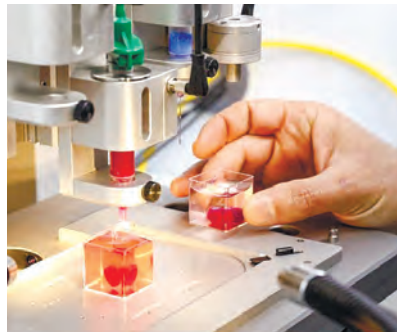




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INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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Gomel Region, Uritskoe communal agricultural unitary enterprise. Sowing of spring crops.

## Get sowing!

Belarusian farmers have sown early spring grain and legume crops on more than half the area. The peculiarity of this spring is that it came early in our region, but it still hasn't come into its own. However, the weather is already improving, which means that grain growers have an opportunity to accelerate the pace of field work.

The sowing machinery is working at maximum capacity. Machine operators try to ensure that all technological operations are carried out with impeccable quality. It's good to see how smooth rows of seeds planted into the soil appear in the fields. Their numbers are growing with each pass of the tractor.



# Strategy of Belarusian diplomacy



By Yevgeny Kononovich,  
Varvara Morozova

Foreign policy issues are regularly submitted to the Head of State for consideration. Although the recent meeting in the Palace of Independence on optimising the network of Belarusian foreign institutions was scheduled, its topic was dictated by recent challenges. The pandemic has provoked a global crisis and changed the structure of world trade. As a result, it's become necessary to reformat the work of Belarusian embassies and optimise them.

Aleksandr Lukashenko suggested not to be limited to the set topic, to look at the issues more broadly and discuss the work of the Foreign Ministry as a whole, while emphasising the main task for diplomats,

*"We don't suffer from globalism, if we talk about the prospects. We have ordinary, routine issues and problems both in politics and the economy. In the foreground shouldn't be a claim to leadership, but the protection and promotion of our interests in the economic sphere."*

## Experts as the main criterion

As the Head of State noted, under the conditions of competition, the winner will be the one who can competently take advantage of these opportunities,

*"It is obvious that a friendly country for us is one where the buyer votes with their Rouble, Dollar or Euro for a Belarusian product or service, and the Government does not prevent this — but, on the contrary, contributes to it."*

Belarus' interests abroad are now represented by 70 foreign institutions in 58 countries, which account for almost 97 percent of exports and 76 percent of foreign investment. In general, the system of bodies of the diplomatic service makes it possible to solve the tasks set. The question is how effective it is in terms of the funds spent on it and the protection of our interests.

"In a number of countries, our long-term experience indicates that the prospects of the Belarusian diplomatic presence there are not visible. So why do we need to keep our embassies and spend significant budget funds on them? Why is there a full staff of diplomats responsible for the areas that are put on pause, mildly speaking? In such cases, it is necessary to work under conditions of reciprocity, as was recently done with Poland and Lithuania," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

According to the President, in extreme cases, all issues of interest can be discussed at the UN and other international organisations in New York, Geneva or Vienna: there is an opportunity to talk to the whole world.

The main condition of the President is to open new institutions abroad only through the competent redistribution of available resources. There should be no inflating numbers of staff.

## The work of Belarusian foreign institutions, activities of foreign investors and relations with Poland were on the agenda at a meeting with the President

### Double play

The topic of mutual relations with our neighbours, primarily with Poland, was also in focus at the meeting and Aleksandr Lukashenko was sincere — as always. He noted, "To tell the truth, our political contacts with this country have never been perfect. However, because of our character and mentality, we have put up with individual attacks and accusations against ourselves for a long time, trying to find a compromise, showing flexibility and understanding.

*"We proceeded from the fact that neighbours are not chosen. They really are all important to us. However, it turned out that these constructive approaches in Warsaw are perceived as a weakness."*

According to the President, the readiness of the Polish side to meet us halfway in a number of areas, which was declared last June, has been replaced with accusations of our rigging the Presidential election, with the sheltering of runaway traitors and extremists, and extremist Internet resources. He added, "And then things went as far as sanctions. Can you believe that they were praising us in June? And now we know that, at the same time, they were double-crossing us using intelligence agencies and other bodies (in politics as well). Brazen attempts to glorify criminals became the last straw that exhausted our patience."

This is confirmed by an egregious case in Brest, where representatives of Polish-affiliated non-governmental and youth organisations actually forced Belarusian schoolchildren to honour the memory of 'cursed soldiers' — the thugs of Romuald Rice who burned Belarusian villages. The actions of a destructive group of ethnic Poles, under the leadership of certain figures of the

themselves Poles as harassment of the Polish national minority.

The President stressed that Belarus has always taken a responsible approach to the observance of the rights of all national minorities and is proud of the inter-ethnic peace in the country,

*"It will always be so. Both religious and inter-ethnic peace in Belarus will be preserved at all costs. No one will push us to the confrontation of Poles against Belarusians or Russians."*

Moreover, Aleksandr Lukashenko added, Belarusians share a centuries-old history with the Polish people, "We have

### Progress along a constructive path

At the meeting, the Head of State once again stressed,

*"We are not going to fight against anyone, we don't want to fight with anyone. However, if we start to be treated in the same way as it was at the end of last year and is happening now, then they will be strongly dealt with. It's not enough for us to be passive observers. Where necessary, we must respond appropriately — as in Brest and Grodno. However, we will not get away from talking in normal language with our neighbours."*



Head of the President Administration — Igor Sergeyenko, Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei, Prosecutor General Andrei Shved

no unresolved territorial and property claims against each other. We have never mentioned the occupation of a significant part of Belarusian territory by Poland in the 1920-1930s. Apparently, the time has come to return to this topic and explore it in detail with the involvement of historians and political scientists — and we have already begun to do this."

The Belarusian President reminded

Investigation of all dubious associations and institutions will be conducted and this refers not only to religious or inter-ethnic relations. In particular, Aleksandr Lukashenko instructed the Head of the President Administration, Igor Sergeyenko, to organise the re-registration of diverse numerous structures (representatives of western investments). He commented, "We aren't going to cut out those who benefit the state. However, we've seen who is responsible and they need to be challenged. If they are able to work for the state — we will tolerate them and co-operate with them."

However, the involvement of young people in anti-state activities by the structures that exist on the territory of Belarus, as well as the organisation of the leakage of qualified personnel abroad are not the case. At the same time, not everyone in the West understands what is really happening. The President recalled the persecution of ethnic Belarusians in the inter-war and post-war periods, the activities of Polish and other terrorist gangs on our land, the revanchist aspirations of the authorities of these states to regain control over certain territories and regions of Belarus. "The officially functioning Union of Poles of Belarus, where a new leader was recently elected, should work constructively for the benefit of our country — contributing to the strengthening of relations," Aleksandr Lukashenko added.



so-called Polish emigration in Grodno look no less unruly and terrible.

However, Warsaw considers the legitimate reaction of law enforcement agencies to the illegal activities of some citizens of Belarus who call

the Polish leadership that ethnic Poles living in our country are citizens of their country: Belarus. Any attempts to manipulate the issue of some kind of oppression of persons of Polish nationality in our country are doomed to failure.

# Party building: all aspects of the process

The issues of political party functioning in Belarus and amendments to the law ‘On Political Parties’ were discussed at a meeting with the Head of State. In his opening speech, Aleksandr Lukashenko shared his views, “I’ve personally come up with a formula that I still adhere to: be not with those from the right or from the left — but with the people.”

By Dmitry Kryat,  
Polina Konoga

Aleksandr Lukashenko drew attention to an important fact,

**“My position on the issues of party building has remained unchanged: not to force anything artificially, but also not to slow down the socio-political processes. No artificially created pro-government parties should be in place.”**

The President remarked that perhaps some will suggest that the state purposefully didn’t stimulate the development of political parties. “Actually, society didn’t show any desire for them,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said. “It’s still not expressed. As various social polls show, the level of trust for existing parties is within the statistical spread. The party related issue concerns the minds of only a small part of the politicised community, in big cities. We see this and must take it into consideration.”

## Evolutionary process

The Head of State drew attention to the need for careful organisation of the party

building process. This is the case when haste or rash decisions are unacceptable. “Now we need to think carefully about the mechanism for embedding various social groups in a constructive dialogue, setting a clear framework for political processes. Any steps in this direction should be taken on the principle of ‘doing no harm’. It’s necessary to understand that Belarusian society has practically no experience of existing in conditions of the multiparty system.”

The President also noted that there are no ready-made solutions in this serious process. In support of his words, he suggested looking at the experience of western democracies, “We see how party ideologies are replaced by cheap populism and dirty political technologies. Political parties are sometimes used through dubious methods, violating all norms and principles, in the political fight of certain groups to reach their vested interests. We see this not only in the West but also in post-Soviet republics which have chosen the same way. The interests of these oligarchs (luckily, we

don’t have similar in Belarus) often don’t prioritise the well-being of the country. Instead, they are trying to manipulate public opinion. It’s essential to step up efforts to prevent such speculations on a party basis from artificially dividing Belarusian society and leading to the loss of statehood. The political party building process should not, as has happened in some neighbouring countries, lead to the emergence of pocket parties of several oligarchs promoting their own interests. This should not happen in Belarus. And I hope that it never will.”

## Transparent financing

The President also touched on the issue of financing political parties. The issue is delicate but, in most countries, it’s resolved uniformly, “Just like in all developed democracies, political activities in Belarus should not be financed from abroad.”

The Head of State noted that the norm on the prohibition of money injections from abroad is envisaged also by the existing legislation. Nevertheless, he once again noted,



**“Everyone who relies on support from abroad, on their money for ‘the social elevator’ and wealthy life should realise once and for all: if you take a grant from a foreign fund, if you agree to be paid for trips and other services, you immediately lose the de jure and de facto right to be engaged in politics, to vie for any government posts and elected positions in Belarus. We need to strengthen it even more — so that this would actually lead to the liquidation of such a party.”**

## No room for error

The Head of the President Administration, Igor Sergeyenko, made a report at the meeting. He explained the purpose of the bill under discussion, “This is the streamlining of the party system, strengthening the requirements for the activities of parties, ensuring state control over the political field of the country.”

At this point, the President interrupted the speaker and made an important clarification, “I just want to warn you, the developers of amendments to the law and others: if we make the slightest mistake in forming parties, referring to foreign experiences, we will destroy the country, we will disintegrate it.”

In Belarus, there are 15 registered political parties that declare ‘conditional adherence to various ideological platforms’ but, as analysts say, they can actually be divided into two groups: those who support and those who do not support the course pursued by the authorities.

The recent meeting is the first substantive discussion on the topic of party building. The proposed amendments to the legislation outline the process so far and all the nuances have yet to be thoroughly refined and polished.



Sangeeta Bahadur

By Dmitry Kryat

## There are prospects for growth

Belarus and India have long-standing good relations since Soviet times. This has been continued in the recent history of sovereign Belarus.

Political contacts at the highest level started in 1997, when our President visited India. After that, Aleksandr Lukashenko went to New Delhi twice more.

Minsk also welcomed the President of India: in 2015. At least three times, the Belarusian Head of State met with the current Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, on the fringes of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation summits. Minsk and New Delhi are linked by strong partnership and mutual support at the UN venues.

As seen, the level of mutual trust and understanding is fairly high. Importantly, trade and economic co-operation also strives for the same level. As the Head of State told Sangeeta Bahadur, not all potential has been reached, “A little more than \$500m [of trade turnover] is, of course, a decent figure but it’s not enough for our possibilities. We can do more. And you know that better than I do.”

This is also evidenced by the dynamics of growth in the volume of mutual trade during the diplomatic mission of Ms. Bahadur. In three years, this figure has grown by over \$120m and, notably, it didn’t fall in the challenging COVID year of 2020 — but actually increased. The Head of State expressed the wish that Ms. Bahadur’s successor would be able to realise the

considerable opportunities for the development of co-operation laid down during her time in Belarus.

“I am aware of how carefully you treat Belarus, want to co-operate and would like to liaise with us... I would very much like the person who comes after you to have the same desire to establish good and productive relations with us, to promote all the plans that you had in the relations between Belarus and India. There are many beginnings. And much has been done,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

## An important incentive

The President believes that the time has come for decisive practical actions in Belarusian-Indian relations. However, an impetus is needed for this and it’s clear what kind it should be,

**“I think that a good incentive for the development of our relations would be the visit of Narendra Modi to Belarus. We know each other well, we can even say that we are friendly to some extent, we support each other. It seems to me that he should have already visited Belarus.”**

According to the President, this visit would be an impetus to increase the level of co-operation in all areas, “The time has come when we need to combine our capabilities and desires and take steps towards close co-operation.”

In turn, the Indian diplomat thanked the Belarusian Head of State from the bottom of her heart for the opportunity to meet, and Aleksandr Lukashenko noted: we have had very good relations since the Soviet times;

moreover, India is one of the largest countries in the world.

Sangeeta Bahadur noted that she fully shares the position of the President of Belarus on all aspects of bilateral relations. In her opinion, the three-year post was successful, “We have significantly increased trade. Belarus has strengthened its presence in India. It is worth noting the intensification of co-operation between the private sectors of India and Belarus. It may seem immodest, but I would like to separately note the achievements in the line of co-operation between BelAZ and Coal India. Don’t forget that Belarus is widely represented in India in the market of petroleum products, agriculture, and, of course, in the field of IT technologies, in which Belarusians, of course, are successful.”

## Belarus — New Delhi: time to move forward

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to Belarus, Sangeeta Bahadur, is completing her diplomatic mission in the Republic. It has long been a tradition that the President personally says goodbye to diplomats who have worked fruitfully to strengthen relations and develop co-operation between the two countries. For this purpose, Ms. Bahadur was invited to the Palace of Independence.

Aleksandr Lukashenko thanked his guest for her successful tenure and expressed confidence that the foundations laid by her for even more dynamic co-operation will be implemented in practice, “During our co-operation over the past two decades, we have not only understood, but also studied the possibilities for India and Belarus. Perhaps the time has come when we should move to the stage of relations when it is necessary to conclude specific agreements and contracts and move forward in our co-operation.”

## Item in demand

### Cement exports via Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange rose 5-fold in Q1 2021

In Q1 2021, the sum of cement export transactions at the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) reached \$10.2m — five times more than in the same period 2019. Russia remains the key export market, accounting for over 90 percent of all sales. Work is also underway to boost exports to the Polish market. Thanks to its efforts, BUCE has already attracted several large buyers from Poland.

“Almost all cement sold at BUCE’s export trading sessions is purchased by Russian companies. Recently, they have carried out not just one-time transactions, but have signed long-term contracts to buy large batches of tens of thousands of tonnes of prod-

ucts. Exports to the Polish market have also been on the rise. Supplies to this country have increased thanks to more flexible logistics. For example, we offered an opportunity to deliver cement not only by rail, but also by road. This option appeals to Polish buyers, so we expect more Polish companies to take an interest in Belarusian products in the future,” BUCE’s press service said.

In 2020, 191,000 tonnes of cement worth \$9.2m was sold at BUCE’s export trading sessions — going to Poland, the Baltic States, Russia and Ukraine.

## Close interaction results

### Belarusian Steel Works (BMZ) launches seven new metal products since early 2021 — by customer demand

Among them are new kinds of reinforcing bars, round bars, hot-rolled seamless pipes, and wire. The share of innovative products in the company’s total shipments has increased to 30 percent as a result.

“Section round bars made of ‘C50 mod’ carbon steel is one of the new products. BMZ worked out the tech-

optimise their own manufacturing process. The company’s technical services have closely liaised with producers to achieve the necessary result and the first batch has already been shipped. Agreements have been made on shipping more in H1 2021,” the company’s press service has informed.

From January-March 2021, BMZ



nology to make the new product on the orders of a well-known German manufacturer of automobile parts. In addition to traditionally high requirements for mechanical and chemical properties, the new product has high surface quality requirements: surface defects and decarbonisation must be minimised. It will enable customers to

exported over \$300m of merchandise to 44 countries across the globe. Round bars, which are intended for automobile construction, accounted for about 10 percent of foreign sales. These products have been shipped to 22 countries this year. The top consumers are Germany, Poland, Italy and Norway.

## Steps to strengthen co-operation

Prospects of long-term collaboration, acting contracts and plans to deliver BelAZ mining vehicles were discussed as representatives of Russian companies — which are part of AV Group — visited the Belarusian Automobile Plant (BelAZ)



AV Group — an international leader in the area of quality and safety of drilling and blasting operations and mining operations — is long-standing strategic partner of BelAZ. It is a rapidly developing

turer of haul trucks is at the highest level. All the moving vehicles we use for open mining operations are made by BelAZ. Of them 55-tonne trucks are the smallest type. We also have trucks with a load capacity of 130, 180, 220, 240 and even 360 tonnes. As for the latter, we are probably the only contractor with such haul trucks. However, BelAZ 7513 series trucks are universal and miners sometimes even compare them to a Kalashnikov assault rifle: you simply need to take it and use it. This is why, when we were considering buying 130-tonne haul trucks, we chose only BelAZ



group of companies that operates all over Russia, the CIS and in Eastern Europe.

Some AV Group companies (Mountain-Transport Company JSC and AV Mining JSC) provide rock mass transportation services to mining companies in Russia’s Kemerovo and Novosibirsk regions — using about 50 BelAZ trucks with the carrying capacity of 130-450 tonnes, as well as other vehicles. Among the customers of transport services there are such large companies as Mezhdurechie JSC, Razrez Pervomaisky JSC, Chernigovets JSC, Razrez Vostochny JSC, Elgacoal JSC, Razrez Kiyzassky JSC and others.

BelAZ has sold 15 BelAZ-7555B haul trucks to Azot Mining Service JSC, which is part of AV Group. These new 55-tonne trucks will be used to create a coal cluster in Russia’s Krasnoyarsk Krai. BelAZ will ship another 15 haul trucks of the BelAZ-75131 model to the Kemerovo Region companies in April-May.

Dmitry Duntsev, the Director General of AV Mining, noted, “Our co-operation with the Belarusian manufac-

vehicles. In times of the vigorous development of the outsourcing market, BelAZ is the most important strategic partner for us.”

At a joint working meeting of top managers from BelAZ, Azot-Vzryv, AV Mining, BelAZ Trading House and BelAZ-24, the parties discussed the operation of BelAZ vehicles as part of AV Group’s vehicle fleet, also focusing on current matters of co-operation and sketching out future steps for expanding liaisons in the next five years.

Ilya Chernilovsky, the Managing Director of Azot-Vzryv, noted, “Thanks to BelAZ vehicles, we intend to acquire new experience of the operation of haul trucks in the most complicated conditions, including in the Far North. We hope the experience will be as positive as the current experience of using these trucks in other parts of Russia. I believe that later on, AV Group’s partnership with BelAZ will continue with new mutually beneficial projects.”

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# Most promising and innovative

## 23 Belarusian companies took part in *Innoprom. Big Industrial Week in Uzbekistan* international industrial trade fair in Tashkent



By Igor Platonov

Uzbekistan hosted the event — which was a continuation of the *Innoprom* fair traditionally held in Russia's Yekaterinburg — for the first time.

“The Industrial Week in Uzbekistan was the first major event in the country after the break caused by the pandemic. Its organisers attracted enough participants to Tashkent to fill all four pavilions of Uzexpocentre,” Belinterexpo, of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has stated.

Over 200 companies from Armenia, Belarus, Germany, Italy, China, Korea, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, France, the Czech Republic and Japan took part — representing the spheres of machine building, metallurgy, energy, pharmaceuticals, chemical industry and medicine.

Government officials from the EAEU member states took part in the main strategic session of the event: *Global Industrial Production in Search of Growth Drivers*. Among them were Sardor Umurzakov — the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Foreign Economic Relations, Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister — Roman Sklyar, the Member of the Board (Minister) for Industry and Agroindustrial Complex of the Eurasian Economic Com-



There was great interest in our exhibition from the state structures of Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of Russia. Mutually beneficial contracts were concluded as a result of the demonstration of the best samples of Belarusian machinery.

belinterexpo.by



A total of 23 domestic companies took part in the exhibition cycle

mission — Artak Kamalyan, Belarus' Industry Minister Piotr Parkhomchik, Tajikistan's Minister of Industry and New Technologies — Sherali Kabir, Russia's Minister of Industry and Trade — Denis Manturov, and Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Energy and Industry — Kubanychbek Turdubaev

The exhibition was attended by representatives of state agen-

cies and business communities from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The overall number of visitors exceeded 8,000 people.

The opening ceremony of the *Made in Belarus* national exposition took place as part of the event — organised by Belinterexpo. The exposition featured products of the mechanical en-

gineering, metallurgy, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, as well as medical equipment, new R&D solutions and consumer goods.

BelAZ was one of the exhibitors. The Belarusian industry giant showcased its new promising and innovative products and solutions. Its VR presentation was also in place.

In turn, the Minsk Automobile Plant demonstrated its latest development: a 65012K dump truck that uses natural gas as an engine fuel.

NIVA-Holding presented an SBSH drilling rig with an electric and diesel engine, handling and mining equipment.

Belkommunmash displayed an electric bus with a daily run of up to 300km and a low-floor tram meant for lines with a rail gauge of 1,524mm and the pos-

sibility of an autonomous run.

Tyres for cars, city and suburban buses, as well as for agricultural machinery and tractors were presented by Belshina, while the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus showcased the latest research outcomes in the field of health and medicine, materials science and agricultural mechanisation. Among the exhibits was equipment to treat respiratory and cardiovascular diseases in people diagnosed with COVID-19. It was developed by the Institute of Physiology of the National Academy of Sciences and is unique for the CIS.

The Scientific Research Centre for Materials Science brought products based on graphene, composites, electronic ceramics and electromagnetic shields, as well as items made from artificially grown emeralds.

AMKODOR exhibited backhoe loaders, a universal loader and an electric platform truck. The Minsk Tractor Works showcased new machines, including tractors with upgraded cabins and tractors for tropical countries, while the Minsk Motor Plant demonstrated a multi-purpose three-cylinder diesel engine aimed for use in seasonal, construction, road and communal vehicles.

Products of other Belarusian companies were also presented at the event.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### The Banner of Victory and earth from the Mound of Glory will be taken to Everest



The start of a joint project by the Belarusian Federation of Mountaineers and the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus was begun at the top of the Mound of Glory in the Smolevichi District. The famous mountaineer, Vadim Frolov, was given a copy of the Victory Banner, the state flag and a capsule with earth from a place sacred to every Belarusian. All this will be delivered by Belarusian climbers to Everest — the highest point of the planet.

The Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, Mikhail Orda, emphasised the symbolism of the patriotic action, saying, “We remember how many victims the Belarusian people sacrificed on the altar of the Great Victory for the sake of our quiet life. With our action, Belarusians tell the whole world that the most important value for us is peace and tranquillity, because we know what war is.”

### Unique scanner for digitising especially valuable and dilapidated books installed in the Fundamental Library of the BSU

Its use will make it possible to digitise any type of originals, including large, especially valuable and dilapidated books, without the risk of damage. The specialised



book scanner is equipped with a modern high-resolution camera and an optical system with a large depth of field. Digitisation of materials is made contactless at a speed of one page in 0.5 seconds. In total, the collection of rare books includes 25,000 copies, including the oldest edition of *The Six of the Republic* by the French writer, Jean Bodin.

The library was the first in Belarus to enter the consortium of online digital libraries of classical universities and is also ranked 3rd in the international *Transparent Ranking: Institutional Repositories* by *Google Scholar*.

### New oil deposit found in Belarus — the third discovered so far this year

The Guryanovskoye oil deposit is located in the central zone of the Pripyat Trough in the Rechitsa District. The deposit lies at a depth of 4.5km and its geological reserves are estimated at around 600,000 tonnes. Moreover, relying on test results of potential oil-bearing capacity, oil workers expect this deposit to produce oil flow to surface at the site.

The discovery coincided with the 55th



anniversary of Belorusneft, while news of the oil inflow — with intensity above average at a depth of 4,500m — was received by specialists on their professional holiday, Geologist's Day.

As far as the prospects and resource potential of the central structural zone of the Pripyat Trough are concerned, there are plans to drill 13 exploratory wells in the area in 2021-2022.

### Bronze bust of Yuri Gagarin unveiled on Cosmonautics Day in Belarus

The sculpture of the first cosmonaut in the world appeared in the agro-town of Tomashovka of the Brest Region — the small homeland of the first Belarusian pilot-cosmonaut, twice Hero of the Soviet Union Piotr Klimuk. It was installed in Belarus' only Cosmonautics Museum, established over 40 years ago.

The project was initiated by the Russian side. “This is our gift to the friendly Belarusian people in honour of the 60th anniversary of the first manned flight into space. This year has been declared the Year of Science and Technology in Russia, and many events are being held in connection



with this. I suppose the unveiling of the sculpture will facilitate friendship, as well as patriotic education of the young generation of the Union State,” noted Igor Kon-yakin, Consul General of Russia in Brest.

ECONOMY

# New star mission



Oleg Novitsky's mother tells us about her son and his third expedition to the ISS

April 12th marks the 60th anniversary of the first manned flight into space. All this time, cosmonauts from different countries have been actively exploring extra-terrestrial space, and scientists — including Belarusians — have developed space technologies and special high-precision equipment. The anniversary of the first flight into space was celebrated with the 65th long-term expedition to the International Space Station, which was launched on April 9th. Our compatriot, Oleg Novitsky, joined the prime crew as commander of the Soyuz MS-18 spacecraft and the ISS-65 commander and he will also celebrate his own 50th birthday in space. For Oleg Novitsky, this is already his third long-term expedition, which testifies to the highest qualifications, excellent health and the demand for an astronaut. *The MT* reporter met with Valentina Eduardovna Novitskaya, Oleg's mother, to find out all the details about his new mission.

By Oksana Nevmerzhitskaya

## All life is study



Valentina Novitskaya

The outskirts of the town of Cherven: a forest on the horizon, a green meadow, and a river can be glimpsed behind it — three children of the Novitsky family grew up outside in nature. Now Oleg, the eldest son, is a rare guest in a cosy house with a green roof. Mother and son are very close, so Valentina Eduardovna is aware of all his trips, business trips, including space ones.

“The expedition will last 191 days, for the first time Oleg will have several space walks. The ISS has received a lot of new equipment, so all this needs to be disassembled, installed, assembled and adjusted. He has been at the Baikonur cosmodrome since March 26th, when the final stage of preparation began, and will only appear at home after landing at the end of the year.”

Indeed, according to the available data, one of the main tasks of the expedition is the phased integration of the new multifunctional laboratory module ‘Science’ into the Russian segment of the ISS. In addition, the crew will conduct more than 50 scientific experiments and research in orbit.

In fact, the station is a scientific laboratory, just not on Earth. Medical, technological, biological, physical research is carried out in unique conditions: cosmic radiation without the influence of the atmosphere, the presence of vacuum and, finally, microgravity or weightlessness. Moreover, remote sensing of the Earth is carried out to understand its natural resources and to solve meteorological problems, with processes of global warming and the ozone layer being studied. If necessary, the cosmonauts should be able to carry out repair and restoration work, install new station equipment and scientific devices. It is difficult to imagine how much knowledge an astronaut needs to have! It would be no exaggeration to say that these are unique people.

## Reward for merits

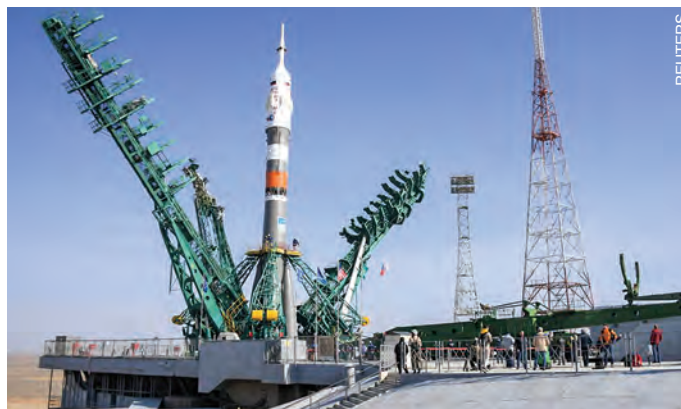
Valentina Eduardovna doesn't remember any special mischief among her two sons and daughter, “There was no time, as we loaded them with work so that the children were always busy with something. Each had their own area of responsibility. My daughter was, of course, responsible for cleanliness and order in the house, while the boys worked around the house. There was always enough work in the village!”

In the Novitsky family, both father and mother were a model for the children. They have always worked, demonstrating by their own example that in order to receive certain benefits, you need to earn them. The family didn't live in poverty, with parents listening to the wishes of the children and taking into account their needs; however, they also encouraged them to earn money on their own.

to a concentration camp, where she spent the whole war. The children cried as they listened to her stories about the suffering of people. My dad, Oleg's grandfather, was seriously injured in 1941 and couldn't fulfil his dream of becoming a pilot. However, Oleg's cousin entered the Borisoglebsk Higher Military Aviation School of Pilots. Under the influence of all these factors, Oleg decided to become a military man, and specifically a pilot. He began to prepare. He always studied well,

banded, and Oleg received his diploma at the Kacha Higher Military Aviation School of Pilots. He wrote a report saying he wanted to serve in the North Caucasian Military District, where military aircraft flew regularly, and was sent to Budennovsk. He served in the North Caucasus for ten years, took part in two Chechen campaigns, has military awards. “Who if not us?” he answered the worried questions of his parents. “I took the oath!”

Then Oleg entered the Gagarin



REUTERS



The crew of the 65th ISS expedition includes our countryman Oleg Novitsky (below), American Mark Vande Hei and Russian Piotr Dubrov

While still at school, Oleg Novitsky decided that he would be a military man. No wonder, because Victory Day, the day of Belarus' liberation, has always been revered in the family more than New Year or Easter.

“My father-in-law reached Konigsberg, my mother was taken straight from the field and sent

putting special emphasis on physics and mathematics,” Valentina Eduardovna recalls.

## ‘Who if not us’

After admission, Oleg was rarely at home. His parents themselves went to see him two or three times a year. In 1990, the Borisoglebsk school was dis-

## FACT

Oleg Novitsky spent more than 340 days in space during the two previous space expeditions: 143 days 16 hours 15 minutes in the first and 196 days 17 hours 50 minutes in the second. The retired colonel has the title of Hero of the Russian Federation and was awarded the Order of Merit for the Fatherland of the 4th degree.

Air Force Academy and studied there for two years, because he already had a higher education. When going on vacation to Cherven, he wrote an application to the cosmonaut corps before leaving.

“Recruitment to the detachment isn't carried out annually, but it turned out that it happened that year,” Valentina Eduardovna is well aware of all the intricacies. “Everything worked out! Oleg was enrolled as a candidate for the cosmonaut to the squad of the cosmonaut training centre. So, the work began... my son had been preparing for the flight for five years; compared to others, this isn't long at all. Some of them worked for 18 years before

going into space and there were those who never went at all. He passed all the exams successfully, because from childhood he was very responsible. Only ‘excellent’ marks are allowed: space will not forgive even the slightest mistakes.”

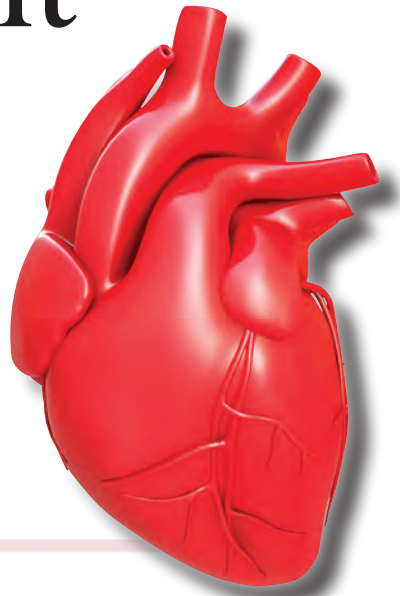
Valentina Eduardovna watched her son's first flight into space from the Flight Control Centre. “We must pay tribute to the scientists, they organised everything perfectly. The first crucial moment is the launch, the second is the entry into orbit, while the most important is the docking. It takes a full day. The spacecraft is getting ready, the crew commander transmits all instrument readings to Earth, then takes off, transfers from one orbit to another. Approaching the ISS, it slows down to dock to the station receiving cone. The cosmonauts have two hours to change their clothes, dry their spacesuits, and prepare the hatch for the exit. Then a very touching meeting takes place as people also work on the ISS. They hand over the equipment for two weeks, and then the previous crew leaves.”

Previously, the Flight Control Centre held monthly video meetings between cosmonauts and relatives, the so-called ‘private conversations’, which Valentina Eduardovna also regularly attended. However, she fears that now they will not be due to the coronavirus. But it's always possible to talk by phone.

“It's good that the connection is established, you can talk at least every day. I heard his voice, exchanged a few words and it means that everything is fine, life goes on. During Oleg's second flight, they organised the station flight schedule over Belarus. On certain days, I went outside at 11:45pm and looked at the sky — in clear weather, of course. The stars stand still, while a little star starts to move. It looks like a bean, floating smoothly overhead 450km from the Earth. I wave to Oleg with my hand and call him for tea. Once I returned to the house and there was a call: ‘Mom, I called you, why didn't you answer?’ — ‘I went to meet you! Well, how will I sleep when my son flies over me?’

# Sending the heart to print

Traumatology and cardiology: 3D technologies already widely applied by our doctors in operations



**Belarusian medicine is actively introducing the latest technologies into clinical practice. Among them are 3D scanning and printing, which open up new opportunities for doctors and improve the quality of medical care. Traumatology and cardiology are the areas where digital techniques have come to our country in the first place. In addition, 3D technologies are also used for training future doctors. We've learnt more about how 3D products can improve the effectiveness of treatment.**

By Olga Kosyakova

## Computer vision

Traumatology is a technological science. As the trauma surgeons say, there is nothing to be done with the bare hands here. To restore the integrity of damaged bones, plates, rods, screws and retainers are needed to fix the bone fragments in the correct position for the fusion of fractures.

The Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Traumatology and Orthopaedics is developing new methods of treatment of fractures and new implants for the implementation of these methods and local surgeons already apply 3D technologies for treatment of the most complex injuries.

“To ensure the fusion of fractures in the gentlest way, fixators must correspond to the anatomy of the place of application,” explains Aleksandr Sitnik, who heads the Centre’s adult traumatology laboratory. “For example, we have developed retainers for different segments of the tibia and 3D technologies were used for fractures of the proximal and distal parts of the lower leg. On the basis of computer tomograms of patients, an average model of the bone was obtained, which can be rotated on the screen however you like. In accordance with the patient’s anatomy, the optimal shape of the plate was selected so that it corresponded to all the bends and lays on the bone like a template. The designs — modelled on a computer — are 3D printed in the form of plastic models. We work with metal plates already made on their basis for fixing.”

Jointly with the Hi-Tech Park residents, the Centre’s specialists are developing methods for using computer vision in traumatology. ‘Magic’ 3D glasses make it possible to see a leg and a fracture through the skin.

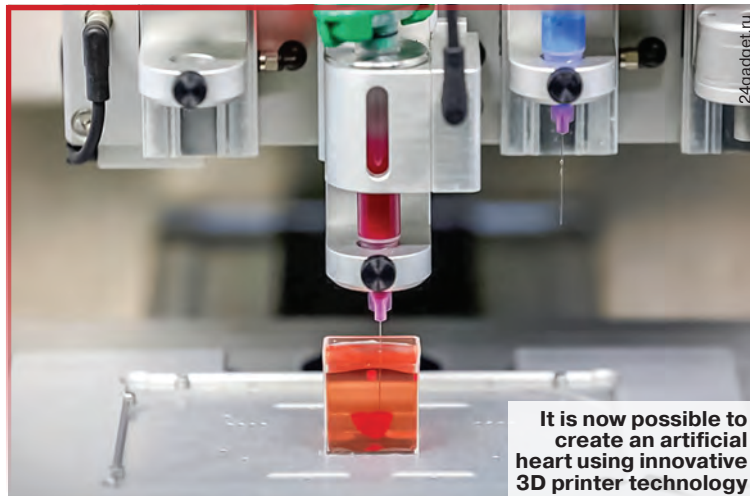
“Before the operation, a tomography is done; the image then turns into a three-dimensional model. The images are uploaded to the helmet. The doctor can rotate the virtual copy of the leg with his hands, without touching the damaged limb. This approach enables us to achieve two goals,” adds Dr. Sitnik. “Primarily, on the eve of the operation, when the surgeon receives a hologram of the fracture, he can twist it as he likes. Accordingly, he better understands the fracture itself, better plans how to reposition the fragments and then fix them. This technology is used for complex joint fractures. When we already have a plan of action, we go to the patient and directly draw a marker on the skin where the crack is located. With more precision than usual, we go strictly to the desired area of the skin. This makes it possible to reduce the length of the incision, to ensure the mobilisation of tissue, to achieve better healing and recovery of patients.”

These ‘magic’ glasses practically exclude the influence of the human factor. After all, previously, the model was built in the head of the surgeon and then much depended on the doctor’s imagination.

“You can imagine anything but, in reality, it will be

different,” confirms the doctor. “Now the work is done with high precision. With the use of these glasses, we perform about forty operations annually and continue investigating this method. A number of technical issues related to the production of the model and the accuracy of its installation are being worked out.”

The first results of successful work of Belarusian surgeons using computer vision were reported in Las Vegas, at the US Congress of Traumatologists. This indicates the high achievements of our school in this field.



It is now possible to create an artificial heart using innovative 3D printer technology



Three-dimensional vision of a trauma



Medical students master laparoscopic skills using computer technology



Candidate of Medical Sciences, Associate Professor Anna Pasyuk lectures to foreign students

Recovery after surgery using 3D glasses takes less time than usual, because tissue damage is minimal. Glasses for traumatologists will be improved and the scope of their application will also expand.

## Computer autopsy

3D technologies are now widely used in the training of future doctors. Simulators for practicing laparoscopic surgery skills, modern patient simulators and ready scenario programmes enable medical students to polish the manipulations they will face in the future.

The anatomical table makes it possible to ‘disassemble’ a person and see all the organs without dissection. Behind it, students of the Belarusian State Medical Univer-

sity study anatomy in a three-dimensional volume.

Anna Pasyuk, the Deputy Head of the Department of Normal Anatomy at BSMU, shows how this 3D technology works. With a few taps on the screen, she removes the layers from the model and finds the stomach. Then she moves to the side, opens the tissues and comes out on the gallbladder. Everything happens in seconds.

“The anatomical table helps the educational process and provides visibility. Thanks to such equipment, we can see a person from the inside — also rotating the organs and removing layers of various tissues. It’s possible to see the smallest details of the body and identify a separate structure. Such equipment motivates students, enabling them to learn the nuances of development,” she says.

A special programme of the anatomical table demonstrates four models of the human body. Interestingly, they are based on the bodies of people who actually lived. After death, they were frozen, then divided into layers. Layer-by-layer, they have been restored via computer graphics.

“It is very convenient to study the blood flow here,” adds Ms. Pasyuk. “In addition, the table has a large library of histological preparations and over 1,500 clinical cases. We can see

here malformations, gunshot wounds and various diseases. The main feature is that the device makes it possible to see the human anatomy in three dimensions and the relative position of organs.”

## 3D-heart doesn't hurt

More than 100 heart operations with the use of 3D modelling have

been performed at the Cardiology Republican Scientific and Practical Centre. The method was first used here a few years ago to improve surgical care for people with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy — a rare heart defect that leads to sudden death.

“We created a model of the heart on a computer, 3D printed it (at a scale of one to one) and performed a heart operation using 3D modelling,” heart surgeon Vladimir Andrushchuk comments on the first unusual intervention. “To date, more than a hundred such operations have been performed, including for foreign patients.”

Previously, doctors turned to computer companies for 3D printing. Now the Centre has its own 3D printer, with which specialists simulate the course of operations.

In many ways, surgery is impromptu. Doctors don’t know for sure what they’ll face during the operation until the last moment, and the decision must be made quickly. Another thing is if a real intervention is worked out in advance on a 3D model of the heart of a particular patient.

When performing surgery for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, it is difficult to determine the volume of muscle tissue that needs to be cut out. Neither computed tomography nor other methods of examination will show a specialist the volume of the area of the heart muscle that needs to be removed. 3D modelling has changed the situation: an individual 3D model enables the surgeon to act clearly and confidently.

MEDICINE

The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
April 15  
2021

7



# Northern Ireland riots

The flareups come amid rising tensions over post-Brexit trade rules for Northern Ireland and worsening relations between the parties in the Protestant-Catholic power-sharing Belfast government

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) said officers were attacked in Londonderry, and there was also unrest in two pro-British unionist areas near Belfast. Police said most of those involved were teenagers.

Violence has broken out and a bus was hijacked and later set on fire at the junction of Lanark Way and Shankill Road. Youths on the Springfield Road have also gathered and thrown bricks, bottles and palettes at the PSNI.

Chief Superintendent Darrin Jones condemned the 'senseless and reckless criminal behaviour that (does) nothing but cause damage to the community'.

The disturbances followed unrest that took place in unionist areas in and around Belfast and Londonderry, also

known as Derry, that saw cars set on fire and projectiles and gasoline bombs hurled at police officers. Police said that over 40 officers were injured.

Britain's economic split from the European Union at the end of 2020 has shaken the delicate political balance in Northern Ireland, a part of the UK where some people identify as British and some as Irish.

The Democratic Unionist Party, which jointly governs Northern Ireland with Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein, has called for the Brexit deal to be scrapped. Unionists are also angry at a police decision not to prosecute Sinn Fein politicians who attended the funeral of a former Irish Republican Army commander in June. The funer-

al of Bobby Storey drew a large crowd, despite coronavirus rules barring mass gatherings.

The main unionist parties have demanded the resignation of Northern Ireland's police chief over the controversy, claiming he has lost the confidence of their community.

The UK Prime Minister has issued a statement as hundreds continue to riot on the streets of Belfast. In a statement from Boris Johnson, he said, "I am deeply concerned by the scenes of violence in Northern Ireland, especially attacks on PSNI who are protecting the public and businesses, attacks on a bus driver and the assault of a journalist. The way to resolve differences is through dialogue, not violence or criminality."

# World's first living lung transplant

**Kyoto University Hospital has transplanted lung tissue from living persons to a patient suffering from serious COVID-19 pneumonia, in the world's first living-donor lung transplant to a novel coronavirus patient**

While there have been 20 to 40 lung transplants in China, Europe and the US after infection, all were from brain-dead donors. "The world's first living donor lung transplant is expected to be a promising treatment for patients who have serious lung disorders," said the university hospital in a news release.

The patient is a woman who lives in the Kansai Region where the hospital is located. After being infected with COVID-19 at the end of last year, her condition deteriorated rapidly and both lungs began to fail.

After undergoing a three-month treatment with extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, the woman was admitted to Kyoto University Hospital. The patient received parts of lungs from her husband and son during an 11-hour operation. The university hospital said the two family donors are in good health.

Although the patient tested negative for COVID-19 in a PCR test, 'there was no hope of recovery from the lung disorder, and the only way to save her life was to transplant the lung', the hospital said.

The living-donor lung transplant is only available for people under 65 years of age who have no other organ damage. Many patients undergoing the same treatment for COVID-19 tend to have underlying conditions, which may limit the number of patients eligible for the procedure, the hospital added.

# Royal mummies

Twenty-two mummified members of ancient Egyptian royalty passed through downtown Cairo in an awe-inspiring parade

The event, which drew fanfare to the country's robust collections of antiquities in an elaborate procession, saw the mummies being relocated from the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, about 3 miles away in nearby Fustat.

The spectacle was named *The Pharaohs' Golden Parade* and comprised 18 kings and four queens, including some of Egypt's most prominent rulers of the

past. Among them was King Ramses II, one of Egypt's most famous Pharaohs.

The royal figures were transported in vehicles specially rigged to carry the remains and a security motorcade surrounded the convoy. Due to the fragility of the preserved pharaohs, they were placed in nitrogen filled boxes for protection. The roads along the route were even repaved to ensure a smooth relocation.



# Huge waterway project

**The construction of a huge canal on the edge of Istanbul is set to begin in the very near future, Turkey's Transport and Infrastructure Minister Adil Karaismailoğlu announced**

"Kanal Istanbul will serve as an international waterway that will complement Turkey's logistics power and infrastructure by performing an important function in global maritime trade," Karaismailoğlu told a meeting in Ankara. "It is now a very short time before the construction of the Kanal Istanbul begins."

"We have approved the Kanal Istanbul Project development plans and put them out for public consultation. We'll rapidly take steps to enrich our country and sacred city with Kanal Istanbul," Environment and Urbanisation Minister

Murat Kurum wrote on Twitter.

The canal will connect the Black Sea north of Istanbul to the Marmara Sea to the south, designed as an alternative global shipping lane, and estimated to cost around \$9.2bn.

The government says it will ease shipping traffic on the Bosphorus Strait, one of the world's busiest maritime passages, and prevent accidents similar to that on Egypt's Suez Canal, where a giant container ship became lodged, blocking the channel for almost a week.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**



# Cake from the queen

Path to success: Natalia Sharai from Mogilev joins top-5 culinary experts worldwide

**If culinary achievements could be equated with sports, Mogilev's Natalia Sharai would have won the title of Olympic champion. Actually, she has more than enough medals from winning international competitions, including gold awards. In order to win them, it is necessary to give your best just as much as in the stadium. The world cuisine championships are real battles, with eminent masters from dozens of countries fighting for victory. Natalia has joined the top-5.**



Natalia Sharai joins the top-5 confectioners in the world

By Svetlana Markova

## Luck of the draw

Hair in a ponytail, graceful walk and a sincere smile — it would seem that Natalia Sharai is still far from the confidence of the master craftsman. However, her relatives and colleagues know that behind her external optimism lies perseverance, an endless thirst for knowledge and, of course, great talent. There was a time when her fellow countrymen even recognised her on the street and she is an iconic figure in culinary circles. At international championships, she is expected, welcomed, and asked about her new work. The lady always admits that the basis of her sweet figures, compositions and installations is not only fondant, caramel or chocolate, but above all — hard work. It's hard to believe, but the young girl came to the profession that took her to the top of her culinary art quite by accident.

"I lived with my parents in Russia, and when I received my general education certificate, I decided to move to Mogilev to my grandmother. I immediately took my documents to the culinary school and mastered two specialties there at once: that of cook and pastry chef," recalls Natalia.

The young specialist focused on the confectionery business; whatever one may say, there is much more room for imagination in this area. She was assigned to work in a restaurant at Mogilev station. "Back then, creamy biscuit cakes were used, and some of the most popular were those with roses. You have no idea how I wanted to learn how to twist these roses," she admits. "I tried to see how an experienced colleague did it, but alas: she turned her back as she didn't want anyone to steal her knowledge. Perhaps she wanted to be irreplaceable? But I didn't give up: I trained at home, using margarine, I sculpted in the evenings. There was no Internet, and there were no manuals, so everything was understood by practice. But in the end it worked!"

## The road led to Rome

The young girl from the Mog-

ilev branch of the railways was sent to the industry competition for culinary specialists.

"Those from Brest turned out to be much more advanced both in the use of materials and in the design of sweets. Their yellow orchids especially surprised us: a real work of art! However, our cakes were several times 'weightier' than what was required under the terms of the competition."

Nevertheless, the judges also appreciated the original approach of Ms. Sharai to the design of delicacies and their taste, and the Mogilev woman was awarded third place.

She didn't return from contests without awards even when she switched to the co-operative trade. All this gave her strength. Moreover, diplomas and awards helped Natalia make her dream come true: to get work in Mogilevkhlebprom, now the Domochai Company. She doesn't hide the fact that she's very grateful to General Director Natalia Podlesnykh, who created all the conditions for a confectioner of the 4th production to become a world-famous professional: it would be unrealistic to pay for an internship in Moscow or participation in competitions from one's own pocket.

One of Natalia's first high-profile victories was gold at the *Queen of Baking-2010* competition in Minsk. Soon after, the star confectioner went to Rome for an international confectionery exhibition to see what was on offer.

"Just imagine a huge hangar, full of colours, forms and huge figures, as well as the building material of such compositions: caramel, chocolate, icing sugar, fondant."

Natalia admitted that she only saw the capital of Italy from the bus window, but her impressions are still unforgettable.

## Oh, Charlie!

Later, Sharai visited Italy with her own works. And not only that: the fantastic compositions of the Mogilev woman were applauded by many Eu-

ropean cities hosting pastry competitions. For example, her caramel 'Charlie Chaplin' impressed the jury and contenders at the 2014 International Pastry Championship in Rimini. She worked on the 160cm high sculpture for more than a month; it took more than 30kg of sugar alone! With 'Charlie', Natalia was the first of the Belarusian women to join the top-5 best confectioners in the world, and she continues to keep this accolade to this day.

"Few people believe it, but I



'Charlie Chaplin'

don't draw any sketches. I can't even say that I once liked drawing or that I have any special abilities. How are ideas born? Very simply: they appear in my head. It's necessary to take them out of there, decide on the material and give it shape," the master said, revealing the secrets of her work.

In fact, of course, everything is much more complicated. Weeks of painstaking work, calculations, disappointments and even losses, when finished structures break or fall apart. She once had to work for half a day straight to correct a mistake, yet it's almost impossible to convey the joy from such a result. Sometimes unexpected situations happen at the most inopportune moments.

"In Luxembourg — where we arrived together with other Belarusian confectioners for the World Culinary Cup — I suddenly saw that the head of my chocolate farmer has fallen off. Of course, I was upset. Anyway, I quickly gathered myself and began to do everything possible to restore the figure. Perhaps it didn't work out as perfectly as I wanted, but I did it."

Furthermore, she wasn't left without a reward.

## Haute couture sweets

The confectioner doesn't hide the fact that high marks from the jury are not a goal in itself for her. It's much more important to test one's own capabilities, to see the reaction of the audience, and to get a positive assessment from her colleagues. Moreover, there's no limit to perfection: often after a triumph, Natalia sees that here and there in the miracle cake

a 45kg composition of chocolate, caramel, sugar paste, and marzipan. It's not surprising that the very list of sweet sources leads to seditious thoughts: is it possible to eat such beauty?

"I guess, yes though, primarily, it's not created for this," admitted Ms. Sharai. "It is made to show what you're capable of. And, of course, to make a personal contribution to make life more



Natalia Sharai with Belarusian colleagues — pastry chefs (second from the right in the first row)



Each of the works is exclusive

something could be corrected, added or taken away. However, it's important to move on and begin a new work. This dynamic also has a special appeal. Baba Yaga, Margosha, Felix the Cat, Bonya Doll — all the characters by this unique author of sweets can't be listed, and she didn't repeat any of them. It's not for nothing that she gained fame as the queen of cakes!

One of her latest big awards is the gold medal of the World Culinary Olympiad in Stuttgart. There Natalia shone with 'The Enchantress Hilda' —

beautiful. It's like the world of high fashion in confectionery."

Natalia literally had a chance to participate in Haute Couture Week in Moscow: there she demonstrated edible outfits. "It's a pity that due to the pandemic, such events have been paused," says Ms. Sharai. "But there's more time to think about what to make at the next competition. Sooner or later, the epidemic will end and the desire to create remains forever."



'The Enchantress Hilda'

# Swim across the sea

If we believe the maps of the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, the Belarusians had a sea: two and a half thousand years ago and fresh — as a result of the melting of the glacier. Violent waves rustled in the area of the modern Pripyat River, which even today likes to overflow in spring so that dozens of villages and cities remain underwater, as if reminding us of its maritime past.

By Sofia Arsenyeva

### Becoming a medieval citizen

The heart of the Belarusian Polesie is the town of Turov — one of the oldest cities in Belarus and the most important trade and craft centres of Kievan Rus. It stands on the wayward tributaries of the River Pripyat and is surrounded on all sides by mysterious swamps and incredibly beautiful, flooded meadows.

The remains of an imposing 12th century Orthodox church have been



In the 'Polesie Amazon', you can meet deer and roe deer among the age-old trees

preserved on the high bank. Anyone can look inside and appreciate the power of the former greatness since the archaeological site has been turned into a modern museum.

Another miracle of the ancient town is the stone crosses that literally grow out of the ground at an amazing speed. According to the legend, in the 1930s, the Soviet government ordered that these large and weighty local Christian shrines be 'drowned'. No sooner said than done. However, the faith of Polesie people turned out to be stronger than the new ideology: crosses... began to emerge in different parts of Pripyat, and some of them appeared from the soil. Not a single scientist has yet been able to explain a phenomenon that contradicts the laws of physics.

### Arranging a swamp safari

Pripyat is often called the 'Polesie Amazon'. Crocodiles and hippos aren't found here, but you can always find a local resident who speaks a unique dialect and ploughs through the surface of the water in a fancy boat made of an oak trunk. The colourful people perfectly match the natural diversity: herds of deer and bison, elk and roe deer, foxes and even the fastest peregrine falcon in the world.

The favourite pastime of visitors is jeep trips on safari in the Pripyatsky National Park. Centuries-old trees, off-road, incredible smells and sounds carry visitors back hundreds of years when walking in a virgin forest was unsafe: it is still possible to meet wild boars or wolves.

### Being a birdwatcher

The best time to travel to the Herodotus Sea is spring. Right behind the ancient town, there is a unique reserve — Turovsky Lug (Turov Meadow). The locals jokingly call it 'the bird's airport'. Every year, hundreds of thousands of birds stop here on their way from Europe and Africa, where they winter, to nesting sites that are located even in Yakutia.

The spectacle is so unique that tourists from all over the world come here. The chances of seeing the blue tit, the great spotted eagle and the Terek sandpiper at arm's length are high.

Birdwatchers are delighted, and the birds don't seem to object to posing for the cameras.



Birdwatchers 'hunt' for lapwings: its voice is too sweet

### Admiring wooden architecture

In the Russian north there is Kizhi while the Belarusian south can boast of its Pripyat architecture. Wooden temples — built without a single nail — are impressive in their resilience. Churches, modest at first glance, have adorned many villages for hundreds of years. All were erected by local nameless craftsmen, this is why it's impossible to find two similar ones.

St. Nicholas Church, built in 1818, in Kozhan-Gorodok surprises with its five domes, each of which looks in its own direction. It seems to be about to collapse. But it has been like that almost from the first years of construction. However, the title of the 'narrowest' church in Belarus belongs to the Trinity Church in Dobroslavka (1758). It is only seven metres wide, but long



The 'Pisa Church' was built back in 1818. It seems about to fall! All five domes face in different directions. It has been like that from the first years of construction.

and tall. How has such a layout survived to this day? Wonder of wonders!

Historians and art historians note one important feature of Polesie wooden churches — the faces depicted on the icons inside often have the features of local residents.

### Items made with an axe

The majority of locals believe that there's no place like home, so they don't seek to leave their native land. That's why villages and farms in Polesie retain many traditional crafts. It's still not a problem to find a hereditary potter or beekeeper here. There are also unique people, like



The craftsman carved colourful local residents from bog oak. I wonder if they recognised themselves?

the wood sculptor, Ivan Suprunchik. In an ordinary village hut in Tereblichy, the artist arranged not even a gallery or a museum, but a universe where the past, present and future were intertwined in wooden images. You can see the 'founder of the family' of local residents made of bog oak, which has been lying in the river for millennia, or a whole pantheon of pagan gods. The tree reflects not only legends, but also quite real pages of history — the Great Patriotic War or the tragedy at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. There was also a place for philosophical works as the craftsman doesn't hesitate to study the themes of drunkenness, sin or freedom. At the same time, thousands of sculptures were cut out of stumps and logs using only an axe.

# A real holiday atmosphere

It was worth coming to the final match of the Republican ice hockey tournament not only to enjoy a spectacular game but also to be immersed into the atmosphere of a real holiday. At Minsk's Olympic Arena, the team of the Head of State played against the Brest Region's team — a week after their previous match — to win: 12:4 (0:2, 4:0, 8:2) and take the honorary trophy. Aleksandr Lukashenko assisted on a goal. Despite the seemingly lopsided score, the match had intrigue — also being accompanied by a flurry of positive emotions.

By Irina Sergeeva

The guests took the lead in the first minute of the match. The efforts of his teammates were completed by defender Viktor Shariton. The hosts made much effort to win back — attacking often and in different ways. In turn, the Brest team responded with dangerous counterattacks, and shortly before the signal for a break, Aleksandr Korotkevich doubled the advantage of his squad.

After the break, the President's team continued to besiege the opponents' goal, and in the 23rd minute, Mikhail Grabovsky netted a goal; a minute later, Nikolai Lukashenko equalised the score. However, the hosts didn't stop there but continued to storm the guests' goal. As a result, Nikolai Lukashenko scored for the second time. The Brest play-



ers didn't give up, but they missed the puck again: Yaroslav Chupris scored.

In the final third of the match, Artem Karkotsky, Konstantin Koltsov, Mikhail Grabovsky, Oleg Antonenko, Pavel Volchek, and Artem

Antonenko from the Head of State's team scored.

Georgy Dubitsky and Nikolai Vasyukovich scored for the Brest Region's team.

Sergei Ploskov (Brest Region) and Mikhail Grabovsky (the President's team) were

named best players of the match. Meanwhile, goalkeeper Vadim Boiko (from the Brest Region), defender Konstantin Durnov (the President's team), striker Aleksandr Korotkevich (from the Brest Region) were acknowledged as best play-

ers of the tournament, in their roles. Yaroslav Chupris was the best scorer.

The spectators who came to support the teams in the decisive stage of the competition could enjoy an entertainment programme prepared by the organisers and, during the breaks, participated in competitions: their winners received valuable prizes and presents — including a hockey jersey with the President's autograph.

At the opening stage of the competition, the President's team celebrated six victories in 6 matches — scoring 12 points out of 12 possible and topping the standings.

In the fight for bronze, hockey players of the Grodno Region defeated the Minsk regional team — 4:3 (0:2, 2:1, 2:0).

The President's hockey team won the amateur team competition for the 12th time.

## Growing big Brest Meshkov handball players gave themselves a wonderful birthday present

Having beaten Motor Zaporozhye in great style in their native Victoria Sports Complex, Meshkov Brest HC managed to get through the first round of the Champions League playoffs and reach the quarterfinals, for the first time in their history. They will face the formidable Barcelona.

By Sergei Kanashits

Today it's impossible to imagine Brest without its sporting business card — Meshkov Brest HC. It seems that it has always been there. Perhaps, this feeling stems from the name itself, because the name of Anatoly Petrovich Meshkov, in whose memory the team was created, is associated with the birth of handball in the city above the River Bug, and, therefore, breathes history. Anatoly Meshkov passed away early, in May 1994, not having time to realise all his ideas and dreams. However, on April 9th, 2002, Meshkov's sons — Aleksandr and Sergei — created a team in Brest. This story is not only about a local point on the map and a separate handball club, it's about the development of handball in Belarus as a whole. In fact, at that time, handball in the country was not just floating without a rudder or sails, but literally dragging out a miserable existence. The appearance on the map of a new club — Brest Handball Club named after Meshkov — with a strong financial foundation, a pure heart and a big soul, became the point from which the countdown of the new history of Belarusian handball began. A tremendous amount has been accomplished over the last nineteen years. From a provincial team, Meshkov Brest has become a powerful brand that is well known in Europe. Czech, French, Hungarian, Croatian and Slovenian, Danish and Spanish handball

players and coaches have worked and continue to work in Brest, unanimously declaring that Belarus and Brest are amazingly clean and beautiful, where sincere and strong people live. For nearly two decades, they managed to create a clear and modern structure in Brest for the development of handball, to build an infrastructure that we can call one of the most advanced in Europe. Therefore, the current result is by no means accidental. It's a natural progression, gained through hard and painstaking work, flavoured with sweat and more than a few tears. It's even more pleasant because of this. Congratulating Meshkov Brest and all fans of the country's handball on their success, we can safely say: 'Keep it up!' and be sure that this isn't the end of the story and that the continuation of it will surely follow. After all, even those who quite recently quietly laughed at the long-term plans of the Brest handball players to win the Champions League, have probably erased the

smile from their lips, because the team is slowly but surely moving towards its goal. Right now, Meshkov Brest has already entered the top-8 of the strongest clubs in Europe! This great height, from which their heads would certainly have been spinning in the past, is perceived today as a natural, well-deserved place for the Brest squad.

Motor was easily beaten without any chance of success. As expected, at home, Meshkov Brest appeared as a completely different team than the one we saw recently in Zaporozhye. An enchanting game was shown near the goal by Ivan Pesic. In the first half, our 'Croat' with a residence permit in Belarus, 'pushed back' the top scorers of Motor several times in a row, literally plunging them into despair and complete confusion. It became clear that with such a game by our goalkeeper, Motor was unlikely to get anything: their play began to falter and consequently failed. Everyone



showed their class that evening; it was truly a team game and a collective victory. A single fist with tremendous accuracy and incredible power over and over again fell on the opponent, knocking out ambition, strength and hope for a favourable outcome. Nikita Vailupov ran in counterattack and skilfully hit the balls from his corner. Our other handball player, Andrei Yurinok, also played with the full force of his talent. These are the actions we always expect from Andrei! Meanwhile, Stas Skube played the role of a magician while Vladimir Vraniesh and Vyacheslav Shumak — like two Atlanteans — held the defence line on their mighty shoulders and didn't forget about the attack. Moreover, Marko Panic and Pawel Paczkowski carried a constant threat to the opponents' goal... After the first half, all questions about the winners were removed: 16:8 is a defeat.

The Motor team, however, never gave up, but fought until the last minute, and the best in its squad was, of course, our own Boris Pukhovskiy, who managed to score 7 times. Boris is also a pupil of the Brest handball school, coming from Malorita. So, on Thursday evening, under the arches of Victoria Complex our players were soloing in both teams, making this doubly pleasant.

In the quarterfinals, Brest players will have to face Barcelona. There is no need to talk about who is the favourite in this duel and who is the underdog. The Catalans smashed Norwegian Elverum in the first round, having won twice with a crushing score of 37:25 and 39:19. Saying it like it is, let's say that under these circumstances, Meshkov Brest's entry into the Final Four will be a real sporting feat. But miracles do sometimes happen, right?

### DIRECT SPEECH

#### Raul Alonso, head coach of Meshkov Brest:

This victory brings us to a level where no one has been before us in this country. We are very glad and proud that we have presented such a celebration to Brest and the whole of Belarus, that we are making history. However, today's result is only the tip of the iceberg, and there is a lot of work over the course of several years. Thanks to Motor, I wish this team every success. We knew that they have grown compared to the last season and are playing much better. Thank you everyone who came today to support us in the stands, together we've created a special atmosphere. Now we're going to try another incredible step.

## Photo of the week



Under the warm spring sun

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**On April 16th, 1971**, Natalia Zvereva was born in Minsk — a Belarusian sportswoman (tennis), Honoured Master of Sports of the USSR (1991). She claimed bronze at the 25th Olympic Games (1992).

She is a world champion in doubles (1994) and a silver medallist (1995). She has also won the Australian Open (1994, 1997 — doubles, 1995 — mixed). Moreover, she is a winner of the French Open (1993-1995) and USA in the doubles (1996).

**On April 16th, 1996**, a monument was erected at the Brilevsky Field in honour of the soldiers of the Great Army who died during the crossing of the Berezina River in 1812 (sculptor I. Misko, architect S. Samtsevich). It was officially opened on November 16th, 1997, when a cast-iron memorial plate was attached to the stele.



**April 16th** is World Voice Day, first held in Brazil in 1999 and acquiring international status in 2002. The purpose of establishing International Voice Day is to

attract the attention of medical specialists, as well as everyone around the world, to the phenomenon of the human voice — a gift that allows people to communicate, express their emotions and feelings, and to delight with the beauty of sound.

**On April 17th, 2006**, the Dzerzhinovo Museum-Estate was founded in the Volozhin District's Ivenets on the premises of the memorial complex of the same name. The manor house with outbuildings, erected in the 1870s and in which F. Dzerzhinsky spent his childhood, was burned by the fascist invaders. In 2001, a decision was made to restore the Dzerzhinovo memorial complex, in 2002, it was included in the State List of Historical and Cultural Values of the Republic of Belarus; since 2006, it has had a modern status and name. The expositions tell us about the history of the Dzerzhinsky family, showcasing the belongings of family members, alongside personal belongings of F. Dzerzhinsky, including his death mask.



**On April 18th, 1891**, Gmyrak Levon was born (true name Mechislav Bobrovich) in the village of Parafyanovo (Dokshitsy District, Vitebsk Region) — a Belarusian critic and publicist. He investigated

the relationship between Belarusian and Ukrainian literature, the work of T. Shevchenko. He was published in periodicals on cultural issues, social problems of the Belarusian village, the need to protect forests, etc. He is the author of the story *Vasil's Wedding*, the *Belarusian National Revival* essay, alongside articles *The Power of the People*, *On the Rural Intelligentsia* and others. He was killed at the front in 1915.

**April 18th** is International Day for Monuments and Sites (World Heritage Day), established in 1983 by the decision of the General Conference of UNESCO at the suggestion of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). It was first celebrated in 1984.



**April 18th** is World Amateur Radio Day. The date wasn't chosen by chance. On this very day, on April 18th, 1925, enthusiasts created

the International Amateur Radio Union in the capital of France, Paris, designed to unite all people involved in radio amateur communication, which at that time was considered something fantastic.



**On April 19th, 1881**, Valentin Volkov was born — a painter, teacher, People's Artist of Belarus (1955), Professor

(1957). He worked in monumental and easel painting, as well as book and easel graphics. His works include *Kastus Kalinovsky*, *Barricades*, *Hammer*; portraits *The Girl in Blue*, those of M. Bogdanovich and Z. Byadulya; and landscapes *View of Vitebsk*, *The Dvina River*, and the well-known painting *Minsk on July 3rd, 1944* — a kind of emblem of the Victory. He died in 1964.

**April 20th** is Chinese Language Day — a commemorative date of the UN. Chinese is one of the six official languages of the United Nations along with Russian, English, Arabic, Spanish and French.

**On April 22nd, 1961**, Yelena Spiridovich was born in Minsk — a hostess of Belarusian television, Honoured Artist of Belarus (1999). She is a hostess of national and international music festivals, including the *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk*, the *Listapad CIS* film festivals and the Russian *Kinotavr*, as well as *Dozhinki* festivals of rural workers and the competition of young pop artists *Zornaya Rostan*, numerous festive concerts.

