

2018

From the editor

Forward-looking

Happy New Year 2018 everyone! As ever, we're summing up the results of the previous year, with politicians, economists and sociologists having their say. Naturally, at this time of year, we also tend to assess our own life, seeing how our actions fit with the global footstep of the planet. It's a time for making personal plans, and setting our own goals, just as in business, to avoid wasting precious time. The hours march on but, if we set clear objectives, there's a better chance of success.

As the year draws to a close, people often ask 'What are your plans for the future?' There's nothing unusual in planning ahead, either by a few days or weeks. However, long-term planning is another thing entirely: thinking of where you'd like to be in five or ten years' time. It's so difficult to make one's life run according to a detailed programme; after all, fate often interferes! Nonetheless, there are advantages to having targets in sight. When there's a tangible goal ahead of us, we gain focus.

I've been wondering what it means for us to be 'cultured'. Naturally, education is important, but there's more to achieving an understanding of culture than formal learning. Those without prestigious diplomas can demonstrate intelligence and sensitivity, while an extensive education does not necessarily bring a sympathetic or spiritually-aware soul.

Moreover, not all those we would assume, by their profession, to have a cultured outlook, can be said to be truly cultured. Fortunately, we have many publications exploring our rich creative heritage, including our own monthly magazine and our socio-political weekly, to keep you abreast of creative developments.

Congratulations on the arrival of 2018! I hope that there is much for us to look forward to, and that we'll continue marching into tomorrow, following our principles of independence and sovereignty: the determining characteristics of Belarus.

By Victor Kharkov





Participants of informal meeting of CIS Heads of State in Novo-Ogaryovo

Much work still lies ahead

Informal meeting of CIS Heads of State held in Moscow

By Vladimir Khromov

The President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, has characterised this year's economic results within the CIS space as successful, speaking at an informal meeting of CIS Heads of State, at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence of the Russian President.

Trade turnover between CIS countries rose by nearly 25 percent in 2017, while Belarus' share increased by nearly a quarter also. The Eurasian Economic Union, established several years ago, has demonstrated strong economic results. The President of Belarus noted that the Russian Federation will preside over the Eurasian Economic Union in 2018, and hopes that, during its presidency, Russia will present serious initiatives to bolster the Eurasian Economic Union.

Mr. Lukashenko underlined that Be-

larus is in favour of creating common EAEU markets for electricity, natural gas, oil, and oil products, in a timely manner.

The meeting was also attended by the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, noted that, during its chairmanship of the CIS, Russia has focused on integration processes within the Eurasian space, strengthening CIS authority within the international arena.

The President of Belarus noted the removal of barriers to trade as a priority and commented that political strife during the forthcoming Russian presidential elections is unlikely to be overly dramatic. He declared, "Our meeting has a political aspect because the core of our associations — the Common-

wealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union, and the Union State of Belarus and Russia — is living through a responsible period. Russia is about to have a presidential election so it's only natural that political strife will become more pronounced. We're absolutely confident that political strife will not be as dramatic as it has been in Russia's past."

"Russia has saved Syria: has saved the country I visited ahead of possibly everyone else present here. It's a flourishing, beautiful, magnificent country," noted Mr. Lukashenko, believing that, if Russia had not interfered, Syria would have been destroyed.

"We also back your stance on Jerusalem," asserted the President of Belarus, addressing the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. The Belarusian Head of State noted that it's difficult for him

to evaluate American President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. "There may be something to it we don't see, but the decision looks somewhat strange at first glance," said Alexander Lukashenko. "One should not destroy peace, for which so much had been paid in this part of the planet." The Belarusian leader stressed that we should abide by decisions made by the United Nations Organisation.

The President of Belarus also emphasised the need to remove sport from political struggles, mentioning the ban on the Russian team taking part in the forthcoming Olympics, in South Korea. Mr. Lukashenko stressed that Belarus supports Russia's fight against doping, underlining that athletes mustn't use doping, but that only those found guilty should be punished.

Welcoming hospitably

By Alexey Fedosov

Yufimuk family from Biala Podlaska becomes first group of tourists to use visa free access to Brest

At Brest-Tsentralny Railway Station, the guests from Poland were welcomed by representatives of local authorities, a tourist operator and mass media. The Deputy Chairman of the Brest City Executive Committee, Sergey Zhukov, warmly welcomed the first visa-free tourists and presented them with a colourful book detailing Brest's sights.

"We're very pleased with such attention. We've never been welcomed in such a way, anywhere," admitted the guests. A tourist operator has developed a route for them, envisaging a pedestrian walk, visits to museums, shopping, and acquaintance with national cuisine. Despite Biala Podlaska being just 30km from Brest, the family were making their first trip. "Previously it was difficult to come because it was necessary to wait for a visa. Now, everything is very simple: you need only a voucher, an insurance certificate and a passport. It's great," explained the guests.

These are Sustainable Development Goals

By Maxim Osipov

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been set out within the Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development programme. Last year, Belarus presented its approach at the UN headquarters, receiving positive assessment from the international community and the UN leadership. Towards the end of 2017, open parliamentary hearings at the Council of the Republic were dedicated to the achievements of SDGs.

Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Dapkiunas, believes that the SDGs chime with work for the benefit of the nation and in the interest of the international community. However, Belarus has the potential to become something more than a participant. Mr. Dapkiunas tells us, "We can offer our experience for multi-lateral diplomacy, our ideas and, finally, our venue for international dialogue on sustainable development."

Over the last two decades, the percentage of people living below the poverty line has almost halved, thanks, at least in part, to work towards the SDGs. Moreover, child and maternity death rates have fallen and we have progressed in battling disease. Deputy Economy Minister Alex-

ander Chervyakov explains the importance of SDGs for Belarus, saying, "Businesses are beginning to flow into social entrepreneurship. New, automated technologies are pushing people out of the production cycle, and our population is growing older. About 15 percent of people living in Belarus are aged over 65, and this is set to rise to 23 percent by 2040. Of course, this category of people needs lots of services, and social entrepreneurship will occupy a worthy place, finding a balance between charity and commercial income."

Sustainable growth is impossible without permanent investment activity from businesses. Moreover, SDGs require



and cent on the regions. Mr. Chervyakov added, "Today, we're building our regional policy in two directions: forming centres of economic growth; and jobs within one hour commute of such centres. One of the instruments of this policy is our plan to industrialise the regions, developed by the Economy Ministry."

DIRECT SPEECH

Mikhail MYASNIKOVICH,
Chairman of the Council of the Republic:

Belarus is ready to facilitate the strengthening of global partnership to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We may become a platform for regional sharing of experience, knowledge and technology. We have common tasks: enhancing people's standard of living, through making the economy more competitive, while attracting investments and innovative development.

Belarusian oncologists deserve a Nobel Prize

Alexander Lukashenko made the relevant statement as he talked to patients of Minsk's City Clinical Oncology Dispensary

By Vladimir Velikhov

The patients told the President how treatment procedures are organised over there, praising sensitive attitude and attention demonstrated by the medics. Professional skills of the doctors definitely inspire hope for speedy recovery. "They should be awarded a Nobel Prize: they cure everyone here," Mr. Lukashenko concluded, receiving support from clinic patients.

The President talked to each patient, including children. Almost all of them have passed some courses of therapy and most of them demonstrate no relapse of the disease now. Mr. Lukashenko presented Christmas gifts to children and their parents, while congratulating them on upcoming holidays and wishing them strong health and long life. In turn, children presented their own souvenirs to the Head of State. Among them was a picture drawn by a girl inspired by her mother's recovery; the President promised that it would be put on display in the Palace of Independence.

While visiting the establishment, Mr. Lukashenko was informed that the clinic provides services not only to Minskers but to all Belarusians.

"Efficient technologies have been placed at the cornerstone. Our modernisation of the oncol-



At Minsk City Clinical Oncology Dispensary

ogy service has made it possible to cut death rates despite of rising morbidity," noted the Chief Doctor of the Minsk City Clinical Oncology Dispensary, Vladimir Karanik, expressing gratitude to the domestic pharmaceutical industry. "Over the past five years, Belarus-made medications represent 92 percent of the medications we used to treat our patients," he added.

The President also got acquainted with life-support systems of the Nuclear Medicine Department, while learning more of modern methods of diagnosis and treatment of patients with cancer pathology and the conditions of their staying in the clinic.

The Minsk City Clinical Oncology Dispensary was founded in 1934 and is the oldest onco-

logical institutions in the country. Since the introduction of new equipment in 2015 (spectrum accelerators — unique for the CIS), the most modern techniques of high-precision radiotherapy have been applied.

In 2011, a decision was made to reconstruct the buildings and construct a new radiological building. Since then, the infrastructure has been much

improved and the material and technical base has been perfected. The new radiological building (which will soon be put into operation) will have Europe's largest nuclear medicine department for twenty patients — significantly increasing the possibility of providing radioiodine-therapy and diagnostics to patients suffering from thyroid cancer.

Country lives with hope for the young

Young generation to preserve and multiply achievements of modern Belarus

By Vasily Kharitonov

"You're smart and observant people, and you know that not all your peers on Earth can attend such parties with their president. In many places on our planet, children are starving. I'm saying this because you need to remember, to ensure you value our past and present. In doing so, we'll create a better future," asserted Mr. Lukashenko.

Speaking at the Palace of the Republic, for a New Year charity event for children, held as part of the *Our Children* campaign, President Lukashenko underlined his hope that the younger generation will preserve and multiply the achievements of that before it.



New Year holiday for students and schoolchildren

Mr. Lukashenko stated that children love their gadgets, as is to be expected, but he advised them to spend less time in front of their computers because there are many good things outside. "Then, you'll become more beautiful and modern. You won't lose your identity. You should share your emotions with other people. Unfortunately, computers cannot give all that to you," the Head of State stressed.

The President asserted that children's happy eyes and smiles are the

best present for adults. "This is why we live and work. We believe that the time will come when you'll also be happy to see the happy eyes of your own children," resumed Mr. Lukashenko.

The Head of State wished his young audience a Happy New Year and expressed hope that they will preserve their faith in kindness, demonstrating purity and sincerity towards others. He hopes that all their dreams will come true.

The New Year party was the cen-

tral event of the *Our Children* charity campaign, with over 2,000 children aged from 8 to 14 years invited from all regions of Belarus. These included orphans and children from foster families, children of refugees, students of cadet schools, and winners of international, national and regional academic excellence competitions, creative contests, and sports competitions.

2018 will see improvements to education, noted Alexander Lukashenko, with the school curriculum becoming even more intense and complex. "Of course, it's necessary to pass this stage worthily and to receive knowledge because (you have also, probably, noticed this) it's impossible to move into the future without knowledge, especially today. Life has become much more complex and you need to master everything," said the Head of State.

He added that Belarus continues to adjust the school curriculum to make it intelligible and to work in an optimum fashion. "So that teachers and parents don't force you to do too much, and to allow you time for sports and favourite events. We've done much in this direction," Mr. Lukashenko commented.

Children also presented the President with New Year home-made gifts, on behalf of all children of Belarus.

Restrained pitching

Frozen oil production increases oil prices

By Mikhail Overyanov

Expectations of economists and politicians are confirmed, as OPEC member-states continue limitation of oil production until late 2018, seeking to reduce excess market supply and retain high prices. Oil has already risen in price, with the former geopolitical focus returning to the international agenda.

The agreement reached in Vienna concerns OPEC member-states and eleven non-member oil producers. The goal is to reduce oil reserves in countries within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to an average five-year level. Surplus oil production has led to a drop in the price per barrel, although consumer prices (for fuel and goods) remain steady. The economies of oil-producing countries have been suffering. However, by reducing production volumes, crude oil prices have returned to around \$65 per barrel (rivaling 2015 prices). In early 2016, a barrel could be purchased at just \$30.

It might seem that Belarus can breathe easy, but geopolitical intrigue has replaced economic difficulties. The Middle East continues to see an intense struggle for power.

The Director of Alpari Eurasia, Alexander Sabodin, believes other favourable prospects result from rising prices. He explains, "I agree with the forecast of the Government and the National Bank. If we avoid unexpected external factors — such as a sharp drop in oil prices — we'll see no more than 7 percent inflation this year. Oil prices are an important factor affecting the exchange rate in our country. If we avoid any steep change in the external market, the demand and supply of foreign currency in Belarus should remain steady in 2018."

Since the discovery of oil and the beginning of its industrial use, the significance of this extremely resource-rich region has increased dramatically. Turkish *Hürriyet*



VALUABLE FORECAST

The agreement to extend oil production among non-OPEC members will raise the barrel price above **\$70** in 2018, if the market remains otherwise steady. OPEC admits that the present **\$62-65** price corridor is satisfactory; stability of prices is now paramount.



newspaper reads: 'Some consider that the struggle for power continuing in the Middle East over the past century stems exclusively from the value of its oil resources. Those who view wars through the prism of oil and natural gas emphasise

two important factors, one being the Middle East vision of US President Donald Trump'.

Many analysts view the American factor as most significant. The OPEC + agreement on restraining oil production essentially hails a full

return of American producers of shale oil, whose work is only profitable when prices reach at least \$60 per barrel. To maintain its market share against increased oil shale production, Saudi Arabia 'flooded' the market with oil in 2014, lowering the price per barrel from \$120 to \$27, within a few months. Saudi Arabia retains profitability above \$10 per barrel, but the strategy affected Riyadh's finances. It's quite probable that the country can no longer risk such low prices.

As regards the USA, although its daily exports of oil have reached a record 2 million barrels this year, the idea of shale oil development and production remains on paper rather than in action. In late November, six new drilling towers were launched in the USA (giving a total number of 929) but French OFI AM expert Benjamin Louvet believes this counts for nothing. He tells us, "Production in the shale industry increased last January and February but little progress has been registered since then.

Much drilling has been conducted but only at a handful of wells. The latest report by the US Energy Agency indicates low production volumes at shale wells."

Growth in oil prices is benefitting Belarus, with budget revenue expected to exceed the target of Br1.1 billion, largely due to oil prices having been higher than expected. Additional revenue will be used to cover the budget deficit of the Social Protection Fund and to pay pensions. The rise in oil prices is likely to impact the forecast for Belarus' socio-economic development for 2018, which is currently based on a cost per barrel of \$45.90.

Le Prairie residential district in France

By Vyacheslav Prokofiev

French to live in Belarusian houses

The whole world knows that Belarusians have carpentry skills, making good quality frame-panel houses. Soon, the French will have the opportunity to appreciate them, as the first stone has been laid in constructing a residential district of Belarusian wooden houses, called Le Prairie (Meadows), in Villerupt, in the north of France, near the border with Luxembourg.

The solemn ceremony was attended by Villerupt's Mayor Alain Casoni and the Head of

Logibat (the general constructor of the quarter), Luc Longueville. The Ambassador of Belarus to France, Pavel Latushko, also arrived from Paris, while Mikhail Kasko, the Deputy Chairman of Bellesbumprom Concern (producing houses for the French), came from Belarus.

Production will be situated at Shklov's Paper Mill (in the Mogilev Region). In line with the contract, thirty-seven buildings (ranging from 80 to 120 square metres) will be constructed, meeting all French standards and strict environmental requirements, while ensuring high energy efficiency. Construction will be launched



Belarusian housing development

in the near future and will be completed this year.

According to the adviser of the Belarusian Embassy in France, Vladimir Malevich, the present project is only the be-

ginning, with Lorraine planning to co-operate with Minsk long-term; over the next five years, 650 Belarusian houses are to be built there.

A proposal has been accept-

ed to name a street of Belarusian houses after famous French physician and botanist Jean Emmanuel Gilibert. This native of Lyons was invited to Grodno in 1775, where he built the first city hospital and a botanical garden; in the late 18th century, the latter was considered the best in Europe.

Over the past three years, about seventy Belarus-made houses have been supplied to the French market, with some in Haucourt-Moulaine, not far from Villerupt. Several days ago, seventeen single-story houses, to be used as social housing, opened their doors to new residents.



Fast and reasonably priced, though not truly healthy

In eight months alone, seventeen large fast food chains have opened. What will happen next to the market?

By Polina Kononova

Just a couple of years ago, restaurant businesses went through bad times in Belarus. The economic crisis and decline in purchasing power coincided with the tightening of legislation and numerous inspections. In 2015 alone, over 200 catering sites were offered for sale. At the same time, fast food operators felt quite confident: places selling fried chicken wings, pizza and French fries continued to open. Our *MT* reporter investigates why overseas hamburgers have gained such a strong foothold in Belarus.

Free cash desk

Queues are common at a certain fast food chain, in the city centre. Students, pensioners, young parents and solid-looking guys with laptops sit at its tables. "I've an office near here and I visit this place once or twice a week," notes Vitaly, who's ordered French fries, wings and a salad. "I know that food here isn't all that healthy, but the place is convenient, service is fast and prices are reasonable."

The number of fast food chain outlets is mindboggling. Public catering continues to evolve, while operators are strengthening their positions in Minsk

FIGURES

Food halls are likely to become the next step in the fast food chain market, attracting visitors and investors



and the regions. According to Tvoya Stolitsa, a business real estate agency, new international players are likely to join the market. Tvoya Stolitsa tells us, "Minsk's fast food market has shown rapid development in recent years. 2015 saw a breakthrough, with KFC, Burger King and three pizza restaurants launching. In the first eight months of this year alone, seventeen new fast food chain sites have opened in Minsk; some debuting on the market."

From food court to food hall

Food courts have given significant impetus to

DIRECT SPEECH

Alexander CHIKILEVSKY, Head of Chefs and Cooks Guild of Belarus:

All fast food chain outlets in Minsk work under a franchise. Nothing new is really opening. It's more a case of ownership changing. Why are such places so popular? The fashion for fast food has reached us only recently, so it's trendy, and is likely to continue being so for some time. People ask why we don't have our own Belarusian fast food chain. The reason is that Belarusian cuisine has no fast food. There were attempts to open something of the kind but the project failed. It's easier, and less risky, to buy a ready-made business than to invest in creating something new.

the development of fast food in the country's shopping centres. Arena City is a pioneer in this respect, with several outlets at its food court, which opened four years ago and was the first of its kind. These days, all shopping centres have food courts. Meanwhile, the regions are following suit, with companies joining local markets gradually.

Analysts assert that, in future, at least one new gastronomic format will be introduced in Belarus: food halls which offer healthy fast-foods and organic products at affordable prices. In addition, they'll host culinary exhibitions, master classes, express lectures and diverse thematic festivals.

"Investors are now in search of a new niche and are turning their attention to this promising avenue. Such food halls could prove popular in the rapidly developing retail estate sector — not only in the capital but also in the regions," experts believe.

Experience could be definitely useful

By Alexander Pimenov

National Bank and banking IT community develop instant payment system for Belarus

The formation of the national instant payment system aims to promote digital bank-

ing. "We've worked out a framework with the banking IT community, to include an operating system and tariffs, instant money transfer, and irrevocable payments. All will help banks improve their payment services," explains Dmitry Kalechits, Deputy Chairman of the Na-

tional Bank's Board.

The integration of the national payment system, including instant payments, with international payment systems, is currently under consideration. According to Mr. Kalechits, EAEU member states have taken some steps towards this

objective, including standardising payment processes and establishing an integrated payment system.

The Deputy Chairman of the National Bank's Board notes that the Belarusian interbank identification system opens up new opportunities for

every financial market player and facilitates access to every domestic bank service, for individuals and legal entities. He is confident that Belarus' experience in setting up, introducing, and operating the interbank identification system could be useful for other countries.

Looking beyond the horizon

Dmitry Suyarkov, from Brest, has been attracted by the sea since childhood, excitedly consuming adventure novels about sea journeys. He even attempted to enter nautical school. Although he became a programmer, his dream of captaining a boat lived on and gained realisation when he reached the age of 39.



Oleksa yacht has covered many miles along rivers, canals and seas

By Nikolay Petrovsky

Not long ago, Dmitry returned from a long journey on the yacht Oleksa, which he built with his own hands, visiting almost a dozen European countries, crossing four thousand kilometres. He admits, “Chatting with knowledgeable people, they wondered where I was planning to sail. The Mediterranean

is like elementary school, the Baltic is more difficult, and the North Sea is more difficult, while the English Channel is a true challenge. I’ve needed to be very careful not to damage the yacht, in order to stay alive! The sea is unpredictable; irrespective of your level of preparation, it can destroy you.”

Possible dangers and hardships haven’t stopped the dare-

devil, who even left his job with a large IT company to make the trip. When everything was ready, Dmitry loaded his yacht onto a vehicle and drove to Polish Elblag to launch Oleksa. Over a period of 4.5 months, he has traversed the Baltic and North seas, and along the shores of Poland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. His voyage wasn’t simple, as strong

moor in the Odessa Region of Ukraine.

At home, good news awaited him. “Several days ago, I was informed that I’d been nominated for the ‘Yachtsman of the Year in Belarus-2017’ Award. It’s a pleasant surprise. However, I’ve decided to sell my yacht if I can. If I fail to sell it, I’ll continue sailing,” he smiles.



Dmitry Suyarkov

north winds and huge waves could easily have overturned the yacht.

In Amsterdam, his wife Tatiana, and their son, joined Dmitry, taking to rivers and canals, through France. Tatiana and his son then went home, while Dmitry continued through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia and Romania, to

Major potential of Covenant of Mayors

By Alexey Fedosov

Belarusian cities’ joining of benevolent European initiative Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate aims to promote reduced greenhouse gas emissions, by at least 10 percent

The Covenant of Mayors is working to combat climate change, with the effect of greenhouse gas emissions on urban environments as a key focus. Twenty-six of Belarus’ cities and districts have joined the agreement, committing to reduce CO2 emissions by 30 percent (from a base year). More than two million people live on territories taking part and, in 2018, another five or six cities are expected to join.

At an international level, Belarus has promised to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost a third (from 1990 levels).

Normal flights within two and a half years

Air China facilitates development of ties between Belarus and China

The launch of a direct Beijing-Minsk flight two and a half years ago, by Air China, has helped Belarusian-Chinese cooperation, 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,” notes the Director General of Air China’s Minsk office, Wang Zhengfeng.

Roman Catholic Church in Dyatlovo makes front page of *Wall Street Journal*

By Olga Korneeva

A photo taken at the Christmas service at the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the Grodno Region’s Dyatlovo, has been published on the front cover of the influential US newspaper

Vasily Fedosenko, a photo



correspondent for Reuters in Belarus, submitted the photo, taken inside the Baroque-style church, built in 1624-1646. Registered on the State List of Historical and Cultural Treasures of the Republic of Belarus, the church burnt

down in 1743, losing almost the entire interior, including the main altar. In 1751, it was reconstructed by architect A. Osinkevich, funded by Duke Mikołaj Radziwiłł. It gained a new façade and the interior was renovated.

On the edge of the world

By Vladislav Khoroshilov

Construction of first stage of Belarusian Antarctic station to be completed within two years

In 2019, our specialists will launch year-round work in Antarctica. At the moment, the tenth expedition is on location, comprising a crew of four, with three more soon to join. They’ll work at the South Pole until spring, installing four new sections of the future station, to include scientific laboratories and accommodation.

The head of the expedition, Alexey Gaidashov, stresses the importance of their work, saying, “We’re now a step closer to the first Belarusian winter. I would compare this with the launch of the first Belarusian satellite into near-earth orbit. This is another world, another dimension,

in the direct and figurative sense.”

The expedition embraces research into such areas as microbiology, geophysical monitoring, studying the composition of the atmosphere, ultraviolet radiation, and climate and ozone layer monitoring, using Belarus-made equipment.

Interestingly, even while dozens of thousands of kilometres away from their native land, polar explorers are aware of events taking place back home, such as the recent 2nd Congress of Scientists hosted by Minsk. In honour of this event, the expedition raised the flags in Antarctica those of Belarus and of the National Academy of Sciences.



Participants of Belarusian expedition in Antarctica



Jean-Yves Bouchardy

Jean-Yves Bouchardy, Representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Belarus, arrived in Vitebsk to give New Year presents to refugees from Ukraine and to listen to their problems, while also noting his approval of co-operation with authorities and non-governmental organisations working in the country

Holiday far from home

By Sergey Golesnikov

Most of those who gathered to chat with Mr. Bouchardy were former residents of the Lugansk and Donetsk

regions. Meeting at Vitebsk's employment centre, he heard the problems that families face. Lyudmila settled in the Vitebsk Region, with her husband, in 2014; she has seven

children, three of whom were born in Vitebsk. The family, being large, has already been given a flat. Sadly, Dmitry hasn't yet solved his housing problem, despite having employment. Places at the hostel are in short supply and his income doesn't cover the cost of renting a flat.

Olga has long lived in the regional centre, with her husband and child, but laments having to pay for medical tests at the women's health clinic. However, Mr. Bouchardy noted that problems relating to medical treatment have already been settled. "Due to



During meeting in Vitebsk

changes introduced by Belarusian authorities into the law on refugees, from July 2017, residents of the Lugansk and Donetsk regions should receive free medical treatment, equally with citizens of Belarus," he explained.

Mr. Bouchardy presented New Year gifts to refugees, as collected by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Priobank. Meanwhile, the Chair of the Vitebsk regional organisa-

tion of the Belarusian Society of the Red Cross, Galina Zhelanova, gave invitations to a New Year performance.

"Last year, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has allocated Br40,000 for people looking for a new home in the Vitebsk Region. This money has been spent on paying monthly assistance to those in need, and on the purchase of medicine and housing," she noted.



Good mood is great

One tonne of drugs detected on border within a single year

In 2017, State Customs Committee confiscated 62 times more drugs on the border than in 2016, while number of 'arrests' remained virtually constant last year and the year before last

By Yevgeny Zhurov

Over the past year, more than one tonne of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances have been detected on the border: over 229kg of precursors and 15,000+ of medical preparations (containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances).

The Chairman of the State Customs Committee, Yuri Senko, notes that, on December 16th, a haul of over 355kg of hashish attempted to enter the Eurasian Economic Union, in a vehicle marked as transporting 'feed additives for pigs'. The smuggling operation was detected at the checkpoint between Lithuania and Urbany, using scanning equipment. Mr. Senko notes, "The car had false walls filled with substances, in the front cargo compartment,



Customs control

and service dogs confirmed the presence of drugs." Ninety-two hashish bricks were discovered. There have been similar cases, such as an attempt, last February, when 285kg of hashish was detected in a truck passing through Kozlovichi checkpoint.

Last March, Bruzgi officers discovered 70kg of drugs in a passenger car (hidden in the cabin floor) while October 2017 saw a Russian citizen seized at Kozlovichi transporting 300kg of hashish under the floor of his Lexus car.

Sentence can be appealed

By Lyudmila Gladkaya

In the first six months of 2017, thirty-six acquittals were granted in Belarus, including around twenty from sentences being served for serious or very serious offences. Around 5,000 criminal proceedings were discontinued at the initial stage without trial due to conciliation, petty crimes or reparation.

The Chairman of the Supreme Court, Valentin Sukalo, recently attended an international conference, featuring the General Director for Human Rights and Rule of Law at the Council of Europe's Secretariat, Christos Giakoumopoulos. Participants discussed issues of appeal in the national criminal process, as well as the role and tasks of the prosecutor at this stage of proceedings, and the limits of court rights in the second instance. In line with the Belarusian national model of criminal justice appeal, a higher court (on finding flaws in the case) does not send the case to a new trial but independently makes the final decision. Mr. Sukalo explains, "We've chosen our own model. We've been

proceeding towards this slowly while expanding the competence of higher courts. The transition to the appeal study of criminal cases has made justice more operational. This move gives positive results. Over the past five years, the number of repeated judicial reviews has fallen six-fold, in cases of revocation. The quality of justice remains, with not a single case of citizens' unjustified sentencing in the last five years."

Prosecutor General Alexander Konyuk believes the introduction of appeal into Belarusian law enforcement practice is a revolutionary step. He explains, "Cassation assumes a retrial, in line with documents. In turn, an appeal is a particular investigation of the case in court, with the attendance of witnesses and a full examination of evidence. We're very interested in the experience of the Council of Europe."

Talking to reporters, Mr. Konyuk shared his views on the possibility of introducing the notion of 'criminal offense' into the Criminal Code of Belarus. "I believe this deserves attention. There are 'minor criminal cases' which, from the point of view of the law, could be dismissed as not being crimes," he noted.

Hundreds of swimmers brave icy waters for New Year's Day dips



It was certainly a fresh start to 2018 for some

Braving temperatures of seven degrees Celsius, revellers in the Netherlands took part in a New Year's Day plunge into the North Sea. The annual event has been taking place since the 1960s and is now marked by thousands across the country.

A similar sight could be seen on the French side of the English Channel, where

hundreds — many in fancy dress — were rewarded for their bravery with a hot bowl of classic French onion soup.

A smaller group of around 20 participants took part in a jump into the sea in Estonia.

Coney Island's Polar Bear Club came out in force in weather perhaps better-suited

to their furry namesakes. With temperatures hovering around minus eight degrees Celsius, hundreds jumped into the Atlantic Ocean to raise money for charity.

Warmer, although still chilly, weather greeted four men who dived into Rome's Tiber river. The yearly event has taken place without interruption since 1946.



Havana's Malecon is threatened by climate change

Havana's elegant Malecon is one of the city's most famous avenues — where locals and tourists come to walk and fish, or enjoy the sunset

Built to protect the city from pounding Caribbean waves, the coastal boulevard itself is now under threat.

"The recent hurricane caused irreversible damage that has forced us to demolish several buildings along the Malecón," says local historian Eusebio Leal. As temperatures and sea waters rise — and storms become more frequent and more

intense — the seafront structures can't hold up. One recent study found that up to 70 percent of buildings along the Malecon's oldest stretch will have to be torn down.

The Cuban government is planning to rebuild the seawall and erect wave-breaking structures along the coast in a bid to stop seawater from reaching the Malecon. But it might not be enough.

By some estimates, the water around Havana's northern coast could rise by as much as one meter by the end of this century.

Santa Claus race in Spain

More than 7,000 people dressed as Santa Claus ran through central Madrid in a charity race to raise money for cancer patients



Sacrificing comfort for a good cause, racegoers donned red robes, Santa hats and billowing white beards to run 5 km along Madrid's famous Paseo del Prado and Castellana avenues.

Children also took part,

many dressing in green robes and elf hats in what organisers claim was the largest Santa-themed race in the world.

Part of the entry-fee paid by each racegoer will be donated to cancer research nonprofit Fundacion Intheos.

Rare supermoon delights stargazers on New Year's

Fireworks weren't the only spectacle on New Year's Day — as a mesmerising supermoon appeared in the night sky on January 1

A supermoon is an optical effect that makes a full moon appear much larger than normal. This happens when a full moon coincides with the moment the moon is closest to the Earth during its elliptical orbit. Supermoons appear 14 percent larger and 30 percent brighter than a micromoon, which is when the moon's orbit is furthest away from the Earth.

Those who missed out on the New Year moon will have another chance to spot the impressive natural satellite on January 31st, when the supermoon happens during a total lunar eclipse. But don't always expect a supermoon twice a month. On average, supermoons occur every 414 days, according to Space.com.

Man rescued from sinking car

The United States Coast Guard said it rescued an 89-year-old man from a vehicle that fell into the St. Andrews Marina in Panama City

Coast Guard officials said members on the Cutter Marlin saw a car go into the water and sent a boat crew to assist the man. The crew broke the vehicle window and rescued the man. The boat crew took the man to shore in stable condition, where emergency medical services were waiting.

Ryanair applies for UK licence to shore up routes before Brexit

Ryanair recently applied for a British air operating licence in a move it said may be required to keep its small domestic UK service operating in the event of a hard Brexit

Flying rights are currently governed by EU-wide deals and because it is not part of the World Trade Organisation, the aviation sector has no natural fallback arrangement to protect flights if there is no deal between Britain and the European Union.

Ryanair, Europe's largest airline by passenger numbers, follows fellow budget airline Wizz Air in applying for a separate licence in Britain via a UK subsidiary.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



Each exhibit radiates light...

National Art Museum of Belarus hosts exhibition of contemporary Christian art, dedicated to ancient saints — venerated both in the West and East



By Veniamin Mikheev

Saints of the Undivided Church is an icon-painting project unique in geographical scope, hosted by the National Art Museum of Belarus. Displaying over a hundred icons painted in Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, the UK, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Finland and France, the exhibition features works by well-known iconographers, such as Archimandrite Zinon (Theodore), Alexander Chashkin, Alexander Kornoukhov, Oleg Shurkus (Russia), Todor Mitrović (Serbia), George Kordis (Greece), and Victor Dovnar and Anton Daineko (Belarus). Many women are among those showcased.

The project launched in early 2016, following a meeting by Pope Francis with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Kirill, in Havana.

The solemn opening of the exhibition saw archpriest Fiodor Povny, the abbot of All Saints' parish in Minsk, deliver a moving speech. He announced, "We wish to remind the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ that territorial and time frames are of no matter. We divide Christianity into western and eastern, but this moves us away from the first centuries of Christianity, creating cooling and even opposition."

Referring to the time before the Great Schism of 1054 (the formal separation of the Churches of the East and West), he added, "The first millennium was the time of the undivided church. Iconography in Europe grew to take centre stage in Christian life, with icon painters returning lost images of ancient saints, enabling us to come closer to our Faith and enter into dialogue."

Fiodor Povny compared the exhibition with grain which, sprouting, facilitates the rapprochement of nations, their spiritual enrichment and growth, while strengthening peace on Earth.

Each work is a miniature drama from the distant past, interpreted and retold by our contemporaries; therefore, comparisons are appropriate. For example, we might compare Brendan the Navigator and Fiodor Konyukhov, or Bede the Venerable and Francysk Skaryna. Symbolically, we see the meeting of churches, with hope for shared understanding, in the icon showing a salutatory kiss between St. Peter and St. Paul (the West most venerates Apostle Peter while the East gives that honour to Apostle Paul). Christ is the foundation upon which western and eastern believers build their Faith, served by art and culture.

The ceremony was attended by archbishop Yuri Kosobutsky, alongside a deputy of the National Assembly of

the Republic of Belarus, historian Igor Marzalyuk, and the Head of the Ancient Russian Art Department at the State Tretyakov Gallery, Natalia Sheredega. They noted that dialogue between eastern and western Christians has never ceased, but that the *Saints of the Undivided Church* project should aid cohesion. Meanwhile, the Director General of the National Art Museum of Belarus, Vladimir Prokoptsov, read greetings from priests and figures of culture, congratulating the museum on the opening of the exhibition.

The event highlights under-reported history from Western Europe through the first millennium, while introducing various artistic schools, trends and styles in contemporary iconography. The history of Europe is presented as a history of holiness: from the apostles and Christian martyrs of the 2nd century to the faithful rulers of the 10th-11th centuries, embracing the dramatic period of the formation of the Church across regions and countries, from Sicily to Ireland and Scandinavia.

Very few ancient icons showing western saints have survived, so modern icon painters have faced the challenge of creating new iconography, interpreting images within the iconographic canon, using a 21st century point of view to present the saints.

The exhibition features works in traditional techniques, such as egg tempera, encaustic, mosaic, wood carving, ceramics and prints: created specifically for the *Saints of the Undivided Church* exhibition. The vast majority are being exhibited for the first time.

The exhibition continues until February 20th, when it will tour the Russian cities of Yekaterinburg, Perm, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Tambov. Negotiations are under-

way to tour several European states.

The organisers of the international project, which begins in the capital of Belarus, are keen to draw the attention of Christian communities from the East and West towards images of saints from the first millennium. The exhibition provides joint evidence, from Orthodox and Catholic believers, of the Christian roots of modern Europe, while demonstrating contemporary Christian culture and developing cultural exchange between Christian communities of European states.

The exhibition is astonishing in its radiance, as many of those who visited the opening commented. The icons depict men of faith who lived on European lands, missionaries and pastors, as well as kings and ordinary warriors, scientists and monarchs, and people of various social strata. This is the Christian foundation of European culture.





Nadezhda Kucher will soon perform at Belarus' Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre

With Parisian accent

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

By Natalia Stepuro

Nadezhda 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, preferring 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

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’.

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 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. 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 — often repeats that he doesn’t work with singers 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 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.

Worthy secrets of true attraction

By Nikita Sanaev

Darya Reut — from Minsk — becomes Second Vice Mrs World 2017

Alice Lee Giannetta, of Hong Kong, has been crowned the most beautiful married lady on the planet to, while Costa Rica’s Jennifer Miranda is Vice Mrs World 2017.

The finals — held in Johannesburg (South Africa) — gathered beauties from thirty-five countries, with the winners chosen not just for their appear-

ance but for having successful careers and for having conducted charity or community work.

Darya Reut, who has a four-year-old son, teaches Russian and Belarusian language and literature but also works for a glossy magazine and has her own clothing line inspired by vintage trends. She’s been working to help refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine integrate into Belarus, under the Belarusian office of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR Belarus).



Darya Reut

Costumes do impress China

By Olga Korneeva

Belarusian students placed second at International Contest of National Costumes in Beijing

The competition has been held in China for the 7th time — attracting around two dozen teams, including those from Belarus, China, Venezuela, Vietnam, Russia, Sri Lanka, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Denmark, Romania, Peru, Colombia and Pakistan. The Ambassador of

Belarus to China, Kirill Rudy, delivered a speech at the opening ceremony, recognising the special role played by public diplomacy in developing cultural exchange and contacts between young people from different countries.

Belarus was represented by a team of Belarusian students from Beijing universities, who joined diplomatic mission staff. They performed modern dances on the theme of the national calendar of holidays — including Easter and Kupalle.

Named best in 2017

Results of past sporting year

Tatiana Petrenya

The *Sportivnaya Panorama* newspaper has for the 59th time conducted a survey among journalists to determine the best Belarusian athletes of 2017. As a result, Tatiana Petrenya has been named the best Belarusian athlete of the last year. The trampoline jumper and the 2017 world champion has won the vote with a clear advantage.



Vanessa Kolodinskaya

Anton Kushnir

Freestyler Anton Kushnir is the best sportsman. Last year, the Sochi Olympic champion won three stages of the World Freestyle Cup to occupy the highest place among male athletes.



Alexander Kudryavtsev

Vanessa Kolodinskaya

Belarusian Vanessa Kolodinskaya is recognised as the best female athlete of the year in women's wrestling according to the United World Wrestling (UWW). In 2017, she captured gold at the World Championship in Paris, becoming a two-time world champion. Previously, she won gold in 2012. In addition, the Belarusian also won gold at the European Championship in Serbia.



Anastasia Veremeenko

Arina Sobolenko

Last year, Arina Sobolenko performed well as part of the national team of Belarus, reaching the Fed Cup finals jointly with her teammates. Moreover, the 19 year old Minsker reached the WTA finals for the first time, losing to the ex-top-seeded of the world — Maria Sharapova — in the decisive match of the competition in Chinese Tianjin. These achievements enabled Arina to join the list of top 100 tennis players of the world; she was 73rd in the WTA rating in late 2017.



Arina Sobolenko

Yegor Gerasimov

The year was fruitful for 25 year old Yegor Gerasimov: in early 2017, he was among the top 500 athletes of the world but

finished the year in the 149th position (according to the Association of Tennis Professionals rating). This became possible owing to his four wins in the Challenger tournament. Jointly with his teammates, Yegor reached the playoffs, enjoying the right to compete in the Davis Cup World Group.



Anton Kushnir



Tatiana Petrenya

ment of the kind: she was recognised best in 2006-2009, 2012-2013 and 2015-2016.

Alexander Kudryavtsev

Among men, Alexander Kudryavtsev 0- the most experienced defender of the national team and Tsmoki club 00 has been named the best basketballer. Previously, he was unrivalled in 2011-2013.

Mikhail Gordeichuk

BATE forward Mikhail Gordeichuk has collected a whole heap of awards: he is recognised as the best football player of Belarus, has won the race of scorers and received the prize of the best player 'Belarusbank — Supreme League 2017'. Mikhail helped the Borisov team once again win the championship, scoring 18 goals with five assists in 29 games. Moreover, he played for the national team six times during the season.



Mikhail Gordeichuk

Victor Goncharenko

The head coach of CSKA Moscow — Victor Goncharenko — is named the best coach of

Belarus. The result has become apparent after the *Pressball* sports newspaper conducted a poll among well-known specialists and journalists. Mr. Goncharenko was recognised the best coach of Belarus for the seventh time in his career, and for the second season in a row.

Andrey Kovalev

At the gala party in Gdansk, the best sportsmen, coaches and patrons of this Polish city were congratulated in late 2017. Our compatriot and a former head coach of Minsk Dinamo — Andrey Kovalev — won the 'Best Coach of the Year' nomination. He trains Gdansk' Automatics at present and the city leadership highly appreciated the fifth place of his trainees in the elite division. Actually, many thought his sportsmen would need to struggle seriously to survive in the PKL.



Victor Goncharenko

Anastasia Veremeenko

The centre of Belarus' national team and Istanbul's Fenerbahce — Anastasia Veremeenko — is named the best basketball player of the country. She was much ahead of her competitors, gaining 58 points. This is Anastasia's ninth achieve-

Ambitious answer to Magnus Carlsen

Sergey Zhigalko goes to World Chess Championships as European champion

By Sergey Kruzhkov

Experts believe that Belarusian chess is experiencing a revival, once more taking its place among the global elite, after a period of obscurity.

The world's largest tournaments are being held not far abroad, but in Belarus, with our chess players no longer just 'observers', as we see from Sergey Zhigalko's victory at the European Individual Blitz Chess Championship, where

he was unrivalled in the Blitz category.

Katowice recently gathered over a thousand of Europe's strongest players, where Zhigalko earned eighteen points and was ranked first. Britain's Luke James McShane came second while Peter Michalik of the Czech Republic claimed bronze. Belarusian Alexey Alexandrov was also in the top ten.

Sergey Zhigalko is our current leading chess player, be-

coming a grand chess master in 2007; until he was 14 years old, none could rival him at world and European championships: even the current world champion, Magnus Carlsen. Zhigalko recollects his victory over Carlsen at the 2003 World Youth Classical Chess Championship, for boys under 14, with great pleasure. At that time, Carlsen was already called a chess wunderkind but Belarusian Zhigalko beat him to claim the title of champion,



Sergey Zhigalko

while Magnus was only third.

Sergey tells us, "My rating was higher, so regardless of what I heard about Magnus,

I didn't feel that I was playing with a future star. I think he also remembers our childhood meetings..."



On New Year’s eve *Fire-Breathing Tractors* show took place in Minsk

EXHIBITIONS		THEATRES	
NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF BELARUS <i>20 Lenin Street</i> Until 7 th January. <i>Symphony of Life</i> Until 21 st January. <i>Valery Shkarubo: Pictorial Art</i> Until 20 th February. <i>Saints of Undivided Church</i>		NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE <i>1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Street</i> 06.01. The Nutcracker; Iolanthe 09.01. Rigoletto 11.01. The Fountain of Bakhchisaray	
NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM <i>12 Karl Marx Street</i> Until 10 th January. <i>Fashionable Century</i> Until 14 th January. <i>Krakov Kalyady Batleika</i>		REPUBLICAN THEATRE OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA <i>44 Kropotkin Street</i> 10.01. Concrete 11.01. Doctor Raus’ Career	
BELARUSIAN STATE MUSEUM OF GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY <i>8 Pobediteley Avenue</i> Until 31 st January. <i>Fighting for Homeland</i>		CONTEMPORARY ART THEATRE <i>5 Oktyabrskaya Square</i> 06.01. House Upside-Down 07.01. House #2	
HOUSE-MUSEUM OF FIRST RSDRP SESSION <i>31a Nezavisimosti Avenue</i> Until 14 th January. <i>Minsk 1917</i>		YOUTH THEATRE <i>17 Kozlov Street</i> 06.01. The Fool 07.01. Morozko 09.01. New Affair of My Husband 10.01. Playing Happy Family 11.01. Dowerless	
MUSEUM OF THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL CULTURE HISTORY <i>5 Muzykalny Lane</i> Until 21 st January. <i>Kolyady Sketches-2017</i>		BELARUSIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE <i>20 Engels Street</i> 06.01. Snow White 07.01. Morozko 11.01. Belvedere	
GAL-TVORCHESTVO <i>47 Nezavisimosti Avenue</i> Until 1 st February. Exhibition of dolls: <i>Fragile Dreams</i>		YOUNG SPECTATORS’ THEATRE <i>26 Engels Street</i> 06.01. Road to Bethlehem 11.01. Savage Hunt of King Stakh	
BELARUSIAN STATE CIRCUS <i>32 Nezavisimosti Avenue</i> 06-07.01 and 10.01. <i>New Year Fairy Tale in Circus</i>		CONCERTS	
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS <i>116 Nezavisimosti Avenue</i> Until 15 th January. <i>Passenger from Nastrom</i> Until 15 th February. <i>Valery Slauk’s Graphics</i> Until 28 th February. Exhibition of experiments: <i>Science Museum</i>		PALACE OF THE REPUBLIC <i>1 Oktyabrskaya Square</i> 22.12-06.01. Main Fir Tree of the Country 21.12-07.01. Main Little Fir Tree of the Country. Chicken Not/Against Fox show	
GALLERIA MINSK <i>9 Pobediteley Avenue</i> Until 14 th January. <i>13th World Miracle</i> Until 15 th January. <i>Robots and Transformers</i> Until 15 th January. <i>Museum-Factory of Fir Tree Toys</i>		PALACE OF SPORTS <i>4 Pobediteley Avenue</i> Until 10 th January. <i>Minsk Christmas Festival</i>	
MUSEUM OF NATURE AND ECOLOGY <i>117 Kazinets Street</i> Until 25 th March. <i>Water Residents</i>		NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE <i>1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Street</i> 21 and 26.12. Blue Light concert programme 22.12. 8 th Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum: gala-concert of world operatic stars 26-28.12. Gala-concert of Belarusian Bolshoi Opera stars	
PALACE OF SPORTS <i>4 Pobediteley Avenue</i> Until 10 th January. <i>Minsk Christmas Festival</i>		PALACE OF SPORTS <i>4 Pobediteley Avenue</i> 23.12. Oxxxymiron	
CHELYUSKINTSEV PARK OF CULTURE AND REST <i>84/1 Nezavisimosti Avenue</i> Until 30 th June. <i>Legacy of Belarus: Dedicated to Minsk’s 950th Anniversary</i>			
MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY <i>15 Svobody Square</i> Until 7 th January. <i>Naked Nature</i> Until 14 th January. <i>Three Tortoises</i> Until 4 th February. <i>Reflection</i>			