

MAGAZINE FOR YOU

No. 1 (1012), 2018  
Беларусь. Belarus

# BELARUS

Politics. Economy. Culture

ISSN 2415-394X



# COME AND YOU'LL BE WELCOMED

TOURISM WITH  
'BELARUSIAN  
ACCENT' OPENS  
INTERESTING  
OPPORTUNITIES

INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

**Socio-political Weekly**

**Events in Belarus and abroad**

**Weekly  
newspaper  
read in  
dozens of  
countries**

**Don't be late to subscribe**

# CONTENTS



# 4

## 8 For the sake of health

## 10 Tomorrow starts on yesterday

Which economic events of 2017 are most likely to affect 2018?

## 14 Story of budget

Belarusian parliamentarians are convinced that, in 2018, economic growth will continue



# 16

## LOOKING INTO NEW REALITY

## 18 What do genes hide?

## 22 Convincing profit calculation

Belarus joins EU initiative on climate and energy, implementing promising projects

## 24 Keys for electronic government

Building a digital economy, to create an IT country, is a priority for Belarus

## 26 IT: permission to take off

## 32 What to expect from reform?

From January, men in Belarus won't receive their pension until the age of 61, while women may claim theirs at 56

## 38 Duke's ruins revived

A pearl of Belarusian architecture — Kossovo Castle — has opened to visitors, being completely restored within five years

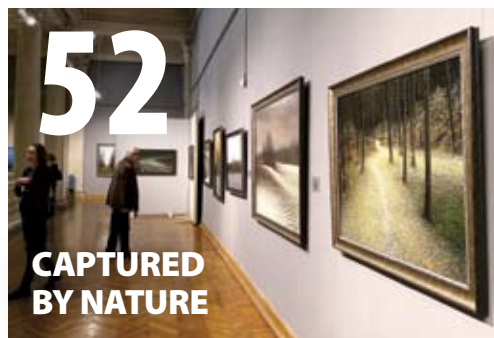
## 40 A distinctive destination, or five reasons to visit Myadel

## 46 This magical Kolyady

Gala concert at Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus features winners of 4th Minsk International Christmas Competition of Vocalists, concluding 8th Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum, delighting opera lovers with stars from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, France, Mexico and Canada

## 50 With Parisian accent

'Singer of the World' Nadezhda Kucher plays to her own melody rather than others' expectations



# 52

## CAPTURED BY NATURE

## Беларусь. Belarus

Monthly magazine

No. 1 (1012), 2018

Published since 1930

State Registration Certificate of mass medium No. 8 dated March 2nd, 2009, issued by the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus

### Founders:

Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus

'SB' newspaper editorial office

Belvnesheconombank

Editor: Viktor Kharkov

### Executive Secretary:

Valentina Zhdanovich

### Design and Layout by

Vadim Kondrashov

Nadezhda Ponkratova

**Беларусь. Belarus** is published in Belarusian, Chinese, English, Polish and Spanish.

Distributed in 50 countries of the world. Final responsibility for factual accuracy or interpretation rests with the authors of the publications. Should any article of **Беларусь. Belarus** be used, the reference to the magazine is obligatory.

The magazine does not bear responsibility for the contents of advertisements.

### Publisher:

'SB' editorial office

This magazine has been printed at Republican Unitary Enterprise 'Belarusian Printing House Publishing Co'.

79 Nezavisimosti Ave.,  
220013 Minsk, Belarus

Order No. 256

Total circulation — 2,317 copies (including 750 in English).

### Write us to the address:

11 Kiselyov Str.,  
220029 Minsk, Belarus  
Tel.: +375 (17) 290-62-24,  
290-66-45  
Tel./Fax: +375 (17) 290-68-31

E-mail: belmag@sb.by

Subscription index in Belpochta catalogue — 74977

For future foreign subscribers to 'Belarus' magazine, apply to 'MK-Periodica' agency.

E-mail: info@periodicals.ru

Telephone in Minsk:  
+375 (17) 227-09-10

© Беларусь. Belarus, 2018

# WHAT'S OUR PRIORITY?

The global situation is unstable, as we all know, and leading world powers sometimes use the situation to further their geopolitical goals. Regardless of the justice or humanity of such an approach, it's a fact. We might think that individuals have little influence on politics but it's from those individuals that initiatives are born, and adopted by the majority, though it may take time. Unity of intention is essential in such cases. For example, Minsk is putting itself forward as the host venue for the 'Helsinki-2' summit, at which international issues will be discussed. Read excerpts from the 2017 Annual Review of Foreign Policy of Belarus in the current issue of the magazine.

Two years ago, UN member states adopted the Goals of Sustainable Development until 2030: a list of seventeen goals aiming at eradicating poverty worldwide, battling inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change. The project was signed by 193 countries, including Belarus. The National Co-ordinator for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, Marianna Shchetkina, tells us about the project in our article, **World Scale Sustainability**.

Without exaggeration, last year was significant for science. The Year of Science featured a range of events, including the presentation of a prototype domestic electric car. Industrial production is still some time ahead, including a driverless model, but we all know that technology is moving quickly. View **Vital Not to Lose Time** to learn more.

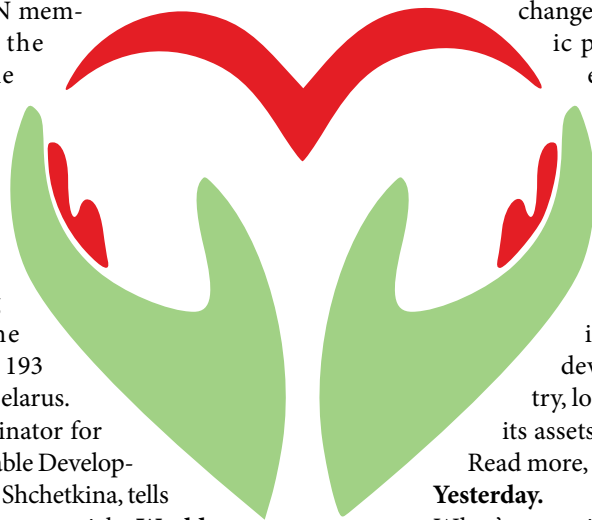
Economic sustainability is vital, since it directly influences our quality of life, and we know that innovative development is an essential element of growth. Many Belarusian parliamentarians are convinced that the Belarusian economy will continue to grow in 2018.

It's no easy task to budget for our family, let alone to budget on a nationwide scale, when so much needs to be considered, from the situation on world commodity markets, and the price of oil, to the exchange rate of the US Dollar... There are so many 'unknowns', necessitating a great deal of analysis. The National Assembly has adopted this coming year's major financial document promptly, as you can see in the **Story of Budget**.

Belarus' open economy is facilitating the export of 85 percent of all goods and services produced domestically. In other words, the welfare of the state, the stability on our currency market and the sustainability of the Rouble exchange rate rely on the dynamic promotion of domestic enterprises' goods to external markets. Exports are a key factor in Belarus' economic security. The Belarusian Government has paid special attention to this topic in analysing the socio-economic development of the country, looking at how to best use its assets and stimulate exports.

Read more, in **Tomorrow Starts on Yesterday**.

What's most important? Politics or trade, or spirituality? What ensures our success? Every January, the 'Spiritual Revival' Awards are bestowed in Belarus, recognising the work of outstanding individuals. Our **Supreme Honour to be the Best** is dedicated to this event.



VIKTOR KHARKOV



1

## ► OBSERVING POSITIVE TRENDS

**Belarus' bilateral relations with European states activated significantly in 2017, notes the Annual Review of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus and Activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**



**O**fficial visits are being conducted more frequently, and at higher levels, strengthening trust in negotiations, and helping expand our contacts, through partner organisations. We've been introducing new formats of co-operation and developing inter-parliamentary contacts. Moreover, representatives of business circles are keen to enter the Belarusian market, and invest in our economy.

"Positive trends have been observed in trade with most European countries, including significant growth in Belarusian exports," reads the document.

Work continues, to improve legislation across various branches, and a range of inter-governmental and inter-departmental agreements have been signed: with the United Kingdom, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

## ► EXCURSION GUIDES WITH DIPLOMAS

**The decree has now entered into force, allowing longer visa-free stay in the Brest and Grodno regions, of up to ten days. Already, around 500 foreign guests from fifteen countries have visited Grodno, during the New Year holidays.**

**A**s to how to enhance tourist attractiveness, Igor Marzalyuk, a deputy at the House of Representatives, believes that good tour excursions are vital. He explains, "In order to give tourists a positive image of Belarus, we need to license excursions. At present, anyone can organise these."

Importantly, the factual content should meet certain standards, to ensure that tourists hear the truth.

The Code on Education needs to be a well-coordinated document. In spring, parliamentary hearings will take place on suggested amendments, as Mr. Marzalyuk tells us. "Education is a topic which should be discussed 'all together', with any changes in this sphere taking into account national and public interests."



2

3



## ► COMFORT FLIGHTS WITHIN TWO AND A HALF YEARS

**Air China facilitates development of ties between Belarus and China**

**T**he launch of a direct Beijing-Minsk flight two and a half years ago, by Air China, has helped Belarusian-Chinese co-operation, with the route used by businessmen, tourists and students: over 60,000 passengers were registered last year alone.

The company is expanding its range, focusing on high quality service. "Our company is a state enterprise and an active participant in implementing the Belt and Road concept: an air version of the Silk Road," notes the Director General of Air China's Minsk office, Wang Zhengfeng.

Air China Ltd. is a Chinese state-owned airline headquartered in Beijing, which joined Star Alliance in December 2007. This flagship airline is the only Chinese flag carrier, covering Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe, and North and South America. Most flights operated by the company, including those to Belarus, depart from Beijing.



BELTA

# SUPREME HONOUR

**The Palace of the Republic hosted ceremony to honour laureates of 'For Spiritual Revival' Award, as well as awarding special prizes to figures of culture and arts and the Belarusian Sport Olympus Award**

**A**s is traditional, the President personally bestowed awards. Addressing the laureates he noted, "We enjoy a great spiritual heritage. This legacy relies on the

righteous life of Belarusian saints and in the great works of poets, artists, musicians and architects who were born in our country. It is rooted in the spiritual heroism of those who have preserved faith, love for the homeland, respect for our history and culture — despite the incredible ordeals of the war years and social upheaval."

Unfortunately, there're enough challenges nowadays and the President noted that the world is still troubled today. "An invisible struggle for the human soul is in progress. Christian pillars of morality often come under attack and traditional family foundations are being eroded.



# TO BE THE BEST

The world view and the way of life of people are changing under the influence of information flow. An increasing number of temptations are emerging. It is getting much more difficult to protect our souls. In the pursuit of material goods and glitz, people are losing their true beauty: the inner light of good feelings and noble deeds which our people have long been renowned," Mr. Lukashenko added.

In this situation, Mr. Lukashenko called on creative people towards determination, encouragement and initiative. "It is particularly impor-

tant not to miss our timing, not to lose our spiritual essence. There is no doubt that culture, art and religion should come to the forefront. Their influence on people's minds is considerable. It is they that shape the images and ideals which many people see as virtues. Therefore, people of culture and art, mass media professionals, clergy, pedagogues and everyone who cares for the world, should pool their efforts for the sake of reinforcing the moral standards of our nation. Spiritual immunity is needed against amorality and bad taste. Culture and art should always

be a source of energy and fortitude for people."

"We remember and honour the rich legacy of the past generations. Their eternal light shows us the right way to live even now. The current generation should make the light even brighter so that our children and grandchildren could pick up the baton and pass it on," he noted.

Speaking of the complexity of forecasting the future, the President said, "We're now at a crossroads. As I speak in front of you, telling you about traditional values, you may think that I'm harking on the past



Laureates of 'For Spiritual Revival' Award of the President of Belarus

but I must emphasise my belief that our society is based upon traditional values. Who knows what tomorrow may bring, regarding art, morale, creativity, culture and spirituality? We'd like it to be based on traditional truths: those with which we are long familiar. Then, it will be easier for us. However, who knows how things will turn out? No one! Of course, we'll be struggling to preserve these traditional values. They seem fundamental to us. They aren't simply spiritual, they're sacred. We'll be striving towards this but will we succeed?"

The Head of State said that the world is changing rapidly. Even five years ago, nobody could have imagined how much the Internet will change the way of life of humankind. "However hard we may struggle, we are stuck in this World Wide Web. It makes people's lives easier by delivering up-to-date information fast. You can see how life is changing, including for the better. On the other hand, the changes bring huge problems we are struggling to contain. We don't know how to tackle some of them yet," he stressed.

Mr. Lukashenko encouraged society's elite and creative Belarusians to learn how to use new opportunities

themselves and teach children how to live well whilst the World Wide Web influences their minds and hearts. "It is necessary from school age to teach your children how to use multiple sources, learn many points of view to draw the right conclusions. It is important for youth. You and I were taught that practice is the judge of truth and young Belarusians could use more practice, more experience," stated the President. "We should teach them to doubt everything, to

seek different sources, become familiar with different points of view, and use the experience of the older generation, as well as their own to choose the point of view that suits the life of our society."

Mr. Lukashenko sincerely wished laureates happiness, creative inspiration and new successes in their life. By their activity they create an aura of kindness and mercy, restoring ancient traditions of Belarusian masters and encouraging interest towards historical achievements of our ancestors. Family values are defended. Charity is encouraged. Patriotism is inspired. With their talents our people inspire genuine love for high art. By ascending to the sport Olympus, they glorify Belarus at the international level and awaken the feeling of pride in their nation and their Homeland.

The President also thanked all those who took part in the traditional New Year's campaigns: 'Our Children'. Together they have done much, giving joy to small citizens who are deprived of it as fate would have it.

Our laureates deserve the highest awards. They are the pride of the nation and example for everyone!



Laureates of the special prize of the President of Belarus to figures of culture and arts

## DIRECT SPEECH

**Marianna Shchetkina, Chair of the Belarusian Union of Women, Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic:**



*This is the recognition of our association's work. This enhances the credibility of the organisation and the very big responsibility which inspires us to improve our work and meet the requirements of modern times. At the same time, it's very important to maintain our continuity and traditions. For 25 years, our goal remains unchanged: the strengthening of moral and spiritual values. Our efforts are aimed at supporting families and strengthening family relations, protecting the rights and legitimate interests of mothers and children, increasing the role of women in the socio-political, socio-economic and cultural life of the country. We pay special attention to charitable and humanitarian activities. Great attention is also paid to the development of women's entrepreneurship.*

**Roman Motulsky, Director of the National Library of Belarus:**



*Our contribution to the Year of Science is the projects devoted to the 500th anniversary of Belarusian book printing. Our key project is the restoration of Francysk Skaryna's facsimile heritage; we've been working on this for five years. We are proud that the publication has become one of the brands of our country. As many foreign book publishers, librarians and scientists admit, a project of this kind is truly unique. Not only one or two books have been released (common for an edition) but a complete collection of Skaryna's works: twenty volumes and a separate volume of scientific comments. Researches conducted while preparing the project have become the basis for virtually all other publications dedicated to Skaryna and the anniversary of Belarusian printing.*

**Pavel Moiseev, Head of the Department of Anti-Cancer Control Organisation at the National Academy of Sciences' N.N. Alexandrov National Oncology and Medical Radiology Centre:**



*The medical direction of oncology obliges us to communicate with patients in a special way; this is the cornerstone of their recovery and our successful work. We build relationships not only with patients but also with relatives: when a family learns of a cancer diagnosis, it changes their outlook on life. The doctor needs not only to prescribe the correct treatment but also explain everything in detail to a patient, offering support. This is as important as the availability of advanced equipment and modern drugs. In addition, a patient can receive moral support from a clergyman: a small church is open at the Centre. The highest praise for our team of doctors is patients' feedback when they admit that they feel at home at the Centre.*

**Abu-Bekir Shabanovich, Mufti of the Islamic Religious Association in the Republic of Belarus:**



*This award is a great incentive. It's a guide for how we should build up our work to revive the spiritual and national culture which brings harmony to the life of society and strengthens our state. Our association strives to develop interest in the history and culture of the nation, thanks to state support. In 1997, top-level events were organised; they were dedicated to the 600th anniversary of the settlement of Tatars in Belarus. In 2017, we celebrated the 620th anniversary of that event on a large scale. The leitmotif of the holiday was that all those years have passed in peace and harmony. We talked about the traditions and culture of Belarusian Tatar-Muslims. The spiritual culture is reviving thanks*

*to large-scale enlightenment activity: the organisation of Sunday schools and groups, as well as reconstruction or construction of mosques which once operated in Belarus.*

**Archbishop Victor Peregudov — Senior Priest of the Saint Yevfrosiniya Polotskaya Church at Ivenets (Volozhin District, Minsk Region):**



*The fact that our work has been recognised at such a high level indicates that society understands the importance of the Church's social service. It aims to help people in distress, as well as children with physical and psychological disabilities. We are engaged in spiritual care to ensure these children receive their first spiritual experience and find their way to God, also obtaining knowledge and gaining skills in the first and simplest prayers. We run the House of Mercy. We gather children from orphanages and families there. Surrounded by the warmth of our hearts, they can pray there, and visit the church. Painters of the Belarusian Union of Artists and other volunteers come to us — to get to know the children and help them.*

**Yekaterina Dulova, Rector of the Belarusian State Academy of Music:**



*Our Academy has been active for many years. In my opinion, it is an important component in the artistic educational process. Participation in the large-scale 'Land's Talent' musical show and such projects as 'Touching', and Easter Festival are important both for our students and for all those to whom they are addressed. Each of these projects addresses the higher levels of the human soul, playing a significant role in educating people. The President's special award proves that our activities are necessary, important and in demand. These are perceived by society as one of the most important components of the spiritual life of the country.*

By Denis **Alexandrov**

# FOR THE SAKE OF HEALTH

**While wishing each other good health, on holidays and birthdays, we often fail to think of the true meaning of our words, and the value of good health. However, patients at Minsk's Clinical Oncology Dispensary know best of all the true value of these wishes. Importantly, many have been given the chance to beat serious illness, to return to a normal, full life. On the eve of the New Year, a new radiological block opened at the city dispensary, receiving a visit from President Alexander Lukashenko.**

By anyone's standards, the new block is impressive. Head Doctor Vladimir Karanik, who seemed not at all nervous before meeting the President, tells us, "We've achieved our dream, with our surgeons performing about 10,000 operations annually, over half of which are complex, involving high-technologies. After receiving new equipment, unique in the CIS, we've mastered the most advanced diagnostic and treatment methods. As a result, we've managed to avoid mortality rates rising due to cancerous diseases."

The President has visited Europe's largest Nuclear Medicine Department, where radioiodine therapy is being used to treat patients with thyroid cancer. The

clinic has a positron emission tomograph, two gamma cameras and many other innovative technologies, which it's using to help save lives. Miracles can occur, especially at this time of year.

Young Anya Kovalevich, from Skidel, has arrived with her mother, to receive treatment. Mother Olga's eyes are shining with hope. "My daughter has already been operated upon, and is undergoing a course of radioiodine therapy. Physicians' forecasts are favourable and we're very happy," she says.

Olga Karetnikova, from Minsk, is also full of gratitude for the treatment she's received from doctors. "We should give them a Nobel Prize, as they cure everyone!" she told the President. Al-

exander Lukashenko agreed, wishing her a speedy recovery and long life to all patients, presenting sweets and fruit to children during his visit.

The President also received a present from journalists, of beautiful New Year tree decorations. The hand-painted glass balls feature key sites from across Belarus, including an image of Alexander Lukashenko's own house in the Shklov District and a new 'Polesie' harvester (as personally tested by the President last summer, during his working trip to Mogilev).

Media representatives naturally use the opportunity to ask questions of the President and received the following answers:



At Minsk Clinical Oncology Dispensary

## DIRECT SPEECH

### The development of the agro-industrial complex

We are completely self-sufficient in food for 2018. We've not needed our reserves, despite the extreme conditions of 2017. Never before have we experienced such severe conditions, under which I was sometimes obliged to become involved. What we've learnt is that we lack organisation and discipline, which is essential for agriculture. No economic reform can save us unless we ensure discipline in villages and mobilise our forces. Then, we'll significantly progress. We don't lack money, grants or machinery so, if all these are well organised, results will follow.

### Demographic policy

To solve the problem of the birth rate, there's only one solution: more births! This is our security. We need

at least 15 million people in Belarus. Nowhere in the world is there such support for mothers and children. I asked that we collect information on the subject and then read the five-page report. It showed how much money we're spending in this area, such as supporting couples giving birth to their first child. Having a baby, especially a first child, is always a happy event, but we even pay for this happiness. We've taken unprecedented measures. Have you noticed that Vladimir Putin, in his election campaign, is repeating some of our ideas? The key task for you is to give birth; leave all other obligations to us.

### Foreign policy plans

This year, I plan to visit America. We have many issues there; at least five American states have invited us, so we should go, primarily, to establish trade and economic relations.

We'll visit traditional partner countries.

However, this isn't the most important thing for me. Frankly, and these are my personal thoughts, I really want to see the war end in our fraternal Ukraine, so that people can start living peacefully. This is the most important problem for me. If we can do something for our native Ukraine and its very hard-working people, we must make every effort to do so. If this conflict expands further, there'll be hell to pay.

### Gifts

When I tour the city, I watch people and their reactions and feel the public mood. If a person is smiling and in a good mood, I know that life is bearable. We all know that life is never uniformly good but I want to see your positive mood and your smiles. Most importantly, your families and children shouldn't be plagued by illness or cause you distress.



# TOMORROW STARTS ON YESTERDAY

**Which economic  
events of 2017 are  
most likely to  
affect 2018?**

**S**

umming up results of the year is, no doubt, a useful tradition, since it shows us what has been achieved, while outlining plans for the future. With this in mind, our reporters have chosen the brightest and most significant economic events from the past 12 months in Belarus.

## Breakthrough of the year

### Driving forward business

On November 23rd, the President signed the Decree 'On Developing Entrepreneurship'. The Deputy Economy Minister, Dmitry Matusevich, is optimistic, believing that the document will drive forward business.

*"Decree #7 is the final chord in the rhapsody of a whole package of documents aimed at emancipating entrepreneurial initiative. State bodies, businesses and the public jointly worked on these documents last year," he says.*

**S**elf-employed people, including artisans, are likely to benefit, as will small and medium-sized businesses. Regarding the latter two, by 2020, their share of 'total value added' should reach 40 percent of the total, and they should employ a similar share of the workforce (up from nearly 30 percent at present). The structure of small and medium-sized businesses will change in favour of innovative and knowledge-intensive industries. It's possible that the trend of previous years will continue: of the number of individual entrepreneurs falling against a growing number of those employed to work alongside individual entrepreneurs, or with small and medium-sized businesses. Over the past two years, individual entrepreneurs have employed over 10,000 people.

A package of measures on liberalisation will be ready in early 2018 and, within a year, state administration bodies should have developed legislation to allow all aspects to come into force.



## Investments of the year

### Investments flow under the stone

**The Head of the Great Stone Industrial Park's Administration, Alexander Yaroshenko, tells us about 2017's results and 2018's plans, including his prediction that the number of residents may grow to thirty-five this year**

*"The most important milestone in developing the Great Stone Park in 2017 was the adoption of Decree #166, which envisaged ready-built infrastructure. Its promotion of the Park and conditions for doing business have enabled a serious breakthrough," he says.*

**T**he Industrial Park has received a major impetus for its further development and transformation into a key platform of the Silk Road Economic Belt. In early 2017, eight residents were registered and, by the end of the year, the number had reached twenty-three. Of these, fourteen companies have Chinese capital and four firms are Belarusian, while five come from the USA, Russia, Lithuania, Austria and Germany.

2018 will be the first year of fully-fledged functioning for the Industrial Park, with residents launching production. The China Merchants Group logistics sub-park has already begun work and Chengdu Xinzhu Silk Road Development will begin producing super-condensers. In addition, centres of research and development are to open at Bel Huawei Technologies and YTO Technology BLR. Companies involved in production of LED devices have also announced their readiness to start operating at the Park.

Park residents' activities and stories of success will be the best advertising for the Park, helping us reach goals for 2018. At least thirty-five residents should be working there by the end of the year.

## Perspective of the year

### Ticket to IT country

**The shortest day of 2017, December 22nd, saw one of the most important economic events of recent years, as the President signed the Decree 'On the Development of Digital Economy'**

**I**t aims to transform Belarus into an IT country. Residents of the High-Tech Park have given their suggestions in creating the decree, as have non-residential IT-companies.

The Head of the HTP Administration, Vsevolod Yanchevsky, believes that the President has supported all ideas and initiatives of the IT community via the decree.

*Saying, "Even before its signing, the decree was sometimes called 'revolutionary' by the media, and it's true. Belarus boasts some of the best conditions in the world for developing IT, high-tech and business, on the basis of blockchain technology, and much more."*

Belarus has become the first country in the world to implement smart contracts into the legal field, whereby a computer programme automatically fulfils contract terms. The document also oversees the exchange of crypto-currencies, and mining. From now on, it will be possible to legally obtain and sell crypto-currencies, although they won't be valid as a means of payment.

While introducing extensive tax benefits for HTP residents, the decree abolishes subsidiary responsibilities, thereby reducing risks for start-ups. Contracts are also being simplified, to help attract foreign investors (based on 'English law').



## Production of the year

### Let's go!

**The Geely Atlas hybrid car, as produced at the newly established BelGee Plant, is to be available for purchase in early 2018 under preferential terms**

**T**he new BelGee Plant opened in Borisov last November and has already produced 222 Atlas hybrids, in the Comfort package. Most of the 2-litre petrol-engine cars (costing \$19,850) are so far sold by pre-order to legal entities, but private citizens will actually pay less for their orders.

The Chairman of Belarusbank's Board, Victor Ananich, comments, "I've personally visited the plant to test the sedan and Atlas. Both are good quality. Jointly with the company, we're studying the possibility of enhancing sales, including credit programmes. I can't speak of concrete results, as we're still developing." Geely dealers say that loans will be available in the near future.

## Borrowings of the year

### Large volumes of money

**After a six-year break, our country is placing Eurobonds, aiming to raise \$1.4 billion over 5.5 years and 10 years. The yield on both exceeds 7 percent per annum.**

**E**urobonds are a special kind of long-term loan, borrowed by governments, large corporations, international organisations and some other institutions interested in attracting financial resources for a fairly long period. The major objective of Eurobond issuing is to seek out alternative sources of finance, as in Belarus' case.

Eurobonds have enabled the country to receive a large amount of money with a minimum of obligations. In comparison with IMF loans, Eurobonds are tasty morsels, since international lending organisations put forward many requirements: privatisation, raising tariffs for housing and communal services, and cutting wages in the private sector of the economy and for state employees. Meanwhile, these bonds envisage no more than simply repaying debt and interest on time!

Interestingly, demand for Belarusian Eurobonds is double that of the amount being placed on offer.

## Figure of the year

### Stakes are made

**Since early 2017, the refinancing rate has fallen by 6 percent-age points. Should we expect the same rapid decline in 2018?**

**T**hose taking out loans, or simply planning to address banks for borrowing, can be optimistic about a reduced refinancing rate. Last year, the indicator fell from 18 percent (in January) to 11 (in October): the smallest such figure since 2010. The lowest rate (of 10 percent) was applied only ten years ago.

According to the Chairman of the National Bank's Board, Pavel Kallaur, the estimated value of the refinancing rate is around 10 percent in the prepared draft monetary policy. "We have no plans to cut the rate in 2018," he notes. To further reduce this figure, the National Bank needs to be convinced of the stability of the balance of payments and the stability of inflation. In addition, the refinancing rate is fixed at 11 percent per annum in the law 'On the Republican Budget' adopted at its second reading and aiming to calculate the annual draft budget. Compared to February 2000 (when the indicator reached 175 percent), the present figure looks quite attractive.

## ► TURBULENT ZONE HAS ENDED

**This year, economic growth is forecast to exceed that of last year, growing by 3.5 percent (against 2 percent). You might think we can relax and catch our breath but the Government is convinced that now is the time to work harder than ever, since obstacles in 2018 are more complex than ever.**

**“W**ithin three years, we should show economic growth within the parameters of our five-year plan. The third year of the five-year plan is decisive,” notes Belarus’ Prime Minister, Andrei Kobyakov. External markets have stabilised: especially that of our major trade-economic partner, Russia. Accordingly, there are all grounds to feel optimistic. In 2017, exports

rose significantly and warehouse stocks reduced, resulting in growth. Mr. Kobyakov emphasises, “The turbulent zone has ended and we’re prioritising enterprises’ financial recovery.”

Diversification of exports is essential, using the ‘thirds’ formula: sharing sales between Russia, the EU and distant foreign states. Mr. Kobyakov believes that we must expand production volumes while enhancing the quality of goods and releasing new types of products, with high value added.



## ► JOINT PROJECTS PLANNED

**Belarus and China to translate and publish more books by Belarusian and Chinese authors in 2018**

**T**he year is likely to be rich in joint events in the spheres of publishing and information. Chinese publishing organisations are taking part in Minsk’s International Book Fair in early 2018, which should result in new joint projects on translation and publishing of Belarusian and Chinese authors.

In May, a press tour of Chinese journalists to Belarus is expected to form part of the 22nd Mass Media in Belarus Specialised Fair. Meanwhile, the Year of Tourism will feature Belarusian-Chinese relations as its main topic. Joint competitions will be held and new projects launched for major Belarusian and Chinese state media.

Belarus’ Ambassador to China, Kirill Rudy, has pointed out the productivity of Belarus-China relations in the media sector and literature in 2017. Several events have been successful, including the first press tour of Chinese journalists to Belarus and the meeting of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko with Chinese journalists. The Belarusian delegation took part in the Beijing International Book Fair, presenting the country’s best books and there was a contest of essays on the theme of Belarus.



## ► ACCENT ON MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

**Belarusian science has become more applied and oriented to the needs of the real economic sector, noted the Chairman of the Council of the Republic at the National Assembly, Mikhail Myasnikov, on the sidelines of the 2nd Congress of Scientists of Belarus. “We need to focus on the technologies and processes that are currently in demand or may be in demand by our industry, the construction complex and other knowledge-intensive spheres of production,” he asserted.**

**I**mportant changes have taken place in the structural organisation of scientific institutions. Modern scientific and practical centres have been set up to introduce scientific achievements into production. “This became possible largely due to the fact that absolutely new approaches were introduced both organisationally and financially compared to those used during the Soviet period. This refers to the programme-target method of planning and financing the research,” added Mr. Myasnikov.

In his opinion, Belarus has enough potential to implement more national projects in the innovation field. “Such projects help us develop both traditional and new industries, not only individual enterprises and industries,” he said. In this respect, the development of the IT industry, the chemical industry (including polymer chemistry and advanced petroleum refining technology), and the pharmaceutical industry looks quite promising for Belarus.





# STORY OF BUDGET

**Belarusian parliamentarians are convinced that, in 2018, economic growth will continue**

It's always a challenge to plan the family budget, so you can imagine the difficulty on a national scale, having to take into consideration world commodity markets, oil prices and the Dollar exchange rate. However, solutions usually become apparent by the end of the year. Late 2017 saw deputies adopt the major financial document of their parliamentary session.

The Government has decided to play safe, preparing the country's budget for 2018 using a conservative scenario of economic development. Oil prices of \$43 per barrel have been used for calculations (at present, the price stands at \$65) and a Dollar exchange rate of 2,038 Belarusian Roubles or 62.3 Russian Roubles. Inflation is forecast at no higher

than 7.4 percent, while the refinancing rate is expected to reach 11 percent.

Even against these cautious forecasts, the Belarusians economy is expected to grow by at least 1.2 percent, while state treasury income should exceed expenditure by Br734 million. If we enjoy higher oil process, a cheaper Dollar and more rapid growth of the Russian and European economies, then the budget surplus will be even more significant.

Naturally, the state will always spend its budget wisely, as the Chair of the profile Parliamentary Commission, Lyudmila Dobrynina, stresses. She explains, "The economy gained momentum in 2017, and the additional income will be used primarily to increase salaries for those employed by the state. This is our key task." Financing

of the educational and health spheres and formation of family capital are also priorities.

The Minister for Labour and Social Protection, Irina Kostevich, believes that average salaries should range from Br920-940 per month, with the amount above Br1,000 in the private sector. Those paid by the state are expected to receive Br700-760. Speaking of pensions, Ms. Kostevich stresses that these will rise in 2018 but their growth depends on economic growth. "Conservatively, pensions should increase by around 12 percent (or more if targets are met). In any case, pensions should be at least 40 percent of the average monthly salary."

The construction industry is also set to develop, with four million square metres of housing planned to be built this year, including around a million using state support. The state programme of accommodation construction is likely to be funded by citizens' own savings, as well as organisations' money and banking credits.

Apart from social guarantees, the state has another priority: repaying debt. Finance Minister Vladimir Amarin sees no cause for fear, saying, "State debt service is completely overseen by the common revenue of the budget. Non-debt sources — comprising export customs duties on oil products and foreign exchange balances of the national budget accumulated as a result of Eurobonds placement in 2017 — will be used to repay foreign currency debt. This is a good safety cushion for our country."

Belarus has almost completely paid off its liabilities. It now has to complete a programme run jointly with the Eurasia Fund for Stabilisation and Development. Two more tranches (equal to \$400 million) are to be received. The economic security indicator regarding state debt will be fully met by late 2018. The draft budget envisages a limit of domestic state debt to Br10 billion (against a foreign debt limit of \$19.6 billion).

The size of the budget depends on exporters' operations too, with the mastering of new markets a key target for 2018, alongside gaining an even stronger foothold in existing markets. Our comprehensive strategic partnership with China is vital, with exports of goods and services to this country set to exceed \$800 million this year, including increasing supplies of food, machinery and equipment. A joint facility to promote Belarusian food to the Chinese market is soon to be set up in China: in early 2018, Belarus plans to sell the first batch of poultry there, bringing our economic interests closer.

Inflow of foreign currency will contribute to the stability of the domestic currency market. In turn, stability of the Belarusian Rouble — maintained by balanced foreign trade — will ensure further reduction of inflation: the latter should reach the lowest ever level in Belarus by late 2018.

By Arseny Kovalchuk

## EXPERT OPINION

### Vladimir Ulakhovich, Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry:



*Around 40 percent of Belarusian products are now exported to the Eurasian market. Of course, this entails certain vulnerability. Our task is not only to preserve the presence of our products there but also to expand it — primarily through the sale of high-tech and high-intensive products.*

*Less than 30 percent of our sales are to the EU. The European market is very complicated, requiring certification, which is sometimes characterised by protectionism. This pushes companies to introduce new management cultures and marketing strategies, while improving products and moving towards price competitiveness, maintaining quality and offering 'value for money'.*

*As I tell company heads, it's much easier for us to join other markets once we gain a certificate for the EU market. We're now trying to gain a foothold in Africa and have already organised business trips to Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Africa, Algeria, and Egypt. In 2017, we held an exhibition in Algeria and, this year, three trips to Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia are planned — after working out trading niches with our enterprises to gain the maximum benefit from these visits. We're also thinking of South Korea: a high-tech country with a niche for some Belarusian products.*

### Vyacheslav Yaroshevich, Candidate of Economic Sciences and Associate Professor:



*From the point of view of international organisations and creditors, the Republican budget for 2018 looks both realistic and compromising, taking into account the conditions under which the country's economy is working. It's necessary to understand that a profit is necessary, primarily to ensure payments on our debt obligations. However, taking into account the forecast for socio-economic development for next year, the budget may be too conservative. Our economy is intensively warming up, as are those of Russia and the EU states, so the planned 1.2 percent is too modest, especially against a background of positive dynamics for prices for energy carriers, thanks to the OPEC-Russia agreement on the preservation of quotas on oil extraction.*

*It's very important for Belarus, since oil products are the basis of our foreign currency earnings. At the same time, we have to reinforce the recovery of our economy, that started last year. To achieve this, we need to do more than simply expand exports. We must diversify geographically, and with our product range.*



# LOOKING INTO

**2017's Year of Science concluded with a Congress of Scientists, bringing together 2,600 participants, including state officials and guests from dozens of states. They discussed the global development programme of Belarusian science for the forthcoming two dozen years, and attended an inter-departmental exhibition of promising developments, entitled 'Intellectual Belarus', showcasing exciting innovations in IT, electronics and nano-technologies.**

**D**iscussion aimed to determine the role and the place of science in the intellectualisation of the economy, as laid out in the draft strategy, entitled 'Science and Technology: 2018-2040', submitted for public discussion.

The Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Vladimir Gusakov, gave

examples of recent achievements, such as the portable super-computer (which has more than double the power of the initial SKIF) and the Belarusian electric vehicle (the battery for which is still being developed). He mentioned the new DNA database (passportisation) and stressed the goal of reaching 3 percent of GDP research intensity by 2040. Moreover, breakthrough scientific researches and developments should account for almost a third of the total number. He also wishes to see high-tech sectors generate 10 percent of GDP, with

another quarter hailing from innovative industrial production.

To achieve these goals, new principles of development are required, including via education and training, as President Lukashenko noted during his opening speech at the Congress. He has determined the major areas of development for Belarusian science, aiming to ensure industrial application for innovations, and focusing on sci-tech improvements for agriculture. Other priorities include IT technologies, the creation of sci-tech parks across various spheres,



# NEW REALITY

and the creation of social technology (as a result of enhanced humanitarian scientific organisations).

Regarding funding of scientific and innovative activity, investments need to be used wisely, and favourable conditions are essential, to encourage scientific creativity. Mr. Lukashenko underlined that the plan aims to improve living standards and raise our economic level, while securing long-term economic growth.

The President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, a foreign member of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Alexander Sergeev (who also took part in the work of the Congress), agrees that scientists should concentrate their efforts on economic intellectualisation.

“We’re thinking about robotics, and efficient management of production, allowing us to design and forecast the development of enterprises and whole economic branches, under ‘digital’ conditions. We should look ahead, to enable self-development, funnel-

*More than  
26,000 scientists  
and other  
specialists  
meet*



ling money into science, and encouraging it to adapt and ‘nourish’ the economy,” he explained.

Union States sci-tech programmes are already bearing fruit, with thirteen of fifty jointly implemented projects having been suggested by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Even closer co-ordination is needed to solve today’s challenges, with remote Earth sensing in the spotlight. Belarusian-Russian remote sensing apparatus is aiming at ultra-high resolution. Belarus has already agreed the technical conditions and Roscosmos Corporation should be ready to act by the end of this year. Russian cosmonautical veteran Vladimir Aksenov, who also took part in the Congress of Belarusian Scientists, has noted that deep space flight is the next stage of joint research.

By Denis **Alexandrov**

**WHAT DO GENES HIDE?**

---

**Minsk's Akademicheskaya Street is a science hub, with almost every building housing a research institution or laboratory. Wherever you go, you come across a scientist. There's even a DNA bank: the only one in the post-Soviet space.**

---

**As valuable as gold**

"The national 'gene pool store' is right under you," says Valentina Lemesh, who has a Ph.D. in biology. She works as the Director of the Institute of Genetics and Cytology at Belarus' National Academy of Sciences. Meeting on the first floor, she tells me that all genetic research relies on this database, which is being used by the 'DNA Identification' Union State programme, currently in its second year.

The programme's full title is 'Development of Innovative Geno-geographic and Genomic Technologies for Personality Identification and Individual Characteristics of a Person on the Basis of Studying Regional Gene Pools'. Each word represents painstaking work by geneticists, which begins with collection of biological material for wide-ranging analysis, determining the function and development of the human genome.

Belarusian scientists have collected an impressive number of DNA samples and biological materials in pursuit of the state programme, with each sample used repeatedly from the bank; it's efficiently and saves up to \$130 from each unit.

Over eight thousand DNA samples are stored in large freezers in a special room, at a temperature of minus 80 degrees: from people, plants, animals and micro-organisms. Among them are samples from patients with malignant and benign tumours of the lungs and bladder, and from people suffering from bronchial asthma, cardiovascular pathology and osteoporosis. In the process of research, these are compared with samples from healthy people, allowing analysis and the drawing of conclusions. In addition, the bank keeps 780 DNA samples from Belarus' indigenous people, from eighteen settlements, across six regions of the country. The biomaterial of national team athletes is also stored at the bank, which resembles a systematised library, providing scientists with great opportunities for research. Doctors from large Republican medical centres help replenish it.

"It's difficult to collect enough samples of a certain pathology in medical genetics," Ms. Lemesh stresses. "The process is strictly regulated and conducted in accordance with the principles of voluntariness and informed consent, with mandatory questionnaires. Each sample is as valuable as gold."



VITALIY PIVOVARCHIK

## Find and neutralise

Almost Br2 billion has been allocated for the 'DNA Identification' project, which is to run until 2021. Specialists are working at several scientific sites: in Minsk, Moscow, Novosibirsk and Tomsk. Results from specific methods and technologies will be used in the field of medical genetics, aiming at the prevention, diagnosis and prognosis of a wide range of diseases and to aid forensic science.

"If a person is predisposed to diabetes, osteoporosis, or cardiovascular, oncological or autoimmune diseases, we can predict their occurrence, enabling us to give treatment and arrest development," explains the Director of the Institute of Genetics and Cytology at Belarus' National Academy of Sciences. "Criminals with particular genetic diseases will have distinctive DNA, enabling their identification more easily."

This should help seriously in criminologists' gathering of evidence, with studies conducted only by laboratories with international certification. Belarus' lab is the only one in the CIS accredited to these standards.

Expensive equipment is necessary to ensure accuracy and quality of research. Belarus owns one of twenty fragmented analysers worldwide:

a compact box with touch buttons which helps greatly in investigating crime. Geno-geographic research can help identify individuals who have died in disasters and in wartime. Results can be carefully submitted into the bank gene pool, remaining valid for dozens of years.

## Testing suitability for stressful employment

This year will see some innovations implemented, including genetic testing for stress resistance and psycho-emotional characteristics. Results will then be used in employing members of emergency services, such as for the Emergency Ministry, and for aviation.

"A complex of genes is responsible for stress-resistance," explains Irma Mosse, who heads the human genetics laboratory. "A person can be healthy and physically fit to work in these areas but, in a stressful situation, will crumble. We can determine at the initial stage whether someone is suitable for certain work."

Tests will soon be available for all residents of Belarus, to create a genetic passport, showing their innate predispositions and features. Forewarned is forearmed.

By Alena **Prokina**

*Margarita Smal,  
a research officer at the  
laboratory of molecular  
genome stability,  
at the Institute  
of Genetics and Cytology,  
of the NAS of Belarus*

# WORLD SCALE SUSTAINABILITY

UN member states adopted Sustainable Development Goals until 2030: a list of seventeen goals aimed at eliminating global poverty, combating inequality and injustice, and solving problems relating to climate change. The project unites 193 states, including Belarus. In late 2017, an open parliamentary session was organised, entitled Partnership of Branches of Power as a Prerequisite for Successful Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. The Deputy Chair of the National Assembly's Council of the Republic, the National Co-ordinator for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, Marianna Shchetkina, comments upon the project.



### ***What do we need to focus on, to realise the SDGs?***

Approaches to achieving the SDGs are reflected in two major strategic documents: the National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development until 2030 (a key programme document outlining major avenues in the field of development and echoing the Agenda-2030) and the Programme of Social and Economic Development for 2016-2020. Several other documents for industries and regions are also relevant but our analysis demonstrates that they aren't covering all indicators. Our task is to develop national parameters and implement them into Republican, branch and regional programmes, at various levels.

All seventeen goals are interrelated, aiming to enhance the quality of life of our people. Ensuring public welfare economically and socially should be the basis for long-term development. No social progress is possible without economic development, and vice versa: no economic progress can be achieved without human potential development.

***Obviously, the SDGs cover more than a single state or a handful. What contribution can we make to the prosperity of peace, and partnership on the planet?***

Globalisation seriously affects social policy. Previously, social issues were the sphere of responsibility of national governments but, these days, it's hardly possible to avoid international influence. Worldwide, we're seeing the most advanced practices, principles and approaches. It's vital for our national system to apply approaches which meet public interest.

IT development is an undoubted priority but we must understand that new technologies require new skills in the labour market — such as the ability to work with large arrays of information. Accordingly, appropriate qualifications are needed. With this in mind, people of the older generation should have the opportunity to train and re-train — in order not to lose out on the labour market. Informatisation of processes and activities entails the need to move to a new type of employment, and this should be taken into account when regulating labour relations. Introducing new, modern technologies is accompanied by optimisation of figures of those involved; this is a matter of employment. Therefore, it's important to create new industries and promote development of entrepreneurship.

Achieving SDGs is an ambitious task; realisation requires more than mobilis-

ing internal resources. We support the idea of an 'integration of integrations', as proposed by the President at the UN summit in 2015, to promote multilateral initiatives to find optimal joint paths for sustainable growth, and to co-ordinate the battle against global challenges and threats.

***Some of the tasks which UN member states plan to jointly solve by 2030 are losing their relevance for us — such as reducing child mortality, and improving maternal health. Will our priorities change?***

It's true that our starting position for achieving these goals is quite high. The country has managed to achieve

***All seventeen goals are interrelated, aiming to enhance the quality of life of our people. Ensuring public welfare economically and socially should be the basis for long-term development***

the major Millennium Development Goal relating to eradicating poverty and hunger ahead of schedule, and we fully meet our food needs.

The Millennium Development Goal aimed at reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis has been achieved. Our country is also demonstrating success in achieving gender equality and education. However, much work lies ahead. Belarus is obligated to meet all seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. This is a difficult yet necessary path; nobody should be left aside.

***In February, the country will host the first regional forum gathering national co-ordinators involved in achieving the SDGs in Europe and the CIS. What do you expect from this meeting?***

We have plans to host such a regional forum for leaders of regional sustainable development initiatives in Minsk, in February 2018. We plan to gather heads responsible for co-ordinating work aimed at achieving the SDGs in Europe and Central Asia, in addition to UN officials and international experts. Participants will be able to exchange experience on sustainable development, establish partner ties between national co-ordinators and solve other issues relating to social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Meanwhile, we must understand that nobody but us will act in the interests of our country. Our work towards the SDGs requires our joint effort. We need mutual support, understanding and interaction for the sake of present and future generations.

**7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY**



**12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION**



**17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS**



# CONVINCING PROFIT CALCULATION

## Belarus joins EU initiative on climate and energy, implementing promising projects

**A**round eight thousand cities, with a combined population of over 240 million people, have voluntarily pledged to reduce harmful emissions into the atmosphere. Belarus has joined one of the largest global initiatives in the field of climate and energy, with Polotsk already seeing carbon dioxide emissions falling by 12 percent. Brest, Mogilev and fifteen other cities are also working towards similar goals and, not so long ago, twenty other towns joined the list: Bobruisk, Bykhov, Verkhnedvinsk, Vitebsk, Volkovysk, Gorodok, Dokshitsy,

Ivatsevichi, Kalinkovichi, Krasnopolie, Korma, Mosty, Mstislavl, Nesvizh, Novopolotsk, Pruzhany, Svetlogorsk, Slavgorod, Slutsk and Smorgon.

The Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy is a European Union initiative signed by over 300 countries, each promising to improve the quality of life for their citizens. The idea has received support from the Eastern Partnership region and 225 million Euros have been allocated for related projects.

Ivan Shchedrenok, a national expert of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy in Belarus, tells us, "Belarusian cities have been demonstrating interest in this initiative: in 2017 alone, the number of participants almost doubled and, in early 2018, there were forty signatories. You might wonder

why the initiative is so popular. Cities primarily gain the opportunity to draw upon global expertise in the field of climate change, learning from international experience. Secondly, donors and credit institutions pay attention to signatories, rendering financial assistance. It's important for investors that cities develop a specific business plan to reduce CO2 emissions, as this is a bright indicator for co-operation."

Polotsk was the first Belarusian city to join the EU initiative, cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 12 percent and aiming to double that figure by 2020. The Gorsvet (City Light) project is being successfully implemented, envisaging major modernisation of street lighting, at a cost of 1.3 million Euros. The initiative is much welcomed by city residents, with people replacing usual incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs, and taking steps to save water, heat and electricity.

The town of Chausy is a great example too, with its Saving Water





project gaining momentum. Costing 959,000 Euros, the smart system calculates volumes of energy and water consumed, enabling savings of 250,000 Euros annually. In addition, interactive online calculators enable residents to calculate how best to save on their utility bills.

The EU initiative is also supported by Novogrudok, which is seriously developing green energy. Not so long ago, it launched the country's most powerful windmill, and has extensive plans, with 600,000 Euros allocated to develop renewable energy sources.

Meanwhile, the regional centre of Brest is promoting green urban planning and has launched a waste-recycling plant: an excellent example of integrating national financing and European monetary assistance. Its water treatment facilities may soon be modernised.

Speaking of achievements, Mr. Shchedrenok notes that the Energy Saving programme (being realised

until 2020) is helping achieve greater energy efficiency, allowing Belarus to approach the level of most developed countries. However, some activities are yet to become part of the state programme. Participation in the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy will help implement these, and find external sources of funding.

"Progressive cities are joining the initiative, wishing to do more than the state programme envisages. For example, they're aiming to half energy consumption and generate the remainder from renewable sources by 2050. Many desire full climatic neutrality by then, producing no detri-

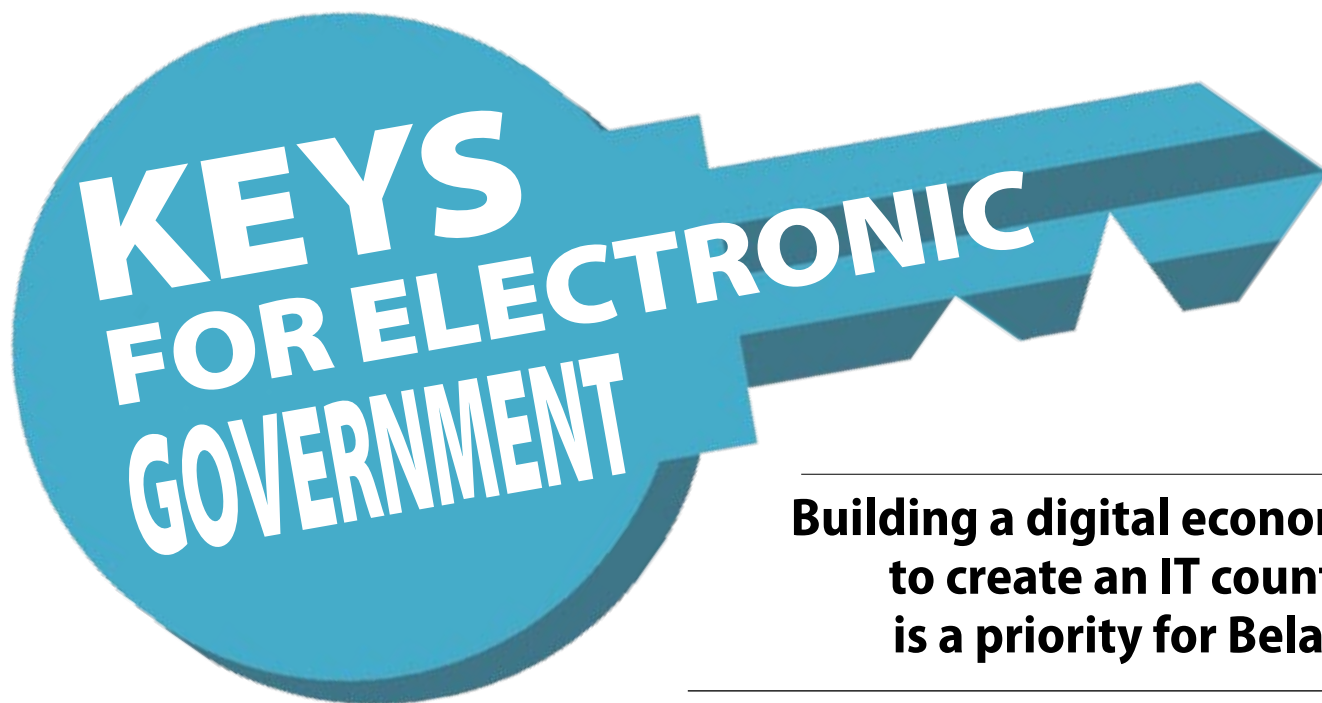
mental effect on the climate," explains Mr. Shchedrenok.

The Braslav District, in the Vitebsk Region, has already voiced this wish, striving

***Many Belarusian cities are keen on eco-initiative: Gorsvet project is being successfully realised in Polotsk, with major modernisation of street lighting costing 1 300 000 Euros***

to become the first climate neutral area in the country. To ensure this, the EU will allocate considerable financial support.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**



## **Building a digital economy, to create an IT country, is a priority for Belarus**

**T**he citizens and businesses keen to engage in straightforward dialogue with the state, via e-government, to optimise access to services, support and 'self-service'. How far along are we?

Just fifteen years ago, Belarus lacked state mechanisms of electronic services, either 'internal' between ministries, or with legal entities and individuals. Citizens were obliged to queue in person and engage in tiresome correspondence. A solution was certainly needed, inspiring the creation of a nationwide automated information system, alongside a system of inter-departmental electronic document flow for state bodies, and a state system of public keys for electronic digital signature verification.

The Operational and Analytical Centre, under the Administration of the President, launched the National Centre of Electronic Services in 2012. Online e-forms and pay-

*By 2022, at least*

**75%**

*of administrative procedures and state services should take place in electronic form*

ments are now the norm, and most 'in person' visits are only required once, with e-submission being just as valid as paper documentation. E-government has the potential to be upgraded, to adapt with the times. The Director of the National Centre of Electronic Services (nces.by), Andrey Ilyin, is convinced that we're on the threshold of global change regarding automated managerial proc-

esses. What's important is to learn from our successes, and make best use of opportunities.

"Our enterprise is an inter-departmental operator, helping legal entities and individuals receive data from state-run public authorities. On the basis of this information a list of corresponding e-services and administrative procedures is being formed," notes Mr. Ilyin.

The unified portal of e-services (portal.go.by) is an access point to various services and a source of information about administrative procedures. Using remote technology, it offers information at the touch of a button, and has answered over two million requests to date, with 100,000 queries weekly and sharp growth in users as departments shift to e-formats. For example, the Interior Ministry now allows hotels, agro-estates and individual guesthouse owners to send information on foreign guests and stateless persons via its website: a move which is proving popular with the majority.

Of course, not all services are free of charge; however, one needs to pay



for precious information and new opportunities. For example, let's take an electronic document flow. More than 8,600 participants of such flow in the country have an opportunity to send and receive 100 percent legally valid electronic documents, using a variety of software. Weekly, around 60,000 documents are in the system: up from just 300 in 2013. Of this leap, Mr. Ilyin says, "At the dawn of electronic document flow, many people didn't understand why they needed to pay for the new system, with its computer technology, and payment of engineers' labour. Now, it's far less common to hear such queries, as electronic document flow is more efficient and less expensive."

He adds, "The electronic digital signature is used by twenty informa-

tion systems, and by over 250,000 people, with that number rising by 500 to 1,500 users daily. A network of thirty-four registration centres has been established, providing the whole range of services, including release of public-key certificates and electronic digital signatures."

At present, electronic digital signature keys are primarily used by representatives of state structures, large and small businesses, and individual entrepreneurs, to solve daily production tasks. However, this electronic instrument of authentication is also gaining popularity among individuals. It's expected that it will soon be used on a mass scale, for a significant quantity of everyday tasks (where identification is required).

By Alexander **Nesterov**

## FACT

■ Every other year, the UN conducts a global survey regarding electronic government. In 2016, Belarus was

ranked 49th among 193 states for its e-government coverage (up from 64th position in 2010 and 55th place in 2014).

## TOP-5

### ELECTRONIC SERVICES ON THE UNIFIED PORTAL OF ELECTRONIC SERVICES

- Release of information about foreign citizens and persons without citizenship;
- Confirmation of subscriber information by mobile operators;
- Information on pensions;
- Entering data on the register of consumer services and trade register;
- Information on real property rights for a particular person.



# IT: PERMISSION TO TAKE OFF

**Presidential Decree 'On the Development of Digital Economy' has been signed. Its major goal is to create conditions in Belarus to attract global IT companies to open representative offices, setting up creation of their digital products. The decree is targeting investment in the future, including training IT personnel, and introduces the latest financial instruments and technologies. Leading world economies are keeping a close eye on this new phenomenon, with Belarus becoming the first country to encourage blockchain technology. VP Capital CEO Victor Prokopenya shares his thoughts on whether it will be possible to make payments in cryptocurrencies in Belarus and whether we should be worried that IT specialist will come to dominate the labour market.**

*After your recent meeting with the President, you wrote on your Facebook page that the document would be adopted in 'super-liberal form', and listed the major changes: using blockchain, the 100 percent absence of bureaucracy, any product business models, and freedom in hiring foreign specialists. Why are these goals important? What will fundamentally change?*

Primarily, our country is creating a legal environment for the use of blockchain technologies. This technology can be compared with the development of the Internet in the 1990s. The world network transformed many professional

spheres and the same will happen to blockchain. It's important that our country keeps pace with the latest trends.

The decree frees HTP residents from many bureaucratic problems, that prevent the development of product models in the IT sphere. For example, to conclude a contract with a non-resident, it was necessary to issue papers signed by both parties and each operation had to be confirmed with primary accounting documents (also signed by two parties). The progressive world operates differently, with transactions concluded electronically. We don't send paper documents from one country to another.

Those restrictions haven't seriously hampered large companies, since they can always hire more accountants and lawyers to register papers, or restructure their businesses. IT de-bureaucratization helps small companies, start-ups and talented young people, since they can create and develop their product model. It's important for these people to concentrate on their product.

***Is there a danger of our better trained IT specialists being poached to work abroad, or will we be able to keep them in Belarus, working for global companies based locally?***

It will be worse if they aren't taught and they stay here. Don't worry, it's a joke. IT specialists are never tied to one location. It's becoming unprofitable to entice IT employees or even teams of workers from Belarus. Any transfer brings financial obligations so the trend is unlikely to become popular. Meanwhile, the flow of high-quality specialists between companies usually enhances the level of personnel competence, and should be welcomed. There are many cases of intelligent people, having worked for the world's top IT companies, returning to our country to launch projects.

***Can you explain the elements of British law being introduced into our new legislation?***

International investment follows certain rules, with English law as the golden standard. These rules regulate the rights and responsibilities of investors. In providing certain rights and obligations in their shareholder agreements, they must fulfil them.

The norms of Belarusian law are applied in our country but are little known to investors and any uncertainty increases risk. The decree enables investors to understand that their money is safe, protected by law, making our economy more attractive to large investors.

***During the recent meeting, the President requested that state interests be considered alongside profits. Does this mean that IT companies will receive some additional social obligations? Might this deter businesses?***

I think discussion has been on ensuring that the High-Tech Park doesn't operate in isolation from the rest of the country or the economy (rather than on additional obligations that might scare away businesses). It's important to support education in schools and universities. Olympiads should be organised, to support talented young people, and we need computer classes in rural areas. In short, the IT industry should be focused on business development not only in the short term but in the long term.

***Do you think crypto-currencies will ever be used for making payments in Belarus? Has the National Bank's***

***position been taken into account in this respect? Its Chairman of the Board, Pavel Kallaur, recently stated that Belarus should use only one legal means of payment: our Rouble...***

Crypto-currency is not recognised as a means of payment. According to our legislation, the Belarusian Rouble is the means of payment in the country. The decree changes nothing.

***Is there any reason to create our own local crypto-currencies? After all, there are precedents in neighbouring countries: i.e. the crypto-Taler.***

This will be guided by the market.

***Mining will be permitted. How will digital currency mining be regulated?***

Mining is an important part of blockchain infrastructure, so nuances of regulation are overseen by the decree. Individuals and residents of the High-Tech Park will be allowed to mine. Actually, the decree gives the green light to mining and miners.

***As you've many times stated, the decree offers more than the opportunity to make money; it helps young people achieve their dreams, helping them become IT specialists, earning a good wage, and using their talent.***

In training to become a programmer, people must demonstrate many talents, and embrace various skills. Meanwhile, they're sup-

***IT de-bureaucratization helps small companies, start-ups and talented young people, since they can create and develop their product model***



Victor Prokopenya

ported by a whole team of others: business analysts, designers, marketers and translators. IT creates additional jobs for non-IT people.

***Should people of other professions make time for IT education?***

We should always keep learning. It's no longer true that you train for a single profession and work there your whole life. You have to keep learning and retraining, ensuring you have mastery of English, the basics of programming, marketing and so on. Knowledge is available as never before but motivation is essential.

By Vladislav Kuletsky

# VITAL NOT TO LOSE TIME



**We might call July 22nd, 2017 the birthday of domestic electric car building**

**2017** was a landmark for the Belarusian scientific sphere, headlined by the Year of Science welcoming several significant events. Among them was the launch of a domestically assembled prototype electric vehicle. Although industrial production is some way off, engineers are already planning a version that can drive unmanned, as Oleg Yelovoy, the Deputy Director General

for Research and Innovative Activity at the United Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences, tells us.

### **From site to quarry**

*Mr. Yelovoy, unmanned taxis are now more common, such as in Japan, the USA and the United Arab Emirates. May we soon see unmanned vehicles in Belarus?*



We've begun developing unmanned vehicles with cargo cars. It's a topical issue and, historically, our country has specialised in production of large-size equipment, with great success. It might

Experimental electric car uses this domestically produced battery

sound strange, but cargo transport is simpler to control unmanned: quarry dump trucks, which have strict routes and need to perform specific tasks. These vehicles need drivers least of all. Of course, unmanned vehicles are expensive but costs are well-founded since they preclude human error, and save on wages for drivers. It's sufficient to employ a single specialist to supervise the operation of several vehicles, from the office. The leading global companies — like Komatsu — are moving in this direction. We hope our co-operation with BelAZ will result in a robotic quarry dump truck; we've begun along this path already.

***Probably, there will be more than dump trucks without drivers...***

The buggies servicing plant territories are another promising avenue for unmanned vehicles, transporting spare parts and equipment; they'll be like little warehouse cars, which we already use (though these are larger). Of course, we also view passenger cars as a possibility; not long ago, our country became a state of light car industry.

***How much time will it take to develop our own unmanned car? What's hindering the process?***

If we gain a customer, our scientists will need 18 months to two years to develop a prototype. However, there's a more important issue, as voiced by the President during the 2nd Congress of Scientists: the susceptibility of the industry. Plants need to be ready and adaptable. Innovation requires not only courage but, often, the updating of production equipment, technical processes, technologies and the line. No facility is ready for this. I'm convinced that, if an enterprise produces less than a third of new equipment in its total range, it will sooner or later lose its market position. German automakers, for example, update their range by 40 percent every two years. Japanese do the same. We're encouraging our car-making industry to follow the same example. However, there are some problems. Primarily, we lack highly professional engineers and

***Of course, among unmanned vehicles, we also view passenger cars as a possibility; not long ago, our country became a state of light car industry***

are seriously technologically backward. Sadly, we often have to replace the important 'designer-technologist-researcher'scheme, while adjusting production.

### **Show me your face**

***We might call July 22nd, 2017 the birthday of domestic electric car building. Last August, we saw a pilot sample with our own eyes. Some even managed to drive it. However, it's been many times said: our electric car will be different. Can you explain?***

We're considering two variants of an electric vehicle — as discussed at the August meeting with the President. One is low-budget: i.e. a buggy for gardens and parks. Over time, an inexpensive city car can be developed on its basis — for example, for mail, delivery and taxi services. It might even become a service car for organisations. The first prototypes are planned for use in the National Academy of Sciences' Botanical Garden, which we neighbour. We'll work out technical solutions relating to operational needs, including battery charging. We'll be able to realise two ideas at the same time: an unmanned electric car moving through the park along a given route, completely Belarusian-made, assembled at our Institute; and a prototype. We have the premises and necessary tools. Moreover, in line with our action plan in the field of electric car building (approved by the Government), we've created the Intellectual Electric Transport cluster, uniting nineteen participants: scientific institutions, enterprises (including private), universities (like the Belarusian National Technical University and the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics) and their technological parks. According to our forecasts,

### **REFERENCE**

#### **Vladimir Gusakov, Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus:**

*The Year of Science was rich in innovations. Among the most significant, as mentioned at the 2nd Congress of Scientists, was the development of a portable supercomputer, that performs up to 20 trillion operations per second. In addition, we now have a national system for identification, labelling and tracking goods and vehicles, that avoids the falsification of goods. We've created a series of highly effective medicines, new varieties of agricultural plants, machines for the agro-industrial complex, and much more.*

*One of the most significant moments for mechanical engineering was the development of an electric vehicle for personal use, in addition to work on our own batteries. We're constantly working on improving our electric vehicle and I think that, in the near future, we'll be able to position it within our integrated development.*





production should launch by 2019 and we'll be able to present our prototypes.

***Is there a second proposal to make e-cars at BelGee Plant — as mentioned earlier?***

The enterprise is our partner and is meeting us halfway. We'll receive a crossover prototype or, even, a model from the Geely electric car range. Jointly with the Industry Ministry, we're preparing a road map for the project, based on suggestions by the company's management, BelGee, the National Academy of Sciences and the Industry Ministry. Electric car building offers a great opportunity, particularly at European level. According to EAEU requirements, we're ready for 30 percent localisation of production of electric car components. Greater figures are only a matter of time.

We aren't afraid of revamping petrol-fuelled cars, and already have experience. Our experimental electric vehicle has been registered with the traffic police and we sometimes use it on city routes. As regards recharging, we use Vitebsk's Vityaz Plant. Everything is ready for us to develop electric car infrastructure. Upon the President's demand, a programme of electric transport development is being prepared. A draft law is ready, envisaging measures to stimulate demand for electric cars, to help promote the electric car industry.



**Oleg Yelovoy:**  
***'One of the variants of electric car manufacture is, e.g. a buggy for gardens and parks'***

***Tell us more about the batteries for electric cars. How heavy are they, and how quickly do they charge?***

We're developing electric accumulators (the most expensive component of an electric car) so there's no need for lithium-ion technologies, which are very dirty and quite expensive, as they require cobalt. There aren't many deposits globally and those countries which possess cobalt are already planning to raise prices. We've chosen another path. A sample of graphene-like material will soon be ready and we're making a cell to rival lithium-ion in its characteristics. Its production is simpler, cleaner and cheaper, being lighter, and it's more reliable, in all weathers and temperatures. It's not explosive either. We can produce batteries of the required capacity and power, evenly distributing graphene sheets in cells along the body of an electric car. We're now making a prototype at one of the academic organisations of the Scientific-Practical Materials Research Centre. Although the first series of our electric cars will probably use traditional lithium drives and super-condensers, in time, we'll be testing and mastering graphene.

Time is of the essence for all our projects, and rely on the support of industry. We need to ensure high added value in high-tech products.

By Vera **Arteaga**

# GREAT STONE SETS AN EXAMPLE

**Central avenues at Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park (now under construction) are named Minsky and Pekinsky. We all know that seeing is better than hearing a hundred times, so we set off to view the Great Stone Park for ourselves.**



ALEXANDER KUSHNER

**2017** has been a breakthrough year, with the number of residents rising from just eight in December 2016 to twenty-three by late 2017. Importantly, these aren't newcomers but strong, branded companies: from China, Russia, Lithuania, Austria, Germany and the United States.

An increasing number of people are eager to join the Park, with at least a hundred world corporations expected to be registered by late 2020, bringing in projects worth hundreds of millions of Dollars.

Chatting with businessmen and investors, it's clear that people have long-term, serious intentions, thanks to the state's excellent terms: corporations are exempt from tax on land and real estate, and pay no profit tax for the first ten years, while paying just 9 percent income tax. Meanwhile, all imported materials and equipment are completely

exempt from customs duties and from value-added tax.

The Great Stone has received guarantees for many years to come so it's hardly surprising that many businessmen are eager to gain a foothold there. Its doors are open only to innovative, knowledge-intensive industries that will bring billions of Dollars of export earnings to the country. One such is a Park pioneer: the commercial giant China Merchants Group, which boasts one trillion Dollars in capital and the world's largest merchant fleet. CITIC is soon to join, assembling high-tech robotic equipment for rescue operations, while German Dieffenbacher is also ready to take residency, producing composite materials (stronger than traditional metals and alloys in terms of their mechanical properties, and weighing less). In spring, production of super-condensers for electric buses will be launched and the Americans will start producing lasers. Meanwhile, a Lithuanian company will be

making environmentally-friendly packaging, and Chinese investors are joining MAZ in producing internal combustion engines for heavy equipment. An agreement has also been reached with Russian partners to grow artificial sapphires: as used in microelectronics, optics, medicine and laser technologies.

A package of documents on business liberalisation, including a decree on developing our digital economy — adopted in late 2017 — creates additional advantages for attracting technology, capital and, most importantly, smart and talented people from all over the world. The experience of the Chinese-Belarusian Park makes it possible to better investigate this work. For example, founders, shareholders and investors of the Great Stone Park can now work for 180 days in Belarus without visas. Why not to apply this attractive norm Belarus-wide, for all major investment projects? It's an interesting topic for discussion.

By Yevgeny **Kononovich**

# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM REFORM?

**From January, men in Belarus won't receive their pension until the age of 61, while women may claim theirs at 56**

## Three years within six

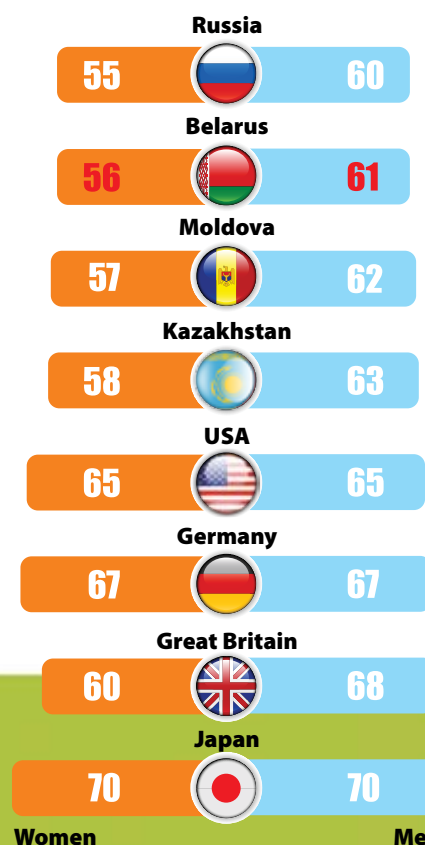
Last year, due to demographic pressures, the retirement age was raised for Belarusian citizens. The governmental initiative may not be popular, but a gradual increase using the 'additional three years within six years' formula is inevitable.

Belarus has about one pensioner for every two people working, and the nation is only becoming older; the number of those contributing taxes is falling while the number receiving a pension is increasing.

The reform has been extended for five years. From January 1st, 2017, the retirement age for men became 60.5 years, and



## Retirement age in various countries of the world



NADEZHDA PONKRATOVA

that for women became 55.5 years. The changes affect around 100,000 people.

In January 2018, the bar is raised by a further six months until, by 2022, men will retire at 63, and women at 58. Belarus suffers from a gender misbalance, as in many other countries, with women receiving pensions for more years than men. On average, women tend to draw their pension for twenty-five years, against just over fifteen years for men.

What does the government expect from the reform? Economists have calculated the benefits, saying that the increase in pension age will reduce the deficit of funds in the State Non-budgetary Fund of Social Protection, from which pensions are paid. It will also increase the number of those employed. According to experts, later retirement age should raise GDP by more than 1 percent, from 2019.

### Size depends on merit

The size of Belarusian pension received depends on two major parameters: job tenure and the size of salary, from which insurance contributions have been paid. The minimum job tenure for women is twenty years while that for men is twenty-five years.

Recently, deputies at the House of Representatives adopted (at first reading) amendments to the law on pension provision, reducing job tenure for some categories of citizens by up to ten years (with payment of insurance contributions). Those who have served in the army for at least ten years but lack a military pension are now eligible, as are those who have cared for a group one disabled person or a disabled child, or someone elderly.

Pensions are set at approximately 55 percent of the average salary. Those lacking the necessary job tenure may receive a social pension, reflecting the minimum living wage (currently, about Br200 or \$100 monthly).

Those working past their obligatory years will receive an additional bonus of an extra 6 percent for each additional year. State awards will also be taken into account. According to statistics, more than 25 percent of Belarusians of retirement age continue working.

Pensions in Belarus are paid from the State Non-budgetary Fund of Social Protection, which also pays sick certificates and other social allowances. Each worker deducts 1 percent from their accrued salary to this fund and most employers make pension contributions of 29 percent, in addition to 6 percent as insurance contribution.

"Pensions and allowances are always paid on time, though the Fund does have difficulties," explains the Finance Ministry of Belarus. "These are connected with falling numbers of employed in comparison with pensioners, as well as being linked to overdue payments. From January to September, contributions into the fund totalled about Br9 billion (270 billion Russian Roubles) while payments from the fund stood at Br62 million more."

By German **Moskalenko**

## ► DASHA IS GREAT

**In late 2017, South African Johannesburg hosted the finals of the pageant to find the most beautiful married women on the planet, gathering thirty-five women from around the globe**

Unlike most beauty contests, Mrs. World unites women who have families and children, who have realised themselves professionally and can offer the world their own social project. Darya Reut is a co-owner of the 'My Muse Vintage' brand, the editor of 'Famous' magazine and mother to Mark, aged four. Beauties appeared in dresses and bath-

ing suits, as well as on the catwalk, with Darya impressing everyone with her unusual coat, featuring 'My Blue-Eyed Belarus' as the pattern. She joined eleven others in the final round, before being named Second Runner-Up. The crown went to Hong Kong's Alice Lee Giannetta, while Jennifer Miranda, from Costa Rica, was named First Runner-Up.

"I'm so happy! I'm madly happy

and I feel a sense of accomplishment," declared Darya, full of emotion after the pageant. "The competition was tough, especially as many have been preparing for the contest for the past year, while I only learnt that I'd be taking part about 1.5 months beforehand. The schedule was very tough, with literally every minute busy. I only slept for four or five hours each night."

Darya admits that her English-language interview was the biggest challenge. "Half of your success depends on it, as the judges ask questions to learn more about your personality. I know English quite well but English was the native language for many of the entrants, so it was much easier for them to speak. However, apparently, I succeeded," she adds.

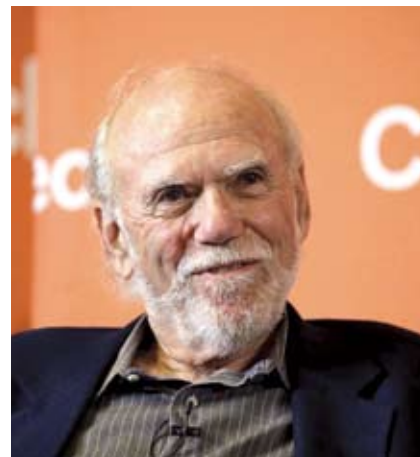
Darya has a diploma in teaching Russian and Belarusian languages and literature, and is fond of theatre and sports. She loves to travel and cook. Last year, she took part in a social project to help refugee-families from Afghanistan and Ukraine integrate (run by the UNHCR office) at the Taste of Minsk Festival.



Darya Reut — Second Runner-Up at Mrs World-2017

# BARRY BELONGS TO US

American laureate of the Nobel Prize,  
physicist Barish has Belarusian roots



NADEZHDA PONKRATOVA

**N**ot long ago, the world community followed the news from Stockholm, where 2017 Nobel Prize laureates were announced. In the field of physics, the committee acknowledged the breakthrough studies of American scientists Kip Thorne, Rainer Weiss and Barry Barish, who've proven the existence of gravitational waves, as predicted by Einstein.

Interestingly, Barry Barish's ancestors were Jewish emigrants who left for America from Western Belarus (in the late 19th-early 20th century, from today's Grodno and Vitebsk regions), as he has disclosed in interviews. Mr. Barish was born in the American state of Nebraska, in 1936. His parents were born and met on the West Coast of the United States. "We lived in the city of Omaha until I was nine and then, right after World War II, we moved to Los Angeles," the scientist tells us.

Mr. Barish's passion for science was nurtured by his parents, who were keen to see their children gain a good education. Barry's mother was self-educated and, after only after her death, did the future Nobel laureate learn that she had successfully passed college exams. Sadly, her dream of higher education didn't materialise as her parents insisted that she devote her time exclusively to her family.

Mr. Barish has been fond of mathematics since childhood, and entered the University of California to become an engineer. However, he became fascinated by physics, achieving unprecedented heights.

By Alena **Prokina**

***P.S.** In 106 years of the Nobel Prize's existence, forty-three laureates born in the Russian Empire and the USSR have received the honour. A significant number have Russian and Belarusian roots, being either born there or their ancestors having emigrated from these territories. Even if the laureate is an American passport holder, they may hail from Belarus.*

## REFERENCE

### Simon Kuznets

Pinsk-born Simon received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1971. He introduced the term 'gross national product' into circulation, which is now used as the main indicator of national financial activity. He also explained the role of 'human capital'. Simon moved to the USA in 1922.



### Menachem Begin

He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978. Born in Brest-Litovsk (modern Brest), Menachem graduated from the Jewish religious school and the state grammar school. He then moved to Israel with his family, fighting for the independence of Israel and winning the presidential election as a result. A year after his appointment, he was awarded a prize for initiating negotiations with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. As a result of the Camp David agreements, it became possible to avoid major military conflict and return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

### Shimon Peres

The former president of Israel and a Nobel Peace Prize winner (1994), Shimon was born in the Minsk Region's Volozhin District. His mother, Rosa Cohen, was born and lived for a long time in Mogilev. When Shimon turned 11, his family moved to Palestine and Mr. Peres grew up in Tel Aviv. In 1941, all his relatives remaining in Belarus were killed by German Fascists in the village of Vishnevo. Mr. Peres has visited the village twice. The Nobel Committee has praised his efforts to achieve peaceful settlement of the Middle Eastern conflict.

### Svetlana Alexievich

Known for writing 'Second Hand Time', 'Chernobyl Prayer', 'War Doesn't Have a Woman's Face', among other books, Svetlana was awarded in 2015 for her 'for many-voiced creativity — a monument to suffering and courage in our time'. Ms. Alexievich has become the first in the history of sovereign Belarus to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature (and the first Russian-speaking writer of the past thirty years). Svetlana was born in Ukraine but later moved to Minsk with her family. She lived in Western Europe for over a decade but, in 2013, returned to Belarus.

### Zhores Alferov

Although the famous Soviet scientist lives and works in Russia, he was born in the Vitebsk Region and graduated from a Minsk school with a gold medal. Mr. Alferov received his higher education and doctoral degree in physical and mathematical sciences in Russia. He was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2000 for the development of semiconductor hetero-structures, creating fast opto- and microelectronic components ensuring a breakthrough in microelectronics.

### Leonid Kantorovich

He received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1975. His father comes from the village of Nadneman, in the Minsk Region, while his mother is a native Minsker. Leonid was born in Petersburg and studied, worked and lived his whole life in Russia. He was awarded for his 'contribution to the theory of optimal allocation of resources'.



# COME

# AND YOU'LL BE WELCOMED

**Tourism with 'Belarusian accent' opens interesting opportunities**

**T**he country's tourism industry offers increasingly diverse and interesting options for holidaymakers. Those wishing to escape city noise are invited to hos-

pitable agro-mansions and cosy sanatoriums surrounded by forests. Gastronomic tours are an ideal option for gourmets, who can enjoy the delights of national cuisine, while those fond of adventure can try kayaking along fast-flowing rivers.

Unsurprisingly, when choosing a holiday destination, Russians most often turn to Belarus, falling in love with our deep forests, where they can hunt, and our lakes, where they can fish. Some prefer to visit Belarus with snowboards and skis.

## **Following the scent of pancakes**

Around 2,300 Belarusian agro-mansions welcome over 300,000 guests annually; interestingly, our country won first place for its Russian-language rating, as surveyed by the National Geographic Traveller Awards, in the 'Agrotourism' category, ahead of France and Italy: both experts in organising rural holidaying.

It's hard to believe but agro-ecotourism only appeared in Belarus fifteen years ago. Certainly, plenty of people enjoy holidaying in the countryside and many village guesthouses have banded together, in clusters, to offer tourists a range of entertainment and activities, from master classes in crafts and cooking to gastronomic tours and sporting and cultural activities. There's no doubt that these holidays have a strong Belarusian flavour.

Surprises for guests vary. In the Dzerzhinsky District, holidaymakers are invited to navigate a corn labyrinth, while the Cherven District proposes gathering blueberries. Hosts in the Brest District invite their

TATIANA KONDRATEVA



TATIANA KONDRATIEVA

guests to hike botanical-routes, and some organise open air shows or create crafts. Others entertain tourists with batleika (Belarusian folk puppet theatre). Gastronomic festivals are also popular, such as Dranik Fest and Motol Delicacies.

Interestingly, most estates are situated in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions: each has about six hundred. Perhaps it's not surprising, since they boast the Narochansky and Braslav Lakes national parks, with their beautiful lakes. Only half the number of guesthouses are registered in the Brest and Grodno regions, while the Gomel Region is just beginning to develop this sphere.

Interest in such holidays is likely to grow. Last autumn, the President signed a decree 'On Developing Agroecotourism' (which came into force on January 1st, 2018), significantly simplifying working conditions in the countryside, while expanding opportunities. In particular, it legalises guest houses and allows homesteads to host banquets and weddings.

## REFERENCE

■ In Grodno, tourists are invited to visit locations in which their favourite films have been shot: over five dozen films have been made around the city, with special information stands and thematic sculptures. The project will fully launch in April, but the first stand is already installed, in Kurchatov Street, where legendary 'Belye Rosy' was shot in 1984, on the territory of the former village of Devyatovka.

## Active leisure: skis and kayaks

Plenty of travellers come to Belarus for adventure, with our ski resorts being a classic choice. We may lack mountains but it's no obstacle for winter holidaymakers. The Solnechnaya Dolina (Sun Valley) resort, in Minsk, offers skiing, skating and snowboarding, while major slopes are only a few dozen kilometres from the capital: Silichi, Logoisk and Raubichi. Our 'Belarusian Switzerland' includes the leisure park of Yakutskie Gory (Yakut Mountains), situated on the highest point of Belarus: Dzerzhinskaya Hill.

Our rivers are also a source of excitement, with kayaking growing in popularity. Traditionally offered from May to September, the Polesie wilderness is a wonderful destination for those with experience. Meanwhile, novices can try their hand on easier waters, within the city of Minsk. You can even take a river cruise along the Pripyat; the first passengers tried out the route last April, travelling from Brest to Mozyr.

By Olga Pasiyak

## ► UNDER A SHARED SKY

**Festival in Grodno to bring together around 2,000 representatives of various national cultures**

**R**epresentatives of 141 nationalities live in our country, in concord and understanding. In order to unite diasporas, preserve their national identity and facilitate mutual understanding and enrichment of cultures, every other year, Grodno hosts the Republican Festival of National Cultures. This year, it will take place on June 1st and 2nd, when Grodno's streets will be filled with bright colours and the flavours of various nations.

It's still several months before the great event but most preparations have been conducted. Selection rounds have taken place across all regions, with diasporas demonstrating their cultural traditions, history, customs, decorative-and-applied arts and national cuisine.

"In December, the best groups performed in the Main Hall of the Belarusian State Philharmonic at the solemn opening of the festival," notes the Director of the Republican Centre of National Cultures, Olga Antonenko. "The concert featured more than 300 people, including representatives of Armenian, Georgian, Korean, Gypsy, Jewish, Moldovan, Chuvashian, Tatar-Bashkir, Venezuelan and other national cultures. Delegations demonstrating their historical homeland most vividly are invited to the festival in Grodno. Usually around 2,000 people take part in the final stage of the forum. In 2016, the festival was attended by around forty nationalities and, this year, we hope that the number will increase. We've noticed interesting representatives from the South African Republic, China and elsewhere during selection rounds."

# DUKE'S RUINS REVIVED

**A pearl of Belarusian architecture — Kossovo Castle — has opened to visitors, being completely restored within five years**

## **Along the road made of ancient brick**

Until recently, driving along the picturesque hill, surrounded by pine forest, it was difficult to guess that a legendary castle used to stand there. Only its walls survived, and in poor condition.

Meanwhile, thousands of tourists have arrived in recent years at Brest Region's Kossovo to simply see the historical ruins. Travellers were walking along duke's ruins, imagining how everything was organised here in ancient time.

In 2008, a decision was made to restore one of the most mysterious buildings of Belarus. The park territory was beautified and now the castle is seen from afar in all its grandeur.

"In order to conduct restoration rather than to simply build 'something new' we searched for old bricks and used them in our work," notes the Director of Brestrestavratsiya, Vladimir Kazakov. "We have also conducted chemical research to reproduce brickwork mortar."

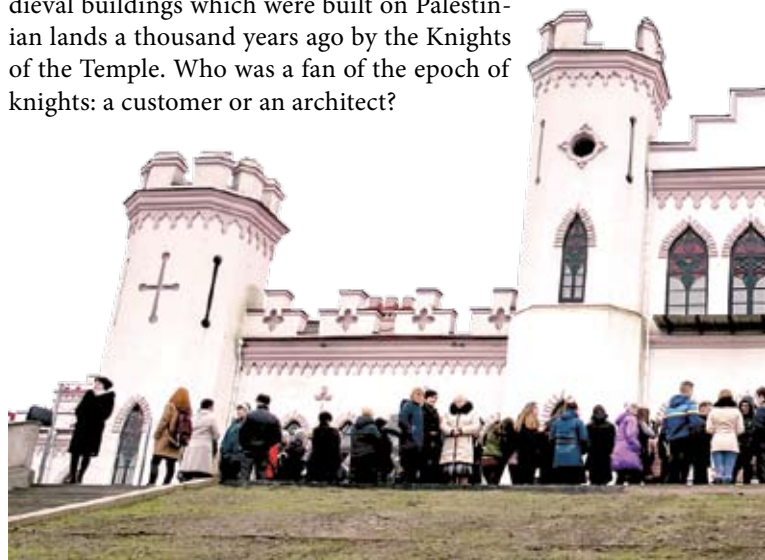
At present, guests of the castle are shown only several halls and they were opened during the stage of draft plastering. At the same time, works are being conducted over decorative finishing of walls 'a-la Marconi'. This Italian painter used to create castle interiors here. The castle quickly became one of the most visited sites of the region.



BELTA

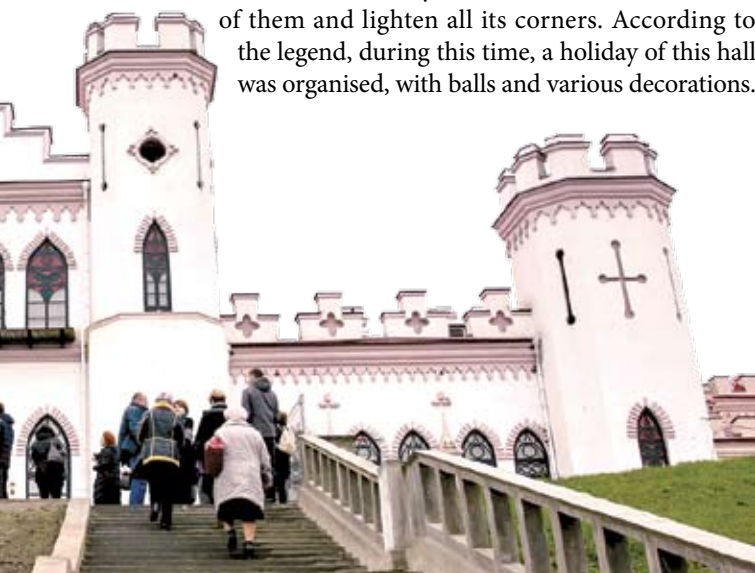
## **Twelve towers-months**

There're many white spots in the castle's history. Its owner Duke Pustowski ordered famous Polish architect to build it in the Neogothic style. However, through peculiar 'sharp' details we can vividly see the features of Middle Eastern medieval buildings which were built on Palestinian lands a thousand years ago by the Knights of the Temple. Who was a fan of the epoch of knights: a customer or an architect?





The castle once boasted twelve towers, with 365 battlements — resembling a stone calendar. The central bastions were significantly larger and stronger, symbolising warm and ‘bread’ months: May, June, July and August. In total, there’re 132 halls in the castle. Moreover, according to the architect’s idea, at least twice a year the Sun should be in each of them and lighten all its corners. According to the legend, during this time, a holiday of this hall was organised, with balls and various decorations.


BELTA

## MYSTERIES AND LEGENDS

- Launching the construction of the Kossovo Palace in 1838, Duke Wandalin Pusłowski decided to outmatch the residences of the Radziwills, Sapegi and other magnates of the Rzecz Pospolita.
- What a castle can there be without legends? They say that at nights the castle was protected by a lion who lived in the winter garden. However, local residents preferred to keep away from the duke’s possessions even in daytime.
- There’s also a story about the underground tunnel. They say that it used to connect the Kossovo Castle and the Ruzhany Castle of the Sapegi family, which is located more than 12km away. They say that it was big, enabling even a horse-driven cart to move there. However, the tunnel hasn’t been found so far.
- The castle is also said to have its own ghost — the phantom of Duchess Pusłowskaja, eternally displeased by the dissolute behaviour of her son, Leon, who finally gambled away the castle. They say that guests too drunk or arrogant see the ghost of the Black Lady, who remains angry with gambling drinkers.

All rooms have their own names: the White Hall, the Pink Hall... For example, only men were allowed to the Black Hall which housed a casino. The Great Hall has a glass floor where previously a huge aquarium was situated, with various fish varieties and sea animals. Those who first came into this hall, were very frightened.

The first stage of reconstruction has finished. They also promise to restore the winter garden and a park with fountains. There’re also plans to open several hotel rooms and a restaurant. Using the experience of Nesvizh and Mir castles, it’s believed that on-site registration of newly-weds with a costume ball and a photo shoot will become a popular service.

\* \* \*

*The Pusłowski family is a noble family of Rzecz Pospolita and the Russian Empire. Wojciech Pusłowski was a father of Wandalin, an industrialist, a leader of the nobility of the Slonim District. He owned the Kossovo settlement and other places in the Brest Region. Until present times the Kossovo Castle, a spirit factory and a front gate have preserved in the village of Peski of the Bereza District, as did Catholic churches and chapels. It was at Pusłowski’s manufactures that a steaming machine was first used in the Russian Empire.*

By German **Moskalenko**

# A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION, OR FIVE REASONS TO VISIT MYADEL



---

**Town near famous Lake Naroch known since 14th century. In 1324, its fortress was attacked by Teutonic knights, but the siege was broken, protected by unknown forces.**

---

## **Finding idol's gold**

The castle was destroyed only four centuries later by the Swedes, during the North War. Mystery surrounds the ruins, where archaeologists have found the foundations of the fortress, with a palace and three towers. According to legend, a huge golden idol was kept there, with precious stones for its eyes almost as big as fists. It protected the citadel from enemies and many believe that the precious statue remains in the castle's tunnels. Some even come to search for it. The Myadel District is an

embodiment of ancient and contemporary history.

Another tourist attraction is Nanosy-Novoselie agro-estate, where an ancient windmill still operates. There's also a unique museum of samovars, many of which have appeared as props in films and have toured Russia and further abroad.

## **Learning the Nara legend**

Belarus is 'blue-eyed', being blessed with lakes. The largest 'diamond' is located in the Myadel District — Lake Naroch, created during the ice age.

It's said that, long ago, a forester lived there with his beautiful daughter, Nara, who was in love with a bold young man. He gave her a small mirror and told her to take care of it, explaining that it was magical, made from spring grains and able to show the future.

On looking into it, she saw only a lake and a gull above the waves, and had no idea what to make of the image. Soon after, a local duke, having seen her beauty, ordered his servant to seize the girl. Nara's young man helped her to escape, hiding her out of sight. He led the chase to follow him, and was killed. Learning



BELTA

*The banks of Lake Naroch are perfect for relaxing while the area is a true paradise for fishing, hunting and those wishing to sample local delicacies*

### Guessing the mystery of the dead lake

Israel has the Dead Sea, and Golubye Oзера, inside Narochansky National Park, not far from Myadel, has something similar. It's the most mysterious of Belarus' lakes, thought to be home to malevolent water spirits, mermaids, witches and wood sprites, who inhabit its deep waters and its banks. It doesn't have any fish and no plants flourish on the surface, so it's called dead. However, scientists have discovered that a huge cloud of hydrogen sulphide lies on the bottom, preventing life from developing. This natural complex has several unique lakes, each with its own colour of water, from bright blue to black. With few settlements nearby, its natural beauty remains untouched, surrounded

by high hills, virgin forests and plentiful rivers and forest springs!

### Investigating WWI pillboxes

The banks of the legendary Myadel lakes have seen many battles, with the Mongol-Tatars, Swedes, French and Germans. One of the bloodiest fights took place during WWI, when the Myadel area was occupied by Germany. In March 1916, Russian troops began an attack, known as 'Operation Narochanskaya', to help Frenchmen bleeding to death near Verdun. However, the Germans released toxic gases and the attack stalled. Within ten days, around 80,000 Russian soldiers and around 40,000 Germans had been killed. Military history experts are still investigating the concrete pillboxes which remain from that time.

of his death, Nara dropped the mirror in despair and a lake appeared where the largest of the silver fragments fell. Meanwhile, the young girl turned into a gull, flying over the water of Lake Naroch, calling ever for her beloved.

### Tasting smoke-dried eel

The banks of Lake Naroch are perfect for relaxing. Before the Great Patriotic War, it was a resort for the nobility from Warsaw and Vilnius. After the war, sanatoriums and health resorts began to appear. Now, dozens operate year-round, offering the most contemporary treatments, helping people to rest and recuperate. The most famous sanatoriums are Belaya Rus, Naroch, Sosny, Priozerny and Sputnik.

The area is a paradise for fishing, hunting and for those wishing to sample local delicacies; mouth-watering smoked and dried eel is a true delight, although it's forbidden to fish for it on Lake Naroch.



BELTA

# LONGED-FOR EVENT

## Minsk's Chizhovka-Arena recently hosted the 14th Christmas Amateur Ice Hockey Tournament for the Prize of the President of Belarus

**T**his year's tournament was unusual, as the President stressed, speaking at the opening ceremony, "The joint organisation of the Christmas tournament and the Golden Puck Republican competition has become a true present for us all. This is a double holiday for young ice hockey fans, demonstrating their best sporting qualities and determination to win, while enjoying the mastery of experienced players. The Christmas tournament in Minsk annually gathers our good friends and we especially welcome the Chinese team, participating for the first time."

Simultaneously with the Christmas tournament, young ice-hockey players also began their matches. Uniting the competitions of star veterans and those of the Golden Puck children's tournament, the organisers were pursuing several goals. Firstly, such a combination is a perfect opportunity to conduct a continuous ice hockey festival while giving youngsters from across the regions the opportunity to see true hockey stars on the ice. The move also allowed full use of sports complex facilities, since Chizhovka-Arena will soon host the European Games and the IIHF World Championships, promoting an atmosphere of true diplomacy and amateur sporting prowess.

The Christmas tournament (unofficially called the World Amateur Championship), featured many previously famous players, allowing them the chance to meet up with old 'comrades' and coaches. Besides matches, they enjoyed excursions, showing international players the beauties of Belarus: another 'brick' in building the authority of Belarusian ice hockey at an international level.

Perhaps, Minsk's warm welcome will help us in being named to host the World Championship matches in 2021 (for the second time in eight years). The recent delegation was rich





BELTA

in interesting guests, with the team from the Balkans including six heads of ice hockey departments. Some failed to appear on the ice: the Head of the Slovenian Ice Hockey Federation, Matjaž Rakovec, participated in the official ceremony only. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Israeli and the Bulgarian teams, Evgeny Gusin and Martin Milanov, took to the ice. The IIHF Youth and Junior Development Committee members, Petr Briza and Aku Nieminen, came to Minsk for a workshop, while the Chinese were responsible for the major intrigue.

The Christmas tournament has featured unusual teams in the past. Not long ago, fans greeted with surprise representatives of the United Arab Emirates: last January, they captured bronze in Minsk. The Chinese team seemed exotic five years ago but is now demonstrating a serious attitude. Having received the right to host the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, the country has developed a state programme of ice hockey development. It has even established a professional hockey club in the KHL. Interestingly, at China's invitation, famous Canadian striker Phil Esposito arrived in Minsk. In late 1972, he became famous on both sides of the Atlantic, as the top scorer of the legendary USSR-Canada series. Mr. Esposito won the Stanley Cup twice and knows virtually everything about ice hockey. Despite this, the Minsk tournament was a surprise for him.

In the finals of the tournament, the President of Belarus' team smashed the Russians 6:1. Bronze went to the Czech Republic. However, the event's achievements are far wider ranging than figures on the scoreboard or statistics in final standings.

Participants of Christmas matches are often asked why previously famous ice hockey players appear alongside sporting amateurs; the answer lies in

the spirit of the event. Around Chizhovka-Arena, matches were supplemented by a wealth of entertainments. With the Christmas tournament and the Golden Puck event held under one roof, there was a good crowd gathered, offering organisers plentiful opportunity to accumulate experience on the eve of the forthcoming European Games and the IIHF World Championships.

The Golden Puck may be an amateur event but it's already becoming nationally recognised, hosted as it is at the country's second most important arena, accompanied by a television broadcast. The final match demonstrated all that's best regarding children's amateur tournaments, with Minsk's Griffons losing to another Minsk squad, Medved, 4:3. The match was a delight to watch, showing the youngsters at their sporting best, and embracing team spirit.

The present and recent past of sport was presented on the ice, with outstanding guests attending the arena, alongside tomorrow's players. Even the 'novice' Chinese squad did well, despite failing to win a medal.

By Alexey Fedosov

Representatives of the Christmas tournament also took part in a traditional charity campaign. In previous years, assistance has been given to children's orphanages and boarding schools. This year, Minsk's orphanage #5 received financial aid and many gifts. According to the director, Tamara Lavrukhnina, such attention was timely. She explains, "Many youngsters in our boarding school enjoy alpine sports and have dreamt of having an adventure park with a climbing centre in the gym. Thanks to the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation and the President's Sports Club, their dream will come true. However, the opportunity to meet and chat with sportsmen is even more important."

1946 was the year in which novelist Boris Mikulich was writing. Meanwhile, poet and writer Arkady Martinovich was conducting his army service, and Lyubov Turbina was born in Ashgabat. The poetess gained recognition in Belarus, writing in Russian. Like Mikhas Karpenko, Lyubov Filimonova, Nikolay Kalinkovich and Vasily Tkachev, she presented her own perspective of Turkmenistan. Oleg Loiko, Rygor Borodulin, Ales Zhuk, and Alexander Yemelyanov visited the area, like many Belarusian writers whose fates are connected with Turkmenistan.

# LIFE THROUGH TURKMEN PAGES



**N**ot long ago, I discovered the 1972 'Poetry Day' annual collection, which unites poems from various eras, published by Minsk's Mastatskaya Literatura Publishing House. It features verse by Mikola Orochko, Ivan Arabeiko, Raisa Borovikova, Marina Barstok, Petrus Brovka, Konstantsiya Builo, Zinovy Vager, Anatoly Vorobey, Boris Gankin,

Lyudmila Goncharova, Victor Gardey, Nil Gilevich, Anatoly Grechanikov, Leonid Daineko, Tatiana Dmitruseva, Marian Duksa, Lyudmila Zabolotskaya, Ales Zvonok, Vasil Zuenok, Artur Volsky, Kastus Ilyushchits, Olga Ipatova, Kazimir Kameisha, Galina Korzhenevskaya, Vladimir Korotkevitch, and Galina Karpova, among others. Konstantsiya Builo released his first work in 1914, while other authors were publishing their poems in the annual edition for only the first or second time. Apart from the Belarusian-

language poets, the 1972 'Poetry Day' collection features Russian-language writers Eduard Kasperovich, Piotr Kasyanenko, Naum Kislik, Igor Malashkov, Vasily Pak, Leonid Rashkovsky, Yuri Sakovich and David Simanovich.

We shouldn't forget that 1972 was a jubilee for the Soviet nation, it being fifty years since the USSR had been established. With this in mind, the compiling editor, the editorial board and the publishing house decided to release poetry written by representatives of each

Soviet republic in Belarusian, allowing readers to better understand Turkmenistan, through the work of poet Kara Seitliev. Yuras Svirko translated his 'Gastello' poem, devoted to the legendary Belarusian pilot. However, Kara's nine lines were not the only 'Turkmen' pages in the Belarusian 1972 'Poetry Day' edition. Bronislav Sprinchan also presented his poem dedicated to Turkmenistan, following his travels there. It begins:

*Dawn and freshness of spinney  
And overflow of cornfields  
Skilled carpet-makers  
Interweave into a single motive...*

I only met Bronislav Sprinchan a few times, as we were from different generations. Mr. Sprinchan was born in 1928 and I in 1964. However, from 1990 to 2009, almost until the poet's tragic death, I chatted with him several times. I even have an autographed book, but we never spoke about Turkmenistan. The 1972 edition of 'Poetry Day' came into my hands not long after the poet's death.

I told Bronislav's son, Vadim Sprinchan, about my interest in his father's 'Turkmenistan' poem. He was working at the time as the editor of the poetry department, at 'Polymya' (Flame) magazine, writing in Russian and Belarusian.

He recalls, "My father was in Turkmenistan." Vadim Sprinchan gave me two books of his father's poetry: 'Ash' (Minsk, 1973) and 'The Light of Love: Favourites' (Minsk, 1988). The covers of 'Ash' and some of its illustrations were created by remarkable Belarusian illustrators Vladimir and Mikhail Basalyga. 'Ash' — published a year later after 1972 'Poetry Day' — gave his poem a different title: 'To Turkmenistan'. Doing so, the author appears not simply to be talking of the discovery of the previously unknown land but is addressing Turkmenistan, sharing his impressions. Written in 1971, in the wake of his trip to the country, 'Ash' features three 'Turkmen' poems, including 'The River of Life' and 'Zakhmet'.

Bronislav Sprinchan's work reminds me of that of Russian poets Vladimir Lugovsky and Nikolay Tikhonov, who also wrote poems dedicated to Turkmenistan, discovering the East in the 1930s. Mr. Sprinchan was also making discoveries, in his own way, exploring the key principles of life, including the honour of labour and creativity.

His 'River of Life' states:

*Even in a yellow desert  
Karakum Canal  
Through blue splashes  
Destroys the deafness  
Willow trees are on the right and left  
Air is soft and fresh  
Grass outlines a new life  
frontier...*

Any parallels are inappropriate but I can't help thinking of Mr. Lugovsky (interestingly, Bronislav Sprinchan has a wonderful poem — 'By the Rock of Vladimir Lugovsky, in Yalta' — written in 1966). The lyrical epic of the Russian poet — 'To Bolsheviks of Deserts and Spring' (also entitled 'The Desert and Spring') — was a guiding star in presenting Turkmenistan to Bronislav Sprinchan. The third poem, 'Zakhmet', written after his 1971 trip, glorifies the act of labour.

Bronislav Sprinchan was born on August 16th, 1928, in the village of Kanizh, in Ukraine's Kirovograd Region. He graduated from Kirovograd Engineering College, working first at Gomselmash as a blacksmith foreman, then at the factory newspaper. Bronislav graduated from the Maxim Gorky Literary Institute and moved to Minsk where, for many years, he headed the poetry department of 'Neman' magazine. In 1957, his first collection of poems — 'Over Sozh Steeps' — was published. Other books followed: 'In Central Passage', 'Wind on Slopes', 'Heat', and 'Tender Sprouting of Hope'...

Mr. Sprinchan's 'Turkmen Cycle' was also published in a book of selected poems: 'Light of Love' (Minsk, 1988). The preface to this impressive collection

was written by the great Belarusian poet and literary critic Oleg Loiko. He stated: '...critics who say that Bronislav Sprinchan's poetry is deeply rooted in the Belarusian national soil are right. It seems to me, in his poetry — as in Chingiz Aitmatov's prose — the national characteristic of the work takes the forefront, even above the language. Bronislav Sprinchan is a great translator, having successfully translated, primarily, modern Belarusian poets. Those translations appear in the anthology of Belarusian Soviet poetry. After Bronislav's translations of the poetic legacy of Belarusian legend Maxim Bogdanovich (through

## ***Turkmenistan inspires creativity of Belarusian poets, writers and literary men***

translations of his contemporaries), he proceeded to his final, major achievement, such as would be a worthy goal for any individual. Bronislav Sprinchan undoubtedly became one of the best translators of Maxim Bogdanovich's poetry. I'd especially like to emphasise one more feature of Mr. Sprinchan, without which he would've failed to become a poet and which isn't obvious from his verse. This is Bronislav's remarkable thirst for knowledge of all poetic beauty, his enviable memory for poetry by vastly different poets and, importantly, his perfectly developed sense of harmony and word forms.

Until the last days of his life, Bronislav Sprinchan enjoyed a sense of true harmony and high art form. Pleasingly, this feeling is associated with the Turkmen theme in his work. He was a Belarusian poet, Ukrainian by nationality and birth, who also wrote in Russian.

By Kastus **Ladutko**



# THIS MAGICAL KOLYADY

MIKHAIL NESTEROV

**Gala concert at Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus features winners of 4th Minsk International Christmas Competition of Vocalists, concluding 8th Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum, delighting opera lovers with stars from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, France, Mexico and Canada**

**H**as there ever been such a grand gala concert held at the Bolshoi Theatre? Its finals culminated with an explosion of applause, following several hours of joyful entertainment. With such an exalted atmosphere, the event was truly unforgettable, filled with virtuoso per-

formances. My colleagues in attendance watched opera fans with pleasure, seeing their smiles and inspired expressions as each performer concluded, whether soprano, bass, baritone or mezzo-soprano.

### **New names**

General Director Vladimir Gridyushko deserves our respect and admiration for his work in gathering renowned artists, as does Mikhail Pandzhavidze

— the Chief Director — who staged the gala concert's extensive programme featuring overtures, songs and arias: pieces lesser known and famous, including arias from rare operas, which have never featured in the Bolshoi's repertoire.

The final concert saw winners of international competitions already known to Minsk audiences take the stage, including Tigran Oganyan (from Armenia), Lasha Sesitashvili (Georgia), and

Nadezhda Pavlova (Russia). On December 21st, the winners of the 4th International Christmas Competition of Vocalists sang, including Grand Prix winner Sargis Bazhbeuk-Melikian, a bass singer from Armenia who performed Melnik's aria from 'The Mermaid'.

In all, 116 performers from sixteen countries competed, representing all types of voice. As noted in the 'Parter' newspaper, an international jury of eighteen professionals in the field of opera and musical art worked over seven days, across three stages of the selection process. The first two took place to the accompaniment of a piano, while the third stage enjoyed orchestral accompaniment, and featured leading artistes from the Bolshoi Theatre. Thirty participants went through to the second round, while the best ten reached the finals.

Most contestants hailed from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine but were joined by singers from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Israel, USA, Germany, Canada, Moldova, Latvia, China, Azerbaijan, France and Estonia. Some winners were announced on December 20th, at 11.30 pm — after the third part of the gala concert of finalists in the New Voices of World Opera competition. Apart from ten laureates, this featured stars of Belarusian opera, including such masters of the Bolshoi Theatre as Honoured Artiste of Belarus Stanislav Trifonov — who partnered soprano Margarita Levchuk, who sang Violetta to his Germont, in an aria from 'La Traviata'. Ms. Levchuk received an Award of Appreciation and a People's Choice Award. Mr. Trifonov also sang with France's Helene Carpentier, who received an Award of Appreciation. Finally, Stanislav sang a duet with Grand Prix winner Sargis Bazhbeuk-Melikian, who sang the part of Khan Konchak from the opera 'Prince Igor'. The Armenian's victory was a surprise but well-deserved, thanks to his soulful bass. Singing the lowest register, he had the audience truly holding its breath.

Mr. Trifonov sang the part of the Duke di Luna, to Belarusian Maria Galkina's Leonora, in 'Il Trovatore'. Meanwhile,



Winner Sargis Bazhbeuk-Melikian — a bass singer from Armenia — receives Grand Prix of Christmas competition, with Bolshoi Theatre Director General Vladimir Gridyushko on the left

Maria Galkina and Ksenia Bakhritdinova (from Ukraine) shared the second prize, with Ksenia moving everyone with her performance of Tatiana's letter, from 'Eugene Onegin'. As Vladimir Gridyushko said after the concert, it has never happened in the history of the competition that awards have been shared but each artiste claimed an equal number of jury points, showing their strength.

Third place went to audience favourites Belarusian tenor Alexander Gelakh and Russian baritone Konstantin Suchkov. The former performed Rudolfo to Tatiana Gavrilova's Mimi, in 'La Boheme'. Ms Gavrilova is an acknowledged master of Belarusian opera, who also performed Rosina to Konstantin Suchkov's Figaro, for an aria from the 'The Barber of Seville'. First prize went to baritone Sergey Kaidalov, from Russia, who sang the role of Onegin in the final scene between Tatiana and Onegin, from 'Eugene Onegin'.

## Forum's masks

Like the Christmas forum, the contest of young vocalists is an annual celebration marking the festive season. Mr. Gridyushko stressed his wish to have delighted audiences, saying, "I'm happy that they enjoyed not only the undisputable vocal talent of Belarusian artistes

but the voices of recognised world stars. As for the Minsk forum, I can confirm that it's grown in scale, becoming a major national cultural project, firmly establishing its position among Belarus' most significant cultural events and gaining international fame and recognition. The Christmas forum is a grand celebration of opera, demonstrating the achievements of classical music-and-theatre art from the past year."

Interestingly, the first performance of the forum was a premiere of 'The Magic Flute', by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The fantastical opera was staged by an international team, directed by Professor Hans-Joachim Frey. In his interview with 'Parter', he said, "The show is timeless, so we've tried to unite several epochs, creating an abstract historical period — as is common for fantasy works — with elements of the Middle Ages, the Stone Age, the Renaissance and, even, a vision of the future." The resulting fairytale combines magic and fantasy.

Nadezhda Kucher, the only Belarusian winner of the prestigious BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition to date, and twice winner of the National Theatre's Golden Mask Award, sang the role of the Queen of the Night [read an interview with Nadezhda in this issue]. Born in Minsk, Nadezhda's relatives and

Performances of the Christmas competition: 'La Traviata' (Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus) and 'Carmen' (Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic troupe from Poland)



MIKHAIL NESTEROV

friends still live in the Belarusian capital and, as she admitted at a press conference, she's always happy to sing for the Belarusian public. Like many other artists, Nadezhda believes our audience to be incredibly receptive and grateful, as I often mention in my articles. The Belarusian public displays genuine interest in opera, thanking performers with generous applause even where their own taste fails to be met. Besides being very tolerant, Belarusians are sincerely respectful of others' work. Nadezhda Kucher was greeted with a storm of warm applause, as were all the

performances at the forum, enjoying a standing ovation.

Georges Bizet's 'Carmen' was staged by the Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic troupe, from Polish Białystok, which was touring Belarus for the first time. Featuring colourful Spanish costumes, the women's bright scarves contrasted with sets of dazzling red and a military jeep, near which soldiers dressed in khaki uniforms lounged. Our audience has never before seen such a modern, original version of 'Carmen!' The role of Carmen was performed by unrivalled prima Oksana Volkova, who appeared

both delicate and aggressive, as directed by Beata Redo-Dobber.

Undoubtedly, Oksana is a unique singer, with a captivating mezzo-soprano voice. Moreover, she is a wonderful actress, able to portray psychological nuances. The role of Carmen is one of Oksana's favourites which, having performed in fourteen countries, she says allows her to continuously bring something new...

Honoured Artiste of Russia Akhmed Agadi (from the Mariinsky Theatre) is a favourite with the Belarusian public and a welcome guest of the Bolshoi Theatre. Last season, he performed a premiere of Pietro Mascagni's 'Cavalleria Rusticana': a gangster drama staged by Mikhail Pandzhavidze.

Last season also saw Latvian film director Andrejs Žagars' staging of Giuseppe Verdi's 'La Traviata', with Nadezhda Pavlova as Violetta Valéry — among the invited soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus.

Ulker Aliyeva, a musical and theatre critic from Azerbaijan and a frequent guest at international forums, says of Ms. Pavlova, "Although the finale of the opera is quite tragic, the audience remained happy with the show, which demonstrates the transience and fragility of human life and the importance of love in



Christmas ball surprises its guests with beautiful concert programme, featuring cheerful melodies



***Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum is grown in scale, becoming a major national cultural project, firmly establishing its position among Belarus' most significant cultural events and gaining international fame and recognition***

the short period of time between birth and death. Russian soprano Nadezhda Pavlova captured the hearts of the Belarusian public (and my own heart) two years ago, worthily winning the Grand Prix at the International Competition of Vocalists in Minsk. Her voice is expressive and elegant, tackling the finest dynamic nuances with a light touch, as perfectly suits the role of Violetta. She combines a virtuoso technique with drama, her voice and acting resembling a bud opening gradually. Once fully open, the audience follows her intently, conquered by the rare fusion of superb technique and natural singing (which resembles breathing). We forget that we are watching a performance, hearing the story as easily as the beat of a human heart, in time to the music."

She adds, "Yuri Gorodetsky, as Alfred, sang with an element of spirituality, bewitching us with his soft voice, clear diction and rich shades."

It's fine praise indeed for the leading protagonists of this beautiful and sentimental opera.

### **Final ball...**

The Christmas holiday at the Bolshoi Theatre concluded with a magnificent Christmas ball. As is traditional, it was held on the old eve of the New Year

(January 13th), for the ninth time, in line with the Julian calendar.

The ball is increasingly rich in entertainments each year, this year being directed by Mikhail Pandzhavidze, with assistance from Yekaterina Shimanovich and a young artist from the Head Artist Service, Alexandra Kostyuchenko. Tickets went on sale last autumn, with theatre lovers 'attacking' the box office, and still clamouring for tickets the week before the ball. My colleagues who attended later shared their impressions with the media.

The Christmas ball conjures the atmosphere of past centuries, with women in floor-length dresses and men in elegant tuxedos or suits. However, the musical programme was diverse this year, with

various pieces performed in addition to traditional Russian and Viennese ballroom melodies: Spanish virtuoso guitar playing and the Serenade string quartet also delighted guests. There was the opportunity to take photos beside the Fir Tree and have your fortune told by astrologers, while famous Belarusian perfumer Vlad Rekunov gave a workshop, inviting everyone to sample magic aromas.

The event opened with a four-dance polonaise from Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's 'Night Before Christmas', commencing the 'Russian' section of the ball. It was clear that many dancers had been practising, taking lessons since last November. Professional dancers also graced the floor. During the 'Viennese' section, which started after midnight, everyone was invited to dance, eyes sparkling with delight.

By Valentina  
**Zhdanovich**





Nadezhda Kucher greatly appreciates Belarusian audience

# WITH PARISIAN ACCENT

**‘Singer of the World’ Nadezhda Kucher plays to her own melody rather than others’ expectations**

**N**adezhda Kucher was named ‘Singer of the World’ two years ago and recently gave a concert at the Belarusian State Philharmonic, performing only French music. She oozed Parisian glamour, yet was born in Minsk, graduating from the local

Music College. She later studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and now works at Russia’s Perm Opera House. Nadezhda has sung everywhere, from the UK and Switzerland to Chile... However, her real home is in Minsk, where she not only visits relatives but meets fans. Her recent concert at the Belarusian State Philharmonic was her first solo show accompanied by the orchestra, and was a sell-out.

*Nadezhda, why have you chosen French music?*

The idea for the French repertoire came from People’s Artiste of Russia Sergey Stadler. In late 2017, we performed a Christmas concert together, at St. Petersburg’s Alexandrinsky Theatre.

*Have you considered giving a concert of Russian ballads?*

I don’t like standards. In fact, I really hate them. I don’t follow trends, prefer-

ring to offer something new. Development is essential, or you stagnate. Of course, I could prepare a concert of Russian ballads; I've done so before, and may do so again, but all my time is currently taken up by opera.

***What about relaxation time?***

I'm always rehearsing. After being offered a role, I begin rehearsing. While I'd love to just do something for myself, I have no time, as I work all day and night. I understand that I need to relax sometimes but I tend only to go to the cinema with my husband. When I'm preparing for a show, I can think of nothing else.

***Your coming year is fully scheduled. Has winning the BBC Cardiff international opera competition changed your life?***

I had everything scheduled even before that competition. I've enjoyed increased attention since my victory in the

If I could have prepared in a short period of time, that would have been excellent. If I'd failed, the project wouldn't have been realised at all. This was my first work with modern music. Its libretto was in German and the music was complex, with a complicated libretto. I always translate my roles independently, whether they're in French, German, Italian or English. If I fail to understand each word, I can't convey the idea effectively. This was a very difficult job but we accomplished it.

***Famous Latvian actor and now opera director Andrejs Žagars — who recently staged 'La Traviata' in Belarus — likes to repeat that he doesn't work with singer who don't have actor capabilities.***

I greatly appreciate drama directors who work with opera. I worked with Žagars on 'The Masked Ball' and with

***I work all day and night. I understand that I need to relax sometimes but I tend only to go to the cinema with my husband***

Netherlands in 2012. This is a very good competition, so I advise all young singers to enter. Its initiators are interested in seeing their laureates on the world's leading stages. They invite jury members who can offer employment, and not only to the winners.

***What do you prefer: a permanent job in the theatre or foreign tours?***

That's not a choice I can make. We have clear agreements in the theatre: our overseas tours are our priority. This is connected to various issues: financial, career growth and development. I perform several roles while my foreign tours enable me to sing a different repertoire.

***Are you an experimenter?***

I've experienced all my life. Medea-material opera brought me 'The Golden Mask', which was like a bolt from the blue: the proposal was very unexpected.

Dieter Dorn, who was 80 at that time but full of energy. We sang 'La Traviata' together and he paid attention to the smallest details of the psychological state of Violetta. Our rehearsals were emotionally exhausting, lasting around six weeks, and were relentless, but it was a very interesting experience. The same could be said of Žagars, whom I met at the Mikhailovsky Theatre. I was studying at the Conservatory at that time and had almost no experience. Students are taught 'Acting' and 'Stage Speech' but don't receive serious training, being more like fledgling chicks on graduation. I well remember Andrejs criticising me but I'm grateful and happy to have worked with such a person, as I learnt much from him.

By Natalia **Stepuro**



PAUL CHUYKO

# CAPTURED BY NATURE

**Famous Belarusian landscape painter Valery Shkarubo celebrates his 60th birthday with a personal exhibition at country's major museum**

**A**s always, the artist's exhibition was a success. Having seen Mr. Shkarubo's work previously, I can say that this event was both large-scale and diverse, though dedicated to landscapes. The master hasn't been resting on his laurels, continuing to seek new ways of expressing himself, within his recognisable style.

Mr. Shkarubo attended the event most days, wishing to chat with visitors, hearing their feedback. He tells us, with interest rather than disappointment, 'Many criticise, being honest in telling me what they don't like...'

I noticed that the visitor book was filled with praise, including for Mr. Shkarubo himself, who is described as 'self-critical' and 'modest' regarding his own creativity.

In life, we often ask 'why' and Mr. Shkarubo is no exception. He asked me why I wanted to interview him. His answer amused me, since it showed how little he chases fame. Clearly, he creates

art for its own sake, without seeking recognition. Luckily, Mr. Shkarubo was willing to be persuaded, telling me that he loves to convey his ideas and feelings via landscape painting, with even the simplest object gaining importance under his brush. Something we've seen hundreds of times can be brought to life by an artist's eye, evoking strong emotions and associations.

Those with a tendency to ponder the human condition usually doubt everything. They ask themselves 'Why?' rather than accepting life's lot. This is my passion and my curse, as it is for famous Belarusian painter Valery Shkarubo. He was keen to take up the interview, giving him the opportunity to explain his motivations. As we discover, his art rises about the desire to be popular or successful. His goal is to seek out the truth.



***Every artist wishes to differ from others, being original. Have you chosen the same path?***

I believe an artist shouldn't have to aim for originality — either you have it or you don't, it's a waste of time to ponder the issue. You can't become original just by thinking about it. I think originality as a goal in itself is wrong.

***At the beginning of your artistic career, you were probably tempted — like many others — to copy famous artists...***

Every fledgling artist passes through this path. When I was young, I had models I aspired to — such as famous Belarusian artist Vitold Bialynitsky-Birulia. Later, I realised that you could spend your whole life copying other artists and looking at the world with their eyes, so I decided to try and imagine that mine was the only art. There would be just me and the environment — nothing more. Naturally, it was an abstract idea but such an idyll does exist — in nature. Now, I don't feel pressured to follow any artistic school.

*Valery Shkarubo's main theme is the Belarusian countryside. He continues to search for the truth, exploring it at every opportunity. Landscapes are born from loneliness, in the quietness of his studio after long consideration. There are no people in his landscapes, creating an additional mystique and giving a surreal atmosphere.*

***When did you achieve your own unique style?***

About 25 years ago, at least five years after my graduation from the Art Institute. My teachers influenced me greatly of course; students' works often resemble their teachers'. It took me five years after leaving the institute before I found myself — I was searching for my own individuality. I was initially creating abstract pictures, as we were taught that this was modern. I was also interested in formal composition but, later, everything resumed its natural course. Six or seven years after graduation, I started my own serious work.



***You now work exclusively with landscapes. Where do you find depth in nature?***

Your question already has its answer. I see the greatest depth in landscapes — as in nothing else. I cannot find this in still-life or portraits. I cannot make a still-life deep in its essence — unlike a landscape. It's important to think of what lies beyond the canvas rather than what is plainly depicted. It's important to feel it. An artist's suffering must be evident, with all thoughts and feelings included. This is easiest in a landscape. A landscape for me is a mystery and a secret of nature — it is the major component of art.

*Valery Shkarubo's personality was formed not in the pursuit of originality or the outrageous but through a gradual search for his 'ego'. His singularity is the result of his creative self-cultivation, his constant and consistent comprehension of his own media, which suits his character. He has 'erased the slave' in himself, which desired to copy other masters.*

***Can you explain why landscapes have displaced other genres for you?***

Probably because landscapes are the most philosophical for me — simultaneously the simplest and the most complicated. Almost every artist creates landscapes — in every age. Many people believe it's an easy genre but I'm convinced this simplicity houses a depth



'Imminence' (1997)



'Autumn Thoughts' (1996)



'Silent Evening' (2017)

which I, personally, have only just begun to understand. It is a mystery for me. I see mystery and depth in landscapes — as in no other genre.

**They attract you.**

Yes.

*Shkarubo's landscapes are a medium for self-expression and self-knowledge. They enable him to convey his ideas, images and feelings, forming his own notion of art.*

**Which images are most common in your works? Do you merely depict what you see or do you portray impressions? Can you explain — are you a realist or a dreamer?**

I'm probably more of a realist. Realistic art is far-reaching; the longer we live the better we realise that it has no boundaries. The pictures of Zaborov are also filled with realism.

*In 2003, in France, he got to know Belarus-born painter Boris Zaborov who had lived there for a long time already.*

**Reference:** Boris Zaborov was born in Minsk and studied in art institutions of Moscow and St. Petersburg. He emigrated to France and is well-known not only in Europe. His picture was acquired by the world famous Uffizi Gallery in Florence — the first contemporary work over a century of its existence.

*Their communication was rather brief; however, some time later, Valery Shkarubo received a sudden call at his Minsk flat from the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. They told him that they had a letter from France for him: a letter from Boris Zaborov.*

**Fragments from Boris Zaborov's letter to Valery Shkarubo:**

*'Valery, after I looked through the catalogues you presented to me, I wanted to write you a letter. Probably, my words will help you to understand the correctness of your choice and the uniqueness in each of us. However, few people realise it and often go away without realising their 'ego'. You have, which is a rare privilege. Believe me*

*and keep this precious quality. Your world of feelings, with its simple and unsophisticated frankness, will help you to look at your surroundings unambiguously, which is crucial. The only force which can help a contemporary painter resist temptation is attachment to his moral core. I wish you courage on this path'.*

**What inspires you to begin?**

I invent an image of what I wish to see before going into the countryside. The objects I see serve as my plot and guide but plot is not a priority for me. It's important to reflect my mood rather than to merely paint what is seen. I search for what I need. It's unimportant what I depict, as is the season and time. The image in my brain is key; I search for elements in nature to reveal it — a part of the sky or forest. All my landscapes are collective, as there are no such places in nature — I invent them. I work until I achieve the desired result. It takes a long time and much suffering to create a picture.

**Would you like to influence audiences with your art?**

I think not. Art, perhaps, has another purpose. I'd like people to experience my feelings and thoughts from the time of painting the picture. Moreover, it's difficult to influence or educate.

**Don't you think about influencing the audience?**

No. A painter can't aspire to this; it would be fake.

**Do you depict the Belarusian countryside in your works?**

Primarily.

**You travel to many other places. How do they compare and which affects you most? Do you find beautiful sights everywhere?**

I've visited many places and countries and have seen exotic sights and landscapes. I've made sketches in almost every country. However, the most successful are those which resemble Belarus somehow. It sometimes happens that nature is so beautiful that there is no place for an artist — a copy would be adequate for people to admire. Belaru-

sian landscapes tend to be reserved but I love them for their understated glory. They have more complicate colours and I feel they belong to me.

**Are you philosophical in your works?**

I'm always thinking as I work, about eternal themes; this could be considered as philosophy. In 99 percent of cases, I choose to paint the countryside — which endures forever, in the past, present and future. I try not to paint temporary things — which come and go — as they are not interesting for me. The saying 'life is short while art is eternal' has truth in it. I want people to feel this eternity when looking on my pictures.

**Fragments from Boris Zaborov's letter to Valery Shkarubo:**

*'Literary tricks in the names of pictures are inadequate. Your works don't need such titles; they protest against them. 'Sad Twilight' is a poor title for a painting of a snow-covered scene. Titles should reflect the emotional force of a picture. Your world perception should dictate the title — as in 'The Road', which evokes a host of thoughts, feelings and emotions, stimulating the imagination and a range of geographical, philosophical and mystical fantasies. Your road dissolves in the mist, full of inexplicable sadness. It fades into the distance, bringing to mind our own psyche.'*

**Do you add your imagination to real landscapes?**

Yes, I'm always inventing. I'm not trying to make exact copies — like photographs; this would be meaningless. You need to demonstrate your vision through art. Only individuality is valued in art — it is either present or not.

**Fragments from Boris Zaborov's letter to Valery Shkarubo:**

*'I will repeat that you shouldn't confirm your love with words. Declare it with your expressiveness as a painter.'*

**You often depict a road...**



A road symbolises movement; movement is life. Thousands of people have travelled the road — all with their own feelings. They've all seen this landscape and I'm depicting that which has been seen by thousands. It has infinite depth.

**Is this a symbol of life?**

Yes, you could paint roads all your life as an artist. I'll continue painting them.

**In what ways do you feel close to nature?**

Nature bewitches me; it takes me captive. Landscapes greatly influence us. I feel unfettered only in my studio, when I'm alone.

**What are your artistic plans?**

The crisis seems to have resulted in fewer exhibitions being organised, which is no bad thing. Beforehand, I had many shows at home and abroad, which can be distracting. With fewer events ahead, I have more time for painting. I'm now working calmly and feel comfortable. I work in my studio every day, to bring new levels of insight to my landscapes. I'm not trying to expand their scope, e.g. to include mountains. I'm striving to show our Belarusian landscapes rather as writers endeavour to penetrate the human psyche.



'Lonely Winter' (2017)



'White Snow' (2003)



'In the Wind' (2013)

\*\*\*

His landscapes are filled with philosophical and symbolic expression, displaying harmony and perfect composition in portraying nature and their own 'concept'. Every object assumes importance acquires a special sense under his brush. It might be quite usual, hundreds times seen by us scenes, where the artist finds and reproduces on the canvas something that renders a magic effect, causes a wave of emotions and associations.

Yes, his landscapes bear philosophical and symbolical character; however, at the same time there is no aspiration in them for an artificial complicating of the form in favour of any modern trends. It is merely a manner of expression. The value of an artwork is determined by the degree of its logic harmony and clearness; by the fact how perfectly the composition is built. How reasonable and accurate features of a landscape are selected. It is important to the author to understand and to formulate for himself a task in

each work. His art is considerable degree conceptual as it is always subordinated to expression of the beforehand and considered author's idea.

Without including people, a certain mystery is embraced: a sense of the unreal, avoiding pastoral sentimentally. His works have depth, revealing beauty with new eyes, where 'empty space' is as important as what is shown. The painter possesses a fortunate ability to open a veil that hides an unusual beauty from outside eyes. Valery Shkarubo always strives to depict not precise view which was seen by him, but which was created in his imagination. He is an artist who possesses the pictorial thinking. He reproduces not 'views' but the landscape's portrait.

Mr. Shkarubo strives to depict something beyond the common view, exploring his imagination, to create his own portrait of each landscape, often referring to change, and transition. We see the movement of the seasons and weather, and time of day: from late autumn to early spring, and the final rays of the sun moving into twilight, and the movement of mist on the land. He renders soft autumn light, the muted colours of withered, prickly grass, and cold twilight in early winter. Each painting is penetrated by a wistful sadness, and underlying tension. Meanwhile, roads are a recurring motif, reminding us of the unknown lying ahead. There is even a sense of horror and mystery, reminding us of life's unexpectedness and our natural sense of fear and anxiety.

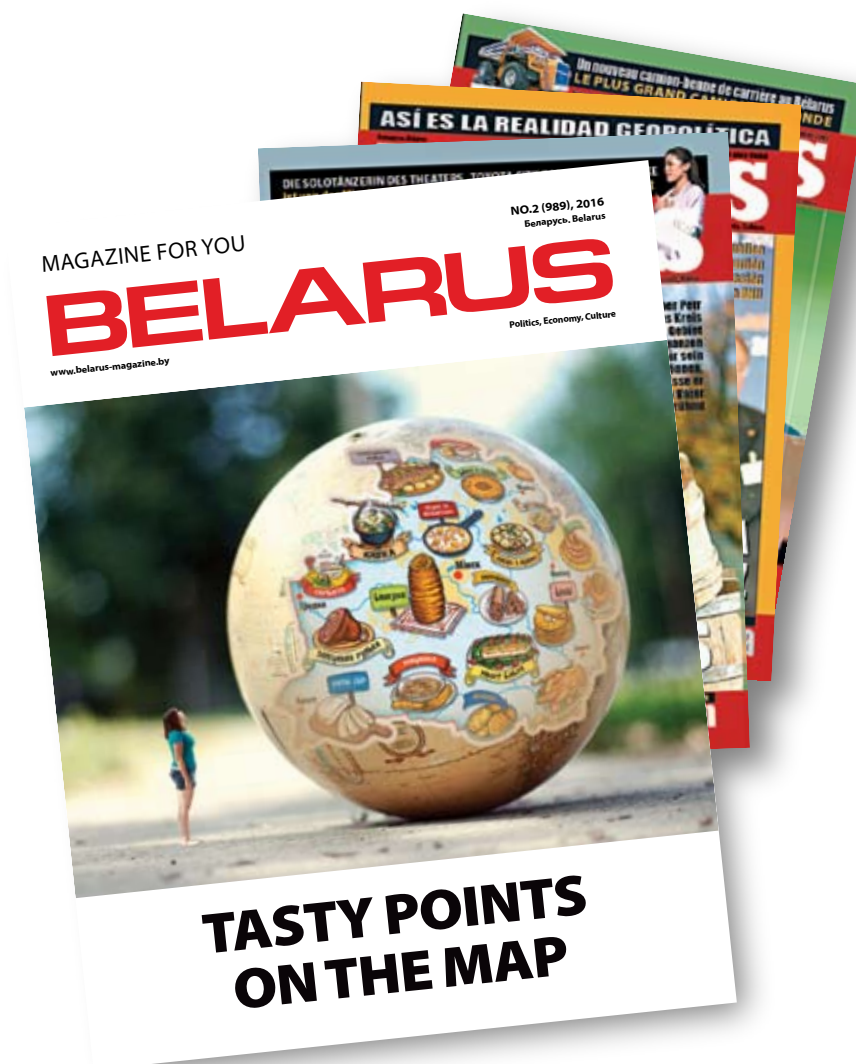
Our contemporary world is noisy, flamboyant and aggressive, where everyone is trying to be unique and original. How rarely we allow ourselves to slow our pace, embracing tranquility and soulfulness. Mr. Shkarubo's landscapes invite us to converse with nature, and its refreshing purity. He encourages us to be sensitive, taking the road with him, listening to the whisper of silence...

By Veniamin **Mikheev**



'On a Curve' (2014)

# NEW DIMENSION



**Magazine for those  
who want to know more**