with foreign capital — including two development centres of foreign corporations — have joined the HTP. Among them is Altoros Bel. As a development centre of Altoros Corporation (USA), it plans to create and support software in the areas of decentralised finance and limiting the spread of COVID-19. Also, the multinational group of

companies Deriv has registered Derivative BY as a HTP resident to work in Belarus on platforms in the field of online trading.

A Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and Professor of the Belarusian State University's Economy Department, Mikhail Kovalev, believes many states aren't yet able to provide the same favourable conditions as Belarus, "Therefore, the admission of new residents to the HTP continues and the total number has already exceeded a thousand. Moreover, this year when the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it's become necessary to increase the amount of income tax from 9 to 13 percent for income received by individuals under employment contracts from HTP



residents. As I know, most of the owners of the companies participating in the project have reacted to this increase calmly and come to a compromise solution."

Despite the global high-profile events of 2020, the ICT sector continues to take root in the traditional economy. COVID-19 has also contributed to this in many ways: people keep to social distancing, remote work and training, and digital forms of entertainment. In turn, business owners have had to look for new opportunities to transfer their work online at an accelerated pace. During the pandemic, a new model for the growth of the digital economy has begun to take shape.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The first batch of petrol shipped to the Russian port from Belarus



These deliveries will be carried out as part of an intergovernmental agreement between Russia and Belarus.

The Portenergo terminal of the commercial sea port in Ust-Lug (Leningrad Region) has started accumulating a ship's load of petrol delivered from Belarus' Mozyr Oil Refinery. Fuel has been shipped ahead of schedule.

In mid-February, Russia and Belarus signed an intergovernmental agreement on organising the reception of Belarusian oil products in Russian seaports. It assumes trans-shipment of more than 9.8 million tonnes of cargo in 2021-2023.

The port in Ust-Lug is set as the main point of delivery of light oil products.

Chinese undergraduates to study in Belarus under English-language programmes

More than 100 Chinese undergraduates are in the process of enrolment to the Polesie State University's different specialities under the English-language curriculum. Among them are 'Physical



Culture and Sports', 'Economics and Management', 'Marketing' and 'Microbiology'.

Applicants from various regions and universities of the People's Republic of China have showed interest in the original Belarusian training programmes. This is the result of co-operation between the Polesie State University and universities of Fuzhou, Qufu, Qingdao, Shanghai and others.

Modern technology makes it possible to organise the learning process extremely flexibly and maintain constant direct contact with the students.

The Rod of Government (1667) by Simeon Polotsky presented to Belarus

The solemn ceremony took place in Moscow during a meeting between the Belarusian Ambassador to Russia, Vladimir Semashko, and Archimandrite Oleg (Cherepanin) who heads the deanery of the Russian Orthodox Church in Thailand.

The Rod of Government was first published in 1667 by the decree of the Great Moscow Synod. This work



is a reasoned and literary response to the comments and claims of the Old Believers who opposed the church reforms of the 1650s which caused a split in the Russian Orthodox Church. Simeon Polotsky's book was in a private library, then it was bequeathed to Archimandrite Oleg who, in turn, considered that the rarity should belong to Belarus.

Ecological route under development at Sporovsky Republican Biological Reserve

Works are being conducted for the project of the Wetlands Global Environment Facility which is being implemented by the UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus.

The previously operating ecological route in Sporovsky was linear: it led in both directions along the same route. The new one will be of a 1.5km loop with two crossings over the Yaselda River. The wooden flooring is almost ready and it's now planned to build ferry piers, prepare a large obser-



vation deck on the swamp and several places to relax.

In addition to the existing one, a second ferry will be purchased. The route is planned to be ready by late spring.

Going for a healthy trip

Spring has come and it's high time to think about upcoming vacations. Although 2020 showed the fragility of our long-term plans, the confusion caused by the spread of COVID-19 has been replaced by a desire to schedule the safest, most pleasant and useful vacation. Fortunately, tens of thousands of places in Belarusian health resorts make it possible not only to relax properly but also to improve our health. The Director of the Republican Centre for Health Improvement and Spa Treatment of the Population, Gennady Bolbatovsky, tells us more about what the upcoming holiday season will bring.

By Irina Sergeeva

Situation under control

The coronavirus pandemic has created a negative impact on the performance of health resorts, but it has failed to significantly affect the availability of health resort and wellness services for the population. "The average annual occupancy rate for the year was 60 percent. Taking into account the fact that we suspended sending all patients to health resorts for a month and a half, I believe the occupancy rate isn't bad," says Mr. Bolbatovsky.

Thanks to the good work of marketing services and the pricing policy (sanatoriums offered promotions and discounts), it was possible to attract more Belarusian citizens — thus compensating for the losses in exports. In total, more than 800,000 people improved their health last year.

"The situation is now under control. In January-February, the occupancy rate of our health resorts stood at the level of 60 percent and more vouchers are being sold for the coming period: over 50 percent of places in health resorts have already been booked for May. These trends are encouraging," adds the expert.

As predicted, a total of about 1 million people will be serviced at Belarusian health resorts this year.

Every cloud has a silver lining

More relaxed working hours, the forced suspension of activities due to COVID-19 have unexpectedly brought a positive effect: Belarusian health resorts used this time to strengthen their base, carry out repairs and reconstruction. As a result, last year, they invested into development almost 1.5 times more than in 2019.

"Br108m (about \$42m in equivalent) were invested in 2020 by health resorts into strengthening of their material and technical base. It's a record figure for the last 20 years and almost 1.5 times more than in 2019. So we see significant



Plissa sanatorium and resort complex

360travel.by



th.by

progress," says Mr. Bolbatovsky.

Interestingly, even in such a difficult period, the sphere continues its development and, in early 2021, another health institution — Riviera SPA — joined the list. In total, there are 106 health resorts for 30,000 guests in Belarus, in addition to 200 health organisations. Among the latter are houses, recreation centres, boarding houses and children's health camps — for almost 40,000 people.

"There are still places in Belarus where health resorts can be built: places with sources of mineral water or mud reservoirs with sapropels. We're looking for investors. This is long-term money, so it pays off," adds Mr. Bolbatovsky.

Holidaying without danger

Mr. Bolbatovsky stresses that, in the difficult conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, Belarusian health resorts are taking all the necessary measures to ensure safe stays for the population for sanatorium treatment and recovery. The distribution of vouchers is now made on a regional basis, so that people move around the country as little as possible. Institutions provide social distancing when accommodating, feeding and pro-



A swimming pool with hydrotherapy at Sosny sanatorium on Lake Naroch



BELTA

SPA capsule treatments at Lettsy sanatorium

more than 100,000 foreign citizens were rehabilitated — against 242,000 in 2019. As for revenue, it decreased by 55 percent to make more than Br95m (about \$39m). Of course, the dynamics are negative but — in the conditions of closed borders — it is not quite right to talk about exports," notes Mr. Bolbatovsky.

Attracting exports is still an urgent task. "We see a delayed demand for this type of service. With the improvement of the epidemiological situation, we will restore the flow not only from the East, but also from the West," he concludes. Even today, 800-1,000 foreign citizens are present.

More than 90 percent of foreigners who have chosen to improve their health in Belarus are citizens of Russia. They prefer health improvement in Belarusian health resorts to Russian ones because of the price-quality ratio of the services offered here. Therefore, Russian consumers are extremely important for the Belarusian market of recreational services. Our health resorts pin great hopes on the full restoration of transport links with the neighbouring state.

Prices for travel packages have not, in fact, changed much compared to 2020; moreover, they've even decreased against December. At present, a bed in a standard double room costs Br63.7 (about \$24.5) for those coming to recuperate with a voucher.

viding medical and additional services to guests. Citizens come in if they have medical documents confirming they've had no contact with those who have fallen ill with coronavirus infection. Constant temperature checks on recovering patients are carried out. A sufficient supply of personal protective equipment and antiseptics has been created; it's constantly being replenished.

Demand meets supply

Clearly, exports of health services in 2020 were low due to the global COVID spread and related measures. "Actually, the statistics are not so bad: last year,



Vitaly Pivovarchik

Rehabilitation of patients recovering from coronavirus at the Republican Centre for Medical Rehabilitation and Balneotherapy

Sunshine from the stove

On a chunk of wood, made of dough with sour milk and brine, straight from the chef: during Pancake Week we tried a variety of recipes for making the treat

Maslenitsa is an ancient Slavic holiday of farewell to winter which envisages festivities and fun with the obligatory attributes: a stuffed figure of Maslenitsa and, of course, pancakes: made with sour milk and cucumber pickle, cooked on a wooden 'brazier' right in the yard. During Pancake Week, from March 8th to 15th, our reporters prepared a 'delicious' reportage, watching how the chef baked pancakes and how those in the villages of the Berezino District made them according to traditional Belarusian recipes.

By Ilya Krasovsky

Belarusian fast food

In restaurants, cafes and roadside customer services, about 850 places, during Pancake Week, visitors were offered a special menu: cabbage soup with pancakes, pancakes made with curdled milk, with sour cream and butter, jam or syrup, as well as machanka with pancakes. Also, our candidates traditionally participated in fairs in honour of the farewell to winter in Minsk, alongside regional and district centres. Pancakes are real folk street food, both hot and cold. They are quick to prepare, and convenient to eat wrapped in paper, on the go.

I watch how 4th grade chef Yulia Lygina skilfully bakes the sunny cakes on a pancake maker. Two large pancakes are prepared at once in just a minute. Each weighs 250 grams with filling: an impressive portion, after which even the most hungry visitor will be satisfied.

“During Pancake Week we make 40 litres of pancake dough at once,” explains Yulia Lygina. “The recipe is usual, it couldn't be simpler: flour, eggs, milk, sugar and salt. We have delicious pancakes, as we cook them with our heart and soul and a careful method.”

I tried them, and they were really tasty; even better with honey!..

The first pancake is not always spoiled

In the village of Noviny, Berezino District, local residents still cook pancakes on the stove using traditional recipes. Svetlana Rodionova only cooks potatoes on gas. She cooks porridge and soup in the cast iron pots on the stove.

“My husband especially enjoys pearl barley soup in a cast iron pot, it has a completely different taste,” says the villager.

The stove is pre-war, like the house. Moreover, they have been cooking in a frying pan for more than a dozen years. In general, the spirit of history is around. The stove warmed up quickly, despite its advanced age, gaining heat in half an hour.

“When we were children we used to climb on the couch and watch how mom cooks,” Svetlana Rodionova recalls.

The dough is made of sour milk, flour and some soda. Now the secrets of the recipe are being adopted by



the younger generation.

Lard is used to grease the surface of the frying pan. The hostess grabs a frying pan with a pan gripper and puts it in the mouth of the stove. It's hot there and drops of sweat appear on her forehead, which the mistress brushes off with the edge of a handkerchief. Pancakes need careful watching: just a minute too long and they can burn underneath. The pancakes came out colourful and smelling delicious.

Guests came to celebrate Maslenitsa: a son and grandchildren.

“They enjoy thin pancakes with milk,” says Svetlana Rodionova. “We call them ‘nalistniki’. They are eaten with cottage cheese and jam.”

Welcomed with pancakes and salt

The village of Podvolozhka is located nearby, two kilometres away. The

Verin family in national costumes welcome guests from the doorway — Valery and Olga and their daughters: Lyuba, goes to the second grade, while Natalia works as a biology and chemistry teacher at the local village school. They immediately invite us to the table, which is bursting with food. Any Instagram food blogger would envy such a beautiful picture. And what a delicious smell lingers in the house!

At the head of the table there is a figurine of Maslenitsa made from pancakes. The amulet is a ‘lyalka-herbalist’ which holds three pouches tied with green onion feathers and stuffed with chicken. Nearby is a head of soaked cabbage; it was waiting in the cellar in a wooden barrel. Milk and sour cream are served in clay cups while stacks of lush



pancakes lie on the plates. The pancakes are piled high because, in Noviny, we cooked in the stove, and now we cooked over an open fire.

“The second batch of pancakes will be prepared according to a different recipe using cucumber pickle instead of milk,” Olga Verina is a cook and tells us, according to one of her studies. “Those who didn't have a cow, who lived a poorer life, replaced milk with brine.”

Pancakes made in cucumber brine are darker, denser and, for me, are not so tasty. The budget option is that you get more.

The bacon in the frying pan has sizzled, which means it's time to cook machanka. In the old days, it was served only on holidays. In my native village in the Kopyl District, machanka is when sour cream is added to the fat, and in the local area it is ‘polivka’.

The hostess mixes flour with water, adds milk and eggs, and pours it all into the fat. The machanka is ready.

While we're standing at the stove, the owner of the house is whipping butter. This is traditionally done only by men. Previously, the Verin family kept a large farm. There was a cow, which means there was always fresh milk. They made their own cheese, cottage cheese, butter, kefir and sour cream. Now it's difficult to harvest hay.

They also like potato pancakes in this family. Potatoes are finely grated, then kefir and flour are added and put into the stove. It turns out to be transformative: neither a pancake not a dranik (a potato pancake).

However, the most interesting way to bake pancakes is on a chunk of wood. Young girls hung it around the necks of young boys who didn't marry for a long time — a sign of distinction for those who stayed too long as bachelors. You carry a heavy piece of wood for an hour or two, you get tired, you can have a snack right on it. The chunk of wood is essentially a brazier. Holes are made on top to allow air to pass under it. The chunk is hollow to the core, standing on pegs for good airflow. The deck bursts into flames unexpectedly quickly (inside there is woodchip) and gives heat to the pan. Young boys and girls gather around, warming up and waiting for the pancake to rise with fun and jokes. Chips crackle and the pancake is browned. It's all very tasty in the fresh air and in good company.

TRADITIONS

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Photo for illustrative purposes

A 'lost generation'

As Europe's economy shrinks following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, youth unemployment is on the rise. There are now 3.1 million young people aged 15-24 unable to find a job.

The number of NEETS (not in education, employment, or training) aged 15-29, which includes those not actively looking for work, is at 9.6 million.

The EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, says they are determined to prevent the same impact on young people that followed the financial crisis.

"We are just coming out of a period where we had a lost generation due to the financial and then an economic crisis," he says, adding, "We have to prevent the new lost generation."

The European Commission has adopted the Youth Employment Support Programme with an investment of at least 22bn Euros over the next seven years. It follows a previous investment of 22bn Euros over the past seven years to get young people into work through vocational training and apprenticeships.

Tremlin is a programme in the Brussels region, funded by the European Social Fund. The Fund has a budget of 18m Euros over 7 years and 10,000 18-25 year-olds have benefited from.

Across the Brussels region, the num-

ber of job seekers under the age of 25 has increased by almost 8 percent compared to last year and the youth unemployment rate has reached 25 percent.

Despite EU plans to invest at least 22bn Euros to support youth employment, some think it is not enough. Guntram Wolff, an economist and director of the Bruegel think-tank, says that he wants to see more done. According to him, "you clearly also need national support for the young generation. The sad truth is youth unemployment doesn't go down so quickly".

Joint lunar space station

Russian Space Agency Roscosmos and Chinese counterpart CNSA to develop research facilities on surface of Moon or in its orbit

The leaders of the two countries' respective space agencies signed a memorandum of understanding on behalf of their national governments.

"China and Russia will use their accumulated experience in space science, research and development as well as the use of space equipment and space technology to jointly develop a road map for the construction of an international lunar scientific research station (ILRS)," China's Space Agency said.

A statement from Russian Space Agency Roscosmos said the two organisations planned to 'promote co-operation on the creation of an open-access ILRS for all interested countries and international partners, with the goal of strengthening research co-operation and promoting the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in the interests of all mankind'.

The lunar space station will be 'a complex of experimental and research facilities' created on the Moon's surface and / or in orbit of the Moon. The facilities will be designed for a range of multidisciplinary research, including 'testing technologies with the possibility of long-term unmanned operation with the prospect of human presence on the Moon'.

China and Russia will now work on a road map for how to design, develop and operate the station, and plan 'its presentation to the world space community'. The two countries have also signed agreements to jointly create a data centre for the exploration of the Moon and deep space.

Under state of emergency

A state of emergency was declared across Hawaii as flooding from heavy rains that breached a dam spreads across the entire state

The emergency declaration covers the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Kalawao, Oahu, and Kauai, Governor David Ige said in a statement, freeing up state funds to help with recovery efforts. The disaster emergency relief period will remain in effect through May 8th.

The heavy rains forced evacuations, heavily damaging or destroying at least half a dozen homes, and washing out or displacing a pair of bridges. At one point, officials worried about water

cresting over the Kaupakalua Dam in Haiku.

Maui Mayor Michael Victorino called the flooding 'unprecedented', and stressed that residents have said this is the worst flooding they've seen in more than 25 years.

"When you see flood damage in the light of day, it's a reminder of the sheer power of fast-moving water," Mr. Victorino said in a statement as the county started assessing the damage.



Anniversary of disaster

Japan has marked the 10th anniversary of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster that hit its north-eastern region, where many survivors' lives are still on hold

Carrying bouquets, many people walked to the coast or visited graves to pray for relatives and friends washed away by the tsunami. Emperor Naruhito and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga were among those observing a moment of silence at 2:46pm — the minute the shaking started — at a memorial in Tokyo.

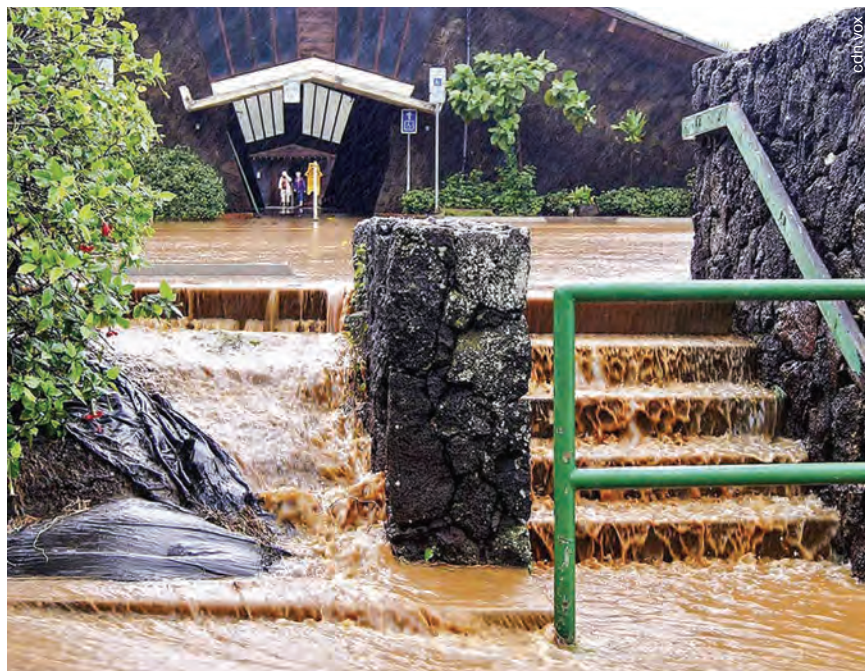
The magnitude 9.0 quake that struck in March 2011, was one of the biggest on record and set off a massive tsunami that swept far inland, destroying towns and causing meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. More than

18,000 people died, mostly in the tsunami, and nearly half a million people were displaced.

Ten years later, more than 40,000 people are still unable to return home in and around Fukushima, where areas near the wrecked plant are still off-limits due to radioactive contamination.

No deaths have been confirmed directly from the radiation, but Fukushima has fallen behind in the recovery efforts, with 2.4 percent of land classified as no-go zones near the nuclear plant.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



Let's hear from art itself!



The Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God Hodegetria. Late 19th century.

Experts share the secrets about how they determine the authenticity of works of art and antiques. Among these might be rare furniture, old icons, Faberge jewellery, samurai swords, Slutsk sashes and many others.

The Scientific and Practical Centre at the State Committee of Forensic Examinations has begun to conduct art history examinations. The authenticity of the artworks has been determined by experts in previous years, but the Centre has developed a unique area of expertise. Specialists can not only find out where and when the works were created, and who created them but also whether they are original or not. Their approximate cost, as well as artistic and museum value can also be established.

By Inna Gorbatenko

Professionals who take the credit

The fine art artefacts for examination vary. Among them are paintings and dishes, Samurai swords and furniture, and many more. To give a qualified assessment of each of them, a specialist needs to have a high level of knowledge in fine and decorative arts, to understand antiques.

When listing the most common objects, leading researcher Irina Skvortsova mentions paintings, graphics, furniture, ceramics, textiles and antique weapons.

“Even when working with one form of art, we might deal with a whole complex of objects. Speaking of paintings, this incorporates paintings, miniatures, theatrical sketches, and icon painting,” she explains, adding, “There is probably no universal expert who has an equally deep knowledge of all types of art. However, if a specialist can expand their knowledge into two, three or more areas, then this is a great thing.”

Experts in art history have a lot of work. “Recently, we examined the pieces which the Puslovsky Palace in the Brest Region is planning to buy,” says senior researcher Yelena Senkevich, who has more than 40 years of work in the field of art studies. “The Palace is currently working on the formation of a collection of art objects. We establish their authenticity and determine the date and country of manufacture. Most often, customers wish to know whether the items they are interested in are valuable. This is a difficult question. Sometimes an item may be of museum value but not of an

artistic value; these are for example items that once belonged to famous historical figures.”

One of the first examinations performed by the Centre’s specialists concerned the late 17th century trellis made by French masters of Aubusson (France).



A Slutsk sash. Late 1760's - 1780s.

The Mir Castle museum was considering purchasing them.

Last autumn, a unique Slutsk sash joined the collection at the Memorial Church in Honour of All Saints in Minsk. Before its acquisition, the late 18th century rarity was examined by specialists. “Slutsk sashes appeared in Belarus in times of the Rzecz Pospolita as part of the gentry’s costume. Sashes performed not so much a utilitarian role but were

symbolic and presentational, testifying to the noble origin of their owners. Until the 18th century, sashes were imported into Belarus, but after that, local production was launched. One of the manufacturers opened in Slutsk by the Radziwills produced sashes that became a role model for many other enterprises and are

now considered one of the key symbols of Belarus,” Ms. Skvortsova explains. It seems she knows almost everything about Slutsk sashes. “Not so many of them are kept in Belarus’ museum collections now and their cost can be more than tens of thousands of Dollars,” she adds.

Art of deception

The Centre also conducts jewellery work which begins with a thorough visual inspection. At this stage, the experience of specialists and their knowledge of the original works matter the most. In this respect, the history of museums plays a major role. Experts start their search for answers to the questions of when the artwork was

made, in what country, in what artistic style, who is its maker, whether it’s unique, authentic and what value it has.

“We use technological research when it’s necessary,” Anzhelika Mitskevich joined in the conversation. “A standard set will see scans in ultraviolet, infrared and X-ray radiation which shows many absolutely amazing things! For example, in ultraviolet light, we can see whether the object has been restored and can assess the degree of restoration intervention.”

Furthermore, if the new restoration parts account for 40 percent or more of the volume of the work, then it’s no longer considered as original. Ms. Senkevich explains the difference between museum and commercial restoration, “For example, we have a broken cup found during an archaeological dig. The task of commercial restoration is to restore it to its original appearance, that is, to collect all the parts and fill in the gaps if there aren’t enough fragments. A museum restorer will glue all the pieces together, but nothing will be painted over. Here it’s important to show the original work, or what’s left of it.”

Thanks to modern technology, anyone can look into the artists’ inner sanctum and see



A pomander. Berlin’s Royal Porcelain Manufactory. 1880s.

how their ideas changed in the process of their work. To show this, Ms. Skvortsova holds up two photos.

One features a landscape with a view of the Rhine, by a German artist, a representative of the Dusseldorf school of painting, Georg Wilhelm Degode. Another picture has an X-ray of the same picture; here, we can distinguish boats on the water. The artist decided to erase them while working and the boats are no longer visible to the naked eye. However, such an interesting fact and the presence of similar creative searches and changes made by an artist in the process of painting is proof of the work’s authenticity. However, an artist’s signature, contrary to popular misconception, is almost never taken as confirmation.

Value held in people's hands

When communicating with art experts, it becomes clear that they’ve held many rare objects in their hands. More than once they’ve had to work with unique jewellery from famous Russian companies: Karl Faberge, Ivan Khlebnikov and Ignaty Sazik ov. They have also explored less valuable but no less interesting objects, such as a tea and coffee set made of 950 silver by masters at the French Cardeilhac Jewellery House, samurai swords, a late 19th century vase produced by Berlin’s Royal Porcelain Manufactory, and an early 19th century French furniture set...

The artefact owners sometimes don’t recognise how valuable these pieces are.

Photo courtesy of State Committee of Forensic Examinations



Georg Wilhelm Degode’s View of the Rhine near Kaiserswerth. Evening. Early 20th century.



A tea and coffee set. Paris. French Cardeilhac Jewellery House. Late 19th century.

Healthy atmosphere

On sports and more: on Saturday, the President, as part of his team, won the relay race at the Minsk Ski Track 2021 and talked to journalists



By **Sergei Kanashits,**
Dmitry Umpirovich

This was confirmed once again at the Raubichi Sports Complex which hosted the Minsk Ski Track 2021 Republican sports event. As is traditional, the Head of State also took part in the relay race. His team won, and Aleksandr Lukashenko didn't hide his emotions, "It's always hard to win — especially when you're being watched (apologies for the indiscretion) by millions of eyes."



Festive atmosphere

The Minsk Ski Track was first opened in 1986 when a mass run of 12,000 skiers along the Borovaya-Raubichi route took place. However, the initiative failed to continue and was revived only in 2003. Since then, Aleksandr Lukashenko has always taken part in the event and, following the example of the Head of State, many others have also turned to skiing. In recent times, the Minsk Ski Track has become a real celebration of sports which gathers hundreds of participants and thousands of spectators over its distance.

This year's Ski Track event coincided with the festival of Maslenitsa and, unsurprisingly, was of a special theme. It was accompanied by an amazing smell: of magnificent machanka with pancakes, browned shashlik, soldier's porridge and hot tea.

The atmosphere which reigned in Raubichi was hard to describe. Smiles on bright faces,

the cheerful sound of voices, a good atmosphere in the air so intense it seemed it could have been touched with one's hands. However, sports were the major attraction for all those who came. The format of the event was slightly changed; it became even more exciting — being a relay version of biathlon competitions. Each team had four participants, two laps of a kilometre for each and a shooting range with five bullets for five targets. A miss was 'punished' by a penalty circle and additional 50

metres of skiing. Among those who met the challenge and put on skis were teams from top-ranking authorities, the central offices of the power ministries and departments, Republican bodies of state administration, as well as ordinary amateurs, for whom sports and excitement are their middle name.

The competition programme of the day opened with the relay race in which the President's team also took part. Complete gender equality was met: ladies skied in the first two stages, followed by the men. As part of the relay quartet, along with the Head of State who completed the race, Svetlana Konoshenko, Lyudmila Kalinchik and Nikolai Lukashenko performed. The fight on the track was intense: no one wanted to give in and everyone proved to be a real fighter.

It's good to note that ex-biathlete Lyudmila Kalinchik hasn't lost her athletic form and completed her stage beyond praise —

placing Aleksandr Lukashenko's team in the lead. His son Nikolai was also good at the third stage: skiing like a real professional and shooting like a cowboy — quickly, and most importantly accurately. The Head of State confidently completed the route which had been already covered by his team members (despite, as he later admitted, an aching knee).

Even two misses on the shooting ranges left no doubt about the assured victory of the President's team! After the finish, Aleksandr Lukashenko talked to journalists and admitted that wasn't easy, "I had to finish on a fresh track — where it's clean. It's a great difference for a skier. I diverted my attention to the stands and was almost close to falling on a rough surface. You never know. So many people came; they sup-

ported those on the track with all their hearts. There were no losers that day.

Enormous fakes as a rock bottom

The Head of State made it clear to the journalists present that he was ready to comment on all the fake issues that the 'runaway' oppositionists featured in the *Golden Bottom* film which was recently released on the Internet. The President noted that he hadn't watched the whole film — only some scenes.

However, the President has already drawn his own conclusions, calling *Golden Bottom* 'a copy' of the film about Putin. He stressed that the film has nothing new and its authors have taken up the topic in vain...

"The worst thing for me is to be ashamed before you," the

A healthy nation means a sporting nation and Belarus has every right to be called such. With this in mind, the state pays great attention to professional sports, develops mass sports and, of course, actively improves children's and youth projects. True, the country can't help but love sports when its President is the most devoted adept of a healthy lifestyle.

part is public and it also has a large common room and one and a half bedrooms: my bedroom and the children's room. Is it really a palace? Moreover, it's not mine; it's a state property."

The Head of State concluded that the film authors probably took up the theme because of desperation.

For stability and safety!

While the 'runaways' are mostly interested in how to get into the President's pocket, ordinary Belarusians are primarily concerned with the issues of stability and safety — even more than improvement in quality of life! These are the results of the *Social Thinking* Republican public opinion poll conducted on the eve of the 6th Belarusian People's Congress.



ported those on the track with all their hearts. It was a very pleasant experience. We'll continue organising such events."

The team of the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee finished second and their colleagues from the Brest Region were third. The teams of the Minsk City Executive Committee, the President Administration and the State Control Committee were also included in the flower ceremony (finishing among the top six).

Amateur teams, those from ministries, departments and many others then joined the competition. Raubichi was virtually breathing a festival of big sports in full voice; everyone found

President told journalists. "I was most worried that you, having watched it, didn't say: well, who are we protecting?"

Aleksandr Lukashenko is also ready to refute the lies of the 'runaways' not only in words. The Head of State plans, for example, to personally show some of his residences to journalists. He explained, "They mentioned some names and showed some buildings. I'd simply like to take you to my house, show you this banya, the place where wood was chopped. In this village where I live... I'll start in spring, with Pripyat. A recreation facility and a wooden house where the President stays are found there. One

The Head of State commented on this, admitting that the results were no surprise for him, "These 'protestors' have added a percentage to us in this regard. I have already said that you and our people, after looking at the outrages of the past year, have realised what they could lose. Therefore, people are obviously concerned about security and stability."

Aleksandr Lukashenko concluded that our people want the country to be quiet and peaceful — wishing this also for their children, "There have always been more sensible people in the country; there is still a vast majority of them now."

Up to the mark

Belarusian athletes bring home two medals and a national record from the European Athletics Indoor Championships



Even if only Maksim Nedosekov had been sent to Torun, host of the European event, there would have been plenty reasons for discussion and lasting favourable impressions. For the Belarusian national team, the first top tournament after a long break resulted in two medals, three fourth places, a national record and five athletes in the finals. However, Maksim was actually the key topic of discussion. His struggle against Italian Gianmarco Tamberi became one of the most significant events in Torun. Moreover, it was at a height that most often remains inaccessible even for participants of top track and field events. Maksim Nedosekov eventually won and President Aleksandr Lukashenko sent a message of congratulations to him. It reads: 'This victory with the best global result of the season has convincingly demonstrated that Belarusians have something to be proud of. You have once again shown not only your excellent form and fighting character but also a high degree of responsibility to the team and fans, as well as true patriotism and respect to the opponents'

By Dmitry Komashko

World height

Sport is loved for stories of this kind. It's no wonder. Maksim Nedosekov and Gianmarco Tamberi pushed aside most of the favourites in Poland — including, for example, Armand Duplantis. The phenomenal Swede, judging by the announcements, was expected to compete against his long-time rival — French Renaud Lavillenie. However, in the end, Armand 'rewrote' the tournament's new record of 6.05m, while the Frenchman finished 25cm lower. In turn, bets were placed cautiously on the Belarusian since the current season has been ambiguous for Maksim. He finished three events in a row with a warm-up result of 2.23m. He later improved on the figures but didn't look like a favourite against Tamberi, who confidently led in the European season. The Italian, apparently, had similar thoughts and, after conquering the 2.33m height, he was ready to start celebrating. Moreover, when he jumped 2.35m, he almost tore off his chest number — following tradition. The Italian knew that — for Nedosekov to show a better result — he would need to set a new personal record. The Belarusian's two unsuccessful attempts hinted that the task was extremely difficult. Many viewed the move of the final jump to 2.37m as a grand gesture but the height — taken eventually by Maksim

Nedosekov — turned out to be not only a new national record but also a serious psychological attack on Tamberi. After that, the favourite couldn't concentrate for his jumps, while Nedosekov — already a European champion — stormed 2.40m.

Closer to the sun

Behind the brilliance of the gold won by Nedosekov, the bronze of Irina Zhuk is somewhat lost — though it deserves no less attention, or at least the backstory. Twelve years ago, Russian Anastasia Shvedova was invited

only for Irina but also for Belarusian athletics. In the pole vault, our athletes haven't won awards at top tournaments for two decades, while girls have never taken any medals. It's long-awaited and well-deserved. The Belarusian has shared it with a multiple



Maksim Nedosekov

Importantly, the winter results for track and field athletes traditionally become the Tarot cards used to predict summer events. The Olympics are scheduled for summer and this is the time to remind us that, even with the current result, the Belarusian would have been guaranteed a medal at almost any Games in our time. Moreover: since Sydney 2000, a jump of 2.37m would not have just brought the title of champion at the last Olympics. Maksim is only 23 years old.

to Belarus to save the situation in pole vault. The level of results was such that Shvedova's quickly updated national records — 4.65m in the stadium and 4.55m indoors — looked like a flight into space. In Torun, Irina Zhuk started her performance with a mark of 4.45m. She easily coped with 4.60m and, it seemed, was upset after failing to jump 4.70m. If she had succeeded, the athlete could have captured silver. She won bronze as a result. The medal has proved to be historic not

winner of world and European championships, British Holly Bradshaw — making a serious bid for Tokyo.

Summer task

Formally, Belarusian athletes have completed the task for the European Championship. Two medals are a good result. In fact, their performance has left a sense of understatement. There are actually no questions about Violetta Skvortsova, who managed to get close to the leaders



Irina Zhuk

at her debut top tournament and occupy fourth place in the triple jump. Vladislav Bulakhov and Dmitry Karpuk — the youngest participants of the championship in the long jump and shotput — are also unquestionable. However, other athletes need to improve their results.

After the performances of jumper Anastasia Mironchik-Ivanova, shot-putter Alena Dubitskaya and hurdler Elvira Herman — who sensationally appeared outside the final, there's a feeling that the results shown in Torun were simply a warm-up. The main test for athletes will take place in Tokyo. The task of performing there successfully looks quite achievable.

ARENA

● Olympic Torch Relay to be started in Japan on March 25th

It has been announced by the Tokyo 2020 organising committee that the solemn ceremony will be held without spectators — due to the coronavirus pandemic. For the same rea-



son, the exact route of the relay remains unknown: it will be announced several hours before the participants' arrival in certain regions of the country. Those wishing to follow the torch route can do this online. Residents of Japan will be able to see the Olympic flame only after prior application.

The flame of the 32nd Games in Tokyo was lit on March 12th, 2020 in ancient Olympia but — due to the coronavirus pandemic — the relay

was stopped and the flame was placed in storage.

● Dinara Alimbekova's silver

Belarusian biathlete Dinara Alimbekova finished second in the pursuit race at the ninth stage of the IBU Biathlon World Cup in Nove Mesto na Morave (Czech Republic).

The Belarusian covered the 10km distance with four shooting ranges in 34.6 seconds — with no misses but behind



Norwegian Tiril Eckhoff, who won. The Scandinavian missed once on the shooting range and finished the race with a final result of 27 minutes and 13.6 seconds.

Bronze went to German Franziska Preuss who left one target open, losing 40.2 seconds to the winner.

Photo of the week



Anton Stepanishchev

Vitebsk Medical University students cheerfully say farewell to winter

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On March 18th, 1921, the Treaty of Riga was signed to end the war and normalise relations with Poland. The agreement was

concluded between the RSFSR (authorised by the Government of the BSSR), the Ukrainian SSR and Poland. According to the agreement, Western Belarus and Western Ukraine went to Poland.

March 18th is the Day of Internal Troops in the Republic of Belarus, a professional holiday for the country's public order guards.



With the acquisition of state independence, the internal troops of the Republic of Belarus received the status of a basic political institution. It is a powerful security structure that ensures the maintenance of law and order in the Republic.

On March 20th, 1996, a decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus 'On Free Economic Zones on the Territory of the Republic of Belarus' was signed. Currently, there are six free economic zones in Belarus.



440 companies are registered as residents of the FEZ, employing over 135,000 people. Projects are being implemented with the attraction of investments worth about \$7bn from more than 30 countries of the world.

March 20th is International Day of Happiness. Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International



Day of Happiness in order to recognise the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world. In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and protect our planet — three essential prerequisites for prosperity and happiness.

March 20th is Vernal Equinox Day. On this day, the Earth, revolving around its imaginary axis passing through the poles, while moving around the Sun, is in such a position in relation to the luminary that the Sun's rays, carrying thermal energy, fall vertically to the equator. The Sun passes from the southern hemisphere to the northern, and on these days in all countries, day is almost equal to night.



March 20th is the Day of Electronic Intelligence in the Republic of Belarus. Electronic intelligence is the discipline of collecting intelligence information based on the reception and analysis of electromagnetic radiation.

On March 21st, 1996, the Republican Hydrological Reserve Verkhnevileisky and the Republican Landscape Reserve Sinsha were founded by the decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic. They were established in order to preserve unique natural plant bog and landscape-lake complexes with populations of rare and endangered plant and animal species listed in the Red Book of Belarus.



March 21st is World Puppetry Day, celebrated since 2003 at the suggestion of the International Union of Puppet Theatre Workers. Traditionally, on this day, workers of theatres and creative puppet groups organise the most unusual puppet shows, creative meetings, concerts and other festive events.

March 21st is World Poetry Day, established by the decision of the 30th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, adopted in

November 1999. One of the main goals of World Poetry Day is to promote linguistic diversity and support endangered languages through poetry.



March 22nd is World Water Day. It is celebrated by a decision of the participants of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, in order to draw the attention of the world community to the problem of poor-quality drinking water. On December 23rd, 2003, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the period 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life'.

On March 23rd, 1896, Lev Leitman was born (Petrikov, Gomel Region) — an artist, teacher and Honoured Art Worker of Belarus (1967). He studied at the Vitebsk school-workshop of Yu Pen. He taught at the Vitebsk and Minsk art schools. Lev



worked in the technique of watercolours, pastels and gouache, creating landscapes, portraits and still-lives. He is author of the paintings *Silence*, *Rainy Day*, *Dvina River*, *First September* and others. He died in 1974.