



**Uplift after reshuffle — or something to recollect**  
Page 4



**Truly gifted hands**  
Belarusian team captures two gold medals at 43rd World Skills Competition-2015, held in Brazilian San Paolo Page 7



**Pictures that are windows, through which we view the past**  
*Our Collections* project at National Art Museum showcases works by Belarusian painters, celebrating their jubilees in 2015 Page 9



# On the path to new discoveries

Everything has been done in Belarus to make September 1st a true holiday for every schoolchild, teacher and parent, notes President Alexander Lukashenko, on visiting Minsk's secondary school #56

Huge funds have been allocated from the state budget for these tasks. The President underlined that this is a vital investment into the future of our country: into our new generation, and into those who will

revere and keep safe Belarus. Mr. Lukashenko especially congratulated first-graders, saying, "This day is one of the most memorable for our first-graders. It is the day when the long road to knowledge and adulthood

begins." He encouraged teachers to do everything to give proper care and attention to children. "May the first academic year bring interesting revelations and new knowledge," the President asserted.

## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS—2015

# Collection of signatures has finally completed

The time has now ended in which signature collection is possible in support of candidates for the presidency. The number of signatures collected by support teams has been published by the Central Election Commission: 1,761,145 in support of Alexander Lukashenko; 159,805 in favour of Nikolay Ulakhovich; 140,735 for Sergei Gaidukevich; 130,404 in support of Victor Tereshchenko; 107,299 for Tatiana Korotkevich; 780 for Zhanna Romanovskaya; just 48 for Sergei Kalyakin; and none for Anatoly Lebedko.

By Maxim Osipov

Signature lists are now being verified but it seems evident that only five candidates will be registered. By law, registration must take place between September 6th and 15th, and the date chosen by the Central Election Commission is September 10th. Lidia Yermoshina, the Chair of the Central Election Commission, notes, "The period of pre-election propaganda will be prolonged for candidates, lasting a month rather than only 25 days. The support teams now have a break of two and a half weeks. Meanwhile, the district election commissions have over 77,000 people put forward to

become members, so will start finalising lists of voters." In a video message visible on the Central Election Commission website, Ms. Yermoshina explains, "District election commissions will be given initial proposals from local executive and regulatory authorities. After they finish their work, veracious lists of voters will be compiled and voters will be invited to attend polls on the Election Day of October 11th. Such invitations will be given to all voters across the Republic of Belarus who are registered."

Voters have demonstrated interest not only by placing signatures in support of applicants but in feedback given

to the Central Election Commission to improve the subscription campaign. It has been suggested that photo ID

SEVERY LOZYUK



be necessary for support team members but time issues do not currently make this possible.

# High-tech novelties at just the right time

Using your phone at an important event to better understand it

By Maxim Osipov

After several smartphone clicks, Google Play's Election-2015 mobile application is downloaded onto my phone. I know straight away how many days are left until the important event. A quick browse shows me that the application is functional and convenient, providing information on potential candidates to the Presidential

post, as well as documents and news relating to the election campaign. In addition, clear answers are provided to virtually all questions on the minds of inexperienced voters.

Developed jointly by the Belarusian Republican Youth Union and BELTA News Agency, the application is useful in informing users about the key elements of the election

campaign. It helps involve young people in this major political process, contributing to patriotic feelings and civic consciousness.

The First Secretary of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union's Central Committee, Andrey Belyakov, believes this to be vital. He comments, "We want our youngsters to be aware of the elections. They don't need to know everything but they need to know the basics about this complex procedure. The online information young people access should be of constructive character. We'll be happy if this application helps encourage them to take part, voting at polling stations

on October 11th."

The high-tech novelty comes at just the right time, since the election campaign is now reaching the most active stage. Users can download the application and master its principles.

According to BELTA's General Director, Dmitry Zhuk, the novelty aims to provide information on elections easily. He tells us, "This year, those born in sovereign Belarus will vote. To meet youngsters' demands, we came up with this application."

The Belarusian Republican Youth Union is conducting a contest among young voters, explains Ales Vinnik, the Chairman of the Union's Central Controlling Commission. As curator of the Union's activity online, he notes, "The contest is for 18-31 year old voters, aiming to find the best proposal regarding elections. Probably, this would be an essay on participation in the election campaign. Organisers will then name three winners, who'll receive tablets as prizes." The winners will be announced on December 1st and entries may now be submitted.

The Election-2015 application is available for Android users only at present but should be available for the iOS operation system soon.



ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Application to help youngsters understand difficult topic of elections

# Being at the border of interests

By Ulyana Bushui

A recent new Law 'On the State Border of the Republic of Belarus' has come into force, with the most significant amendments tackling articles that regulate the stay of both people and transport vehicles in the border zone, aimed at reinforcing public and border security

All citizens are obliged to have documents for entry, visit and move-

ment within the border zone. For those who reside permanently in the country but aren't yet 14 years old, this may be a birth certificate or other personal identity document; for the rest a personal identity document is required. Moreover, it's forbidden to leave mechanical transport vehicles outside settlements within the border zone. Violators of this point will now face forced towing.

The Chairman of the State Border Committee, Leonid Maltsev, comments that there have been

many changes to tackle the conditions for staying of people and transport vehicles in the zone. This is done in order to ensure control over violators near the state border, to prevent smuggling and illegal migration, i.e. for the security of the residents of the area. Nothing has changed for law-abiding citizens. The document also introduces considerable changes regarding the frontier belt; it is now used to ensure border security. All enterprises, both state and private, are allowed to do business within

the area, but only under the supervision of border guards. The changes also tackle the order and reasons for imposition of administrative sanctions. Thus, some fines have been increased, and liability has been introduced for aiding in violating the state regime and allowing the entry of people without documents into the country. The new law also expands the powers of military personnel and customs authority officials, as well as internal affairs employees who work in state border protection.

## OSCE mission to receive support and assistance

By Maxim Osipov

**11 observers from OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights arrive in Belarus, with 37 more due: over 4,000 mission observers in all will follow the election process, with assistance from Belarus**

The Chair of Belarus' Central Election Commission, Lidia Yermoshina, recently reported the figures to the Head of the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), Jacques Faure. The French diplomat has previously visited Belarus, having co-chaired the OSCE Minsk group, which aimed to settle the Nagorny Karabakh conflict in 1992. Mr. Faure also worked as the French Ambassador to Ukraine and is familiar with the post-Soviet space. He is aware of Belarus' readiness for equal righted and constructive co-operation.

Mr. Faure has asked the Central Election Commission of Belarus to render assistance in providing documents and contacts. Immediate guarantees have been given in this respect, as have been provided to the head of the OSCE/ODIHR observation mission.

The Foreign Ministry informs us: 'Belarus has confirmed its readiness to take all necessary measures to hold elections in full compliance with national legislation and international obligations. We hope to see an objective and unbiased approach from international observers in their assessment of Belarus' election campaign.'

### MT'S REFERENCE:

District election commissions have already begun their work. In Minsk, public associations and political parties have proposed almost 7,500 candidates, with 10,688 promoted for inclusion into district election commissions. The Republican Party of Labour and Justice, the Belarusian Social Sports Party, the Belarusian Agrarian Party and the Communist Party of Belarus are demonstrating the greatest activity.

# Plans are ambitious, yet with good grounds

Chatting with workers at Baranovichi Cotton Production Association, President Alexander Lukashenko asserts that the situation in Belarus will start improving in 2016

By Vasily Kharitonov

Within the next 1-2 years, Bellegprom Concern plans to achieve enough volumes of production to completely meet domestic textile needs. These are ambitious plans, especially considering competition from foreign manufacturers. However, the imminent completion of three large modernisation projects gives the Concern grounds for optimism.

A full production cycle would increase the competitiveness of our goods. One such modernised facility is Baranovichi Cotton Production Association, whose share of the cotton fabric market now exceeds that held during Soviet times (within the post-Soviet space).

During his working trip to the Brest Region, the President visited the enterprise. It wasn't the first trip made by Mr. Lukashenko but it may have been the most memorable, incorporating much inspection behind the scenes. The President broke away from the pre-planned route to examine several workshops and to chat unexpectedly to a female employee. Director General Ivan Turchak was also placed 'on the spot' in answering questions.

The essence of the conversation could not be totally overheard, due to the steady hum of machinery, but Mr. Lukashenko's conversations weren't for the benefit of journalists. In speaking, later, to the whole workforce, he emphasised the need to reduce prime costs and expand export supplies; the same is true for all enterprises, including this one. Moreover, he underlined the need to make efficient use of the newly modernised facilities. He noted, "Focus on prime costs. According to my calculations, you need to reduce these by another 7-10 percent. It's bad that half of your facilities aren't being used."

Baranovichi Cotton Production Association is prioritising continuous technical re-equipment, the launch of technical innovations and the mastering of progressive tech-



During visit to Baranovichi Cotton Production Association JSC

nologies. Preliminary results speak for themselves: its share of the domestic bed-linen market increased from 15 percent in 2009 to 46 percent in 2015. By 2020, this should reach 62 percent.

In the first seven months of this year, its profit reached \$5.7m, and should increase to \$12m by the end

of the year, exceeding \$60m by 2016.

Mr. Lukashenko expressed confidence in Belarus' economic situation improving in 2016, saying, "We need to conduct ourselves 'as normal' this year, and see how the situation appears by the year's end. I'm sure we'll start to see ourselves emerging from this situation next

year; at least, we haven't collapsed, as others have."

The enterprise's employees raised their concerns regarding the company's ability to repay its loans promptly (as used for modernisation). To their pleasure, Mr. Lukashenko promised to consider extending the repayment schedule.

## WORD-FOR-WORD

Chatting to the labour collective, the President tackled a range of important topics:

### On the national currency

We won't artificially restrain the exchange rate of the national currency as, if we did so, to keep down inflation, we'd be forced to devalue the national currency by 30 percent in one go.

Kazakhstan and Russia recently did so, but we did this earlier, to avoid using up our gold-and-currency reserves. It's good that gold prices are on the rise since we have about 30 tonnes of gold. This is why we're sticking to a floating rate policy through these difficult times.

### On prices for consumer goods

We're keeping an eye on prices. If we try to keep them down, market supply will drop. Yes, there is some volatility, some movement. However, I swear to you that we're doing nothing to restrain or bolster or weaken the national currency. If more foreign currency is available, the exchange rate will fall. If demand is high, then foreign currency will be in short supply. You know what will happen. Let's focus on buying domestic products and spending our vacations in Belarus; keep foreign currency inside our country. Don't run from one currency exchange office to another. You're just creating unnecessary problems.

### On the necessity of preserving stability

Previously, it chilled me to see the currency exchange rates change; however, I'm now more worried about something else. We need to avoid destabilising the situation in the country. War is

going on in the world; the most vital thing is to avoid such trouble touching us.

### On the retirement age

We haven't raised the issue. I've previously pointed out that the retirement age in Belarus should have been increased long ago. Pensions are not high in Belarus, due to an uneven share between those working and those in retirement. We are overburdening our children. If you want to see a particular ratio of pensioners to those employed, we'll do so, but pensions will be lower. So, we're not tackling the retirement age.

### On housing construction

The practice of concessional lending will continue. If there's more money available, we'll allocate more for lending. Today's situation isn't that favourable. We'd be lucky if we managed to keep lending volumes as they are today. We need to build more rental housing to solve this issue. The entire world is moving in this direction.

### On overcoming the consequences of the world crisis

The current global situation is difficult: soap bubbles created in the world economy are starting to blow out, destroying stock markets and devaluing national currencies. It is a financial war. It is an economic war where we don't have to win and we don't need to defeat anybody. What we need is to keep what's ours and to hold on, to endure through this period.

## Less paper, more business

By Vladimir Khromov

### Feasibility envisages balance between simplicity and strict control

Any path avoiding red tape is wise, believes President Alexander Lukashenko, speaking particularly on the licensing and control of certain entrepreneurial activities. He notes that entrepreneurs once needed written permission for virtually every move but, in 2010, a Presidential decree was adopted limiting such licensing to only 37 activities: far fewer than the number used by some Eurasian Economic Union partners (49 in Russia, 79 in Kazakhstan and 96 in Armenia). Only Kyrgyzstan boasts a similar figure, of 32.

Of course, there is more to a country's business climate than such statistics. The Eurasian Economic Union is a group of single-minded states, historically connected through trade: supplementing each other and uniting, to enjoy a stronger position on foreign markets. However, there remains competition to attract investments and, with this in mind, Belarus is aiming to join the top thirty states for business conditions. According to World Bank data, the Republic occupies 57th place (among 189) at present. The country has much advanced in the sphere of taxation: in just a year, it has moved from 107th to 60th position. Naturally, all ratings should be viewed with skepticism but such figures indicate efficient reform and the promotion of business development. We need to keep polishing our administrative canons, including licensing, while maintaining essential control.

Mr. Lukashenko warns, "Any path avoiding red tape is wise but borders exist which shouldn't be crossed: regarding the present situation and our present stage of development. If red tape and excessive obstructive administrative barriers can be eliminated, we'll do so. However, we should maintain the quality and safety of our services and goods." Production safety is vital, of course. Mr. Lukashenko recalled the outrageous situation at Pinskdtrev Holding and noted that proposed legislation must reflect carefully considered, simplified administrative procedures. Some proposals aim to make licenses valid indefinitely (they currently last for 5-10 years) to reduce paperwork; meanwhile, applications will be possible by mail or e-mail. Courts will also have the power to annul permissions.

The President demands substantiation of each proposal in detail, focusing on efficiency and feasibility. It's necessary to study whether courts should bear additional competence or if a licensing body could cope with the task. "A license issuing organisation would be fully responsible for the act and have the right to settle annulment related issues," believes Economy Minister Vladimir Zinovskiy.

Mr. Lukashenko approves of the proposal to set stricter demands and conditions for realising judicial-expert activity and works in the field of nuclear energy and realtor services. All legislative changes need to be perfected, with the final draft avoiding disputable juridical terminology. The document must be easily understandable to businesses.

# Uplift after reshuffle — or something to recollect

Our independence began with the All-Union Referendum on the preservation of the USSR, the Novo Ogarevo process of establishing a new CIS, an August coup d'etat, Mikhail Gorbachev's dismissal, money reform, extreme inflation, empty shops and lack of commodities. Belarusians suffered all manner of hardships and the ancient Chinese proverb 'God forbid one should be born in an age of changes' became a favourite joke. In the past two decades however, we've managed to cope with all these problems and those who remember the beginning of the 'boisterous 1990s' view our present economic difficulties with a smile.



Economic growth facilitates rise in population's standard of living

By Alexander Benkovsky

On the dawn of our independence, many problems existed. On January 1st, 1991, the USSR introduced a 5 percent sales tax and two weeks later sudden money reform was announced (later known as Pavlovskaya after Finance Minister Pavlov). As a backlash against false banknotes, 50 and 100 Rouble notes (issued in 1961) were taken out of circulation or exchanged for new 50 and 100 Rouble notes. There were only three days allowed for people to exchange their money (a maximum of 1,000 Roubles). The reform was announced on January 22nd late at night, three hours before its launch. Most quick-witted people used those three hours to exchange their savings in metro stations and railway stations or make money transfers at some postal offices that were open until midnight. Some also hurried to the airport to buy expensive tickets and, after the exchange campaign closed, returned them in exchange for new banknotes.

After this initial shock, new prices were set in early April: they were three times higher than the previously ones. By the time of the USSR collapse, people's confidence was at an extremely low level. The consumer market was also experiencing a crisis, with citizens receiving the so-called 'calling cards of consumers to buy industrial products' and special coupons to buy food. Devaluation became the most severe problem.

During the period, the so-called 'zaichiki' (hare) banknotes were put into circulation. These had hares and other animals such as squirrels and wolves depicted on them. In actual fact, our first money was not money

at all but coupons for payment. People needed to receive their salaries but we lacked Soviet money to pay them," recollects the Head of the Economic Theory Department at the Academy of Public Administration under the aegis of the President of Belarus, Irina Novikova.

The figures from those years are truly impressive: from 1992-1995, the money stock rose by over 300 percent, with inflation in Belarus reaching up to 30 percent monthly. In addition, commodity deficiency was widespread, with huge queues in shops being normal. In 1992, price liberalisation was announced in the country but, nevertheless, prices still rose 16.6 times in a year. The present (double-digit) inflation seems strange against that background. The situation changed in 1994 only when the National Bank's programme of

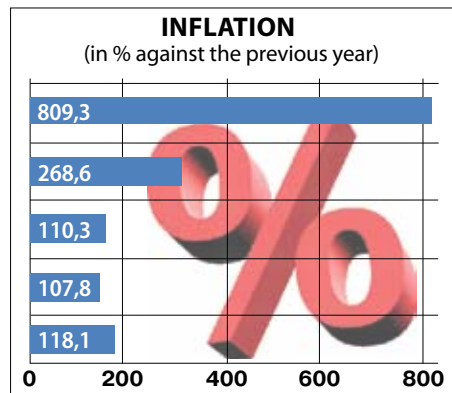
monetary problems, production collapse has been registered since 1992. The Economy Ministry informs us that, in the first five years of the 1990s, GDP fell by 38 percent. Industrial production was cut by 41 percent and capital investment decreased by 60 percent. Under the conditions of free pricing, Belarus' economic situation was complicated by fuel, energy, metal and raw material supplies from Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia. Prices on these were steadily growing, causing continuous rises in the cost of goods and services. Sales of domestically produced manufacturing faced problems as a result. Agriculture was also experiencing difficulties: its production fell by almost 30 percent.

Cattle stock was decreasing and Belarusian farms were in poor condition. At the same time, procurement prices on agricultural produce were controlled — remaining low; they failed to cover all the costs necessary for production.

"In the early 1990s, there was no sense of developing production: our machinery was not in demand abroad and a gap was created with the industrial co-operation with the other former Soviet republics," Ms. Novikova explains. "In 1994, the President promised our nation would revive its industry and all previous ties. At that time, this was a truly serious statement. As we have seen, all pre-election promises were kept: we've not merely revived our industry but developed it. This promise was fully achieved by 2000."

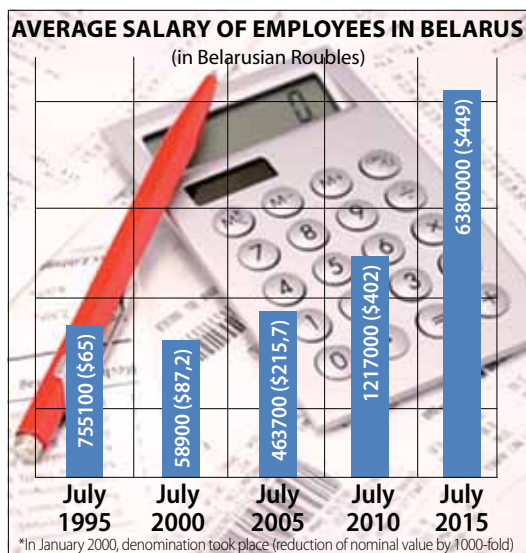
According to the statistical figures, gradual economic growth was

registered in Belarus since 1996 when the 1st All-Belarusian People's Assembly approved the major avenues of the country's social-economic development for 1996-2000. During that five-year period, our



GDP rose by 35.7 percent, industrial production increased by 64.4 percent and injections into the main capital rose by 33.2 percent. More accommodation was built (by 81.1 percent) and people's real monetary revenue almost doubled. By 2000, the pre-crisis 1990 figures were overtaken regarding the volume of industrial production and manufacturing of consumer goods. The Economy Ministry believes that the country's social-economic development proves the wisdom of this economic model.

"It's pointless to compare our present wellbeing with that registered in the first years of our independence: it has risen many times," Ms. Novikova says. "This refers to the level of people's earnings and the number of material assets. Cars are the best example of the latter. You can compare the car fleet of the past and the present. Moreover, the situation is truly much better regarding the parity of consumer ability. At present, a Belarusian can buy many more goods and services than they were able to around 25 years ago."



urgent measures to take the country out of the crisis was adopted. Emission volumes were cut and, in late 1994, the refinancing rate was increased to 480 percent. The National Bank began pursuing a monetary-credit policy traditional for modern capitalist countries. Apart from



## Warehouses are within easy reach

By Uliana Blazhchishina

**A logistical centre selling Belarusian construction materials has recently opened in Kaliningrad, with a visit by Belarus' Architecture and Construction Minister, Anatoly Cherny, to this most western Russian region**

As the project initiator, Mikhail Maryan, states, the site occupies 12 hectares and unites buildings and open-air storage facilities. He explains, "From now on, Kaliningrad businessmen lacking direct ties to Belarusian producers can order products directly from the warehouse. They can come to the centre independently, purchasing all they need at competitive prices."

"Belarusian companies are supplying products not manufactured in the Kaliningrad Region: cement, road metal, glass, bricks, reinforced concrete structures and other materials. With this in mind, no competition with local companies is likely," adds Mr. Cherny.

Representatives of Kaliningrad business circles are demonstrating interest in the project, proposing an offloading terminal for Belarusian raw and construction materials in Chernyakhovsk: a city situated halfway between Kaliningrad and the Russian-Lithuanian border. If plans come to fruition, transportation costs will be cut and it will avoid the unnecessary movement of goods.

Belarusian construction materials enjoy great popularity in the Kaliningrad Region, as the Belarusian Embassy to Kaliningrad informs us. It notes that the Republic exported around 80,000 tonnes of cement (worth \$4.9m) in 2014 and, from January-July 2015, Kaliningrad businessmen bought 40,800 tonnes, worth \$1.7m. Consumption of Belarusian quicklime is rising, up from 15,000 tonnes last year, to 16,450 tonnes already exported so far in 2015.

Against the Rouble's devaluation, many Kaliningrad entrepreneurs are now turning from European construction materials to Belarusian. Importantly, Belarus-made goods are of equal quality and avoid custom fees. This year, we launched direct sales of Belarusian fittings to the most western Russian region, as the Head of the Belarusian Embassy to Kaliningrad, Vasily Gorbatenko, explains. He comments, "Our ties are vital to trade development within the Eurasian Economic Union. We hope the new logistical centre will encourage our business partnership, and must now work to preserve supply networks for Belarusian construction materials (established by Kaliningrad companies during our years of co-operation).

# Falling prices for accommodation

New and second hand flats are becoming cheaper, inspiring Alexander Gorval, the Head of the Construction and Architecture Ministry's Department of Housing Policy, to ponder whether state orders should become an alternative to housing co-operatives and whether shared-equity construction is to enjoy a bright future

By Svetlana Devyatkova

The housing market is seeing prices fall for flats. In H1 of 2015, the cost of each square metre for new-build homes fell by 16 percent, reaching around \$1,200 in Minsk and as low as \$800 in the suburbs.

The price of accommodation built with state support, for those on the waiting list, has remained unchanged since late 2014, despite the long-held premise that inflation affects all spheres. The current cost per square metre countrywide is almost equal to the average salary: Br7m — against an average June salary of Br6,800,000. You've mentioned falling prices for commercial accommodation. Truly, private builders have had to cut their profits: from huge amounts to more modest. If we convert Dollars to Belarusian Roubles, we could argue that commercial accommodation has risen in price, since 99 percent of our citizens receive their salary in Belarusian Roubles.

It was initially planned to build 5 million square metres this year, including 2.5m with state support. Not long ago, these plans were amended, so what's the new figure?

Around 4 million, including individual and rental housing, in addition to accommodation in villages and constructed to state order. This year, around a million fewer square metres will be built for 'subsidised' accommodation: the total figure should reach 1.5 million. The same figures (with state support) are planned for 2016.

Falling volumes definitely affect



Around 4 million square metres of housing to be constructed by end of year

construction organisations. How can this situation be changed?

Everyone is experiencing hard times. Volumes have fallen significantly, as investment programmes have been cut and people lack money. Integrated home-building factories are especially affected, operating at just 80 percent capacity (or less). They would happily export their services but our neighbours, the Russians, are also building less accommodation. Belarusians have been constructing across the Russian regions but are still working to less than full capacity. Company

managers are seeking out orders but, if they fail, employees must take on fewer shifts in order to keep their jobs. However, hope is not lost. We're now negotiating with the Pskov Region; agreements have been signed to build around 360,000 square metres in the Kaluga Region.

In recent years, long delays at construction sites have been rare. Might this problem emerge again?

The key reason for delays is not criminal (as with Terrastroyinvest) but non-payment. If money is not transferred within a deadline, work



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dozen housing and construction consumer co-operatives are to come into operation by winter but no more are planned.

Some have been disbanded.

This has happened at the initiative of housing and construction consumer co-operative members. Seeing that construction of their house is delayed, they seek alternatives. Meanwhile, those on the waiting list (for state support) are satisfied with the system of state order.

Is this mechanism functioning properly?

Absolutely. Over the past six months, 5,158 flats have been built by state order — six times more than in 2014. State orders have replaced housing and construction consumer co-operatives: capital construction managements are now building accommodation using privileged loans and selling them to people on the waiting list.

Russia is planning to abolish shared-equity construction as being too 'risky'.

We have no plans to act similarly. On the contrary, not long ago, we settled all our agreements to minimise possible risk to equity holders at legislative level. We've pegged payments to the National Bank's refinancing rate for those who might decide to give up on construction plans. As a result, people will be saved from significant losses. Moreover, we've a few major organisations able to build accommodation from their own funds, to sell privately on the market. The use of bank loans raises the price of a new flat by around 40 percent so we plan no significant changes.

## Where milk rivers flow

By Piotr Ivanov

Belarusian food products firmly occupy their niche — not only on the domestic market but abroad

Inexpensive and of premium quality, with some produced under strict Soviet regulations, Belarusian food products enjoy great export success. Our MT reporter investigates the source of Belarusian milk, visiting Shippany-ASK Republican Unitary Enterprises, which specialises in meat and milk production.

The enterprise also has agricultural interests, as is common in the livestock business. The enterprise believes that science and practice go hand in hand, mutually supplementing each other. Long ago, it began hosting the National Academy of Sciences' Scientific-Practical Centre Republican Unitary Enterprise. As a result, Shippany-ASK is at the heart

of Belarusian seed development. Elite seeds are tested here, then sold countrywide. In addition, the first Belarusian seed plant is operational on its premises, using innovative technologies of seed drying and processing.

Milk products are the key and, with this in mind, Shippany-ASK completed construction of a major modern milk-commodity complex at the end of 2014; there are few similar in Belarus. It indicates that a farm is operating at a new level — including cattle breeding and managerial duties. New jobs are being taken mostly by young people, with milking staff aged 21-30. They enjoy good salaries (as worthily rival those earned in the capital). Once the complex is fully equipped and operational, salaries should rise.

Maria Smyk — who heads the company — proudly admits, "Young people are attracted not only by our high salaries but by our convenient

working schedule; employees have a day off every four days or two days off after eight days of working. Meanwhile, there's no more hard labour of carrying buckets by hand."

Comfortable working conditions can be very attractive. Employees have access to showers and a room in which to eat their meals. During field work, combine drivers and animal breeders are provided with hot meals free of charge, and are taken to their workplace by bus.

Maria joined the company after graduating from a higher educational establishment, being employed as part of her obligatory student distribution. She explains, "I thought I'd work for a year or two but have chosen to remain here ever since. I've headed the farm and have worked as a livestock specialist but now head the new complex. We also have a man among our milkers; in fact, scientists have proven that cows are more obedient



Seed producer at Shippany-ASK RUE

towards men and provide milk more eagerly, so it shouldn't be surprising." In confirmation, Maria recalls her student internship in the Czech Republic, where men were commonly employed on dairy farms. Belarus' stereotype of milking being a female profession needs to be broken.

In 2014, average milk yield (per cow) stood at 7,828kg; the ambitious target is now 8,500kg, requiring all reserves and scientific innovations to be used. As specialists assert, milk yield depends on the standard of forage, so research is being undertaken into making this as high quality as is possible. Pleasingly, the complex uses high quality forage: vital to successful milk

production. As the saying goes: 'Cows have their milk on their tongues'. With this in mind, it's important to store enough forage for the whole year, and to ensure that standards meet European norms.

Not long ago, Shippany-ASK took the decision to build another modern dairy farm. Healthy profits can be generated where there is high quality, since this is always appreciated and enjoys demand. Director Vitaly Kozlov believes dairy production has a promising future, since it envisages exports. These can help fund future investment into developing the industry and training staff to the highest level.

# It is easy to talk to anyone when you know 18 languages

‘Good morning’, ‘Guten Tag’, meaning ‘hello’ in our language, is heard from a slightly open doorway. The photographer and I realise we have come to the right place. On the threshold is a man around two metres tall with blue eyes, his name is Yuri Zhelezko. This is the man who is 54 years old and can speak 18 languages.

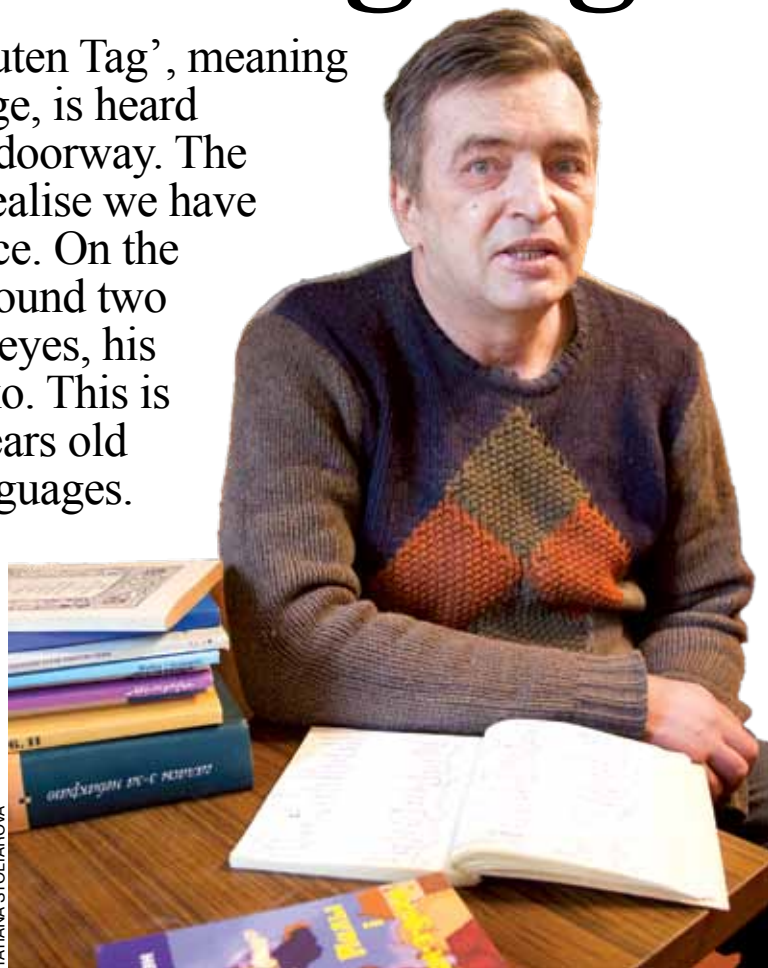
By Yekaterina Panteleeva

The atmosphere in the house of this polyglot matches his reputation: there are books in the wall unit, books on the shelves and books on the table. There are books in English, French, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian and Chinese, almost as if you are in the library of a linguistic university. Yuri Borisovich begins the conversation with literature; “I worked in the Academy of Sciences for a long time, now I am busy with translations. For example I translated *Karlsson-on-the-Roof* from Swedish to the Belarusian language,” and he reaches for the book in its blue jacket. “I’m currently translating Norwegian fairy-tales into our native language.”

Simultaneously Mr. Zhelezko is completing his mastery of the Irish language and the textbooks lie on the table. “It is the 18th language in my list,” he smiles. “There are about one and a half million people who speak it around the world. Of course it’s unlikely I’ll use it or Esperanto, which I’ve also learned, but they both sound beautiful when spoken. It’s like a little bit of luxury for my soul.”

When asked why he chose exactly 18 languages to learn, he instantly replies, “The main thing is to find that fine line between quality and quantity. My magic number for this is 18.” He continues, “I began modestly, simply wanting to learn English, German, French and Polish.” His unassuming nature makes one smile, as if mastery of four foreign languages has been no great effort. Mr. Zhelezko explains, “I started learning languages after ninth form at school, my previous hobby had been swimming but I did not want to continue with it at university so I started learning English. I didn’t see daylight for almost three months, I was so immersed in studying. Consequently, when I was in the tenth form, a miracle occurred, for the first time in all my years at school I could understand the English teacher in the lesson.”

Following this, Mr. Zhelezko studied languages at university, beginning with French and German, by the start of his second year he



Yuri Zhelezko

had mastered Swedish and Italian, the latter inspired by accidentally tuning to Vatican radio. The atmosphere in the room is intellectual and academic. Mr. Zhelezko seldom smiles and is a reserved speaker. “At university, I competed with a student who knew more languages than me. However, whilst I

I think if someone can understand at least 70 percent of all that they read and hear, it means he knows the language

concentrated on the European languages, he studied Slavic languages. Eventually I had to accept defeat.”

I’m intrigued as to how one measures language success as it can’t be measured in distance like a sprint race. He replies, “The person who speaks it more accurately and understands more knows the language better in my opinion. I think if someone can understand at least 70 percent of all that they read and hear, it means he knows the language,” he said.

Yuri’s enormous knowledge should ideally place him for a range of job opportunities, but this may not necessarily be true. The linguist remembers his past, “I was first placed in a college to work as a teacher. I had to teach English, French and Spanish, which I had to learn in two weeks. European languages are not difficult for me.”

Having mastered the basics, a new language only takes three or four weeks. He does admit however, that some languages present a challenge. “Of course not all languages come easy. Five years ago, for example, I started learning Chinese, and I needed a year and a half to learn it. But I still cannot write anything although I read and understand it fairly well.”

I ask him whether there is a secret trick to his learning but he dismisses the idea and tells me it’s down to sheer hard work. He explains, “I developed the following system for myself: at first I read 5-7 textbooks, then I move on to listening. Following that I read fiction. I read books, I write new words, I learn and re-read once again, but this time without a dictionary.” Mr. Zhelezko unexpectedly gets up from the table and opens a case of the wall unit where he displays the proof of his hard work, exercise books covered with writing in different languages. He says that there are about twenty of these large notebooks. I wonder how he retains the languages once learnt. He describes how he repeats them in pairs every two to three weeks; he has no concerns about forgetting the vocabulary with his amazing memory.

During our conversation, Yuri Borisovich switches from Russian into Belarusian, “I think in Belarusian,” he explains. “All the same, it does not matter how many foreign languages I know, I think in my native language. Though dreams, I admit, I see basically in Danish. And in my dreams I speak Andersen’s language better than I do in life.”

Advice from Dr. Zhukova

## Listening to the body



If people have back pain, they have osteochondrosis. What are the basic causes and symptoms of this complex condition?

S.Pavlovsky, Bobruisk

Osteochondrosis refers to dystrophic abnormalities in articular cartilage, which usually affect intervertebral discs. Depending on location, it is possible to single out cervical, thoracic and lumbar osteochondrosis. In English-speaking medical literature, the term refers to another group of orthopaedic diseases, called osteochondropathies in Russian.

Spinal osteochondrosis is initially evident in incorrect posture. As we age, our vascular physiologically changes, breaking alimentionation in intervertebral discs and losing cartilage elasticity and strength, resulting in form and structure changes.

Poor diet, injury, overloading and irrational or asymmetrical demands on the muscles in our back can be harmful to our discs. Incorrect posture, carrying heavy shoulder bags, using soft pillows and mattresses, and failing to warm up before exercise can all cause back injury.

Flat-footedness can be a cause, since the foot fails to provide proper amortisation. Obesity is also a factor, with fatty tissue accumulating; it complicates balance and overloads intervertebral joints. Other causes are likely, but it seems that most people feel symptoms after the age of 35: and with increasing regularity with greater age. However, in recent years, ever more people aged 18 to 30 years have been coming to doctors to complain of back pain. Back injury and straining (either static or through movement), as well as vibration, aggravate the condition. Early display of the disease may be due to weak physical condition, fault in posture and spinal curvature, flat-footedness or being overweight.

The main causes are as follows:

- Hereditary (genetic) predisposition;
- Metabolic imbalance in the organism, infections, and intoxication;
- Being overweight;
- Poor diet (lack of trace elements and hydration);
- Age;
- Backbone injuries (including fracture);
- Poor posture, spinal curvature, superfluous movability (instability) of segments of backbone, or flat-footedness;
- Adverse ecological conditions;
- Inactivity;
- The lifting of weights, or repetitive or sudden movement (turning, bending or stretching);
- Standing, sitting or lying in uncomfortable positions;
- Lifting and carrying of weight, or other work placing pressure on discs and the spine;

- Excessive physical loads;
- An unevenly developed musculoskeletal system;
- Backbone overloading connected with diseases of the feet;
- Wearing uncomfortable footwear, including high heels;
- Pregnancy;
- An immediate end of regular training for sportsmen;
- Nerve strain, and stressful situations;
- Smoking.

Symptoms:

People suffering from osteochondrosis complain of constant aching back pain, often accompanied by numbness and aching of the extremities. In the absence of adequate treatment, there may be weight loss or atrophy of the extremities.

Basic displays of osteochondrosis:

- Constant aching back pain;
- Numbness and aching extremities;
- Increased pain from sudden movement, physical activity, weight lifting, coughing or sneezing;
- Reduced flexibility, and muscle cramps.

Osteochondrosis of the cervical spine brings pains in the hands and shoulders, and headaches. Vertebral artery syndrome may be accompanied by head noises, dizziness, colourful spots before the eyes, and a pulsing headache. It is often caused by bone enlargement, intervertebral disc hernia, arthrosis of the intervertebral joint, and by sudden movement following stimulation of spinal receptors. It can aggravate coronary or cardiovascular pathologies and arterial hypertension.

Osteochondrosis of the thoracic backbone brings thorax pain (as of something being stuck in the chest area).

Osteochondrosis of the lumbosacral backbone brings pain around the waist, extending to the sacrum and lower extremities, and sometimes into the pelvis. It affects the nerve roots (for discal hernia and bone enlargements), and brings shooting pain and extreme sensitivity, as well as muscle weakness, and slower reflexes.

Complications include disc hernia (spinal disc herniation or backbone hernia), kyphosis (spinal curvature), and radiculitis.

Next time, we will discuss methods of treatment and prevention of osteochondrosis.

By Tatiana Zhukova  
Doctor of higher category,  
M.D. Ph.D.

# Truly gifted hands

Belarusian team captures two gold medals at 43rd *World Skills Competition-2015*, held in Brazilian San Paolo

By Alexander Benkovsky

Belarus was taking part in the major international competition for the first time, competing among 1,192 contestants, from 59 countries, across 50 competencies. Our team performed brilliantly, with Alesya Nazarova (from Brest) competing in hairdressing art and Olga Zakrevskaya (from the Mstislavl District's Kopachi village) in the clothes design nomination.

We chat to them on why 'blue collar' vocational work is deserving of attention.

Our team was welcomed home with flags, flowers, smiles and congratulations. Tired but satisfied, our participants were smiling — despite a 13-hour flight from San Paolo to Istanbul, a night spent in the Turkish capital and then three more hours travel to Minsk. Moreover, the same day, ladies planned to journey onwards to their parents' homes.

With this in mind, we agreed to speak about the contest the next day, when Olga told us that she was already helping her primary school teacher mother with making a new dress, ready for the start of the academic year on September 1st.

The competition was tough, requiring up to 10 hours of work a day (for four days) over five modules. Participants had to show their skills in various aspects, including tailoring and cutting patterns. The professionalism required meant that three times fewer participants were registered for this nomination than for others. As Olga explains, the idea was to demonstrate the techniques used in your



Alesya Nazarova and Olga Zakrevskaya

home country, and the speed with which they could be applied.

Irina Morozova, Olga's teacher from Minsk's State Professional-Technical College of Clothing Manufacture, proudly admits that Olga was acknowledged the best in Europe! Only those from China, Indonesia and South Korea performed better.

Speaking of her chosen profession, Olga underlines, "I wish that working specialties were more appreciated." This is already true abroad

where working with your hands is valued alongside university education. The young designer decided her future profession during her 7th year at school; she took part in manual training Olympiads and this became her life.

Alesya Nazarova competed in eight modules, demonstrating everything in just four days, from hair dyeing and perming to hair tattooing. Unlike traditional hairdressing contests, where participants have time

to prepare, the event required strict time limits, and work in front of the judges.

Alesya has been fond of hairdressing since childhood and decided to continue her hobby professionally, taking a position at a Brest salon. She admits that it's a true challenge to find a master-professional and jokes that she's had to neglect her loyal customers while preparing for the contest. She'll need to sort out their hair on her return!

## Playing football on the marshes

By Alexander Kurets

Hot summer weather fails to hamper International *Sporovo Haymaking Festival*, held in Bereza District

Nature lovers from Belarus, Russia, Poland, Germany and elsewhere recently gathered for the 10th European Haymaking Championship — the key event of the grand festival. Fans anticipated surprises until the last minute and weren't disappointed.

Everything looked wonderful at Sporovo Reserve. A chain of cars was parked far from the marshes while trading tents were placed near the forest, selling cold kvass and ice-cream: a sure hit on the hot summer day. Those ready to scythe stood fixing their tools, and some addressed local master Alexander Levkovich to have their scythes clenched. He knows his business perfectly, having competed in the festival for several years. Last season, he took part but, this time, decided to help others.

On welcoming all the entrants, the Chairman of the Bereza District Executive Committee, Yuri Narkovich, joined the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Andrey Kovkhuto, in wishing success to each team. He stated



Haymakers' self-possession worthy of envy

that the *Sporovo Haymaking Festival* is a calling card of the Bereza District. The international level event helps preserve the reserve's habitat for rare birds and animals, while protecting Red Book plants. In recent years, over 500 hectares of the reserve have been cleared of grass and bushes.

Last year, the reserve hosted the European Championship for the first time, including a team from remote Yakutia. Men brought their own scythes to the prestigious competition, covering thousands of kilometres by plane. Russia's Vyacheslav Okorokov and Fiodor Rokhlev admitted that, having taken part in such events for many years, they remain impressed

by Sporovo's marshes. They were extremely tired after completing their line but, on looking at the winners — the Kartuziane team, from the Bereza District's Peskovskoe JSC — they admitted that they'd met their match. Vladimir Zdanovich and Vasily Novik know the local marshes perfectly but, importantly, have trained hard in using scythes.

This year, Yakutia's team failed to attend, so Kartuziane's main rivals were from the Postavy District's Zhilinskije. Not long ago, the latter won first place at a similar event in Ural's Arti. Notably, the skilled scything men found a true challenge in defeating the Kartuziane pair. "I'd love to be

taught a master class by these guys," admitted Piotr Korol, from Zhilinskije. "Their endurance and mastery are impressive!" The Bereza scythemen were acknowledged best in the team and personal competitions, finishing their team scythe in just 11 minutes and 15 seconds. Zhilinskije came second (yielding 4 minutes and 41 seconds behind) and third place was occupied by Kakorytskiya Asilki, from Belarus' Drogichin District (taking 17 minutes and 19 seconds).

The personal competition was won by Vladimir Zdanovich, Vasily Novik and Nikolay Yalchik, while Bereza Meat-and-Milk Factory JSC won the football tournament.

Of course, such events have no losers. All participants were in high spirits, being entertained by amateur troupes and culinary delicacies. Nature lovers were invited to an observation ground from where, using binoculars, they could observe aquatic warblers, bitterns, daker-hens, spotted flycatchers and other rare birds.

After the results had been announced, guests did not hurry to leave, enjoying the relaxed atmosphere of the occasion. Many have said that they look forward to the next European Haymaking Championship in Sporovo.

## Textbook-navigator leads towards knowledge

By Valeria Gavrusheva

Electronic textbooks were launched four years ago as a pilot project and have been followed by the testing of various technological innovations. In 2013 and 2014, electronic diaries and journals came into operation.

An electronic textbook-navigator suitable for such devices as mobile phones and interactive panels was discussed within the post-Soviet space 15 years ago and is now being developed for 10th grade chemistry students. Hypertext organisation allows pupils to move between chapters, paragraphs, dictionaries and tests, explains Irina Shevlyakova-Borzenko, the Head of the National Education Institute's Educational Centre.

The Candidate of Philological Sciences describes the advantages, saying, "You can remotely access resources such as external web-pages, to research further. Moreover, students can model processes via a virtual laboratory."

As far as traditional printed textbooks are concerned, school-children are provided with these at the beginning of the academic year. There are 499 varieties of textbooks and study guides at institutions of general secondary education.

## Shark young on the way

By Nadezhda Dekola

Cat sharks Kai and Gerda — who received their new home at the Open Ocean Minsk's Centre of Oceanography — are soon to become parents: recently, they laid two eggs (each half the size of an adult's palm)



"This is a true event for us. Indian coral cat sharks give birth rarely in captivity," explains the Centre's Director, Alexey Azarov. It takes eight months for the eggs to hatch but visitors to the Centre can watch the embryos' development: daily changes are evident through the thin walls of the shells. After a few months, they'll receive their tails and fins and, later, these small predators will break their shells, to begin searching for food.

Kept in a special incubator, the eggs and quality of water is being supervised by the local children's scientific oceanographic society. Some already boast experience: the first cat shark at the Centre was born in Minsk four years ago (its egg received from Indonesia).



French gendarmes block migrants along a road to prevent them access to train tracks which lead to the Channel Tunnel in Frethun

# EU free movement put into question at Vienna summit

## EU politicians are threatening to dismantle the bloc's free-movement rights amid calls to revamp asylum rules, due to the surge in the number of people seeking refuge in Europe

On August 27th, the bodies of up to 50 people, who had suffocated, were found in the back of a refrigerated food truck on the outskirts of Vienna. News of the tragedy came the same day EU and Western Balkan leaders and ministers met in the Austrian capital for a summit on migration issues. "We cannot continue like this with a minute of silence every time we see people dying", the EU's Foreign Policy Chief, Federica Mogherini, said, referring to previous EU gestures of respect for migrant deaths.

Earlier the same day, Sebastian Kurz, Austria's Foreign Minister, warned media the EU's asylum regime, the so-called Dublin regulation, which requires point-of-entry

countries to process claims, risks collapse.

"I believe that we will need a quick solution for the entire system because otherwise countries will go at it alone and no longer adhere to spirit of the European Union," he said, adding the EU should consider letting people apply for asylum from their home countries. "We should think about the possibility of making an asylum request in the country of origin in order to ensure better redistribution to European Union countries". Earlier Mr. Kurz said that a European Union 'without borders inside is in danger' if its external borders aren't secure. Italy's Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni made similar comments, "The way things are going, there is a risk

of Schengen [the EU's border-free zone] being called into question and having to go back to the old frontiers," he said.

### Beginning of the end of current rules

Maintaining open internal borders is sacrosanct to the European Commission. But the Brussels executive is now becoming more vocal on the possibility of reforming the so-called 'Dublin' rules, which, if applied correctly, would require EU states to return the vast majority of asylum seekers to their EU point-of-entry — Hungary and Italy. Commission Spokeswoman Natasha Bertaud said 'structural changes' will have to be introduced into the system. The

'structural changes' involve relocation and redistribution of asylum seekers in times of crisis.

The commission has already proposed a new mechanism to cover Italy and Greece for the next two years. But it's planning to propose a more permanent solution by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the need for asylum reform and for immediate action was underlined by Germany. Chancellor Angela Merkel said in Vienna the 'Dublin system isn't working'. German Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said the same. "What you are witnessing now is the end of the Dublin system", Kris Pollet, a policy advisor at the Brussels-based European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

## China detains over Tianjin blasts

**Twelve people have been 'formally detained' in China after the massive explosions in Tianjin in August**

Among them are the chairman, vice-chairman and three deputy general managers of the company that owned the warehouse containing dangerous chemicals. On top of the arrests 11 officials and port executives have been accused of dereliction of duty or abuse of power.

News of the detentions comes a day after the head of China's work safety regulator, Yang Dongliang, was suspended for corruption. He was also a former vice mayor of Tianjin. The state prosecutor said officials from a range of agencies, including Tianjin's land resources, work safety and customs offices have been irresponsible and negligent.

## Western Europe sizzles in heatwave

**Western Europe is sweltering in the first big heat wave of the summer, with several days of +30 degree temperatures or more in many places, while in some areas the end cannot be predicted**

Temperatures of +40 have been the norm in Spain for days, but Portugal, France, Belgium, Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland and northern Italy are also in for a scorcher. Denmark and the whole of Scandinavia are also going to feel the heat, although a little less so. For Rome it is nothing exceptional, even if at this time of year it is normally several degrees cooler. Italian ice cream sellers are rubbing their hands together.

## Morocco sets off on 10 year plan to hold back the desert



**The road to Fam El Hism in south eastern Morocco is a lonely, hot and dusty one. The harsh climate and low rainfall means little grows here.**

According to Morocco's High Commission for Water, Forests and the Fight against Desertification, 80 percent of the country is prone to desertification. The changing climate conditions are most noticeable in places like Tanzida where palm trees used to be part of an oasis.

Moreover, rain does not always provide welcome relief. Long periods of drought are often followed by severe flash flooding that destroys everything in its path.

"In the oasis, when it rains, it's stormy rain with no benefit. It leads to soil erosion. In the past, 30 or 40 years ago, the width of Hajjaj River was ten metres but today, in some areas, the width of this river could reach 500 metres," says the Deputy Chairman of Skoura rural commune, Jamal Yacoubi. The High

Commission says the scarcity of water and the moving sand dunes are the worst challenges the local populations have to face. River beds are widening every year, making it difficult for local populations to move freely. When bridges are destroyed by the floods, villages are sometimes isolated for weeks.

A member of the local council of the rural commune of Souk Llakhmis Dades says the commune is suffering and needs help.

"Nobody is helping us. As you can see, there is no water in the river and the wells are starting to dry up. From where shall we bring water? We need a little bit of help to be encouraged," says Hussein Sharafi.

With the help of its international partners, the High Commission is implementing a new ten year national plan to fight desertification until 2024.

This plan is based on awareness, partnership and the participation of local, regional and national players.

Its strategy is based on reforestation, the regeneration of vegetation cover and plans to prevent forest fires that destroy 3,000 hectares every year.



## Artist paints with fire and plastic waste

**Hard at work in his Johannesburg studio, South African artist Mbongeni Buthelezi is busy making something from nothing**

Discarded pieces of plastic, including bags and drinks wrappers, are this artist's medium. With it he crafts unique, colourful portraits. The plastic bubbles and pops under Buthelezi's fingertips, which are calloused from manipulating the hot, molten material he uses to create his large-scale abstract pieces.

The 49-year-old artist began working with plastic in his final year

at art school. He says he chose to create artworks using discarded plastic to draw attention and stand out from the crowd. "With water colour and all other mediums or media that I have experimented with in the past, there was a time where I felt that I'm hitting the ceiling, I'm not growing anymore. I wanted to be noticed and I wanted to catch attention, because I knew also that I'm moving into a career where you have to be really special to be able to even make a living out of it." The plastic's rough texture evokes the gritty reality of life in South African townships.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**





River of Time exhibition, at National Art Museum, displays around a hundred works by over sixty painters

# Pictures that are windows, through which we view the past

*Our Collections* project at National Art Museum showcases works by Belarusian painters, celebrating their jubilees in 2015

By Veniamin Mikheev

The *River of Time* exhibition displays around 100 paintings, graphic art works, sculptures and decorative-and-applied arts, by over 60 artists. Such group exhibitions have become a tradition at the museum, being organised since 2008. This is already the ninth and, in some years, several such exhibitions have been held within a single season.

The event allows us

to learn about some artists lesser known, as well as those famous for their aesthetically and historically insightful works. All will return to the museum's depository after the exhibition. Some works are obviously the result of greater skill than others, but each presents a certain vision of its time, the world, and wider philosophies.

The exhibition mainly includes works from the 1950s-1980s, the time of



A. Gugel's *Teenagers at the River*, 1953

Soviet and late-Soviet ('classical' art). It shows not only individual characteristics but the evolution of ideological and expressive features from 20th century art.

Most of those whose works are on show are known to Belarusian lovers of national art, being members of the Belarusian Union of Artists. However, some lived and worked in other countries: M. Aisenstadt and V. Rutsai lived in Moscow, for example.

Yanislav Volokita and



M. Sevruc's *At the Haymaking*, 1953



A. Kotov's *Long-livers of Zaslavl Land*, 1980

Vladimir Guletsky are lesser known, the former having created illustrations of a narrative and emotional character (kept only in the country's major museum in Minsk). It's thought that Minsk office clerk Albert Pavlovich, who was a writer and author, used the pseudonym.

Vladimir Guletsky was born in Vileika, but lived most of his life in Siberia, moving finally to Rostov-

on-Don. Some of his works came to the museum from a post-war exhibition of Belarusian art, which opened in Moscow in 1944 and in

Minsk in 1945. During the war years, he served in the central headquarters of the partisan movement.

Works are being presented in a variety of ways, with some significant pieces taken from the permanent exhibition of Belarusian art on display in the new museum building: works by S. Kovrovsky, M. Aisenstadt, M. Sevruc, A. Bembel, A. Gugel and N. Zalozny.

Works from this period seem contained in their own 'time capsule' yet retain spiritual and material significance.

They are windows through which we view other worlds and times, feelings and expectations. They offer universal chords of resonance.

## Ruslan Aslanov: our guy in Sofia

By Yuliana Leonovich

**Junior Eurovision jury admit this year's finals of national selective round to be among the most contentious — with seven soloists, one duo and two bands taking part**

The professional musical jury and TV viewers were unanimous in choosing Ruslan Aslanov, 13, to represent our country in Bulgaria's Sofia in November. Signing *Magic*, the young artiste will compete in the *Junior Eurovision-2015* International Musical Contest.

Ruslan is no novice on stage, having first competed in the selection round in 2013, reaching the top ten. His second attempt earned him the greatest number of points and a clear victory. Meanwhile, TV viewers will remember Ruslan from the Children's *New Wave* competition of



Ruslan Aslanov moves the jury

2014, in which he was placed third. The young singer also reached the finals of Ukraine's *Voice* children's contest, having been coached by Tina Karol.

Ruslan admits that he values all victories, saying, "I don't distinguish some as being more important than others. I prepare for each as if it were my last chance. Before singing, I al-

ways speak in my thoughts to the person, very close to me, who is, unfortunately, not with me at the time. However, I know that this person is helping me. I devote this song to all those who need to harness a belief in magic." Ruslan admits that he'd love to duo with Yuri Vashchuk, who represented Belarus in the 2014 adult *Eurovision* contest (most widely known as Teo). "I'd ask him whether he really can bake a cheesecake as wonderfully as he sings about it," Ruslan smiles.

People's Artiste of Russia Edgard Zapashny was among the first to offer advice to Ruslan. He visited the Belarusian TV and Radio Company studio to support young artistes during their rehearsals and urged them to relax, embrace a feeling of confidence and enjoy themselves, regardless of the outcome, while 'coming on stage as winners'.

## Recognition from international jury

By Dmitry Sobolev

**Vladimir Dmitruk claims third prize and People's Choice Award at Elena Obraztsova International Competition for Young Opera Singers, hosted by St. Petersburg**

The international jury awarded Vladimir third prize while his People's Choice Award was the result of public Internet voting and among the audience, during the third round at the hall. Another Belarusian representative, Alexander Roslovets, was awarded a diploma at the competition.

The Elena Obraztsova International Competition for Young Opera Singers was being organised for the tenth time but this was the first time without its founder; it was dedicated to the memory of the outstanding singer.

# Amazing voice that has conquered the world

Nadezhda Kucher, winner of the international opera singer competition at the BBC Cardiff *Singer of the World*, is ranked alongside those who have stood on the Olympic podium. At the Olympic Games however, an entire team is usually sent, whereas in this case, all the expectations are concentrated on one person. We spoke to Nadezhda in Minsk after her triumphant return home where she was looking forward to resting and meeting her relatives.

By Irina Ovsepyan

**Nadezhda, let's talk about your victory in the competition *Singer of the World*, was this your very first attempt?**

Two years ago, I sent an application, but only managed to reach the live auditions.

**How difficult was the preparation for the competition?**

The competition has the status of the best in the world, the most prestigious. It is possible to say that I was preparing for it from the very beginning of my musical education. All my creative life up to that point was preparation in some way for the competition in Cardiff. I had to show different styles, languages and emotions. I hope the programme will be enjoyed by the public, because it is not just a popular event in England, it's a show for the whole world. I have never sung in front of so many cameras, it was only in the hotel where they did not film you. It was unpleasant for many guys but I tried not to notice it.

**You graduated from the Minsk Musical College with a degree in musicology. How did it happen, that you started to sing?**

In the 4th year we were to follow an optional course, we could choose any instrument or type of composition so I chose vocal training.

**Did you have immediate success?**

My first piece of good luck came at the end of the 4th year when I passed the academic examinations with other vocalists, I sang a small programme and I remember being noticed for it at the time. Having graduated from college, I went to work in the chorus of the opera theatre where I spent three years. After that, I entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where I studied under Tamara Novichenko. She is a legendary teacher and played a decisive role in my development as a singer.

**And how did you become a soloist at the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre? The Urals are a long way away.**

The conductor Teodor Currentzis works there and I went to him not really to Perm. If he had been somewhere else I would've gone there to work with him.

**Currentzis is a very well-**

**known and talented conductor, but his character is not all sweetness?**

Yes, but many of us have difficult aspects to our characters. To produce such a result is complex. I mostly work on Teodor's projects and we have performed a great deal together! We recorded a track using the music of the French classicist Jean-Philippe Rameau, also 'The Wedding' by Stravinsky that will be released soon. I have sung 'The Requiem' by Brahms, the 'Carmina Burana' by Orff, the 'Indian Queen,' all projects on a grand scale that he has designed

## MT'S REFERENCE:

Nadezhda Kucher is a soprano opera singer. She was born in 1983 in Minsk. She graduated from the Minsk Musical College named after M. Glinka and entered the St. Petersburg State Conservatory. She is a soloist of the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre. Repeated winner of various vocal competitions and the winner of the BBC Cardiff *Singer of the World* international opera competition, where she represented Belarus.

and conducted, they caused a stir both in Russia, and in Europe.

**Do you like the style of work of Currentzis?**

We have worked together for a long time, and I decided I needed something else. Teodor does not work in the bel canto tradition, while I always dreamt of it. He does not like French music, while I adore it.

**Do you have a favourite part something that is uniquely to you?**

There are many favourite roles but I especially like Marfa in the 'Tsar's Bride', because it was my first big role. My love of opera probably started with it: it made a strong impression upon me even when I was still at college. When I began to sing, I wanted to sing Marfa. I already knew many entire operas by heart. When I en-



run out naked however, not at all. If a director is only looking for an outrageous performance then it will never be a success.

**Do you have to practise much?**

When I am preparing for a new role as I am at the moment, I try to practise it every day. I have a month to prepare for the part, which is more than enough. I can learn it in a week if I sit for days on end but I don't like to do it this way. While I need to learn the material, in respect of vocal practice, if I have a chance to rest, then I keep silent. I was preparing for a month for the competition in Cardiff. The Minsk Musical College gave me a classroom three times a week, where I practised with the concertmaster. When I am at home I have a certain claustrophobia because it is small and the acoustics are not good, there are neighbours and I do not want to torment them! Working at home is always difficult for me, so they really helped by allowing me a room to work in.

**Your ties with Belarus and Minsk are not broken then?**

My mother, sisters and nephews live here. When I have free time I try to come to visit but it happens only about once a year. I miss Minsk very much, I feel good here.

**Do you have a family or any personal plans?**

I have a family and my plans do include children. My husband is a musician, beginning his conductor studies at the Moscow Conservatory.

**What is in your tour suitcase?**

Not much, because I do not like to carry heavy bags. A travel pillow, which I take on the plane, is essential, concert dresses, shoes and sheet music. The rest could be bought wherever I'm going.

**Like a real traveller! After all many people consider that life on stage is full of glamour**

Well, everything sparkles on the stage!



## Virtual expression of new concept

By Valentin Orlov

### 'Pleasure for the Eyes' at 22nd Minsk International Listapad Film Festival

Igor Sukmanov, the Director of Listapad's Feature Film Programmes, explains the concept, saying, "In the best films, the major senses are revealed not through dialogue by in mise en scenes: the playing of light and shadow, and the drama of colours and interwoven threads. It's a true pleasure to watch a film whose secrets are revealed via subtle nuances. You can enjoy the syntaxes and punctuation of film language, which create a melody."

Every year, the festival offers a new concept, which finds visual expression in a poster. This year's is created by artist Alexander Kamenets, with light blue dominating: the colour of the sky. A numerical row of the number two creates the hypnotic illusion of movement and a mesmerising stereoscopic image. Every year, Listapad features films by directors young and experienced, across various nominations, including feature and documentary films. Last year, it was held under the slogan 'Alternative Cinema'. This year, audiences will also enjoy a diverse programme, with something for every taste.

## Pictures returned to homeland

By Veniamin Mikheev

### Pictures by Goravsky, Bobrovsky and Ruszczyc returned to Belarus

Belgazprombank JSC has returned works by Apollinary Goravsky, Grigory Bobrovsky and Ferdinand Ruszczyc to Belarus, expanding its corporate art collection. The acquisitions have been made as part of the Art-Belarus national historical-cultural project, aiming to bring works by Belarus-born artists back to their homeland.

Apollinary Goravsky made a significant contribution to the culture of Belarus and Russia in the second half of the 19th century. The National Art Museum already holds several dozen of his pieces. The bank notes that the castle landscape purchased reveals the master's previously unknown romantic side." Grigory Bobrovsky's *In Summer: A Windy Day* is a wonderful acquisition, since Belarus holds no other work by the great artist, who was one of Chagall's teachers.

Belarusian nature is shown in all its beauty in *Landscape: Viliya*, by Ferdinand Ruszczyc. Our country already boasts ownership of several of his works and this recent purchase by the bank is a worthy addition.

# Medals from Beijing

IAAF World Championship in Beijing brings gold for Belarusian Marina Arzamasova in 800m sprint, and hurdles bronze for Alina Talay

By Igor Leshin

The winner of last year's world forum, Eunice Sum, was viewed as the favourite, while the Kenyans also looked impressive. However, Belarusian Marina Arzamasova led the distance, judging her rivals' strategy early on, where they tried to dictate a slow pace, rather than allowing her to speed ahead.

Marina performed brilliantly, leaving Sum and Canada's Melissa Bishop behind. Her speed, which became apparent in early rounds, is now needed at the Rio Olympics, to be held next year.

After the race, Marina undertook a lap of honour, as champion. At the same time, the Bird's Nest Stadium was hosting the awards ceremony for the 100m hurdles,



Marina Arzamasova celebrates victory in final race

with Belarusian Alina Talay claiming bronze. On her path to success, Alina gradually improved her speed: from an initial 12.87 seconds to a personal record in the semi-finals of 12.70 seconds. In the finals, she repeated the Belarusian record, ahead of such prominent athletes as America's Brianna Rollins and Sharika Nelvis and the UK's Tiffany Porter.

President Alexander Lukashenko has congratulated Marina and Alina on their IAAF World Championship medals.



Alina Talay pleased with her result

## Leader won't lose ground

By Yegor Glebov

**Belarusian grandmaster Alexey Alexandrov successful at Fischer Random Chess competition**

Taking silver at the St. Petersburg Summer tournament, the Minsker scored five points across seven rounds. The event, which honours 11th world champion American Robert Fischer, differs from classical chess in placing figures randomly on the board, to avoid 'typical' chess openings. In our computer era, this is especially acute. Working from a place more usual of the 20th or 30th move, it requires greater original thinking and the ability to calculate variants, using endgame strategies.

This year, Alexey Alexandrov won the classic *MinskOpen-2015*. The leader of the Belarusian national team plans to perform at the European Rapid & Blitz Chess Championship, to be hosted by the Belarusian capital this December.

## Jeff Platt moves to Moscow CSKA

**Belarusian ice-hockey player Jeff Platt, 30, has left Yaroslavl's Lokomotiv to transfer to Moscow CSKA for a year**

From 2008-2013, Mr. Platt played for Dinamo Minsk, fulfilling over 200 matches with the 'bisons', and earning over 100 points. From Dinamo Minsk, he moved to Yaroslavl's Lokomotiv where, last season, the forward earned 30 points (17+13) across 60 matches in the regular championship and 1 point (1+0) across six play-off matches.

## Award with prospects for the future

Darya Skrypnik (under 52kg) claims bronze at Judo World Championship, held in Astana

By Kirill Karin

On the way towards her medal, unassuming Darya defeated Mexican Jennifer Cruz and French Annabelle Euranie, but lost to Brazilian Érika Miranda. In the consolation tournament, she faced Russian Natalia Kuzytina: a world and European multi-prizewinner. Dasha easily overwhelmed Kuzytina and, in the match for third place, smashed Gulbadam Babamuratova from Turkmenistan, in the best performance of her career.

Dasha, 28, is an experienced athlete and has been a member of the Belarusian national team for more than a year. This was the last champion-



Darya Skrypnik

ship before the 2016 Olympiad and the Astana event gathered the world's strongest judo wrestlers, making her win all the more worthy. Our hopes are now with Dasha for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

## Interesting football autumn

Both Belarusian representatives within European tournaments to continue through group stages

By Igor Grishin

After the return match in the Serbian capital, Borisov's head coach, Alexander Yermakovich, declared the defeat by Partizan (1:2) as far from a disappointment. Importantly, the Belarusian team is now through to the group stage of the Champions League, thanks to a single goal in their away match; at home, they won 1:0.

Borisov BATE is among the top 32 clubs in Europe for the fifth time and is to play in Group E, alongside Spain's Barcelona, Italy's Roma and German Bayer (from Leverkusen). The Belarusian team is already familiar with experienced Barca, having met in the 2011/12 Champions League. At that time, the dangerous Catalan squad smashed our club at home — 5:0. No doubt, the forthcoming European Cup is likely to present another challenge for BATE.

Minsk Dinamo's away match within the Europa League's play off round saw it lose to Salzburg — 2:0. However, across two matches, the Germans lost in after-match penalties — 3:2. As a result, Dinamo goes through to the next round for the



Alexander Gutor undoubtedly hero of the match

second time. Belarus' vice champions proved to be stronger than the Austrian champion.

Monaco hosted the draw for the group stage of the Europa League, with Minsk Dinamo placed in Group E, alongside Spain's Villarreal, Czech Viktoria Plzen and Austria's Rapid. All the teams are strong, with Villarreal demonstrating steady success in the Spanish championships, and having played once in the semi-finals

of the UEFA Cup, the Champions League and the Europa League.

Viktoria Plzen is the Czech champion and a holder of the Super Cup, while Vienna's Rapid has been Austria's champion 32 times.

Irrespective of the draw results for BATE and Dinamo, fans are expected to enjoy an interesting football autumn. Lionel Messi is expected to take part: the best European football player of the 2014/2015 season.

# Casting of the week



Minsk hosts casting for cats to play major role in children's *Cat* musical, by the Sverdlovsk Academic Theatre of Musical Comedy

## Exhibitions

### NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street

Until 6th September. *Dedicated to 70th Anniversary of Great Victory*

Until 27th September.

*Belarusian Iconostas*

Until 27th September. *A*

*Husband, a Man, a Warrior*

Until 28th September.

*Fabrics of Thoughts*

Until 2nd November. *Great*

*Patriotic War in Art*

Until 30th December. *Celebrating*

*Victory Day in Museum*

### NATIONAL HISTORY

### MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 6th September. *From Hoop*

*Skirts and Tournures to Modern*

Until 6th September. *Three*

*Stories about War*

Until 13th September.

*Fascination art-project*

Until 15th September. *Blue-Green*

Until 31st December. *Major*

*Presentation of Museum Relics:*

*79 Steps Inside History*

### WANKOWICZ HOUSE-

### MUSEUM

33A Internatsionalnaya Street

Until 25th December. *A Prophet*

*of his Time. Adam Mickiewicz.*

*Illustrations and Medals*

### MAXIM BOGDANOVICH

### LITERARY MUSEUM

7A M. Bogdanovich Street

Until 1st December. *Maxim's*

*Garden*

### KOMSOMOLSKOE LAKE

Until 14th September. *Art-Islands*

### VLADISLAV GOLUBOK

### PARLOUR

14 Starovilenskaya Street

Until 13th September.

*Beautiful and Famous*

## Theatres

### BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square

08.09. The Tsar Bride

09.09. Laurencia 10.09. Carmen

### BELARUSIAN STATE ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street

Tours of the Sverdlovsk Academic Theatre of Musical

Comedy 05 and 06.09. Catherine the Great

07.09. Aunt Charlie 08.09. The Pit 09.09. Fiddler

on the Roof 10.09. Park of the Soviet Period

### MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street

04.09. Oedipus 05.09. Pane Kokhanku

06.09. Tricks of Khanuma 08.09. Viva Commedia!

09.09. Notes of a Tired Romance 10.09. Love Circle

### YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street

04.09. The Black Lady of Nesvizh

05.09. Office 06.09. Don Juan

09.09. The Seagull 10.09. Local Cabaret

### THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTOR

13 Pobediteley Avenue

04.09. Abduction of Yelena

05.09. Who Laughs Last 06.09. The Mechanical

Man 08 and 09.09. #13 10.09. Pygmalion

### REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street

10.09. Eternal Song

### MODERN ART THEATRE

5 Oktyabrskaya Street

06.09. Simply Karlsson

### MINSK CONCERT HALL

5 Oktyabrskaya Street

08 and 10.09. Dozen of Red Roses

### REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN ARMY

3 Krasnoarmeiskaya Street

05.09. The Princess and the Soldier

# Kaleidoscope of history unveiled

## September of decades and centuries past comes to life

**September 4th.** In 1925, Prof. Pavel Kuts — a scientist in the field of industrial heat energy, a Doctor of Technical Sciences, and an Honoured Inventor of Belarus — was born in the village of Porechie, in the Grodno District.

**September 5th.** In 1903, Belarusian poet Mikhas Yavor (Mikhail Karas) was born. The member of the liberation movement in Western Belorussia praised the Nieman as Belarus' symbol of glory.

**September 6th.** In 1914, state figure Mikhail Minkovich was born in the village of Kireevo, in the Mogilev Region's Gorky District. Over his career, he was a deputy, a first deputy and Minister of Culture of the BSSR.

**September 7th.** In 1885, amateur crop developer Ivan Sikora was born. He was among Michurin's followers in Belarus.

**September 8th.** In 1920, Ivan Vysotsky was born. He became a member of the partisan movement in the Brest Region, was a squadron commander, and participated in numerous fights.

**September 9th.** In 1954,

state figure and historian Valery Tolkachev was born in the village of Terebezhev, in the Stolín District. The Candidate of Historical Sciences has been Rector of the Labour and Social Protection Ministry's



Republican Institute of Qualification Improvement since 2011.

**September 10th.** In 1950, Doctor of Chemical Sciences Anatoly Ratko was born. A scientist in the field of colloid chemistry, he has written over 220 scientific papers and created 53 inventions.

**September 4th.** In 1920,

the marmalade factory began its work.

**September 4th.** In 1952, Minsk's first trolley bus began serving the Railway Station-Kruglaya (Round) Square route.

**September 5th.** In 1928, Belgoskino cinema set up the Soviet Belarus Film Studio in Leningrad (known as Belarusfilm since 1946).

**September 5th.** In 1951, the Belarusian Peace Protection Committee was established at the First All-Belarusian Conference of Peace Supporters, in Minsk.

**September 5th.** In 1989, a branch of the Yanka Kupala Literary Museum opened in the Logoisk District: Trenches.

**September 5th.** In 2001, Minsk's Mogilevskaya metro station opened (the 20th in a row)

**September, 6th.** In 2002, the Belarusian Republican Youth Union's charter was approved at a joint session of the Belarusian Youth Union and the Belarusian Patriotic Union.

**September, 7th.** In 1931, KIM Stocking-Knitted Factory — one of the largest light industry enterprises countrywide — began its work in Vitebsk.

**September 7th.** In 1972, the Powder Metallurgy Scientific-Research Institute was established at the Belarusian Polytechnic Institute.