



Polish politicians deliberately destroy the Belovezhskaya Pushcha

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MAZ intends to contribute to the development of self-driving passenger transport

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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 6 (916) ● THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2022 ● WWW.SB.BY



BELTA

Dzinara Alimbekava during the mixed relay at the Olympic Games in China

Support our athletes!

Quite recently, the whole world enthusiastically followed the fight in the Olympic arenas of summer Tokyo, and here are the new Games: Winter Olympics. The colourful opening ceremony of the multisport forum took place in the Chinese capital, and Beijing went down in Olympic history as the first city in the world to host both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games. "Reaching the Olympic podium is the dream of every athlete and coach but only those who work hard and who strongly believe in themselves conquer the top," emphasised Aleksandr Lukashenko in his greetings to Belarusian athletes before the Olympics. "I believe in our team and in each of you. Remember, the whole country is rooting for the Olympians and is waiting for sporting achievements in the name of Belarus. May success be on your side in the snowy stadiums and ice arenas of the Olympic Beijing and may your wildest dreams come true!" wished the President. → **11**



Stability will be ensured

The work of enterprises under sanctions, the situation in the country's financial market and curbing inflation. Chairman of the Board of the National Bank Pavel Kallaur and Aide to the President for the Development of the Financial and Credit System Valery Belsky were the first to report to the President, followed by Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko and the heads of Belaruskali and the Belarusian Potash Company. Aleksandr Lukashenko once again warned the Government and the National Bank that economy is the main thing, therefore, all target figures must be met unconditionally, "Stability must be provided, people shouldn't worry. It's sacred."

By Yevgeny Kononovich,
Dmitry Umpirovich

Positive results

Despite all negative forecasts, last year, Belarus not only survived but exceeded the target figures for 2021. As a result, we have an unprecedented over ten years growth rate in industry, record exports in agriculture, the largest since 2012 surplus in foreign trade, a stable exchange rate and growth in gold and foreign exchange reserves. All this made it possible to maintain a positive trend in real incomes of the population. During the visit, Aleksandr Lukashenko drew the attention of Pavel Kallaur and Valery Belsky to positive trends, "Our talk is totally unconnected with any problems. Rather the opposite. You did a great job last year, everyone, the entire banking system. But we must also give credit to the economy. The economy worked."

As an example, the President cited the fact that the positive balance of foreign trade at the end of last year amounted to 4 billion dollars. On the whole, a strong base for a breakthrough has been created. And no external shocks should be an obstacle to this.

Walk the talk

The President emphasised that the main task was to fulfil the plans in the field of economic development of the country. At the same time, he assured that there would be no excessive pressure on the leaders of the Government and the National Bank. Moreover, Aleksandr Lukashenko actually gives them carte blanche,

reminding them that they have all necessary controls.

However, the Government and the National Bank should be one team, that is, act in a unified manner. It is one of the President's requirements, "These conversations... well, the Government has its own indicators, and the banking sector has its own ones..."

We've agreed on all issues. We have figures within six percent for inflation, and for GDP, and the economy. Everything's been determined. It must be strictly observed.



Chairman of the Board of the National Bank Pavel Kallaur and Aide to the President for the Development of the Financial and Credit System Valery Belsky

Countermove

Even the sanctions policy of the West will not be taken into account. Although, of course, it will not be ignored. The President addressed it while listening to reports made by Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, as well as the heads of Belaruskali and the Belarusian Potash Company. Earlier, Aleksandr Lukashenko stated

that the issues of opposition to the sanctions policy were within the competence of the Government.

The President said that many enterprises found good alternatives in terms of foreign partners and markets last year.

Furthermore, Aleksandr Lukashenko touched upon the actions of the Lithuanian authorities. In mid-January, in order to please its masters from across the ocean, the government of this country resolved to terminate the agreement with the Belarusian fertilizer company Belaruskali. It is among the

ones on the US sanctions list. Although experts warn that a ban on the transit of fertilizers through Lithuania will harm not only the port of Klaipeda but also many subcontractors, Vilnius preferred loyalty to Western partners to the well-being of its own citizens.

Be that as it may, Belarus has to react to the unfriendly actions of its neighbours. And



Aleksandr Lukashenko gave Roman Golovchenko specific instructions,

"If, for example, Lithuania doesn't want to let our cargos pass to the port and transship them in the port, well, that's their right. If it happens, it means that literally within a few days the measures that we agreed on in relation to Lithuania must be implemented."

At the same time, the President made it clear once again that we weren't the initiators of this confrontation.

"Once again, I'd like to

stress: we don't initiate any processes that would lead us into a clinch with Lithuania, Latvia, Poland or Ukraine. We don't need it. If it's necessary for them to save face, let them come out and negotiate.

We are ready to negotiate. However, if they continue to put pressure on us, we'll use the plan that we have. Let them not take offence afterwards. And the people of Lithuania, Poland and other countries should understand that we are just responding to these challenges."

Later, Chairman of the Board of the National Bank Pavel Kallaur told reporters about the prospects for the financial sector in 2022,

"We will aim for inflation to be around six percent by the end of the year. Let me tell you right now that this is no simple matter. In the first place, the problems are caused by the so-called imported inflation. Many countries in the world, including our neighbours, are also experiencing this unpleasant period. In some countries, the corresponding records reach figures of thirty years ago. We expect a significant slowdown of inflation. There is every reason to believe that by joint efforts we will be able to provide the level planned."

In case the inflation trend we predict materialises, the average refinancing rate will be maintained within 9 to 10 percent."

What goals the Government and the National Bank plan to achieve in 2022

According to forecasts, next year, the growth rate will be 102.9 percent for the GDP, 102 percent for real disposable money incomes of the population and 103.3 percent for fixed capital investments. Exports of goods and services are expected to grow by 6.3 percent as compared to 2021. The monetary policy will aim to maintain inflation around 6 percent. Taking into account the upcoming payments, by the end of 2022, gold and foreign exchange reserves will amount to at least \$7 billion.

The President of Belarus met with the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu. The meeting was devoted to cooperation in the military sphere. It should be pointed out that currently in Belarus, the parties are holding the Allied Resolve 2022 joint military exercises.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated, "I would like to explain the main goal we pursue in these drills. Everybody has noticed that we are relocating a lot of equipment from Russia to Belarus, including modern ones. As we agreed both with you and with the President of Russia, it is very important for us that our military people not only see this equipment in pictures but also, train how to use it together with the Russians. This is very important for us because we plan to purchase almost all of the equipment present here from you this year, next year, and the following years. This is crucial for our Union State today in connection with how NATO is behaving, as well as with Ukraine's intention to join it."

The President added that, together with Russia, they form training centres to teach how to handle the latest Russian weapons. Three kinds of these training centres have been formed, two in the Russian Federation and one in Belarus.

Aleksandr Lukashenko named one more goal of holding joint military exercises.

"I do not conceal it. Today, unfortunately, we are opening the southern direction. You cannot get away from this. We are forced to strengthen the border with Ukraine. Your help is important here. Your military specialists will help us identify the most painful points in this direction in order to build up the defences on our

southern borders at no extra cost. For the Russian Federation this is important as well. Therefore, talks about the war or not war, and so on... if they interfere, they will pay for it. That is the war. We do not need what does not belong to us."

The President thanked the Russian party for the support of their Air forces.

"Truly, it has such a cooling effect on the heads of some of our so-called neighbors who are trying to get ahead of them selves. It is in their right. They escalate the situation, they are urging us to react (there have already been several provocations to which we could give armed response). They understand that if we respond, Russia will follow. We are patient

Union drills



Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Belarusian Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin

for the time being, but they provoke us all the time."

In his turn, Sergei Shoigu noted that the transfer of a large group of troops from Russia to the western borders of the Union State as part of the Allied Resolve 2022 military exercises, was brilliant.

"We have more than 20 events ahead of us this year," the Minister added, mentioning that the Vostok 2022 drills are among them.

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Partners on all continents

President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko accepted letters of credence from ambassadors in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Laos, Morocco, Nigeria, Russia, the Republic of Chad and Sri Lanka

The President declared that the diplomats had arrived in Belarus at a landmark time — on February 27th, a republican referendum on amending the Constitution would be held in the country.

“It is of principal importance that our people themselves determine the further development of Belarus. I would like to particularly note there is no pressure from outside. That is why we believe this political campaign is fully in line with all democratic norms.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed: to better understand how Belarus lives today, it is necessary to know how the Belarusian people won their freedom and the right to live in their own state.

“The most tragic page in our history is World War II which took away the lives of at least every third Belarusian. I would like to emphasise that our people were mercilessly destroyed not by some wild hordes of barbarians but by representatives of the most enlightened nations of Europe that, decades later, begin to teach us how to live.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko added that the situation in the world is dangerous due to its unpredictability and can enter a hot phase at any moment.

The President spoke on the cooperation of Belarus with each of the states whose ambassadors presented their letters of credence that day.

Russia

According to the President, Minsk and Moscow face big and ambitious tasks, “2021 went down in the history of our countries as a year of making fateful decisions on deepening economic integration that will bring our strategic partnership to a qualitatively new level. I really hope that in your professional activities you, being a most experienced leader in Russia, as well as on a global scale, will contribute to the strengthening of multifaceted Belarusian-Russian relations and the development of integration cooperation.”

Vietnam

Belarus intends to intensify cooperation with the states of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the President assured.

“We refer to these regions as the ‘far arc’ ones based on their geographical position. However, politically and economically, many of these countries are our close allies and partners,” said the Belarusian leader. “2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and Vietnam. Our peoples have much in common: we fought together against external aggressors and won our right to build sovereign and independent states.”

Laos

The President mentioned our country’s interest in giving a new quality to tradi-

tionally friendly relations with Laos. The capabilities of Belarus can to a great extent meet the needs of the Laotian economy.

The Head of State noted, “As

made technological projects in harvesting and storing crops. Our relations are developing dynamically. We are ready to give this momentum even greater scope.”



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to Belarus Boris Gryzlov presented his credentials to the President of the Republic of Belarus

is known, today Laos is striving to develop industry, agriculture, science and technology. Our country is ready to offer you its knowledge and experience.”

Sri Lanka

Speaking on cooperation with Sri Lanka, Aleksandr Lukashenko observed that our countries had made significant progress in the development of political contacts, trade and cooperation in the field of education.

Aleksandr Lukashenko assured, “Belarus has something to offer Sri Lanka to improve the efficiency of its agricultural sector: from special equipment to ready-

Morocco

The President drew attention to the prospects of economic cooperation, “The Kingdom of Morocco is an important trade partner of Belarus in the north of the African continent. We have significant untapped potential for trade development. Great prospects are opening up in agriculture, industry, as well as in the humanitarian field.”

Nigeria

Belarus considers the Federal Republic of Nigeria as an important and promising foreign economic partner. The countries can significantly ad-

vance in mutual trade, the President is convinced.

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, participation of Belarus in the mechanisation of agriculture in Nigeria, in the development of infrastructure and in the implementation of joint projects in mining will bring cooperation to a higher level.

Republic of Chad

The President asserted the interest of Belarus in intensifying contacts with the Republic of Chad in all areas of bilateral cooperation, “Large reserves of minerals have been explored in your country, and Belarus has the necessary mining machinery and equipment. We are also ready to establish effective partnerships with local companies in agriculture. We can offer automotive and road construction equipment, medicines and food products.”

Dominican Republic

Addressing the ambassador in the Dominican Republic, Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out that Belarus highly appreciated constructive and mutually respectful relations with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

“We see good prospects for intensifying interstate relations with the Dominican Republic. Despite the geographical distance, we have many points of contact. The economies of Belarus and the Dominican Republic are complementary in many ways.”

“This has not happened before! Sharp questions, unexpected answers, and exclusive statements,” the journalist of the All-Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, a well-known radio and TV presenter, left a comment on his telegram channel.

What is Fatherland from Minsk to Vladivostok? Comparison with the creator of the Singapore ‘economic miracle’ Lee Kuan Yew. On traitors. The hottest topics and events of August 2020... These and other topics were discussed during the conversation.

Important highlights

The events of 2020 were given special attention. Vladimir Soloviev emphasised, “For me, there was a critical moment, such a fundamental one, including a change in my personal attitude towards you, when you flew in with a gun. I realised that you were definitely not like Yanukovich...”

Aleksandr Lukashenko immediately shared his perspective, “Yanukovich and I are a big difference. He had a lot of money. You see, money always prevails. They make your pocket heavy, and you need to save money.”

“Well, how can we talk about money? I think when you came out with an assault rifle, it became clear that you were ready to die, but not to leave, not to run away, not to surrender,” continued Vladimir Soloviev.

The President shared the details of that difficult, but, now quite obviously, turning-point day, “The organisers of the riots were spreading this fake that I fled like Yanukovich, that I was already

Fiery talk!

It was these emotions that the famous Russian journalist Vladimir Soloviev shared after an interview with the President of Belarus

in Rostov, that the children have flown away. I took the rifle, put on a bulletproof vest, I even forgot to put on a helmet. I didn't know this would happen. Nobody trembled. I knew how our law enforcement guys operate. They did everything I told them. But I had to show them that I hadn't run away, that I was there. And my children too. I got into the helicopter and just a few minutes later landed there with the assault rifle.”

The Head of State drew attention to the fact that the residence of the President, as well as the place where he lives, are always coveted for ‘any bastard’ during such periods, “They were planning an attack on the residence. I assumed that was possible. They were planning to storm the Palace of Independence. This was a big risk. They knew they crossed the line.”

About madmen and wars

When answering the interviewer’s questions Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed the following assumption: if NATO invaded Belarus, there would be a third world war.

Vladimir Soloviev asked the Head of State about the events of August 2020, when the President visited the Gozha

training ground located near the border with Poland. Before the elections, NATO had just begun to concentrate its forces not far from the Belarusian borders.

“You were ready for a war on the border with Poland because ...” started the journalist.

“More than ready,” emphasised Aleksandr Lukashenko and recalled that one of the protesters’ plans was to shake up the situation inside the country and appeal to NATO with a request to send troops to resolve the conflict.

“NATO would be invited literally for a moment. And imagine the situation: they invited NATO here, and what? Then there would be a war,” said the Head of State.

“World War III,” continued the presenter.

“Yes,” the Belarusian leader supported his opinion.

During the interview, the Head of State also revealed some details of his talks with former US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, who visited Belarus in early 2020. According to the President, during the meeting, among other things, the US policy towards China and Russia were discussed.

“When Pompeo came here, we sat in

his office. I asked him several questions in a row. I say, “Are you mad? Tell your Trump you are madmen.” He looks at me, “What do you mean?” “Why did you unite the most powerful nuclear country with huge military potential with the greatest economic power and are trying to wage war against this union? You will never win. Why are you fools doing this?” I told him about it. He said, “China is stealing technology. We will stop them.” I said, “Too late. I know China better than you do. It’s too late. Nobody will stop China today. They will manage even without your technologies,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said about that meeting.

The country was created by the people

Vladimir Soloviev also asked Aleksandr Lukashenko about how he feels: as the President of Belarus, the father of the Belarusian people, the creator of the modern Belarusian state, or a dictator?

The Head of State replied, “A human... I don't consider myself the creator. Together with my colleagues who worked with me at different times, I created this sovereign, independent state for the first time (Vladimir Rudolfovich, you know history well) in the history of Belarus. I think so. This is the main thing that my generation, not just me, did.”

“So this is like your baby,” said the journalist.

“This is my Fatherland, I have nothing else besides this.”

Based on materials of sb.by, belta.by



The duty of every citizen and patriot

Belarus is gearing up to hold a nationwide referendum The significance of the upcoming political event and why everyone should take part in it

FOCUS

The law on the Belarusian People's Congress will be developed within a year after the referendum.

Last week, Chairman of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus Vladimir Andreichenko and Belarusian Healthcare Minister Dmitry Pinevich met with personnel of the Glubokoye District Central Hospital where a new computer tomography room was opened. The preparations for the upcoming referendum were the main topic of the meeting.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus outlined the essence of the novelties and provisions of the draft Constitution, and also responded to questions

raised by District Central Hospital staff, emphasising that participation in the referendum is the duty of every person who considers himself or herself a true citizen and patriot of the country.

When giving response to the questions of journalists Vladimir Andreichenko noted that parliamentarians are ready to work out the law on the Belarusian People's Congress within one year after the referendum provided Belarusians vote in favour of the Constitution draft,

"Then over the course of two years, we will have to bring all our legislation into compliance with the Constitution. We will have to rework about 20 codes and some 60 laws," Vladimir Andreichenko explained.



Yury Mozolevsky

SUBSTANTIVE VIEWS

Svetlana Yezerkaya, Chairwoman of the Slavgorod District Council of Deputies:

A whole generation of Belarusians was born and formed their outlook during the period of independence of our country. People have become accustomed to stability, confidence in the future, so now we see the current sentiment — to show the initiative, to go to a referendum, and to have a part in the future of the country in which we want our children to live.

The protection of the interests of citizens and support for people in difficult circumstances remains the priority of the social policy of Belarus. This is demonstrated by the strategy towards the creation of an inclusive society. I personally attended about two dozen forums where the Constitution draft was discussed in labour collectives. In addition, I can say for sure that people are showing interest, care, mindfulness — and want their vote to be taken into account in the referendum.

Lyudmila Demidchik, Director of the State Educational Institution Secondary School No. 31 of Vitebsk named after V. Z. Khoruzhaya:

Four forums were held at our school, including those with the heads of educational institutions of the city. When discussing amendments and additions to the Constitution, we, teachers, were especially interested in Article 32. It contains the norm of the traditional family, states that marriage is a union between man and woman. Until recently, it seemed that this was something taken for granted, but what has been happened in the world in recent years has shown that this simple truth needs to be legislated. The addition to this article refers to the fact that parents are obliged to prepare children for socially useful work, to inculcate culture and respect for laws, historical and national traditions, and it is of particular interest for me.

Now our school is preparing for the upcoming political event — the referendum. Three polling stations will open here, and I together with a number of teachers of our educational institution will take part in their work.

Based on materials of sb.by



By Katerina Krolevets

An important milestone for the future

Belarusian Deputy Tax and Duties Minister Ella Selitskaya said, "The proposed constitutional changes are a step forward, a sign that the state is not only evolving but also planning its future development for a decent life for our children and grandchildren."

try. At the outset, I wish to acknowledge that the proposed constitutional changes are a step forward, a sign that the state is not only evolving but also planning its future development for a decent life for our children and grandchildren. This is absolutely essential in a rapidly changing world, in the context of globalisation, digital transformation of economies, and under the influence of external political technologies. By doing so, it is possible to continue to be a strong state.

It is also important to emphasise that the amendments to the Constitution are aimed at strengthening the independence, protecting the sovereignty of Belarus, and developing our own direction. For this purpose, Chapter 31 is proposed to introduce another institution — the Belarusian People's Congress representing the power of the people. This representative body, which has already passed the stage of formation in a quarter of a century and became a body of the civil society, is endowed with new, highly extensive powers. In my understanding, these are new opportunities for governing the state. It is this body that will determine the strategic directions for the development of our society and state, ensure the inviolability of the constitutional order, develop measures aimed at ensuring civil harmony and social stability.

This means that our further development will largely depend on its decisions. The draft Constitution provides a new procedure for electing delegates to the Belarusian People's Congress. Representatives of not only local authorities and administrations but also labour collectives of organisations could become delegates. It is crucial that the main directions for development will be formed, among other things, by responsible, competent, and not indifferent citizens of our country. I also cannot fail to mention another innovation proposed for the Constitution — the preservation of the historical truth and memory of the heroic deed of our people during the Great Patriotic War (additions to Article 15 of the Constitution).

I believe that our fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers paid a heavy price for the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War. The ministry recently discussed the crimes

of Nazism during the Great Patriotic War, as well as the glorification of Nazi criminals with the participation of Igor Marzalyuk, Chairman of the Standing Commission on Education, Culture and Science of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus.

My heart literally sank from the facts presented from official sources, the horrors that took place on the territory of Belarus during the war. Therefore, today we must not let to rewrite history. We are obliged to convey the whole truth to our youth and future generations about what this victory means for us, Belarusians, precisely when those who fought in those years are practically gone. After all, this is exactly what freedom is, the independence of our country today, and most importantly, a peaceful life tomorrow.

That is why it is very important for us, citizens of the Republic of Belarus, to come to the polling stations and vote for changes to the Basic Law of our country, which will enable us to preserve the above values, and hence the further development of both our society and our state.

Voting at a referendum is an opportunity to jointly determine the future of our society and state while preserving the universal values developed by several generations. Such opinion was expressed by Deputy Tax and Duties Minister Ella Selitskaya.

There are three weeks left ahead of the extremely important event in the life of the state. It is time to re-read and analyse the proposed changes to the Basic Law of our country, so that on February 27th each of us could make an informed decision, on which the whole future of Belarus depends.

As a citizen and as a qualified lawyer, I carefully studied the proposed changes to the Basic Law of our coun-



Work to set up polling stations for the national referendum has been completed, BELTA learned from the Central Election Commission of Belarus. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the heads of Belarusian foreign missions decided not to set up polling stations for the national referendum outside the Republic of Belarus due to objective reasons (epidemiological situation and relevant measures and requirements, the inability to ensure a sufficient level of security of the voting process and the lack of the necessary number of citizens on the consular registry. All in all, 5,510 polling stations have been set up in the Republic of Belarus, including 217 in health resorts and recreation centres, hospitals, and other healthcare institutions that provide inpatient medical care, and 12 in military units. The largest number of polling stations has been established in Gomel Region and Minsk Region (977 and 929 respectively), 883 — in Brest Region, 714 — in Vitebsk Region, 707 — in Mogilev Region, 608 — in Grodno Region, and 692 — in the city of Minsk.



By Yelena Mikhailova

Potential for personal development

Yevgeny Stankevich, engineer-technologist of Borisovdrev OJSC believes, "There must always be an opportunity for development."

have such opportunities in the future. He shared his attitude towards other reasons to attend such a significant for every Belarusian event with the correspondent of *MT*.

Today, Yevgeny's working day begins with a morning meeting with the director. Then the young man goes to the production workshops of the enterprise — MDF, plywood and match production, where, together with technologists, they plan work for the whole day. He performs these functions during the absence of the Head of Production Technology Department.

Yevgeny started working as an ordinary presser of wood and chaff boards in the MDF workshop and at the same time studied at the Belarusian State Technical University as an engineer for wood technology. After graduating from the university, he began working as a technologist in the Quality Control Department,

and then in the Production Technology Department.

"There is a potential for career development at our factory," Yevgeny smiles, "where there is a will there is a way, and this applies not only for the career."

However, the young man believes that opportunities for youth development in our country are provided in all areas. It should be noted that these are not empty words, since Yevgeny is actively involved in the public life of both the factory and his native city. Two years ago, he became the secretary of the primary organisation of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union at Borisovdrev OJSC. Today, together with thirty active employees, they organise tourist rallies, receive prizes in various competitions, and are engaged in volunteer activities. They were among the first to help deliver medicines and food to elderly citizens

of Borisov at the very beginning of the pandemic. Besides, they took third place among the teams of the Borisov District at the winter sports contest in 2020.

"Sport has always been in my life: as a child I did karate and became a bronze medallist of Belarus," said Yevgeny, "now I'm into volleyball and I am very glad that I had such an opportunity. I want to keep it that way."

The young man supports innovations in the Basic Law of the country.

Article 321 suggests that the state promotes the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical development of young people, creates the necessary conditions for their free and effective participation in public life, the realisation of the potential of young people in the interests of the whole society. How can one not vote for these strong and necessary guarantees? That is why Yevgeny will vote for his future.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The office of Honorary Consul of Belarus opens in Fribourg, Switzerland



The grand opening of the office of Andrei Nazheskin, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Belarus in Fribourg, took place on the territory of the Givisiez Community (Swiss Canton of Fribourg).

The event was attended by Aleksandr Ganevich, Ambassador of Belarus to Switzerland, representatives of political and business communities, the diplomatic corps, and the media.

Ambassador Aleksandr Ganevich presented Andrei Nazheskin with a new consular commission and expressed gratitude for his significant contribution to the development of Belarusian-Swiss co-operation in the previous post of Honorary Consul of the Republic of Belarus in Lausanne. The Belarusian diplomat also wished the Honorary Consul success in the further implementation of the entrusted functions.

Belarus bans merchandise transit for a group of goods by rail from Lithuania

It should be recalled that Lithuania had banned the transit of Belarusian goods via Lithuanian ports. Belarus had repeatedly suggested arranging consultations in



order to address issues within the legal framework but Lithuania had not accepted the dialogue. "We've decided to prohibit transit shipments by rail of oil products, chemical and mineral fertilizers, which are transported from Lithuania and were loaded at stations of Lithuanian Railways. About 1.5-1.6 million tonnes of such cargoes worth over \$1 billion is transported across the territory of the Republic of Belarus every year," said Anatoly Glaz, the Press Secretary of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry regrets the fact that many thousands of Lithuanian Railways employees, representatives of the private sector, and ordinary Lithuanians will incur serious losses.

Export of Belarusian medical services in 2021 increased by 20 percent

According to Deputy Healthcare Minister Boris Androsyuk, the plan for the export of medical services, even despite COVID-19, was overfulfilled due to the policy of openness of our country.

Exports exceeded \$40 million. Most of all, exports increased in such areas as cardiac surgery, oncology, and dentistry. Exports increased not only to the post-Soviet countries, but also to Italy, Germany, and Poland. Also, more than 2.5 thousand foreign citizens were vaccinated in Belarus. The growth of exports gave impetus to the improvement of the material and technical base. A new building was erected at the Minsk Scientific and Practical Centre for Surgery, Transplantology and Haematology, a cardiosurgical centre was opened in Mogilev, where a heart transplant was performed for the first time in the region.



The positions of the two countries on the main issues of maintaining international peace and security, sustainable development, as well as the postulates of major international summits and conferences, are close or at least coincide.

Belarusian tourism information centre opens in New Delhi

The Belarusian tourism information centre has opened at the BelIndTravel travel company. The launch ceremony was attended by Belarusian Ambassador in India Andrei Rzhessky, the embassy's staff, representatives of tourism and hotel business, Indian media, and also well-known bloggers.

The guests of the event learned more about the tourism attractiveness of Belarus, its cultural, historical, tourist, and recreational potential.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of India were established on April 17th, 1992.



The positions of the two countries on the main issues of maintaining international peace and security, sustainable development, as well as the postulates of major international summits and conferences, are close or at least coincide.



Warsaw tormentors

Narrow-minded ambitions deprive Polish politicians of the reason. They spare neither people nor animals and have already started to deliberately destroy the Belovezhskaya Pushcha.

By Yuliana Leonovich

Barbaric methods

The Poles began to destroy the historical reserve — located on the territory of the two countries — with desperate anger. This was not the case even during the Great Patriotic War. Even with all the atrocities of the Nazis, the Belovezhskaya Pushcha was then preserved. What do we have now? What are Dudas, Morawieckis, and other Kaczynskis guided by when they pull barbed wire fences through the relic forest with maniacal persistence, deliberately dooming the animal world of a unique natural complex to death?

We are once again convinced that there is nothing sacred for Polish politicians. Unmotivated ambitions clouded their minds. In an effort to once again gain favour with their western masters, they are ready to go on the most insane actions, to kill people, to destroy life...

Belarusian border guards have more than once recorded the facts of the death of wild animals entangled in barbed wire, which blocked the usual migration routes. Recently, another bison corpse was discovered. However, what do animals mean for Polish authorities and the military? They didn't really feel sorry for the refugees either, leaving them to die in the cold forests and pouring them with icy poisoned water and chemicals. Alas, it has long

been pointless to look for the remnants of humanity and common sense among the Warsaw political elite.

Will they hear the voice of reason?

Reasonable people are well aware that there is no practical sense in either a wall, a fence, or a heap of barbed wire. The money that the Poles are pumping into the construction of the curtain (and this is 350 million Euros) would be much more useful to direct to strengthening the technical border control system. The Poles also initiated a break in co-operation with Belarus in this area.

Meanwhile, not everyone in Poland is mad. There are also voices of people there who are concerned about the actions of their politicians and who warn of an impending environmental catastrophe.

For example, the Green Party (Partia Zieloni) demanded that the construction of the wall be stopped. The head of the party, Urszula Zielińska, is indignant,

“This nature reserve is the only Polish natural site on the UNESCO World Heritage List! It is the duty of Poland, as a country that has such a treasure, to provide the highest possible protection.”

The party is sure that in addition to catastrophic consequences for nature, Pushcha can be struck off the UNESCO list.

The day before, a similar idea was ex-

pressed in the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). They said that the barbed wire installed by the Polish authorities on the border with Belarus would harm the wildlife of Belovezhskaya Pushcha and nullify the efforts of conservationists in the area over the past thirty years.

The ideas of the Greens are ardently supported by the public (after all, not everyone has been fooled by Polish politicians), whose representatives are increasingly coming out to protest against the stupid project. And let it be only stupid. This is just a barbaric idea.

Death trap

There is already a temporary fence on the Polish side made of barbed tape — the so-called Bruno's spiral — which is prohibited by many conventions. The border service of Poland constructed it back in summer.

Unlike the wire, which is used to protect the control strip from Belarus, the Polish ‘barbed wire’ becomes a death trap for animals, since they can't get out of it on their own.

...Recently, 20 bison came to the territory of the Belarusian border strip. The herd seasonally migrated to Belarus, and with the arrival of cold weather returned to Poland to the place of their winter feeding. Previously, this could be done without hindrance, but the ‘tsar of the pushcha’ cannot overcome the razor wire... Meanwhile, the researcher of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, Aleksei Bunevich's says emotionally,

“One bison died in January from exhaustion, entering the swampy area of the border strip and failing to get out. The sick animal was seen by the Polish military, but no one did anything to help.”

The Pushcha's giants found themselves in a vulnerable position, as did the smallest species of mammals: wolves and lynxes. The number of lynxes in Belovezhskaya Pushcha has been consistently low for a long time, despite its special conservation status on both sides of the state border. The total number of 25 lynxes does not allow the population to exist without constant genetic exchange with neighbouring groups while the construction of the fence threatens the long-term existence of this species because of genetic degeneration.

The activities carried out in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha by the State Border Control of Belarus in mid-January showed that a high number of large animals, including bison, red deer, elk, and roe deer, accumulate in the border strip between engineering structures. Deceased animals have been also recorded.









Polish politicians do not listen to scientists

Belovezhskaya Pushcha is a transboundary UNESCO World Heritage Site, a territory for which two parties, two states are responsible, they have committed themselves to preserve and manage the sites at the appropriate level.

The Head of the Scientific Department of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park, Dmitry Bernatsky, is outraged by the actions of Polish politicians,

“This is a single forest massif in the centre of Europe, on which natural processes proceed without significant human impact for many centuries. What you can find in Belovezhskaya Pushcha you won't find anywhere else in Europe. All these values must be preserved.”

FIGURES

-  According to estimates, in 2021, 687 bison live in Belovezhskaya Pushcha (in 2020 — 604)
-  300 (260) elk
-  more than 1,200 (1,100) roe deer
-  The population of wild boar is 60 (80)
-  foxes — 400 (330)
-  wolves — 70 (70)
-  otters — 120 (100)
-  According to estimates, 240 (360) beavers and 200 (186) raccoon dogs also live in the national park



Dmitry Grummo, Deputy Director for Research at the Institute of Experimental Botany at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus:

The current situation is a violation of international co-operation on the conservation of a unique natural site: Belovezhskaya Pushcha. According to preliminary estimates, if we take the norms of the Belarusian legislation to the scale of construction (roads, storage, deforestation, destruction of the ground cover, land degradation), the damage to Belovezhskaya Pushcha from the Polish side will total about \$80 million. We must proceed from the fact that Pushcha is a single massif and think for decades to come. The consequences of building a fence are difficult to predict. It's like the Berlin Wall from the ecological point of view, not political. Accelerated design can lead to flooding; any linear infrastructure leads to local disasters that we cannot predict now, but they will happen, taking into account the swampy part of the park where the fence is being built.

REFERENCE

As reported on the website of the Polish office of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), in November last year, UNESCO sent a letter to the Polish government with a request to clarify the planned actions in connection with the construction of the fence. However, UNESCO's request still remains unanswered.

PROTEST

Over 700 environmental scientists from Poland and other EU states, as well as African countries, sent a letter to the leadership of the European Commission protesting against the construction of a protective fence on the Polish side of the border with Belarus. The text of the document is published on the site naukadlaprzyrody.pl. **“We call on the European Commission to take all possible measures to immediately terminate the construction of the wall on the Polish-Belarusian border,” says the letter.** Representatives of scientific community demand an immediate examination of the possible negative impact of this object on valuable animal species and protected areas, particularly on Belovezhskaya Pushcha.

The future is coming

MAZ works on the first self-driving electric bus

The global transport system is not yet able to manage without human supervision. However, the robotic automation of transport is the main global trend in recent years and public transport is developing especially rapidly in this direction. Belarus understands that public transport moves along pre-built routes, and therefore it is most convenient to introduce robot technology in this field. Electric trains with the self-driving feature are already running on the third metro line, and the first autopilot electric bus was tested in the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park near Minsk. MAZ intends to contribute to the development of self-driving passenger transport, which plans to actively use already well-known bus models in the production of self-driving shuttles. The task is not just to launch a production, but to make it with a high level of localisation in Belarus in order to construct as much equipment as possible on those units that are produced in our country.

By Inna Gorbatenko

In automatic mode

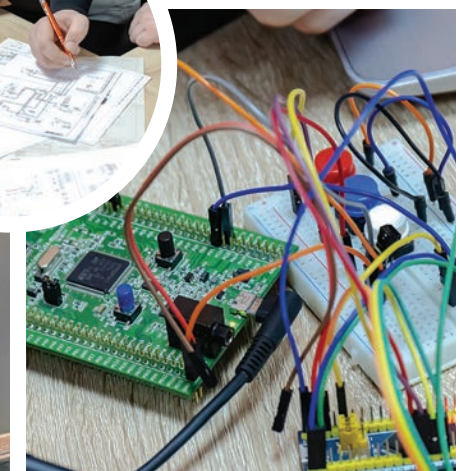
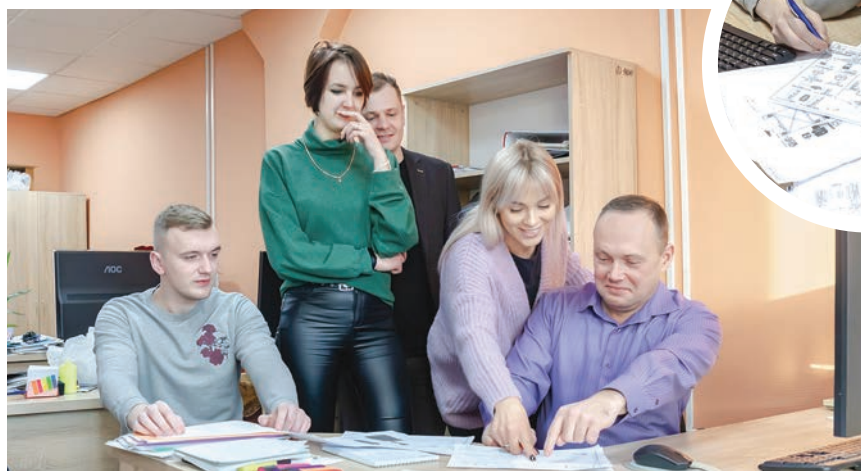
A vehicle equipped with radars, laser sensors, video cameras, high-precision positioning and communication systems, all kinds of on-board computers, which do not require human supervision, may become a reality in the near future. For several years now, the largest automakers together with IT developers, including those in Belarus, have been creating vehicles with the possibility of full autopilot driving. It is in this promising direction that a young team of MAZ designers and technologists is currently working. A site has been allocated at the plant to accommodate structural units for the development and manufacture of a new type of product — electric transport. In the near future, brand new electric buses and cargo electric vehicles will appear there, and, later, self-driving vehicles too.

“The main focus of the new structure is made on the development of electric transport in Belarus”, greets us the Chief Designer Andrey Savchits, Head of the Department of the Chief Designer of Automated Systems, Telematics, and Mechatronics at MAZ. “It is necessary to electrify transport in large cities — primarily Minsk and regional centres, because the number of cars is growing, and the environment is suffering.”

Developers have the necessary space and opportunity to implement bold ideas like a self-driving vehicle model. According to Andrey Savchits, all the required technical solutions for this have been already created. “Now we are deciding on the type of vehicle for self-driving model on its basis and proceed to the implemen-



Aleksandr Gorbash



tation of the project. Brestmash, the enterprise of our BelavtoMAZ holding, assembles minibuses from vehicle sets. It is possible that self-driving vehicles will be implemented on the basis of such a van. In fact, a minibus, bus, or truck — I guess it's not that big a deal. The technical solutions for self-driving vehicles are the same. Now we are just gaining experience. After updating the legislative framework for the admission of self-driving vehicles to public roads, we will be ready to produce such vehicles with the required degree of autonomy within six months.”

It is expected that the first self-driving electric bus will appear on the roads as early as next year. The new technology is absolutely safe, but at the first stage, it will work under the supervision of the operator.

New frontiers

Specialists assemble an electric bus in one of the workshops. Literally, in front of us, the car is equipped with iron parts so that it looks more and more like models riding around the city. This production is a closed-loop cycle. The skeleton is made according to the drawings, then spot-fac-ing and painting are performed, and finally, the electrical equipment is installed.

Andrey Savchits said about the design features of the self-driving vehicle, “We take a classic MAZ truck and remove the cab from it. We install cameras, lidars, and radars — the eyes of a car, a communication system, a computer with a basic level

of artificial intelligence, and blind-spot sensors. With their help, self-driving vehicles recognise the world around them, for example, traffic lights, road signs and markings, cars and people, measure the size of surrounding objects, their speed, and distance to them. Separately, we have already tested almost all of these elements as supporting systems on cars with drivers. I think that within three to five years, self-driving vehicles would become commonplace on the roads.

An excellent start for large-scale testing of self-driving buses could be the territory of the National Airport. Shuttles can take passengers to the ramp and back to the terminal. Another attractive place for testing unmanned vehicles may be the organisation of centralised tours of the Botanical Garden. Not only land transport but also the metro is moving towards robotic automation. The third line represents a new level of train traffic control. We are talking about smart trains that can move without a driver. They were supplied by Stadler Minsk CJSC for the Minsk subway. These trains are equipped with an autopilot system, the main functions of which are to follow the traffic schedule and automatically stop at stations with barriers. The driver would only control the situation and start trains in depots or dead ends.”

Autonomous logistics

Then we go to the office of the design service. The designers and technologists

have a very responsible task — to develop a model consisting of as many units and components produced in our country as possible. And they cope with this task. One of the recent achievements of the team is the development of the concept of a medium-duty electric truck and its layout exclusively by Belarusian units.

“The model is focused on large trading companies”, Andrey Savchits shows the drawings. “They managed to calculate that the cost per km of road on electric transport is much cheaper than on diesel. Reducing logistics and transportation costs is an important aspect of the work of road carriers, and the use of electric transport is an excellent option.

The creation of self-driving electric buses will entail the modernisation of the entire road complex.” Andrey Savchits spoke about what devices for automatic high-precision positioning of vehicles should a road be equipped with for self-driving vehicles:

“The deployment of autopilot technologies based on 5G allows us to optimise the routing of smart vehicles. Route guidance is based on traffic conditions. The system itself decides to reduce or increase the speed depending on the interval of traffic signals, we are talking about the so-called green corridor. The implementation of the smart city infrastructure will optimise transport costs and create the most comfortable transport environment.

The segments where Belarusian autopilot technologies are already working in real conditions are the quarry, mining, and agricultural equipment. Although the technology itself already allows machines to work without the use of manual labour, while the laws do not allow self-driving vehicles to move without drivers on open highways.”

“The self-driving vehicle market is developing very intensively. If we do not come up with a proposal for such equipment, then someone else will come up instead of us. The money should remain in our country so we could redirect it to the development of other technologies and enterprises”, Andrey Savchits once again outlined the main priorities.



Alekssei Matyush

Witness to inhumanity

Emil Czezko addressed his compatriots

The fate of the refugees on the Polish border remains uncertain, people are still waiting for a humanitarian corridor to Germany, and a series of mysterious 'accidents' with the death of soldiers are taking place in the Polish army. Emil Czezko, a Polish soldier who crossed to Belarusian territory in December, addressed the Polish society after another death of a 22-year-old soldier. In a video posted by the Telegram channel of the Sistemnaya Pravozashchita (Systemic Human Rights Protection) Centre, he urges Poles not to pin faith on information in the media and claims that the death of his former colleagues is the result of the cruel tasks that were set before them.

By Daria Gotovko

"Dear compatriots! I would like to ask you to check personally the information that is provided about the situation on the Belarusian-Polish border. The information given by the Polish media is often false and untrue. I believe that Polish society has the right to know the truth about what is happening on the border. In addition, I am talking not only about the death of a soldier on the border or about my escape, but also about the fact that

people died on the Polish-Belarusian border. I wish to express my condolences to the family of the deceased 22-year-old soldier of the mechanised division. The death of a young man who had a whole life ahead of him is a terrible tragedy. The exact circumstances of his death are uncertain, but I know that the military service in the Polish army and the tasks that were recently assigned for the soldiers are psychologically difficult and often impossible to perform without further damage to health. I do

not know what tasks were assigned to the given soldier, but I do not believe that a person who received special training could shoot himself in the head on his own," Czezko said in the video.

In his address, Emil also expressed his willingness to take responsibility for his actions. His lawyer filed an application with the Hague Tribunal concerning the fact that Czezko is a witness in a criminal case related to the use of violence by the Polish security forces against refugees.



Emil Czezko

The previous sentence refers to the initiation of a criminal case against Poland and Lithuania under the 'Genocide and crimes against humanity' articles. The petition was accepted at

the office of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

We hope that the case would not be placed on a shelf: it will be promptly considered and released to the public.



US national debt tops \$30 trillion for first time

Total public debt outstanding is now above \$30 trillion, according to Treasury Department data

Government borrowing accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic as Washington spent aggressively to cushion the economic blow from the crisis. The national debt has surged by about \$7 trillion since the end of 2019.

It's impossible to know how much debt is too much, and economists remain divided over how big of a problem this really is. But the latest debt milestone comes at a delicate time as borrowing costs are expected to rise.

After many years of rock-bottom interest rates, the Federal Reserve is shifting into inflation-fighting mode. The Fed is planning to launch its first series of rate hikes since 2015. Higher borrowing costs

will only make it harder to finance that mountain of debt.

"It doesn't mean a short-term crisis, but it does mean we are going to be poorer in the long term," said David Kelly, chief global strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management.

Interest costs alone are projected to surpass \$5 trillion over the next 10 years and will amount to nearly half of all federal revenue by 2051, according to the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, an organisation focused on raising awareness to the fiscal challenge.

Mr. Kelly pointed out that rising borrowing costs will limit how much money Washington can spend on other priorities like climate change.

Fashion for nuclear power plant returns

The fashion for the peaceful atom is back. Estonian and Latvian authorities are thinking about building a low-power nuclear reactor while Polish companies are already looking for investors to develop nuclear power industry. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda also spoke about the prospects for the construction of small-scale nuclear power plants, the analytical portal RuBaltic reports.

"We need to try to replace gas with something else for basic capacities," said Latvian MEP Roberts Zīle, commenting on the sharp rise in electricity prices in the country. "The question is what could it be. In my opinion, it could be modern so-called modular nuclear power plants. It will be good if we can do something like that, e.g., together with the Estonians. Or if we'll manage to find some other solution. Anyway, building thousands of wind turbines on the seashore is not a solution. The best energy portfolios at the moment are in Finland and Sweden. If we look at them, we see that they have a lot of renewable energy resources, but both also have nuclear energy."

All three Baltic states and Poland are undergoing a creeping rehabilitation of nuclear power, although it doesn't refer to the development of some fundamentally new technologies. What Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Poles dream of is a reliable source of cheap electricity,

they already had: Ignalina NPP.

The plant, shut down at the whim of the European Union and the Lithuanian Conservative Party, would replace a dozen small-scale modular reactors that Poland and the Baltic states are only looking to build.

"Today, the Ignalina NPP has become a unique monument of regional stupidity in the eyes of the 'vatniks [a Russian character meme often used to mock patriotic Russians on the Internet which uses a grotesque character based on a wadded jacket] and sovoks [persons with Soviet mentality]' — despised in the Baltics. Meanwhile, as the political fashion for the peaceful atom returns, the political class of these three countries, and especially Lithuania, will have to recognise Ignalina as a symbol of their own stupidity. Was it worth destroying the Soviet nuclear power plant in order to end up looking for money for the construction of new nuclear power plants?" writes RuBaltic.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Enough showpieces for everybody

What exhibits are presented in the new building of the Art Museum and is there a demand for art: our correspondents walked around the most modern museum space in Minsk

A month ago, a new building of the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus was opened. It was opened just in time for the New Year and Christmas as if making a kind of gift to all Minsk residents and guests of the capital. It was made so quietly and modestly that the museum gave way not only to high-profile exhibitions in the main building but also to the most ordinary ones. Our correspondents carried out an inspection at the new halls exactly a month after the opening and can state: you must admit that the art territory is gorgeous.

By Yuliana Leonovich

Even more space

Any museum has at least three main tasks: to preserve the cultural heritage, study it and demonstrate it to visitors. It was with this that the Art Museum had problems. There are more than 30



Vladimir Prokoptsov

thousand works of Belarusian, Russian, Western European, and Oriental art here: one building was not enough to appreciate the scale of the collection for a long time. In 2006, the museum was attached to the first large-scale extension, which made it possible to significantly expand the permanent exhibition. Among other features, the new so-called 'glass' building received a super-advanced technical stuffing: climate control and lighting equipment. By the way, it was made in the image and likeness of the Moscow Tretyakov Gallery. Nevertheless, it was still not possible to finally ease the congestion of the museum. Vladimir Prokoptsov, Director General of the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus, recalls, "So we got a new extension and a separate building of the directorate, it seemed that everything is fine, that this is more than enough! However, when we settled down, it turned out that there was still not enough space and our richest collection would not fit here. That is how the idea to get more areas by attaching adjacent buildings around the main building of the museum came about. There were simply no other options. If there was a wasteland behind the building, it would be possible to build something new, but there are only buildings around..."

Thus, with the support of the President and the city administration, every effort was made to review the occupancy of nearby buildings.

Thus, a month ago, almost 10 years after the start of reconstruction, the building on Karla Marksa Street, where the BSU dormitory had previously been located,

received its first guests. You can get there both from the street and through the gallery of the extension of the main building.

"It is very convenient," affirms Vladimir Prokoptsov. "You can come to the museum and visit all the exhibition hall, without leaving the building. If you want to have a snack or drink coffee with a croissant, you are welcome — there is an art cafe on the ground floor. And then you can go on watching the exhibition with a renewed vigour."



Egor Ermalititsky

The museum will continue to review the occupancy of nearby buildings and adapt them to the new life, but someday (we believe!) there will be a whole museum quarter in Minsk

The yearlong line

Next to the art cafe on the ground floor, there is a great joy and pride of the museum staff — a large-scale souvenir shop. The local assortment is in no way inferior to any department store. The main target audience, sellers say, are tourists who often make an emotional, spontaneous purchase — a souvenir that, in their opinion, is associated with the museum, Minsk, and Belarus in general. Decorative dishes and plates, T-shirts with the museum masterpieces, cups, and postcards are in the tops of sales. Tourists also appreciate books and gladly buy them: here you can find all the novelties from Belarusian publishing houses related to the theme of art.

"So, first of all, we sent here several

copies of our album-catalogue called *Icon Painting and Altar Painting of Belarus in the 16th – Early 19th Centuries*. This is the first album of the scientific and educational series *The National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus*, which we prepared in November for the museum's birthday," says Vladimir Prokoptsov.

One floor above there are scientific departments, a lecture hall, and an art studio, where children can develop emotional intelligence, a sense of taste and style. The third floor is connected by a passage to the main building. Now there is the *Saved Art Treasures* exhibition, dedicated to the painstaking work of art restorers. It incorporates the works of ancient Belarusian, Russian and European art of the 17th-20th centuries from the collection of the National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus, which were restored in 2010-2021.

"These works brought from the expeditions, as a rule, were in poor condition, as they were removed from the attics of temples, abandoned bell towers, found in the cellars of churches. After undergoing

split into pieces, the frame was lost, and the painting was damaged. Thanks to the efforts of the restorers, the panel acquired an appropriate expositional state. For many years, the drawing *The Adoration of Shepherds* by an unknown artist of the 17th century was waiting for restoration. This is one of the earliest monuments of original graphics by European masters in the museum collection.

From heavenly to earthly

On the last, fourth floor, there is one of the museum's most successful exposition projects of recent times. *The Movement of the Earth* exhibition is, in fact, a great artistic story about the sacred relationship between man and nature.

"The land could not but become one of the main motives for the work of Belarusian artists of different generations. The main goal and concept of this exhibition is to present a multifaceted image of the native land both in time and themes, as well as in artistic styles," says the Head of the Department of Belarusian Art of the 20th-



21st Centuries Yekaterina Izofatova.

The connection of the earthly and the cosmic has different expressions: from landscapes by Valery Shkarubo and Aleksandr Grishkevich to ritual folklore and mythological works by Mikhail Filipovich and Nikolai Seleschuk. The romanticism of working days and holidays of Belarusians, in turn, is presented in the works of Boris Kazakov, Georgy Skripnichenko, and Mai Dantsig. In these halls, there is a piece of lighting equipment, unprecedented for Minsk museums, which makes every piece of art stunning. However, for all its novelty, there is no feeling that the new building arose just yesterday.

"Seems like it's been here for a long time," says Vladimir Prokoptsov with a smile. "Now the permanent exhibition presents about four percent of the works of the entire collection. When the next stage of the museum quarter is completed, it is planned to show the audience at least seven percent of the masterpieces. There are enough exhibits to fill the buildings, believe me. Where there is a will, there is a way."



initial conservation, many of them have been waiting for a full-fledged restoration for years," highlights the Head of the Department of Scientific and Restoration Workshops Arkady Shpunt.

Angel with a Lyre is the earliest of the works presented at the exhibition. It is dated 1642-1649 according to the time of interior decoration of the Church of the Annunciation — the Monastery of St. Brigitte in Grodno, where it decorated the balcony parapet for the organ. Its wooden base was



Openwork secrets

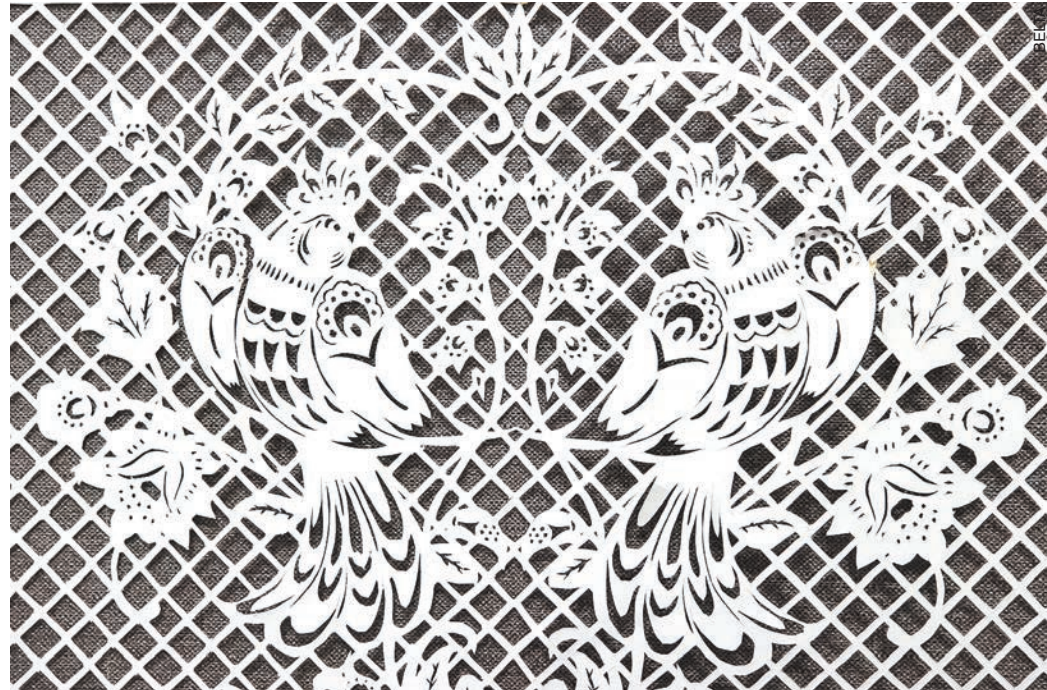
We visited the workshop of Natalya Klimko from Novogrudok, who was awarded a special Presidential award for art luminaries

Natalya Klimko, the Head of Kalyarovaya Altanka, a folk art club in the Novogrudok District Crafts Centre, was awarded a special award of the President for her fruitful work in preserving the traditions of making the Belarusian vytynanka (folk art of paper cutting images with scissors). For more than ten years, she has been replenishing her own collection of original works and also passes on the national art to the children and youth of the Novogrudok District. There are already about 100 works made in a special technique in Natalya's collection. They are known by visitors to the exhibition halls of Belarus, Russia, and Turkey. They were also presented at the festive venues of Alexandria, the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk, and the Vyasnovy Bouquet (Spring Bouquet), the Republican Festival-Fair of Crafts.

By Irina Lukashik

Only unique craftsmen plunge into the laborious process, because it takes about four (!) days to make a vytynanka. Natalya Klimko collects the overall picture from separately thought-out sketches. First, she draws a cellular grid — the main element, reminiscent of the curtain fabric familiar to everyone, then she makes the drawing itself and patterns. Natalya invents each part on her own — this is the secret. There is even a notebook for original ideas, which the craftswoman always keeps with her. Inspiration visits her spontaneously, sometimes on a walk or on a fishing trip. The remaining two days are allotted for the finishing stage — ‘punching out’ all the elements with a hammer, chisel, and specially sharpened screwdrivers. According to Natalya Klimko, exhibition visitors are surprised how such products can be made from paper, “Many are sure that this is crochet. And few people know that in the villages they made a vytynanka expressly for the holidays to decorate the house. Paper craftswomen made excellent overlay covers for shelves and firankas (special curtains) for windows. In most areas, rural craftswomen carved their work with scissors. The peculiarity of the Novogrudok region is to ‘punch out’ patterns. I used to be a beginner in this art myself. After graduating from the Minsk Art College named after A.K. Glebov, I came to the Novogrudok District, my husband’s homeland, and met Nina Shurak, the Chief Curator of the Funds of the Novogrudok Museum of History and Regional Studies. Communication with her gave impetus to a new hobby, now it’s my life’s work.”

In 2002, Natalya was appointed Director of the District Crafts Centre. At that time, each region tried to find its own zest and revive it. And so the search for the identity of Novogrudok began. Employees of the Crafts Centre travelled around the area: they studied folk art, got acquainted with the craftsmen. It turned out that weaving, pottery, and straw weaving were well developed in these parts. “Suddenly I found out that



her 70th birthday. After seeing the openwork beauty, I began to thoroughly study the topic, to understand it more. She even presented her thesis on the traditional vytynanka at the University of Culture and Art. Then she created the first set of works under the name *Svyata* (Holiday), dedicated to Easter.”

Now Natalya Klimko is not only a master of her craft but also an excellent teacher. The needlewoman passes on her experience to children in a vytynanka studio. Novogrudok children of different ages gather at the Crafts Centre every Saturday and learn all the basics of technology: from a sketch of a drawing to the final product. In the countryside, schoolchildren also know how to handle a hammer and know what a cellular grid is. The craftswoman travels to them with workshops and practical classes.

Nina Shurak, in addition to beautifully embroidered towels, is engaged in vytynanka. We just organised the first exhibition of works for

bitions. This is proved by all the letters of recognition and diplomas in Natalya’s workshop. This year, the team took first place at the *Vyasnovy Bouquet* Republican Festival-Fair of Crafts.

“We participate wherever we can. There are 28 people from the city and the district in the club, they are very friendly. The club gathers people of various ages and professions. Craftsmen exchange experiences, learn from each other, hold creative events. Lyceum and colleges of Novogrudok also collaborate with us, provide their works for exhibitions.”

Colleagues cherish and respect Natalya Klimko, they are proud of her. We are sure that she deserved the special award thanks to her desire to create and hard work. But the craftswoman herself admits that she still does not believe in what is happening, “I still remember how excited I was before going on stage. My heart beat faster even due to the mere understanding that there were people of such a high rank nearby. It seemed as if all this was not happening to me, it was like a Christmas fairy tale. And when the guests in the hall stood up to greet me, tears of joy rolled up, I was overwhelmed with a sense of delight. I am grateful that the work done was noticed and appreciated. I am grateful to our President! It is important when beginning craftsmen are provided help. In life, you need to love what you do, constantly develop in your field. It is also good when the team supports you in difficult times. I always adhere to the rule: do not interfere in the creative process. I can only prompt the student, show him or her the direction.”

The art of making a traditional vytynanka will definitely continue its rich history. Natalya Klimko took care of this: her daughter Veronika became interested in special technology in her childhood and now she has her own crafts studio, and her grandchildren Masha and Ilya are regular participants in classes and master classes.

For the older generation, there is the project *No to idleness — yes to needlework*. People have been visiting these monthly classes for two years now.

“We are also collaborating with the Novogrudok Residential Care Facility for Neuropsychiatric Patients in the village of Bolshiye Karnyshi, holding creative master classes there. We invite you to visit us for a tour,” says Natalya.

The Kalyarovaya Altanka folk art club is known in the country thanks to numerous exhi-



Numbers of Covid-19 patients seem to be growing here — the hospital is getting full and, apparently, will not be empty. Everyone is waiting for the fateful results of PCR-tests and it affects the athletes a lot. This creates nervousness and additional excitement, but it makes no difference: the Olympics finally overshadowed all other planetary events with its wide and varied essence. We hope that Belarus will do its best at this contest, and our athletes will make everyone proud of themselves and the country.

From Chamonix to Beijing

The first ever Winter Olympic Games were held in 1924 in Chamonix, France. 16 countries took part in them — there were 16 medal events in 9 different sports.

The 24th Games are already taking place in Beijing, and over almost a hundred years of history, the scale of the winter miracle has truly grown to incredible proportions: now representatives of 95 states have gathered in the capital of China, more than four thousand athletes are fighting for 109 sets of medals! The programme of this competition includes seven new disciplines: mixed-team freestyle skiing and ski jumping, women's monobob, men's and women's big air skiing, mixed-team snowboard cross, and the mixed-team relay in short track speed skating. Of all this diversity, we are perhaps only interested in freestyle skiing, where the Belarusian team will perform. The rules here



City lights

Beijing hosts 24th Winter Olympic Games



Mikita Labastau (centre)



Ekaterina Sloeva

are as follows: teams consist of three people — one woman and two men or two women and one man. Their individual results are summed up, and the winner is the one with the most points. Serious competition is expected, but the Belarusian acrobats also have a chance to take off on the podium.

Schuss, Vučko and others

The very first winter Olympic mascot was introduced at the Grenoble Olympics in 1968. It was Schuss — a man on skis

with a red and white head and Olympic rings on his forehead. The blue, curved body, as if at the start of ski jumping, smoothly turned into skis, and the colour of the mascot resembled the stripes of the French flag. There have been various mascots throughout the history: the snowman Schneeman, the wolf cub Vučko, polar bears Hidy and Howdy, the snowlets Sukki, Nokki, Lekki and Tsukki. The mascots of the Games of the last decade are the freshest in memo-

ry, do you remember them? Furry Bigfoot Quatchi at Vancouver 2010. The cheerful and perky trio from Sochi-2014 consisting of Bely Mishka (Polar Bear), Snow Leopard (leopard), Zaika (the dore hare). Mysterious Soohorang and Bandabi — white tiger and black bear from Pyeongchang 2018. Well, now all the attention is on a panda named Bing Dwen Dwen, dressed in an ice suit resembling a space suit. The bright multi-coloured rings around the panda's muzzle symbolise Beijing's state-of-the-art ice and snow arenas, and the heart on the left paw symbolises China's hospitality.

Keep politics out of the sport

The inviolable rule that while the Olympic flame is burning, all the guns in the world fall silent has long turned into archaism. The world has turned upside down and now the reverse is true: quirky politicians strive to use the Games in their own self-

ish interests, to drag them into their fiefdoms, to use them as a lever of pressure on competitors. Beijing 2022 is no exception, and the United States, as always, is 'ahead of the rest' — on a dashing horse and with a punishing sword of justice in their hands. The main targets of harassment are not new — Russia



Dzinara Alimbekava

and China. The first ones were beaten for a long time and are being punished for the Games in Sochi-2014 (objectively the best Winter Olympics in history!). They were deprived of the flag, coat of arms, anthem, they tried to trample them down, but got clobbered. Now Beijing is on the agenda. Long before the start of the Games, there were appeals from overseas to ignore this Games. However, it's more trouble than it is worth to completely boycott such an event, and the West could hardly have dared to do this under the current conditions. Once you let it drop, don't stop and USA have to do so: in order to 'save their face', they announced a political boycott of the 2022 Games. This is

something akin to a joke about the 'elusive Joe', who could not be caught just because no one was catching him — no one actually needed him. The same is true here: the United States refused to fly to visit Beijing, although no one invited them there. It is curious that only a few powers supported the Americans in this demarche: Australia, Great Britain, Canada and Denmark.

The greatest achievements

The first Sovereign Olympics for the Belarusian national team were the 1994 Lillehammer Games. However, Sochi-2014 was the most successful for our team, we went there with the smallest number. However, the main thing, as you know, is not quantity, but quality: 5 gold medals and one bronze medal raised our country to eighth place in the team standings, leaving Austria, France, Poland, China, Sweden, Japan, Great Britain, Finland and many others behind. Darya Domracheva, our inimitable biathlon prima, became the main hero of those Game and returned home with three champion titles.

Advances and odds

There are not many people making their medal predictions for the current Games. Firstly, the Olympics are traditionally extremely unpredictable competitions. Secondly, the Omicron COVID-19 variant continues to be a serious threat, and today it is easier to win at roulette by betting all your money on zero than

to predict the winner in any discipline in advance. Just because the main favourite may simply not go to the start due to a positive PCR-test. It is also hardly possible to predict how many medals our athletes will bring home from Beijing. With normal scenarios, even a triumph can happen, no worse than in Sochi, but with the most pessimistic options, there is a risk of showing poor results in some nominations. In any case, every biathlon race is a great chance. Competitions of freestyle skiers have a good prospect. Speed skating is our hope. The main thing is to believe in yourself. Do not give up and go to great lengths on the track, then everything will surely work out.





Pavel Bogush

Photo of the week

Winter fun

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On February 11th, 1807, Napoleon Orda was born (village of Vorotsevichi, Ivanovsky District, Brest Region), a famous artist, composer, pianist, writer, an outstanding public and cultural figure not only in Belarus, but also in the world. His creative work is connected with the artistic life of Belarus and Poland. Orda participated in November Uprising of 1830, after which he was forced to immigrate to France. From 1856, he lived and worked in his homeland. He is the author of *The Grammar of Music* (1873) book. Traveling around Belarus, Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, he made sketches of places connected with the life of famous people and architectural monuments, which are now of great value for the history of architecture. Died on 26th April 1883.

On February 11th, 1847, Thomas Alva Edison was born (1847—1931), an American inventor and entrepreneur.



Author of over a hundred inventions, mainly in various fields of electrical engineering: he improved the telegraph and telephone; invented the phonograph; created an industrial prototype of an incandescent lamp, etc. The world's first public power station was built under his project.

February 11th is the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in order to achieve full and equal access of women and girls to science, as well as to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.



On February 12th, 1961, the world's first Automatic Interplanetary Station, Venera-1, was launched in the Soviet Union. This spacecraft was designed to explore the planet Venus.

Communication with the satellite was lost when it was at a distance of about 2 million kilometres from the Earth. Nevertheless, this event became a new record for the USSR in space exploration. The Soviet spacecraft was the first to fly so close to another planet.

February 13th is the World Radio Day. It was proclaimed at the 36th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO (2011). Radio continues to be the medium of communication and social interactions for the largest audience in the world in the digital age. Radio has great capabilities and low cost, plays a prominent role in emergencies and disaster assistance.



February 13th, 1895 marked the birth of world cinema. On this day, Brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière patented the first motion picture camera. On December 28th of the same year in Paris, the Lumière brothers demonstrated their invention in action. They arranged the first commercial public screening of the film *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* in the basement of the Grand Café on the Boulevard des Capucines. In fact, the history of world cinema began with this commercial screening.



February 14th is celebrated in many countries around the world as Saint Valentine's Day. Back in 496, Pope Gelasius I declared February 14th as St. Valentine's Day in honour of a Christian martyr who suffered for his faith and was canonised by the Catholic Church. In Western Europe, Valentine's Day has been widely celebrated since the 13th century, in the USA — since 1777.

On February 15th, 1992, the Zhlobin Local History Museum was opened. The museum has 16 exhibition halls dedicated to: archaeology, ethnography, the history of the Zhlobin



Region, the development of the railway, the Great Patriotic War, etc. The museum hosts masterclasses and exhibitions of works by artists, decorative and applied arts masters, and photo artists.

February 15th is the Remembrance Day of Internationalist Soldiers in the Republic of Belarus. On this day in 1989, the last Soviet soldier crossed the bridge of the Amu Darya border river near Termez — the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan was completed. The war in Afghanistan lasted 9 years 1 month and 18 days. For many years, a monument in Minsk on the Island of Courage and Sorrow has been a symbol of memory of that war.



On February 16th, 1923, a British expedition led by archaeologist Howard Carter found a stone sarcophagus of Tutankhamun. The room containing the 100-kilogram golden sarcophagus with the mummified body of the pharaoh had so many precious items that it took five long years to declutter them. The sarcophagus with the mummy of the pharaoh was left in his tomb in the Valley of the Kings. All the treasures found there are now kept in the Cairo Museum.

