



Clinical trials  
of domestic  
bioprosthesis heart  
valves based on  
nanotechnology  
started in Belarus

4



Industrial tourism  
is on the rise  
in Belarus —  
200,000+ people  
visited enterprises  
last year

5

INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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During the award ceremony of the winners of the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book*. In the photo, left to right: Mikhail Borozna, Rector of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, Sergei Musiyenko, Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre, Maksim Shnip, Head of Illustration Department at the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, Igor Malanyak, Director of the Yakub Kolas Polygraph Plant, Igor Buzovsky, Deputy Minister of Information.

## Eternal power of book

The 31st International Book Fair was held in Minsk. We have a particularly reverent attitude towards this event — after all, Belarus is among the countries, both in Europe and the CIS, that read the most books. The pavilion of the BelExpo National Exhibition Complex barely accommodated the expositions of participants from 20 countries. Belarusian publishing houses showcased their large-scale expositions at the national stand. Guests from Russia traditionally demonstrated large stands with novelties. Almost two thousand books were brought by Chinese publishers, while representatives of Egypt came to the fair for the first time. The Islamic Republic of Iran became the central exhibitor this year.

During the exhibition, the winners of the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book* were determined. The publication *The Taste of Colour Revolutions*, prepared by the EcooM Analytical Centre in liaison with the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, received the Grand Prix of the competition in the Triumph nomination, with the presentation of the Big Golden Folio badge of honour and the Francysk Skaryna honorary diploma. → **6-7**





# Interfaith peace is Belarus' main achievement



Upon arrival at the Minsk Diocesan Administration, Aleksandr Lukashenko, together with Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl, visited the Cathedral of All Belarusian Saints to light a candle.

Metropolitan Veniamin invited the Head of State to the library, where various rare books are kept. Then the President visited the office where Metropolitan Filaret, the Honorary Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, worked.

***“Our country has laid solid foundations for co-operation between the Belarusian Orthodox Church and the state. It could not be otherwise. The history of Orthodoxy in the Belarusian lands is inextricably linked with the history of the formation of our statehood,” the President of Belarus noted at a meeting with the Synod.***

The Belarusian leader drew attention to the fact that the arena of military conflicts unfolded more than once here at the junction of civilisations. In such conditions, it was extremely difficult for a nation to form and declare itself, not to mention to create a state. “Belarusians

succeeded in doing that — largely due to the spiritual core of our ancestors. Therefore, the state and the Orthodox Church have many points of contact,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

The President noted with regret that the Orthodoxy around the world is going through difficult times now, “It hurts to look at the religious confrontation ongoing in our fraternal Ukraine, with the seizure of churches, criminal prosecution of the clergy and struggle for the main shrine of our Orthodoxy — the Kiev Pechersk Lavra. A tragedy is also unfolding in the Holy Land, which has a sacred significance for all world religions. Unfortunately, we see attempts to drag as many countries and peoples as possible into this conflict.”

The Head of State pointed out that the peculiarity of Belarus is that the control centres of traditional confessions are located outside the country. “As we can see today, a number of countries have found themselves in the epicentre of armed conflicts,” the President noted.

***“All the bloodiest wars in the world started with religious disagreements. This religious card is still played by***

The state and the Orthodox Church have many points of contact — the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, stressed that at a meeting with the Synod of the Belarusian Orthodox Church on March 14th

***ideologists of colour revolutions and riots. In such circumstances, it is important to preserve equal rights and maintain a dialogue between representatives of all faiths.”***

The Head of State highlighted that the difficult foreign policy context, fortunately, did not affect the traditions of good neighbourliness and religious tolerance of Belarusians. Thus, ethnic and confessional relations in our country are characterised by stability and steadiness.

Along with that, Belarusian society is experiencing unprecedented pressure at the level of ideas and values, according to the President. “On the one hand, this is due to the unprecedented pace of technology development — the introduction of artificial intelligence, modern means of communication, and more,” Aleksandr Lukashenko explained.

***“On the other hand, the ideas of permissiveness, consumerism, childlessness, LGBT and others — deliberately destructive and harmful for society and the state — are being imposed on us. Society does not have time to develop generally accepted norms of behaviour, making it more difficult for people to make the right moral choice.***

The Church expects people to come to God on their own initiative. However, I think that this is a reciprocal process, and the Church should take a step towards common people. It is important to learn to preach the Word of God in such a way so that it is understandable to everyone. Society has expressed its demand for the living, effective word of the preacher.”

The President also added, “We remember how in 2020 some priests, including, unfortunately, some Orthodox ones, got involved in politics. I will say that the state has special institutions and trained people for this purpose. The task of the Church is to set moral Christian guidelines.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko urged the clergy to have a thorough and frank conversation. During the event, Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, pointed out, “A lot has been done in our country to counter various negative phenomena.”

He thanked Aleksandr Lukashenko for his attention to the position of the Belarusian Orthodox Church on the issue of enshrining provisions on the spiritual foundations of our society in the Basic Law of the country, as well as for the invitation to participate in the discussion of the draft National Security Concept.”

The Metropolitan of Minsk and Zaslavl emphasised, “Confrontation in the spiritual sphere is a struggle on an invisible front, where we are offered ideas, the essence of which is often hidden under external attractiveness, and even the pious guise. Their true nature is often recognised only when their fruits appear — unfavourable for society.”

Metropolitan Veniamin noted that the focus of settling the problems faced by humanity is shifting to the spiritual sphere. “When finalising the National Security Concept, I ask you to once again pay attention to the spiritual sphere of our society so as to protect it from emerging threats. After all, it is necessary to act proactively in this regard,” said the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus.

## ‘Go and search for what the country needs’

**The Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting on the state and development of the mineral resource base of the country, the expansion of geological exploration, including hydrocarbon raw materials**

In total, about five dozen different types of mineral resources have been discovered in Belarus. The country is in Europe’s top 10 in terms of availability of some of them. However, Aleksandr Lukashenko has warned against complacency. The President has stressed that domestic mineral resources are of paramount importance, since they are the key to sovereignty and stable economic development of the country. This is especially relevant now, against the background of sanctions pressure.

The first thing the Head of State drew attention to was the level of oil production in Belarus. During the Soviet times, it stood at about 8 million tonnes per year, and even reached 9 million tonnes, according to some sources. In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko posed a reasonable question: why has the production level dropped significantly, and what opportunities are there to increase it?

“Everyone knows the natural and geological conditions in Belarus. We used to extract 9 million tonnes of oil. Let’s say 8. Today, the volume stands at about 2 million tonnes. I am getting explanations that the oil reserves have been depleted. I do not believe it,” the Belarusian leader stated.

Experts have noted that reserves and potential are available, and this is confirmed by the annual increase in proven reserves. There is no talk about mining to the detriment of the country. The main task is to work better and at a higher qualitative level.

“We need to manage the available resources wisely and cost-consciously. As for the resources we do not have now but expect to get — we must explore and look for them,” the President stressed. “Belarus would be a rich country if we mined 5 million tonnes of oil rather than 2. That is where the reason for considering this issue comes from.” Aleksandr Lukashenko considers the reliance on the country’s own raw material base especially relevant now, when sanctions pressure against Belarus is increasing every year. “Therefore, I repeat once again — go and explore, search for

what the country needs. Minerals prices are rising every year. Yet, instead of taking measures and making use of what literally lies under our feet, we pay without complaints. Our common goal is not only to make products with the maximum use of domestic raw materials. There are three pillars, three growth drivers that will enable us to develop further — efficiency, import substitution and export,” the Head of State set the task.



### FROM THE REPORT OF BELARUS’ MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ANDREI KHUDYK

- About 50 types of mineral resources with significant reserves have been discovered in Belarus, which puts it in top 10 leading European countries on individual indicators.
- Over the past seven years, an increase in industrial reserves has been ensured: oil — about 14 million tonnes, potassium salts — 783 million tonnes, basalts — 54 million tonnes, chalk rocks for cement — about 8 million tonnes, glass sand — 15 million tonnes.
- In 2023, the level of potassium salt production was 170% (compared to the level of 2022), glass sand — 115%, building stone — 113%, facing stone — 101%. In total, the volume of mining production in 2023 amounted to 104.3% compared to the level of 2022.

### INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OIL PRODUCTION IN BELARUS

- In August and October 1933, the first industrial oil inflows were received in Byelorussia [since September 19, 1991 — Belarus].
- In June 2015, drilling of the deepest well in Belarus, the 1st Predrechitskaya, was finished. Its actual depth was 6,755 metres.
- In 2022, a new oilfield and deposits were discovered in Gomel Region in several zones of the Pripyat Trough.

Based on materials of [sb.by](https://sb.by) and [belta.by](https://belta.by)



# About a mature nation, fulfilled promises and confidence in the future

## The President of Belarus spoke about the main things on Constitution Day

The Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting on March 15th, dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Belarus' Constitution.

The large-scale event at the Palace of Independence was attended by judges of the Constitutional Court, persons who contributed to the formation of sovereign Belarus, representatives of political parties and public organisations, parliamentary deputies, scientists.

Aleksandr Lukashenko made a speech at the event, in which he touched upon the historical foundations of the Belarusian constitutional legislation and its current stage, outlined the accomplishments of sovereign Belarus and emphasised its independent path of development.

*“Thirty years ago on this day, the countdown of a new stage in the history of modern Belarus — sovereign and politically independent — began. It was then that the fundamental legal foundations for the development of our state and society were laid. The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus became our beacon, a truly people’s state-forming document, which was especially evident during our referendums,” the Head of State stressed.*

According to the President, each of those present at the event directly or indirectly participated over the years in the development and improvement of the first and only Constitution of sovereign Belarus, as well as in the implementation of its provisions in all areas of state and public life.

“I have a careful attitude to continuity and have always said that there is no nation and no state without traditions. It is a matter of continuity of the national history and the preservation of the cultural code. More specifically, it is a matter of our sacred connection with the previous generations and those who will come after us. Belarus may be a young state, but Belarusians are an absolutely mature nation. It is impossible to dispute this status, nor deny the fact that our Constitution embodies the achievements of many eras,” the Belarusian leader noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced, “It is important to remember that, both ideologically and conceptually, the Constitution of sovereign Belarus is the successor to the Constitution of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Byelorussia — a revolutionary, progressive and, most importantly, fair document. Back in 1919, for the first time in world history, the natural resources of the native land were recognised as the property of the entire people. It was the Soviet Constitution that also for the first time in history, outlawed the exploitation of people by other people and thereby protected human life and dignity regardless of ethnic origin, social status and faith. This is the embodiment of the social justice principle, which was supported by all Soviet constitutions and which we have preserved as fundamental in our life. Speaking about the 1994 Consti-



tution adopted by the Supreme Council, it is necessary to mention about borrowing the experience of the world’s advanced countries. Belarusians reflected the most important attributes of the democratic system, such as the separation of powers, legality in the activities of state bodies, and additional guarantees for the implementation of human rights and freedoms, in the text of our then Constitution.



*Following the Basic Law, we have built a balanced and effective management vertical practically from scratch. Not right away, though. And not without attempts by foreign ‘assistants’ to take control of the process. At present, when talking about the Constitution, we mean the document that reflects our national interests.*

This is what we have now. Many people present in this hall remember what the 1994 Constitution discussions were accompanied with, what was happening on the streets and in the corridors of power, where a struggle for posts was in full swing. Just think about it — that was a parliamentary republic, there was no country yet. That is, there was no ideology of national development, the goals of that development were not set. There was no control system, nor mechanisms for the interaction between different structures. That was the reality, and the country was actually governed by 360 deputies, including me. The responsibility was absolutely vague and I saw it from the inside. Not many people in power

in the 1990s were bothered by the fact that employees at plants and factories were not paid their salaries in months. Who cared about empty shelves in stores?” the President reminded about the important events. “At the same time, against the background of the total poverty of the population, the country had natural resources and an impressive production potential. There were created conven-

ient conditions for the privatisation of that wealth by Western capital — the country was in a mess, and Belarusians had no time to think about national interests or the essence of sovereignty. In fact, almost no one turned to such notions at that time — some people thought about how to feed their children, others — how to retain their jobs and positions.”

What chances did we have to preserve our cultural, economic, and political identity? This is a rhetorical question.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also mentioned that biased politicians of that time tried to impose on Belarusian society a scheme of systematic chaos and de facto anarchy — the parliamentary republic. Yet, the people made a choice in favour of a strong government.

“They tried to divide us along linguistic and ethnic lines, but Belarusians came out as a united people in support of the state status of our two native languages. They wanted to cut us off from our roots, discrediting the Soviet past, but our people — realising that they were the heirs of the heroic generation of winners —

returned to the symbols of the great era. They tried to drag Belarus into all sorts of alliances in order to break off friendly and close integration ties, primarily with Russia, but the Belarusian people did not allow it. Where are those who broke away from the East Slavic family now? Where are these peoples? In contrast, we have created our own history. We have written our laws ourselves. That is why we have been living under the information, political and economic pressure for a third of a century,” the President stated.

By improving the Basic Law in 2021–2022, Belarusians responded to the challenges of the time. People saw the emerging risks of losing the institution of the traditional family, our moral attitudes, and historical memory, and put these values under protection at the highest level — at the level of the Basic Law.

*“We have constitutionally enshrined the right of every person to a decent standard of living. Over the last three decades, the monetary incomes of the population have increased by more than 9 times (compared to the mid–1990s), and wages have risen by 12 times. You remember the hyperinflation level registered after the USSR collapse. Today, its level does not exceed 6 percent,” the President stressed. “Belarusians’ access to personal accommodation is growing — the number of square metres per person has increased 1.6 times. Belarus has one of the lowest poverty levels — not only among the CIS countries, but also among the European Union states. We have reduced this figure 10 times since the early 1990s. The unemployment rate has been significantly reduced. We belong to the countries with a high level of human development. Belarusians are recognised as a highly intelligent nation. This data does not even belong to us, but to those who are not our friends,” the Head of State pointed out.*

According to the Head of State, Belarus rationally invests in innovations and technologies of the future, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the national economy. Belarus takes a rational approach to financial issues, neither accumulating nor transferring debts to future generations. The country’s public debt does not exceed 32 percent of gross domestic product.

Belarus has created a modern highly productive agricultural sector. The country is in the top 5 exporters of dairy products, and is among the world leaders in meat production per capita. In general, almost 65 percent of Belarusian industrial products are exported.

“Exactly 30 years ago, the countdown of the history of independent Belarus began. Approaching this milestone date, we look back at the path we have covered in order to step more confidently into tomorrow. Our Constitution provides an opportunity to live with dignity, develop, feel safe, and fulfil the most ambitious plans and initiatives in our native land. This is how it should be in a modern, truly democratic country. Most importantly, we have done everything so that our children could surpass these achievements and successes. We will continue to help them. Now it is time for the new generations to act,” Aleksandr Lukashenko added. “Despite today’s difficulties and all the twists and turns, I have good reasons to look confidently into the future,” the Belarusian leader assured.

The participants of the meeting delivered their reports. They discussed the activities of the Constitutional Court to protect constitutional values, the tasks of civil society to strengthen democratic foundations, the role of youth in preserving and enhancing the traditions of the Belarusian state.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by





**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*“The creation of a new segment and the application of advanced technologies give a powerful impulse to the dynamic development of Belarusian healthcare, its promotion to the leading positions in the world. I think that it is possible to achieve this goal with such talented people as our state prize winners from the National Research Centre for the Transplantation of Organs and Tissues at Minsk Clinical Hospital No. 9, the Cardiology Republican Scientific and Practical Centre. These are the beacons for other organisations and industries.”*

**During the presentation of state prizes and awards, on April 28th, 2017**

**By Yelena Basikirskaya**

### Made in Belarus

Belarusian cardiac surgeons have been using domestic mechanical prosthetic heart valves since 1993. These are constantly being improved and modified. Mechanical prosthetic heart valves are mainly implanted in patients younger than 60 years old. Bioprosthetic heart valves allow preserving the quality of life of elderly patients for a long time.

“For many years, Belarusian cardiac surgeons only had bioprosthetic heart valves of foreign manufacture at their disposal,” noted Natalia Mitkovskaya, Director of the Cardiology RSPC, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor.

*“The domestic innovative development of a bioprosthetic heart valve manufactured at the Electronmash Plant required many years of bilateral co-operation between technical specialists and cardiac surgeons. Belarusian prostheses have a lot of beneficial features. Thus, they allow successfully eliminating clinical manifestations of heart disease and, most probably, they will have a fairly long service life.”*

Seven operations performed to date have demonstrated good clinical results and ensured full satisfaction of specialised doctors with the results of medical interventions. If the clinical picture remains to be as positive in the future as in the early post-surgical period, it will be possible to state the fact — Belarus has developed domestic BHVs of excellent quality, competitive not only on the CIS market.

### At the global level

Belarus is among the top 20 countries in the world in terms of the number of heart transplants per one million inhabitants. About 50 medical interventions of that kind are carried out per year, amounting to a total of over 550 since 2009, when the first heart transplant was made. This is an astonishing result. Especially when you consider that a ten-year survival rate of heart transplant recipients has reached 73–75 percent. These indicators match the level of many world centres.

High technologies make it possible to treat patients as quickly and effectively as possible, with minimal post-surgical complications. The advancement of all stages of medical care for patients with heart conditions is the goal of modern cardiology and cardiac surgery.

*The Cardiology RSPC specialists provide world-class medical care to patients with pulmonary hypertension enabling them to return to an active and full-fledged life after surgery.*

Another state-of-the-art technology for the treatment of heart failure is currently undergoing clinical trials — using an X-ray

# Heart line

Belarus features among the top 20 countries in the world in terms of the number of heart transplants per 1 million population. Bioprosthetic valves, minimally invasive operations and the spread of high technologies across the regions — let’s see what new heights Belarusian cardiology has reached so far.

**This year, for the first time in Belarus, the Cardiology Republican Scientific and Practical Centre (RSPC) has launched clinical trials of a new generation of Belarus-made bioprosthetic heart valves (BHV) made from calf pericardium, with the use of nanotechnology. The first patients implanted with a BHV are in satisfactory condition. After the successful completion of clinical trials, it is planned to start mass production of Belarusian BHVs, which will make it possible to abandon the purchase of Western prostheses and to increase the availability of high-tech cardiac surgery.**



Almost all heads of cardiac surgery departments in our country are students of Academician Yuri Ostrovsky, Deputy Director for Innovative Development and High Technology of the Cardiology RSPC. According to Natalia Mitkovskaya, “Specialists of the Cardiology RSPC, who head departments and scientific laboratories of chronic coronary heart disease, arrhythmology, emergency cardiology, arterial hypertension, regularly travel to the regions to conduct master classes, carry out advisory work, and provide organisational and methodological assistance to specialists in the field.”



foreign patient has a life-threatening condition, they are saved out of turn.

### Double success

In 2016, the heart–lung complex was transplanted for the first time at the Cardiology RSPC. A duel organ transplant is an extreme measure that is used in very severe patients and gives them a chance to survive.

“The risks of an unfavourable outcome for such people increase many times during surgery and in the post-surgical period,” clarified Natalia Mitkovskaya. “Therefore, we have created a special care and rehabilitation system for such patients. In addition to powerful intensive care units equipped with state-of-the-art technology, intensive care wards have been opened, where patients can stay until they are transferred to the general clinical department.”

*It is planned to open a cardiogenic shock care centre on the basis of the Cardiology RSPC intensive care units by the end of 2024. The implementation of this groundbreaking project will allow bringing back to life the most severe category of cardiac patients.*

### The regions — up to the mark

With the adoption of state programmes in the field of healthcare in 2008, the development of cardiac surgery reached a new level. The implementation of high-tech surgical interventions began to be introduced in the regions. Every year, the volume of medical assistance is increased, the latest methods and technologies are developed and implemented, and the list of operations in regional centres is expanding.

*Surgical units are available in every region. They perform at least 70 percent of the volume of all heart and vascular surgeries in the country.*

There are ten inter-district X-ray endovascular centres in the republic.

endovascular method, a device is installed in the patient to reduce the heart size, increase cardiac contractility and even cause the reverse process of pathological changes. This project is led by Deputy Director for Therapeutic Care of the Cardiology RSPC, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor Yelena Kurlianskaya.

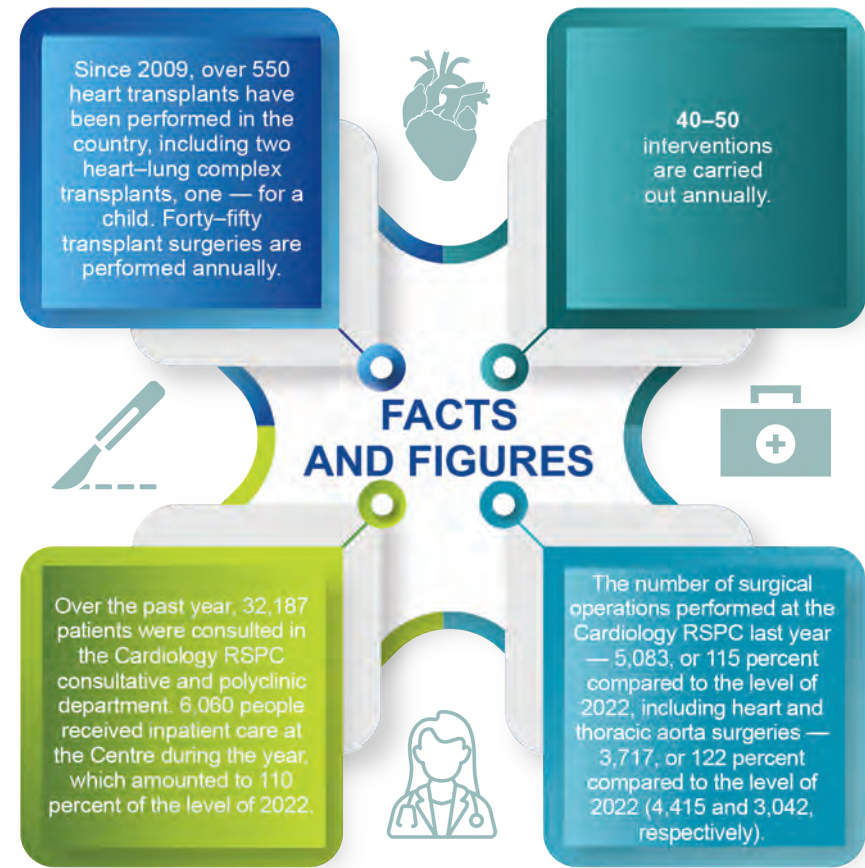
This development of the Cardiology RSPC team and some other innovative achievements of the Centre’s staff were presented with the National Academy of Sciences Award.

### Adopting Belarus’ experience

Cardiology medical science in our country is represented at a decent level. Specialists from Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan come to Belarus for internships and training. We have established strong and long-term relationship with our Japanese and Canadian counterparts.

“An educational centre has been established and is successfully operating at the Cardiology RSPC. We are the clinical base for two departments of the Belarusian State Medical University — the Department of Cardiac Surgery, and the Department of Cardiology and Internal Diseases,” pointed out Natalia Mitkovskaya. “The possibilities of modern Belarusian cardiology and cardiac surgery are demonstrated to specialised doctors from the regions of our country and abroad when conducting more than 30 types of educational cycles, internships and advanced training courses.”

When performing a heart transplant, the priority always remains with our fellow countrymen. Yet, when there are no Belarusian candidates on the waiting list or a





# Welcome to the workshop



Aleksandr Kushner

Last year, over 200 thousand people visited Belarus’ enterprises — industrial tourism is vigorously developing across the country

Great attention is paid to the development of industrial tourism in Belarus at the government level. At present, more than 130 enterprises and organisations have adopted a comprehensive approach to promote this direction by developing and approving tourist routes. Participants of site tours have a chance to ride a tractor, learn how sweets are made and sit behind the wheel of the world’s largest car. In 2023, above 200,000 people visited the country’s enterprises — this is a third more than a year earlier. We have found out what lies in store for this direction.

By Tatiana Semenkova

In 2023, a single classification of types of tourism was introduced in the country — there are 13 of them in total. Every month of the year is dedicated to one particular direction. For example, March has been declared the month of industrial tourism, April will be dedicated to business tourism, and in May agro-ecotourism will be promoted. The industry development strategy has been developed until 2035.

“One of the most important directions is industrial tourism. We have managed to preserve its potential since Soviet times. All brands and leading enterprises are still operating, and we are proud of that. However, the world does not stand still, the competition is growing, which requires new approaches,” Deputy Minister of Sports and Tourism Oleg Andreichik noted at the international seminar ‘Industrial Tourism as a Brand and Strategy’. “People’s attitudes towards tours to production sites have changed. Industrial visits used to be career-oriented, but now almost all facilities offer to take part in master classes, visit museums and tasting rooms, as well as to have a hand in creating popular products.”

A working group on industrial tourism has been set up in our country, which is part of the Interdepartmental Expert Coordination Council on Tourism under the Council of Ministers. The Deputy Minister stressed, “A roadmap on the development of industrial tourism is being implemented. A new law on tourism came into force on January 1st, 2023. In particular, it enables employees of industrial enterprises to act as guides without certification.”

“Last year, over 200 thousand people visited industrial tourism sites, which is a third more when compared with 2022.

*It is gratifying that our enterprises are visited not only by Belarusians, but also by tourists from other countries. Over 5 million tourists from Russia visited Belarus last year. They are interested in life, technology, and products manufactured at our enterprises,” Oleg Andreichik emphasised.*

**ENTERPRISES HAVE COME UP WITH A RANGE OF UNIQUE OFFERS**

Thus, at BELAZ [global manufacturer of mining dump trucks and transport equipment for mining and construction], where it is currently possible to conduct up to 10 excursions per day, visitors are offered to take on the role of a test driver — a dynamic dump truck driving simulator will make it possible. BKM HOLDING [leading manufacturer of modern urban electric transport] provides an opportunity to test-drive an electric bus or a hybrid bus. Minsk Tractor Works offers the ‘Assemble a tractor’ service — visitors can take part in the assembly of BELARUS brand machinery, followed by obtaining the appropriate certificate. Another option — take a ride on an energy-saturated tractor BELARUS 3522 or BELARUS 4522 around the MTZ territory — 2 laps of 2.5 km.

## Leaders of industrial tourism – 2023



Source: Belarus’ Ministry of Industry

The Deputy Minister recalled that last year, 12 holdings and independent organisations of the Ministry of Industry provided industrial tourism services, “The enterprises of the Belgospishcheprom concern received 42 thousand visitors last year, and the income



Andrey Sazonov



Anton Stepanishchev

## INDUSTRIAL TOURISTS WILL WITNESS A LOT OF INNOVATIONS ON THE HORIZON

Gomselmash [Belarusian manufacturer of agricultural machinery based in Gomel] has already purchased radio guides to ensure comfortable visits of its workshops; and after the reconstruction of the museum space, it will be possible to conduct 3D tours. Mogilevliftmash [Belarusian manufacturer of passenger and freight elevators based in Mogilev] is developing a project to launch a new interactive museum exposition. Brest Electric Lamp Plant is considering the creation of a museum of electric lamp products and the history of the enterprise. In addition to the Ministry of Industry, industrial tourism is actively promoted by Belgospishcheprom [Belarusian state food industry concern], Bellegprom [Belarusian light industry concern], as well as the Ministry of Architecture and Construction.

opportunity to get an insight into the production and processes. This practice contributes to effective career guidance,” the Deputy Minister noted.

“Minsk Tractor Works began developing industrial tourism in 2017 with one excursion per day. Today we offer four tours per day from Monday to Saturday. Last year, MTZ was visited by more than 15,000 people,” Sergei Sidorovich, MTZ Leading Specialist for Industrial Tourism, said during the seminar. “We will not stop at that. We intend to go beyond the factory premises but have to get certification first. Industrial tourism contributes to the brand and image of our enterprise, and helps with career guidance. We introduce children to future professions, show them what a modern manufacturing plant looks like today.”

One of the promising areas for industrial tourism development is the creation of joint projects in personnel training and cross-border routes. “Russian entities are willing to co-operate with our regions in building a chain of tourist routes. Another promising direction is formulating a strategy for the unification of legislation in tourism, which will allow carrying out this activity on the territory of both countries. We are currently working on this. It may become the trend for future development of industrial tourism,” Oleg Andreichik concluded.



BELTA





500 exhibitors from 20 countries — 31st Minsk International Book Fair impressed with its scale

The 31st Minsk International Book Fair held on March 14th–17th brought together famous book publishers, public and cultural figures from 20+ countries, including China, Germany, Brazil, Pakistan, India, Türkiye, and South Korea. Belarusian publishing houses showcased their large-scale expositions at the National Stand styled after the capital's Victory Square. Guests from fraternal Russia traditionally demonstrated large stands with novelties. Almost two thousand books were brought by Chinese publishers, while representatives of Egypt came to the book fair for the first time. The Islamic Republic of Iran became the focal exhibitor this time. The overarching themes of the exhibition were the Year of Quality in Belarus and the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi invaders.



# Power of printed word

By Yelena Basikirskaya, Olga Nevmerzhitskaya

## Breaking records

At the grand opening of the 31st Minsk International Book Fair, First Deputy Head of the President Administration **Maksim Ryzhenkov** announced the President's greeting.

"The exhibition rightfully expands the horizons of book publishing and allows plunging into new reflections, meanings, approaches of truly responsible and committed authors from Belarus and our friends," Maksim Ryzhenkov pointed out.

The four-day fair provided a rich programme encompassing all ages — meetings with writers and editors, master classes, presentations for children and adults. The books on display were meant to suit every taste — from novelties to favourite classics.

It is noteworthy that this year, the fair organisers for the first time faced the problem of the lack of space due to large expositions announced by regular participants and guests who decided to expand their representative offices. Interestingly, the Minsk International Book Fair hit a record number of visitors this year — it was visited by over 62 thousand people.

Speaking of quality, it is important to emphasise the decent quantitative indicators achieved by Belarusian publishing houses. Belarus' Information Minister **Vladimir Pertsov** cited the example of 2023, "A high-quality, colourful, informative book is the demand of modern society. It is pleasant to know that Belarusian publishers are able to fully meet this demand. Our average circulation per edition has increased from 2,350 to 2,500 copies. This means that we have managed to identify the structure of the reader's genre preferences. Earlier, 500–1,000 copies were considered a good result, now the demand is higher. The subject of commercial consumption, the so-called dime literature, is losing importance, and serious publications are gaining popularity, instead."

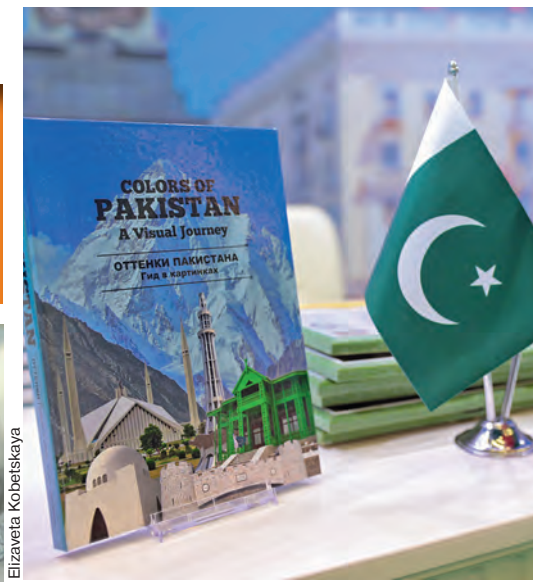
The central exhibitor — the Islamic Republic of Iran — presented about 500 books about its culture and history. The organisers, participants and guests of the book fair were welcomed by **Alireza Sanei**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Belarus, "It is a great honour for me to be among the most educated representatives of society — scientists and connoisseurs of literature. Undoubtedly, the will of states, including Belarus, to hold such exhibitions, to preserve books and popularise reading, to honour and encourage writers and figures of science and culture testifies to the correct and deep understanding by the state of the significant role of books, the influence of scientists and writers on the development of society. This is especially important in the modern era, when the development of science and technologies as well as the transition of mankind to digitalisation, have led to a decrease in general interest, especially among the younger generation, in books and reading."

Books from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were among the most notable novelties. The bright, colourfully illustrated publication *Colours of Pakistan* — a bilingual coffee table masterpiece in English and Russian showcasing the vivid hues of Pakistan's heritage, culture, and natural beauty — was presented by Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus **Sajjad Haider Khan**. "The publication will inspire residents of Belarus to visit our country. Each page will send a reader on a journey capable of telling about this unique state with love and in detail. Here you can see everything — from the high mountain peaks of the Himalayas and the Karakoram in the north to the serene beaches of the Arabian Sea and the Thar Desert in the south, from the ruins of civilisations to the bustling bazaars of the ancient cities of Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi," told the Ambassador in his speech.

Valery Tolkachev, Head of the Investigative Group for the investigation of the criminal case into the genocide of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War, explained the popularity of historical publications among readers. He spoke about the concept that the authors adhered to when preparing the *Genocide of the Belarusian People* series, which sold 20 thousand copies. "The main thing for us is accuracy. The publications are based on the facts, not on allegations. They include excerpts from the testimony of eye-witnesses, beholders of those events, and archival data. Thus, in 2022, the project became the winner of the National Competition *The Art of the Book*. In 2023, it received the Grand Prix at the Moscow International Book Fair. We are proud of that because it was created by the staff of the General Prosecutor's Office." Joint projects of the Ministry of Justice, the General

## Nothing is forgotten

Prosecutor's Office and BELTA were unveiled at the exhibition. The publication *Archives. Nothing but the Truth* presents newly discovered archival materials testifying to the crimes of the Nazis and their accomplices against the civilian population in the occupied territory of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic during the Great Patriotic War. The book *Last Witnesses* encompasses the stories of young prisoners of Nazi concentration camps recorded during the investigation of the genocide of the Belarusian people by the General Prosecutor's Office.



Elizaveta Kobetskaya



Elizaveta Kobetskaya



Ira Shvelko



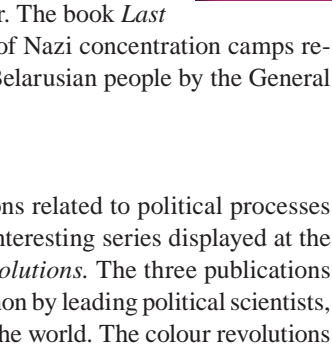
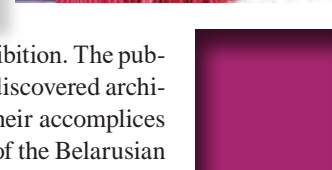
Ira Shvelko

## At the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book*, publications of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House staff won awards

The publication *The Taste of Colour Revolutions*, created by the EcooM Analytical Centre in co-operation with the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, received the Grand Prix of the competition in the Triumph nomination, the Big Golden Folio badge of honour and the Francysk Skaryna honorary diploma.

Maksim Shnip, Head of Illustration Department at the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, became the best book designer in the Mastery individual nomination.

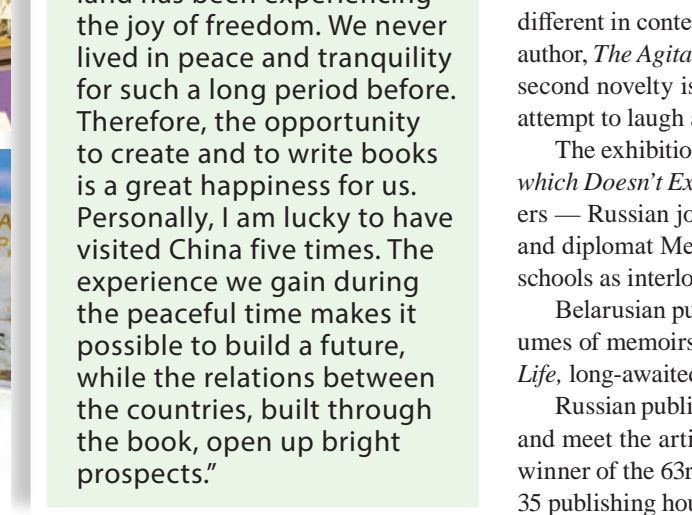
Andrei Mukovozhchik was awarded the first degree diploma in the LIT-Format nomination for the books *What to Teach Children* and *What to Teach Adults* published by the Belarus Publishing House.



Prosecutor's Office and BELTA were unveiled at the exhibition. The publication *Archives. Nothing but the Truth* presents newly discovered archival materials testifying to the crimes of the Nazis and their accomplices against the civilian population in the occupied territory of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic during the Great Patriotic War. The book *Last Witnesses* encompasses the stories of young prisoners of Nazi concentration camps recorded during the investigation of the genocide of the Belarusian people by the General Prosecutor's Office.

## In the top of preferences

Experts have noted the public interest in publications related to political processes and the history of our country. Thus, one of the most interesting series displayed at the exhibition is considered to be *The Taste of Colour Revolutions*. The three publications included in the series contain the vision of this phenomenon by leading political scientists, analysts and publicists from more than 20 countries of the world. The colour revolutions



An agreement signing ceremony between the Mastatskaya Litaratura Publishing House and the China International Publishing Group (CIPG), also known as the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration, took place at the exhibition. Belarus' Deputy Information Minister Igor Buzovsky highlighted the importance of the event for the international relations, "For eighty years already, our land has been experiencing the joy of freedom. We never lived in peace and tranquility for such a long period before. Therefore, the opportunity to create and to write books is a great happiness for us. Personally, I am lucky to have visited China five times. The experience we gain during the peaceful time makes it possible to build a future, while the relations between the countries, built through the book, open up bright prospects."

## A holiday for true connoisseurs of books

### Dear friends!

I cordially welcome the guests and participants of the 31st Minsk International Book Fair and the 10th Writer and Time International Symposium.

Your unique cultural and business platform has once again united the best ideas, talents, novelties from the world of literature and publishing in the very heart of Belarus, while organising a holiday for true connoisseurs of books.

The theme of the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi invaders gives particular significance to this year's event. The works of Belarusian classic writers, which have received a new interpretation in the works of contemporaries, are inextricably linked with this topic.

Today, it is important that the thoughtful word of the writer lays the spiritual and moral foundations of human life, fosters a sense of responsibility for the fate of the country, and contributes to the consolidation of society in the face of modern threats and challenges.

I am confident that the forum will be successful, will be remembered by its participants and guests for its substantial dialogue and will contribute to the strengthening of international cultural ties.

I wish you all fruitful work, pleasant meetings and interesting discoveries.

**Aleksandr Lukashenko,**  
the President of the Republic of Belarus

techniques honed in dozens of other countries proved to be untenable in Belarus. Why? This question was answered by the experts who worked on the project implementation. The series of books was prepared by the EcooM Analytical Centre in liaison with the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House.

According to the director of the centre, Sergei Musiyenko, the books have literally gone to the people, "The popularity with the audience is understandable. The texts, the design, the visualisation are all at the highest level. The world's best authors, from Australia to Vietnam, worked on the publications. What gives them special value is their independent view — it has made the project unique."

The book *We Know Them, We are Proud of Them!* by Irina Ovsepyan, a journalist of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, is based on the project published in the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. Now there are prospects for the second volume of the book, the author has shared, "These are the fruits of our joint work with artist Oleg Karpovich. Our task was to show the cultural and artistic figures that our country is proud of, through the prism of their biography and the era they lived in. And they lived in the 20th century. It was a terrible, bloody and at the same time grandiose time — time of the greatest tragedies, collapse and major breakthroughs. We want the reader to love our characters as much as we love them."

Columnist of the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya* Political Information Department Andrei Mukovozhchik unveiled two premieres at the fair. They are different in content, yet neither of them will leave anyone indifferent. According to the author, *The Agitator's Notebook* is actually a desk book for the ideological vertical. The second novelty is *Fugitive and Funny*. The author has confessed that this book is an attempt to laugh at once painful past.

The exhibition also showcased a captivating book *Conversations about the Future, which Doesn't Exist Yet. Russia and the World in the XXI Century*. The authors compilers — Russian journalist and media manager Andrei Bystritsky and Iranian scientist and diplomat Mehdi Sanaei — gathered Russian intellectuals of different beliefs and schools as interlocutors to discuss the problems of the future.

Belarusian publishers presented other significant novelties of the year — fresh volumes of memoirs by People's Writer of Belarus Nikolai Cherginets *Difficult Roads of Life*, long-awaited reprints of Belarusian literature classics, and more.

Russian publishers arranged over 40 events at the fair — presentations, discussions, and meet the artist sessions. The exhibition also featured the award ceremony of the winner of the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book*, where 150+ books from 35 publishing houses contended for the prize.





# A war on children

UN: Gaza war killed more children than in four years of worldwide conflict

The UN said that more than 12,300 children died between October and February in the Gaza Strip, mostly in Israeli airstrikes, citing its own data and reports from Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry.

At the same time, the UN’s own calculations show that 12,193 children were killed in fighting in all armed conflicts globally between 2019 and 2022.

At least 31,272 people have been killed in Gaza since October last year, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Although it is run by Hamas, the ministry’s casualty figures for previous conflicts have been found to be accurate.

Philippe Lazzarini, Head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), called the numbers ‘staggering’. “This war is a war on children. It is a war on their childhood and their future,” he said.

The head of the UN agency spoke just before a US official warned that Washington would not be in a position to resume funding for the UNRWA, following a scandal around the alleged involvement of 12 of its 13,000 Gazan employees in the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th.

“We have to plan for the fact that

Congress may make that pause permanent,” Matthew Miller, a State Department spokesman, said of a freeze on US contributions to UNRWA.

The ongoing war in Gaza, which has already led to at least 20 children dying from starvation, has caused ‘relentless mental harm’ to minors there, charity group Save the Children said.

The charity warned about the emotional distress for Gaza’s children from dodging bombs and bullets as services and tools for parents to care for their children are ‘further and further out of reach’.

## Vladimir Putin wins election in landslide

**A record number of nearly 76m voters cast their ballots for incumbent President Vladimir Putin in Russia’s presidential election, Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairperson Ella Pamfilova announced**

Russia held its presidential election on March 15th-17th. Voting for the first time lasted over three days and incorporated online voting, which was available in about one-third of the country’s regions. According to the CEC data, incumbent President Vladimir Putin was in the lead with 87.28 percent of the vote after 100 percent of the ballots counted.

Central Election Commission Chairperson Ella Pamfilova also said that voter turnout in the presidential election had set a record in Russia’s modern history, reaching 77.44 percent.

“More than 75.9 million voters cast their ballots for the incumbent head of state. This is a record number compared to 2018, when over 56.4 million people voted for Vladimir Putin,” Pamfilova said at the CEC information centre. CEC will sum up the final results of the Russian presidential election on March 21st.

During a telephone conversation, on behalf of the Belarusian people and himself, President Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated his Russian colleague on the convincing victory in the presidential election.



## Protest against sending Western troops to Ukraine

A rally against sending Western soldiers to Ukraine has taken place in Paris, with several thousand demonstrators tearing up EU and NATO flags and waving French tricolours instead

“We came to say that we do not agree with the escalation of the Ukraine conflict. Lawmakers should demand this issue be debated at the Parliament and put to voting as enshrined in the French constitution,” said Florian Philippot, the leader of The Patriots party, who initiated the protest, being one of the most staunch opponents of NATO in France.

The demonstrators tore up EU and NATO flags and waved French tricolours instead.

“Long live free France!” Parisians chanted. “One of our goals is France’s withdrawal from NATO. This alliance is constantly pushing us toward war and looking for enemies,” Mr. Philippot underlined, adding that the EU is following suit.

The protesters carried banners reading

‘We are not willing to die for Ukraine,’ ‘Let’s stop pumping weapons into Kiev,’ ‘For a peaceful solution in Ukraine’, ‘No third world war!’ and ‘Moms against war’.

The protesters demanded that France pull out of the EU and stop being a NATO member.

French President Emmanuel Macron said on February 26th at a meeting in Paris — where representatives of about 20 Western countries discussed further support for Ukraine in the conflict with Russia — that the possibility of sending Western countries’ ground troops to Ukraine was raised. He remarked that no consensus was achieved, but such a scenario could not be ruled out in the future. Macron later added that ‘not ruling something out does not mean doing it’.

## Archaeological discovery

**Archaeologists say they have discovered what may be the largest mass grave ever excavated in Europe at a site in southern Germany**

Roughly 1,000 skeletons of plague victims have so far been found in mass graves in the centre of the city of Nuremberg, which experts believe may contain a total of more than 1,500 people, according to a press recently published release.

The remains were discovered during an archaeological survey prior to the construction of new residential buildings in the city.

Melanie Langbein, from Nuremberg’s department for heritage conservation, said that eight plague pits were identified, each containing several hundred bodies.

“Those people were not interred in a regular cemetery although we have designated plague cemeteries in Nuremberg,” said Langbein. “This means a large number of dead people who needed to be bur-

ied in a short time frame without regard to Christian burial practices.

”Because of this, an epidemic such as the plague is ‘more than likely’ the explanation for the mass graves, according to Langbein. Nuremberg suffered plague outbreaks roughly every 10 years from the 14th century onward, she said, making it a challenge to date the remains.

Archaeologists used radiocarbon dating to date one mass grave to between the late 1400s and early 1600s, and found shards of pottery and coins dating from the later end of that range at the site. They also discovered a note from 1634 detailing a plague outbreak that killed more than 15,000 people in 1632-1633, which says almost 2,000 people were buried near St. Sebastian Hospital.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



# European Union is entering the twilight zone

The EU has started this year in deep crisis, where farmers are just the tip of the iceberg

The deindustrialisation process is gaining momentum in Europe. Enterprises are reducing their activities and looking towards Asia and America, where the investment conditions are more favourable. Consumer spending is falling, and the economy is entering a recession. Brussels' policy is assessed by experts as a failure. What is next?

By Piotr Petrovsky, political scientist

## From the garden to the jungle

Last year was marked by fictitious economic growth in the EU, whose GDP rose by only 0.5 percent, which is a statistical error. The insignificant growth became possible due to the countries of the Iberian Peninsula — Spain (+0.6 percent) and Portugal (+0.8 percent), which are remote from the conflict in Ukraine. At the same time, Germany (−0.3 percent) and France (0) entered recession.

According to the official data last year, consumer spending in Germany decreased by 0.8 percent, government spending fell by 1.7 percent for the first time in almost 20 years, while fixed asset investments dropped by 0.3 percent. German exports fell by 1.8 percent, and imports plummeted by 3 percent. The German manufacturing sector shrank its activity by 2 percent, including in the processing industry — by 0.4 percent. The total deficit of general government budgets in Germany amounted to 82.7 billion Euros.

*The EU's ongoing collapse is due to the preposterous severance of ties with Russia and the sanctions war arranged by European bureaucrats — not only with Russia and its allies, but also with China. This is added by an increase in EU defence spending, indicating that the pillars, which once supported the miracle of the European garden, are being destroyed with the hands of the European elite.*

## The global trend

The unfavourable conditions that Brussels has put the European economy in are hitting the entire industry. As noted by Eurostat, the industrial production volume in 27 EU countries last October fell by 0.5 percent on a monthly basis. The annual figures are even more impressive — a decrease of 5.5 percent. Ireland has become the record holder for deindustrialisation — minus 7 percent per month, and the staggering minus 34 percent in annual terms. This is due to changes in the activities of large multinational companies, such as Apple and Pfizer for example, which decided to limit their presence in the EU. Industrial production also declined in Slovakia (−13.1 percent) and Estonia (−11.5). They are followed by Luxembourg (−8.4 percent) and Lithuania (−8.2). There has been significant production shrinkage in Slovenia (−7.3 percent) and Romania (−7.1).

Special attention is riveted on Germany — the EU's economic driving force. Gunnar Groebler, CEO of the German steel conglomerate Salzgitter AG, stated the problem of 'creeping deindustrialisation' in Germany. In his opinion, the greatest threat looms over energy-intensive industries — primarily steel and chemical ones.

This, in turn, can result in the loss along the entire value chain in Germany. Goebler's words are confirmed by statistics — the industrial production volume dropped by 2.9 percent in December after a 0.1 percent decline in November.

## Washington is rubbing its hands

Economic competitors such as China, India, the United States, Japan, and South Korea benefit from the fatal energy policy of the EU elites. Gas prices in Europe have skyrocketed to become nearly 6 times higher than the average cost over the past 10 years, and 4-5 times higher than current prices in the United States.

The protectionist policy in the United States in its current form was started by Trump with his tariffs on aluminum and steel, and import duties. The Biden administration, in its turn, did not even think about abandoning it — on the contrary, it even deepened and expanded this trend, consistently adhering to the 'Buy American' slogan.

*Subsidies to the energy sector, which keep domestic American prices within reasonable limits, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$369bn in investments to promote clean-energy programmes, are doing their job — European production is lured to the United States. On top of that, the Biden administration is shifting the burden of financial and military assistance to the Kiev regime to Europe.*

## Ritual sacrifices

The decrease in spare cash in the EU has led to a reduction in subsidies to agriculture. The fact is that small and medium-sized farmers play a more social than economic role for the European Union, creating and retaining jobs in the countryside and hence, mass employment.

However, the EU has now begun to shrink from helping certain segments of agriculture. Another ideology is being promoted. It requires farmers to cultivate less land and use less intensive methods in order to curb harmful emissions. This means reducing agriculture and producing less food.

*This explains why farmers in the EU rebelled against the current policy of Brussels, which leads to imminent bankruptcy and redistribution of the agricultural market in favour of multinational companies that will quickly buy unprofitable farms for a song.*

The consequences of mass protests by farmers include not only the blockade of Ukraine borders, but also the blockade of huge logistics hubs. For example, farmers in some areas of Germany used tractors to



**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*"There is no EU, no Europe as an independent entity. It is completely under the thumb of the United States. Whatever they decide in Washington, Europeans subscribe to. Even to their own detriment, which is surprising at times. Take Germany for example. Why did they decide to destroy such a high-tech economy — out of fear, or to please someone?"*

**During a meeting with representatives of foreign and Belarusian media, on July 6th, 2023**

block entry roads to highways. This, in particular, caused the shutdown of production at the Volkswagen factory in northwestern Germany. Furthermore, members of the union representing Germany's train drivers are about to go on a warning strike across the country due to disputes with the Deutsche Bahn state-owned railway operator over working hours and wages.

## Growing dependence

The current actions of the European elites are completely opposite to the original idea of the EU's 'strategic autonomy', which became part of its Global Strategy doctrine of 2016. By the way, the document envisages strengthening the military-political and economic independence of the EU from NATO. In 2020, the European Parliament even began to use the concept of 'strategic sovereignty', focusing on the interaction of Brussels with the main centres of power — the United States, Russia and China.

*However, there immediately arose contradictions between the desire for the EU autonomy and the Euro-Atlantic solidarity of Europeans and Americans. Despite the obvious crisis in Euro-Atlantic relations and the US aspiration to absorb Europe in pursuance of its interests, Brussels bureaucrats abandoned a balanced and independent foreign policy.*

## The rating is going down

Failures both in the foreign arena and in domestic politics cannot but affect the growth of public discontent in Europe, which is especially important in light of the election campaign to the European Parliament and the national elections in nine EU countries this year. The most interesting ones are expected to be the regional elections in Germany, where the Alternative for Germany (AfD) right-wing opposition party has every chance of winning in the eastern lands; and the parliamentary elections in Austria and the Czech Republic, where Eurosceptics who seek to restore relations with Russia have great chances to lead the governments.

The European Parliament is also expecting changes. According to the Euractiv forecast, European bureaucrats in ruling parties, despite retaining the majority, will be seriously pushed back by Eurosceptics.

The most intriguing part of the forecast is the fiasco predicted to the globalist forces of the Greens and the Liberals. Even though one should not expect that the elections to the European Parliament will drastically change the situation, the recorded year-over-year decline in the ratings and authority of the ruling elites increasingly demonstrates the intensification of the EU legitimacy crisis in the eyes of ordinary citizens.



EUROPE

The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
March 21  
2024

9



Spring is rightfully considered the most beautiful time of the year. Nature is revived after long winter hibernation. The singing of birds outside the window, the flowing stream and warm rays of the sun create a wonderful atmosphere of joy, harmony and movement. The higher the sun rises, the more enthusiastic about travelling everyone gets. We will guide you through the places to visit in Belarus where you can catch the first warm days.

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Brest

The southernmost city of the country knows how to pleasantly surprise tourists. When Vitebsk is still covered with a thick layer of snow, people in Brest already show off their spring coats and walk bareheaded. It is in Brest that you can see the first snowdrops, the first storks, and the first thunderstorm.

Also, it is in Brest Region that they start harvesting birch sap earlier than in other regions. By the way, Kirill Kvetka, a famous Belarusian gardening blogger, lives in the city over the Bug River. The young man became famous on the Internet thanks to his impressive flower collection. He seems to know absolutely everything about seeds, seedlings and cuttings. What is most important is that the guy willingly shares his knowledge with others. Kirill has set up a luxurious Kvetka Park on the territory of the Brest State Technical University, which will blossom vigorously with the onset of warmth.



Belovezhskaya Pushcha

If you want to see the awakening of nature in all its glory, go to legendary Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Snow-white galanthus bells are about to show up on the thawed areas. There will be bluebells, lungwort, primroses, pasqueflowers... The main rule is to admire but keep your hands to yourself. Plucking early bloomers may lead to a considerable fine.

The old-growth forest in early spring is especially delightful not only for its flora, but also for fauna. Wild animals are happy about the approaching warmth and leave their burrows to frolic in the sun. Thus, during hiking or cycling along the Pushcha routes, there is a great chance to unexpectedly encounter its fluffy inhabitants. Some places even provide equipped observation towers, from which bison, deer, wild boars, foxes and cranes are perfectly visible.



Turov

The inhabitants of Polesie are the first in the Blue-eyed country [Belarus' nickname] to feel the departure of winter — as snow begins to melt, the rivers overflow their banks in a matter of hours, and local fields and swamps turn into one big endless sea. No roads, no bridges — some sections can only be crossed by boat. The locals are certainly used to it, while visitors are completely delighted with the waywardness of nature. That is why spring is the peak of the tourist season in Polesie. Kayaking and boat rides are top activities.

Ancient Turov boasts an authentic floating hotel with cabins instead of rooms, and portholes instead of windows. The famous Turovsky Meadow Nature Reserve is located along the banks of the Pripyat River. Hundreds of thousands of birds flock to nest there in early spring, making it a unique place for birdwatching.

The Botanical Garden

The garden of the Belarus' National Academy of Sciences has such secluded corners that winter never reaches them at all. A ticket of only ten Belarusian rubles will take you to the tropics — the temperature in the central part of the greenhouse is +25 degrees. There is a lot of light in the glass building, pleasant music is playing in the background, and colourful parrots are chirping in a lively manner.

A variety of palm trees, cacti, citrus fruits impress visitors right from the doorstep — there are about sixty types of lemon alone here, not to mention oranges and grapefruits. The garden has bananas, avocados, macadamia, and even a coffee tree that blossoms with white buds. The marvellous scents you can smell in the air deserve a special mention — from familiar jasmine and mimosa to completely exotic ones that are difficult to describe. By the way, in case you get hungry, there is a cafe right inside the greenhouse.



Sanatoriums

Prices for health resort vouchers traditionally rise from April, before the start of a new holiday season. Therefore, if you have long planned to improve your health in Belarus, now is the time. Pine forests with the purest air and a countless number of different wellness procedures are just what the doctor prescribed for everyone tired of the prolonged cold and snow.

Forget the stereotypes that sanatoriums are for pensioners. Belarus follows the latest trends in the wellness industry and is ready to offer all the best — from mud and pearl baths to Thai massage. Here is also a real exclusive — the Sosnovy Bor health resort in Minsk Region features the amber room that helps get rid of migraines and chronic ear, nose and throat diseases. And sanatoriums in Grodno Region are located next to unique radon springs.





Clinical trials  
of domestic  
bioprosthesis heart  
valves based on  
nanotechnology  
started in Belarus

4



Industrial tourism  
is on the rise  
in Belarus —  
200,000+ people  
visited enterprises  
last year

5

INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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During the award ceremony of the winners of the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book*. In the photo, left to right: Mikhail Borozna, Rector of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, Sergei Musiyenko, Director of the EcooM Analytical Centre, Maksim Shnip, Head of Illustration Department at the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, Igor Malanyak, Director of the Yakub Kolas Polygraph Plant, Igor Buzovsky, Deputy Minister of Information.

## Eternal power of book

The 31st International Book Fair was held in Minsk. We have a particularly reverent attitude towards this event — after all, Belarus is among the countries, both in Europe and the CIS, that read the most books. The pavilion of the BelExpo National Exhibition Complex barely accommodated the expositions of participants from 20 countries. Belarusian publishing houses showcased their large-scale expositions at the national stand. Guests from Russia traditionally demonstrated large stands with novelties. Almost two thousand books were brought by Chinese publishers, while representatives of Egypt came to the fair for the first time. The Islamic Republic of Iran became the central exhibitor this year.

During the exhibition, the winners of the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book* were determined. The publication *The Taste of Colour Revolutions*, prepared by the EcooM Analytical Centre in liaison with the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, received the Grand Prix of the competition in the Triumph nomination, with the presentation of the Big Golden Folio badge of honour and the Francysk Skaryna honorary diploma. → **6-7**





# Interfaith peace is Belarus' main achievement



Upon arrival at the Minsk Diocesan Administration, Aleksandr Lukashenko, together with Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl, visited the Cathedral of All Belarusian Saints to light a candle.

Metropolitan Veniamin invited the Head of State to the library, where various rare books are kept. Then the President visited the office where Metropolitan Filaret, the Honorary Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, worked.

***“Our country has laid solid foundations for co-operation between the Belarusian Orthodox Church and the state. It could not be otherwise. The history of Orthodoxy in the Belarusian lands is inextricably linked with the history of the formation of our statehood,” the President of Belarus noted at a meeting with the Synod.***

The Belarusian leader drew attention to the fact that the arena of military conflicts unfolded more than once here at the junction of civilisations. In such conditions, it was extremely difficult for a nation to form and declare itself, not to mention to create a state. “Belarusians

succeeded in doing that — largely due to the spiritual core of our ancestors. Therefore, the state and the Orthodox Church have many points of contact,” Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised.

The President noted with regret that the Orthodoxy around the world is going through difficult times now, “It hurts to look at the religious confrontation ongoing in our fraternal Ukraine, with the seizure of churches, criminal prosecution of the clergy and struggle for the main shrine of our Orthodoxy — the Kiev Pechersk Lavra. A tragedy is also unfolding in the Holy Land, which has a sacred significance for all world religions. Unfortunately, we see attempts to drag as many countries and peoples as possible into this conflict.”

The Head of State pointed out that the peculiarity of Belarus is that the control centres of traditional confessions are located outside the country. “As we can see today, a number of countries have found themselves in the epicentre of armed conflicts,” the President noted.

***“All the bloodiest wars in the world started with religious disagreements. This religious card is still played by***

The state and the Orthodox Church have many points of contact — the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, stressed that at a meeting with the Synod of the Belarusian Orthodox Church on March 14th

***ideologists of colour revolutions and riots. In such circumstances, it is important to preserve equal rights and maintain a dialogue between representatives of all faiths.”***

The Head of State highlighted that the difficult foreign policy context, fortunately, did not affect the traditions of good neighbourliness and religious tolerance of Belarusians. Thus, ethnic and confessional relations in our country are characterised by stability and steadiness.

Along with that, Belarusian society is experiencing unprecedented pressure at the level of ideas and values, according to the President. “On the one hand, this is due to the unprecedented pace of technology development — the introduction of artificial intelligence, modern means of communication, and more,” Aleksandr Lukashenko explained.

***“On the other hand, the ideas of permissiveness, consumerism, childlessness, LGBT and others — deliberately destructive and harmful for society and the state — are being imposed on us. Society does not have time to develop generally accepted norms of behaviour, making it more difficult for people to make the right moral choice.***

The Church expects people to come to God on their own initiative. However, I think that this is a reciprocal process, and the Church should take a step towards common people. It is important to learn to preach the Word of God in such a way so that it is understandable to everyone. Society has expressed its demand for the living, effective word of the preacher.”

The President also added, “We remember how in 2020 some priests, including, unfortunately, some Orthodox ones, got involved in politics. I will say that the state has special institutions and trained people for this purpose. The task of the Church is to set moral Christian guidelines.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko urged the clergy to have a thorough and frank conversation. During the event, Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, pointed out, “A lot has been done in our country to counter various negative phenomena.”

He thanked Aleksandr Lukashenko for his attention to the position of the Belarusian Orthodox Church on the issue of enshrining provisions on the spiritual foundations of our society in the Basic Law of the country, as well as for the invitation to participate in the discussion of the draft National Security Concept.”

The Metropolitan of Minsk and Zaslavl emphasised, “Confrontation in the spiritual sphere is a struggle on an invisible front, where we are offered ideas, the essence of which is often hidden under external attractiveness, and even the pious guise. Their true nature is often recognised only when their fruits appear — unfavourable for society.”

Metropolitan Veniamin noted that the focus of settling the problems faced by humanity is shifting to the spiritual sphere. “When finalising the National Security Concept, I ask you to once again pay attention to the spiritual sphere of our society so as to protect it from emerging threats. After all, it is necessary to act proactively in this regard,” said the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus.

## ‘Go and search for what the country needs’

**The Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting on the state and development of the mineral resource base of the country, the expansion of geological exploration, including hydrocarbon raw materials**

In total, about five dozen different types of mineral resources have been discovered in Belarus. The country is in Europe’s top 10 in terms of availability of some of them. However, Aleksandr Lukashenko has warned against complacency. The President has stressed that domestic mineral resources are of paramount importance, since they are the key to sovereignty and stable economic development of the country. This is especially relevant now, against the background of sanctions pressure.

The first thing the Head of State drew attention to was the level of oil production in Belarus. During the Soviet times, it stood at about 8 million tonnes per year, and even reached 9 million tonnes, according to some sources. In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko posed a reasonable question: why has the production level dropped significantly, and what opportunities are there to increase it?

“Everyone knows the natural and geological conditions in Belarus. We used to extract 9 million tonnes of oil. Let’s say 8. Today, the volume stands at about 2 million tonnes. I am getting explanations that the oil reserves have been depleted. I do not believe it,” the Belarusian leader stated.

Experts have noted that reserves and potential are available, and this is confirmed by the annual increase in proven reserves. There is no talk about mining to the detriment of the country. The main task is to work better and at a higher qualitative level.

“We need to manage the available resources wisely and cost-consciously. As for the resources we do not have now but expect to get — we must explore and look for them,” the President stressed. “Belarus would be a rich country if we mined 5 million tonnes of oil rather than 2. That is where the reason for considering this issue comes from.” Aleksandr Lukashenko considers the reliance on the country’s own raw material base especially relevant now, when sanctions pressure against Belarus is increasing every year. “Therefore, I repeat once again — go and explore, search for

what the country needs. Minerals prices are rising every year. Yet, instead of taking measures and making use of what literally lies under our feet, we pay without complaints. Our common goal is not only to make products with the maximum use of domestic raw materials. There are three pillars, three growth drivers that will enable us to develop further — efficiency, import substitution and export,” the Head of State set the task.



- INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OIL PRODUCTION IN BELARUS**
- In August and October 1933, the first industrial oil inflows were received in Byelorussia [since September 19, 1991 — Belarus].
  - In June 2015, drilling of the deepest well in Belarus, the 1st Predrechitskaya, was finished. Its actual depth was 6,755 metres.
  - In 2022, a new oilfield and deposits were discovered in Gomel Region in several zones of the Pripyat Trough.

Based on materials of [sb.by](https://sb.by) and [belta.by](https://belta.by)



# About a mature nation, fulfilled promises and confidence in the future

## The President of Belarus spoke about the main things on Constitution Day

The Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, held a meeting on March 15th, dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Belarus' Constitution.

The large-scale event at the Palace of Independence was attended by judges of the Constitutional Court, persons who contributed to the formation of sovereign Belarus, representatives of political parties and public organisations, parliamentary deputies, scientists.

Aleksandr Lukashenko made a speech at the event, in which he touched upon the historical foundations of the Belarusian constitutional legislation and its current stage, outlined the accomplishments of sovereign Belarus and emphasised its independent path of development.

*“Thirty years ago on this day, the countdown of a new stage in the history of modern Belarus — sovereign and politically independent — began. It was then that the fundamental legal foundations for the development of our state and society were laid. The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus became our beacon, a truly people’s state-forming document, which was especially evident during our referendums,” the Head of State stressed.*

According to the President, each of those present at the event directly or indirectly participated over the years in the development and improvement of the first and only Constitution of sovereign Belarus, as well as in the implementation of its provisions in all areas of state and public life.

“I have a careful attitude to continuity and have always said that there is no nation and no state without traditions. It is a matter of continuity of the national history and the preservation of the cultural code. More specifically, it is a matter of our sacred connection with the previous generations and those who will come after us. Belarus may be a young state, but Belarusians are an absolutely mature nation. It is impossible to dispute this status, nor deny the fact that our Constitution embodies the achievements of many eras,” the Belarusian leader noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko is convinced, “It is important to remember that, both ideologically and conceptually, the Constitution of sovereign Belarus is the successor to the Constitution of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Byelorussia — a revolutionary, progressive and, most importantly, fair document. Back in 1919, for the first time in world history, the natural resources of the native land were recognised as the property of the entire people. It was the Soviet Constitution that also for the first time in history, outlawed the exploitation of people by other people and thereby protected human life and dignity regardless of ethnic origin, social status and faith. This is the embodiment of the social justice principle, which was supported by all Soviet constitutions and which we have preserved as fundamental in our life. Speaking about the 1994 Consti-



tution adopted by the Supreme Council, it is necessary to mention about borrowing the experience of the world’s advanced countries. Belarusians reflected the most important attributes of the democratic system, such as the separation of powers, legality in the activities of state bodies, and additional guarantees for the implementation of human rights and freedoms, in the text of our then Constitution.



*Following the Basic Law, we have built a balanced and effective management vertical practically from scratch. Not right away, though. And not without attempts by foreign ‘assistants’ to take control of the process. At present, when talking about the Constitution, we mean the document that reflects our national interests.*

This is what we have now. Many people present in this hall remember what the 1994 Constitution discussions were accompanied with, what was happening on the streets and in the corridors of power, where a struggle for posts was in full swing. Just think about it — that was a parliamentary republic, there was no country yet. That is, there was no ideology of national development, the goals of that development were not set. There was no control system, nor mechanisms for the interaction between different structures. That was the reality, and the country was actually governed by 360 deputies, including me. The responsibility was absolutely vague and I saw it from the inside. Not many people in power

in the 1990s were bothered by the fact that employees at plants and factories were not paid their salaries in months. Who cared about empty shelves in stores?” the President reminded about the important events. “At the same time, against the background of the total poverty of the population, the country had natural resources and an impressive production potential. There were created conven-

ient conditions for the privatisation of that wealth by Western capital — the country was in a mess, and Belarusians had no time to think about national interests or the essence of sovereignty. In fact, almost no one turned to such notions at that time — some people thought about how to feed their children, others — how to retain their jobs and positions.”

What chances did we have to preserve our cultural, economic, and political identity? This is a rhetorical question. Aleksandr Lukashenko also mentioned that biased politicians of that time tried to impose on Belarusian society a scheme of systematic chaos and de facto anarchy — the parliamentary republic. Yet, the people made a choice in favour of a strong government.

“They tried to divide us along linguistic and ethnic lines, but Belarusians came out as a united people in support of the state status of our two native languages. They wanted to cut us off from our roots, discrediting the Soviet past, but our people — realising that they were the heirs of the heroic generation of winners —

returned to the symbols of the great era. They tried to drag Belarus into all sorts of alliances in order to break off friendly and close integration ties, primarily with Russia, but the Belarusian people did not allow it. Where are those who broke away from the East Slavic family now? Where are these peoples? In contrast, we have created our own history. We have written our laws ourselves. That is why we have been living under the information, political and economic pressure for a third of a century,” the President stated.

By improving the Basic Law in 2021–2022, Belarusians responded to the challenges of the time. People saw the emerging risks of losing the institution of the traditional family, our moral attitudes, and historical memory, and put these values under protection at the highest level — at the level of the Basic Law.

“We have constitutionally enshrined the right of every person to a decent standard of living. Over the last three decades, the monetary incomes of the population have increased by more than 9 times (compared to the mid–1990s), and wages have risen by 12 times. You remember the hyperinflation level registered after the USSR collapse. Today, its level does not exceed 6 percent,” the President stressed. “Belarusians’ access to personal accommodation is growing — the number of square metres per person has increased 1.6 times. Belarus has one of the lowest poverty levels — not only among the CIS countries, but also among the European Union states. We have reduced this figure 10 times since the early 1990s. The unemployment rate has been significantly reduced. We belong to the countries with a high level of human development. Belarusians are recognised as a highly intelligent nation. This data does not even belong to us, but to those who are not our friends,” the Head of State pointed out.

According to the Head of State, Belarus rationally invests in innovations and technologies of the future, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the national economy. Belarus takes a rational approach to financial issues, neither accumulating nor transferring debts to future generations. The country’s public debt does not exceed 32 percent of gross domestic product.

Belarus has created a modern highly productive agricultural sector. The country is in the top 5 exporters of dairy products, and is among the world leaders in meat production per capita. In general, almost 65 percent of Belarusian industrial products are exported.

“Exactly 30 years ago, the countdown of the history of independent Belarus began. Approaching this milestone date, we look back at the path we have covered in order to step more confidently into tomorrow. Our Constitution provides an opportunity to live with dignity, develop, feel safe, and fulfil the most ambitious plans and initiatives in our native land. This is how it should be in a modern, truly democratic country. Most importantly, we have done everything so that our children could surpass these achievements and successes. We will continue to help them. Now it is time for the new generations to act,” Aleksandr Lukashenko added. “Despite today’s difficulties and all the twists and turns, I have good reasons to look confidently into the future,” the Belarusian leader assured.

The participants of the meeting delivered their reports. They discussed the activities of the Constitutional Court to protect constitutional values, the tasks of civil society to strengthen democratic foundations, the role of youth in preserving and enhancing the traditions of the Belarusian state.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

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**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*“The creation of a new segment and the application of advanced technologies give a powerful impulse to the dynamic development of Belarusian healthcare, its promotion to the leading positions in the world. I think that it is possible to achieve this goal with such talented people as our state prize winners from the National Research Centre for the Transplantation of Organs and Tissues at Minsk Clinical Hospital No. 9, the Cardiology Republican Scientific and Practical Centre. These are the beacons for other organisations and industries.”*

**During the presentation of state prizes and awards, on April 28th, 2017**

By Yelena Basikirskaya

### Made in Belarus

Belarusian cardiac surgeons have been using domestic mechanical prosthetic heart valves since 1993. These are constantly being improved and modified. Mechanical prosthetic heart valves are mainly implanted in patients younger than 60 years old. Bioprosthetic heart valves allow preserving the quality of life of elderly patients for a long time.

“For many years, Belarusian cardiac surgeons only had bioprosthetic heart valves of foreign manufacture at their disposal,” noted Natalia Mitkovskaya, Director of the Cardiology RSPC, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor.

*“The domestic innovative development of a bioprosthetic heart valve manufactured at the Electronmash Plant required many years of bilateral co-operation between technical specialists and cardiac surgeons. Belarusian prostheses have a lot of beneficial features. Thus, they allow successfully eliminating clinical manifestations of heart disease and, most probably, they will have a fairly long service life.”*

Seven operations performed to date have demonstrated good clinical results and ensured full satisfaction of specialised doctors with the results of medical interventions. If the clinical picture remains to be as positive in the future as in the early post-surgical period, it will be possible to state the fact — Belarus has developed domestic BHVs of excellent quality, competitive not only on the CIS market.

### At the global level

Belarus is among the top 20 countries in the world in terms of the number of heart transplants per one million inhabitants. About 50 medical interventions of that kind are carried out per year, amounting to a total of over 550 since 2009, when the first heart transplant was made. This is an astonishing result. Especially when you consider that a ten-year survival rate of heart transplant recipients has reached 73–75 percent. These indicators match the level of many world centres.

High technologies make it possible to treat patients as quickly and effectively as possible, with minimal post-surgical complications. The advancement of all stages of medical care for patients with heart conditions is the goal of modern cardiology and cardiac surgery.

*The Cardiology RSPC specialists provide world-class medical care to patients with pulmonary hypertension enabling them to return to an active and full-fledged life after surgery.*

Another state-of-the-art technology for the treatment of heart failure is currently undergoing clinical trials — using an X-ray

# Heart line

Belarus features among the top 20 countries in the world in terms of the number of heart transplants per 1 million population. Bioprosthetic valves, minimally invasive operations and the spread of high technologies across the regions — let’s see what new heights Belarusian cardiology has reached so far.

**This year, for the first time in Belarus, the Cardiology Republican Scientific and Practical Centre (RSPC) has launched clinical trials of a new generation of Belarus-made bioprosthetic heart valves (BHV) made from calf pericardium, with the use of nanotechnology. The first patients implanted with a BHV are in satisfactory condition. After the successful completion of clinical trials, it is planned to start mass production of Belarusian BHVs, which will make it possible to abandon the purchase of Western prostheses and to increase the availability of high-tech cardiac surgery.**



Almost all heads of cardiac surgery departments in our country are students of Academician Yuri Ostrovsky, Deputy Director for Innovative Development and High Technology of the Cardiology RSPC. According to Natalia Mitkovskaya, “Specialists of the Cardiology RSPC, who head departments and scientific laboratories of chronic coronary heart disease, arrhythmology, emergency cardiology, arterial hypertension, regularly travel to the regions to conduct master classes, carry out advisory work, and provide organisational and methodological assistance to specialists in the field.”



foreign patient has a life-threatening condition, they are saved out of turn.

### Double success

In 2016, the heart–lung complex was transplanted for the first time at the Cardiology RSPC. A duel organ transplant is an extreme measure that is used in very severe patients and gives them a chance to survive.

“The risks of an unfavourable outcome for such people increase many times during surgery and in the post-surgical period,” clarified Natalia Mitkovskaya. “Therefore, we have created a special care and rehabilitation system for such patients. In addition to powerful intensive care units equipped with state-of-the-art technology, intensive care wards have been opened, where patients can stay until they are transferred to the general clinical department.”

*It is planned to open a cardiogenic shock care centre on the basis of the Cardiology RSPC intensive care units by the end of 2024. The implementation of this groundbreaking project will allow bringing back to life the most severe category of cardiac patients.*

### The regions — up to the mark

With the adoption of state programmes in the field of healthcare in 2008, the development of cardiac surgery reached a new level. The implementation of high-tech surgical interventions began to be introduced in the regions. Every year, the volume of medical assistance is increased, the latest methods and technologies are developed and implemented, and the list of operations in regional centres is expanding.

*Surgical units are available in every region. They perform at least 70 percent of the volume of all heart and vascular surgeries in the country.*

There are ten inter-district X-ray endovascular centres in the republic.

endovascular method, a device is installed in the patient to reduce the heart size, increase cardiac contractility and even cause the reverse process of pathological changes. This project is led by Deputy Director for Therapeutic Care of the Cardiology RSPC, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor Yelena Kurlianskaya.

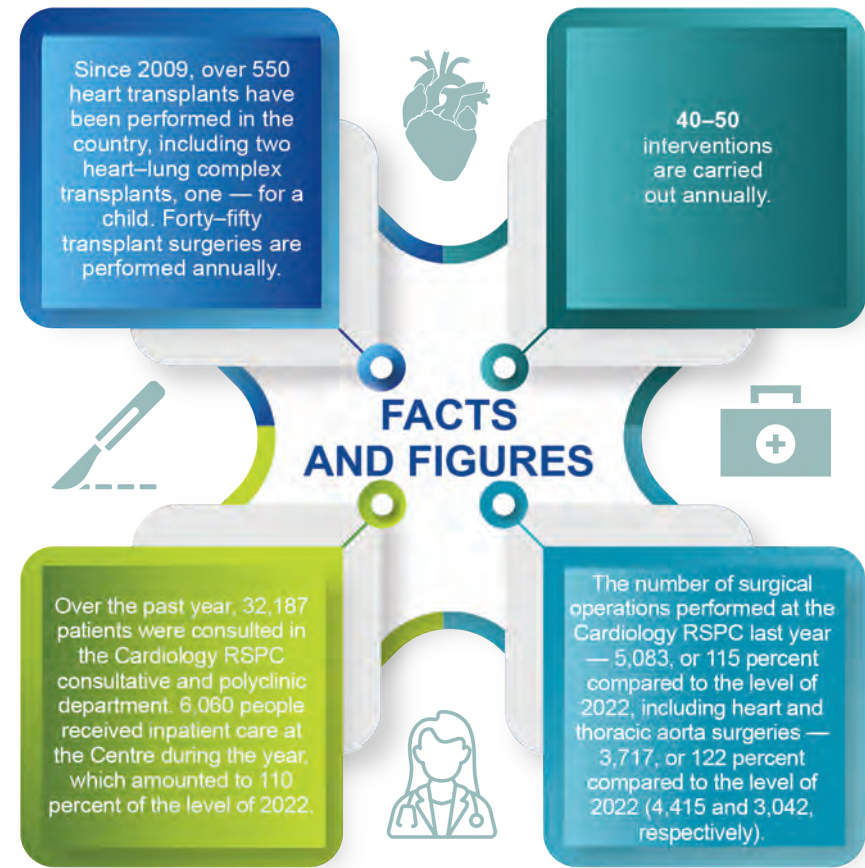
This development of the Cardiology RSPC team and some other innovative achievements of the Centre’s staff were presented with the National Academy of Sciences Award.

### Adopting Belarus’ experience

Cardiology medical science in our country is represented at a decent level. Specialists from Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan come to Belarus for internships and training. We have established strong and long-term relationship with our Japanese and Canadian counterparts.

“An educational centre has been established and is successfully operating at the Cardiology RSPC. We are the clinical base for two departments of the Belarusian State Medical University — the Department of Cardiac Surgery, and the Department of Cardiology and Internal Diseases,” pointed out Natalia Mitkovskaya. “The possibilities of modern Belarusian cardiology and cardiac surgery are demonstrated to specialised doctors from the regions of our country and abroad when conducting more than 30 types of educational cycles, internships and advanced training courses.”

When performing a heart transplant, the priority always remains with our fellow countrymen. Yet, when there are no Belarusian candidates on the waiting list or a





# Welcome to the workshop



Aleksandr Kushner

Last year, over 200 thousand people visited Belarus’ enterprises — industrial tourism is vigorously developing across the country

Great attention is paid to the development of industrial tourism in Belarus at the government level. At present, more than 130 enterprises and organisations have adopted a comprehensive approach to promote this direction by developing and approving tourist routes. Participants of site tours have a chance to ride a tractor, learn how sweets are made and sit behind the wheel of the world’s largest car. In 2023, above 200,000 people visited the country’s enterprises — this is a third more than a year earlier. We have found out what lies in store for this direction.

By Tatiana Semenkova

In 2023, a single classification of types of tourism was introduced in the country — there are 13 of them in total. Every month of the year is dedicated to one particular direction. For example, March has been declared the month of industrial tourism, April will be dedicated to business tourism, and in May agro-ecotourism will be promoted. The industry development strategy has been developed until 2035.

“One of the most important directions is industrial tourism. We have managed to preserve its potential since Soviet times. All brands and leading enterprises are still operating, and we are proud of that. However, the world does not stand still, the competition is growing, which requires new approaches,” Deputy Minister of Sports and Tourism Oleg Andreichik noted at the international seminar ‘Industrial Tourism as a Brand and Strategy’. “People’s attitudes towards tours to production sites have changed. Industrial visits used to be career-oriented, but now almost all facilities offer to take part in master classes, visit museums and tasting rooms, as well as to have a hand in creating popular products.”

A working group on industrial tourism has been set up in our country, which is part of the Interdepartmental Expert Coordination Council on Tourism under the Council of Ministers. The Deputy Minister stressed, “A roadmap on the development of industrial tourism is being implemented. A new law on tourism came into force on January 1st, 2023. In particular, it enables employees of industrial enterprises to act as guides without certification.”

“Last year, over 200 thousand people visited industrial tourism sites, which is a third more when compared with 2022.

*It is gratifying that our enterprises are visited not only by Belarusians, but also by tourists from other countries. Over 5 million tourists from Russia visited Belarus last year. They are interested in life, technology, and products manufactured at our enterprises,” Oleg Andreichik emphasised.*

## ENTERPRISES HAVE COME UP WITH A RANGE OF UNIQUE OFFERS

Thus, at BELAZ [global manufacturer of mining dump trucks and transport equipment for mining and construction], where it is currently possible to conduct up to 10 excursions per day, visitors are offered to take on the role of a test driver — a dynamic dump truck driving simulator will make it possible. BKM HOLDING [leading manufacturer of modern urban electric transport] provides an opportunity to test-drive an electric bus or a hybrid bus. Minsk Tractor Works offers the ‘Assemble a tractor’ service — visitors can take part in the assembly of BELARUS brand machinery, followed by obtaining the appropriate certificate. Another option — take a ride on an energy-saturated tractor BELARUS 3522 or BELARUS 4522 around the MTZ territory — 2 laps of 2.5 km.

### Leaders of industrial tourism – 2023

BELAZ JSC —  
51.5 thousand  
tourists



MTZ JSC —  
19.2 thousand  
tourists



MAZ JSC —  
6.9 thousand  
tourists



Source: Belarus’ Ministry of Industry

The Deputy Minister recalled that last year, 12 holdings and independent organisations of the Ministry of Industry provided industrial tourism services, “The enterprises of the Belgospishcheprom concern received 42 thousand visitors last year, and the income



Andrey Sazonov



Anton Stepanishchev

## INDUSTRIAL TOURISTS WILL WITNESS A LOT OF INNOVATIONS ON THE HORIZON

Gomselmash [Belarusian manufacturer of agricultural machinery based in Gomel] has already purchased radio guides to ensure comfortable visits of its workshops; and after the reconstruction of the museum space, it will be possible to conduct 3D tours. Mogilevliftmash [Belarusian manufacturer of passenger and freight elevators based in Mogilev] is developing a project to launch a new interactive museum exposition. Brest Electric Lamp Plant is considering the creation of a museum of electric lamp products and the history of the enterprise. In addition to the Ministry of Industry, industrial tourism is actively promoted by Belgospishcheprom [Belarusian state food industry concern], Bellegprom [Belarusian light industry concern], as well as the Ministry of Architecture and Construction.

opportunity to get an insight into the production and processes. This practice contributes to effective career guidance,” the Deputy Minister noted.

“Minsk Tractor Works began developing industrial tourism in 2017 with one excursion per day. Today we offer four tours per day from Monday to Saturday. Last year, MTZ was visited by more than 15,000 people,” Sergei Sidorovich, MTZ Leading Specialist for Industrial Tourism, said during the seminar. “We will not stop at that. We intend to go beyond the factory premises but have to get certification first. Industrial tourism contributes to the brand and image of our enterprise, and helps with career guidance. We introduce children to future professions, show them what a modern manufacturing plant looks like today.”

One of the promising areas for industrial tourism development is the creation of joint projects in personnel training and cross-border routes. “Russian entities are willing to co-operate with our regions in building a chain of tourist routes. Another promising direction is formulating a strategy for the unification of legislation in tourism, which will allow carrying out this activity on the territory of both countries. We are currently working on this. It may become the trend for future development of industrial tourism,” Oleg Andreichik concluded.



BELTA





500 exhibitors from 20 countries — 31st Minsk International Book Fair impressed with its scale

The 31st Minsk International Book Fair held on March 14th–17th brought together famous book publishers, public and cultural figures from 20+ countries, including China, Germany, Brazil, Pakistan, India, Türkiye, and South Korea. Belarusian publishing houses showcased their large-scale expositions at the National Stand styled after the capital's Victory Square. Guests from fraternal Russia traditionally demonstrated large stands with novelties. Almost two thousand books were brought by Chinese publishers, while representatives of Egypt came to the book fair for the first time. The Islamic Republic of Iran became the focal exhibitor this time. The overarching themes of the exhibition were the Year of Quality in Belarus and the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi invaders.



# Power of printed word

By Yelena Basikirskaia, Olga Nevmerzhitskaya

## Breaking records

At the grand opening of the 31st Minsk International Book Fair, First Deputy Head of the President Administration **Maksim Ryzhenkov** announced the President's greeting.

"The exhibition rightfully expands the horizons of book publishing and allows plunging into new reflections, meanings, approaches of truly responsible and committed authors from Belarus and our friends," Maksim Ryzhenkov pointed out.

The four-day fair provided a rich programme encompassing all ages — meetings with writers and editors, master classes, presentations for children and adults. The books on display were meant to suit every taste — from novelties to favourite classics.

It is noteworthy that this year, the fair organisers for the first time faced the problem of the lack of space due to large expositions announced by regular participants and guests who decided to expand their representative offices. Interestingly, the Minsk International Book Fair hit a record number of visitors this year — it was visited by over 62 thousand people.

Speaking of quality, it is important to emphasise the decent quantitative indicators achieved by Belarusian publishing houses. Belarus' Information Minister **Vladimir Pertsov** cited the example of 2023, "A high-quality, colourful, informative book is the demand of modern society. It is pleasant to know that Belarusian publishers are able to fully meet this demand. Our average circulation per edition has increased from 2,350 to 2,500 copies. This means that we have managed to identify the structure of the reader's genre preferences. Earlier, 500–1,000 copies were considered a good result, now the demand is higher. The subject of commercial consumption, the so-called dime literature, is losing importance, and serious publications are gaining popularity, instead."

The central exhibitor — the Islamic Republic of Iran — presented about 500 books about its culture and history. The organisers, participants and guests of the book fair were welcomed by **Alireza Sanei**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Republic of Belarus, "It is a great honour for me to be among the most educated representatives of society — scientists and connoisseurs of literature. Undoubtedly, the will of states, including Belarus, to hold such exhibitions, to preserve books and popularise reading, to honour and encourage writers and figures of science and culture testifies to the correct and deep understanding by the state of the significant role of books, the influence of scientists and writers on the development of society. This is especially important in the modern era, when the development of science and technologies as well as the transition of mankind to digitalisation, have led to a decrease in general interest, especially among the younger generation, in books and reading."

Books from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were among the most notable novelties. The bright, colourfully illustrated publication *Colours of Pakistan* — a bilingual coffee table masterpiece in English and Russian showcasing the vivid hues of Pakistan's heritage, culture, and natural beauty — was presented by Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus **Sajjad Haider Khan**. "The publication will inspire residents of Belarus to visit our country. Each page will send a reader on a journey capable of telling about this unique state with love and in detail. Here you can see everything — from the high mountain peaks of the Himalayas and the Karakoram in the north to the serene beaches of the Arabian Sea and the Thar Desert in the south, from the ruins of civilisations to the bustling bazaars of the ancient cities of Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi," told the Ambassador in his speech.

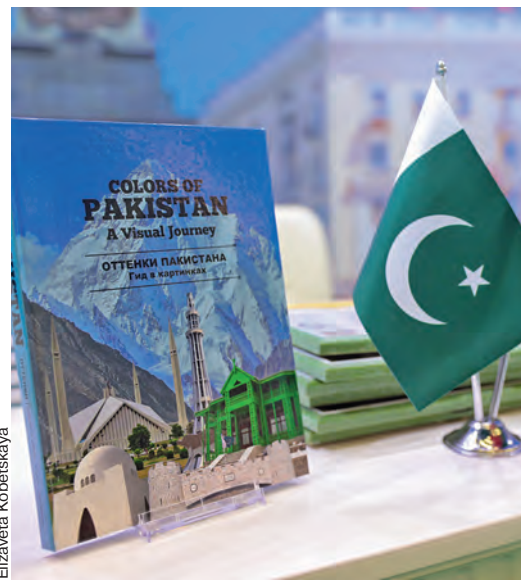
Valery Tolkachev, Head of the Investigative Group for the investigation of the criminal case into the genocide of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War, explained the popularity of historical publications among readers. He spoke about the concept that the authors adhered to when preparing the *Genocide of the Belarusian People* series, which sold 20 thousand copies. "The main thing for us is accuracy. The publications are based on the facts, not on allegations. They include excerpts from the testimony of eye-witnesses, beholders of those events, and archival data. Thus, in 2022, the project became the winner of the National Competition *The Art of the Book*. In 2023, it received the Grand Prix at the Moscow International Book Fair. We are proud of that because it was created by the staff of the General Prosecutor's Office." Joint projects of the Ministry of Justice, the General

## Nothing is forgotten

Prosecutor's Office and BELTA were unveiled at the exhibition. The publication *Archives. Nothing but the Truth* presents newly discovered archival materials testifying to the crimes of the Nazis and their accomplices against the civilian population in the occupied territory of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic during the Great Patriotic War. The book *Last Witnesses* encompasses the stories of young prisoners of Nazi concentration camps recorded during the investigation of the genocide of the Belarusian people by the General Prosecutor's Office.



Elizaveta Kobetskaya



Ira Shvelko



## At the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book*, publications of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House staff won awards

The publication *The Taste of Colour Revolutions*, created by the EcooM Analytical Centre in co-operation with the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, received the Grand Prix of the competition in the Triumph nomination, the Big Golden Folio badge of honour and the Francysk Skaryna honorary diploma.

Maksim Shnip, Head of Illustration Department at the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, became the best book designer in the Mastery individual nomination.

Andrei Mukovozhchik was awarded the first degree diploma in the LIT-Format nomination for the books *What to Teach Children* and *What to Teach Adults* published by the Belarus Publishing House.



An agreement signing ceremony between the Mastatskaya Litaratura Publishing House and the China International Publishing Group (CIPG), also known as the China Foreign Languages Publishing Administration, took place at the exhibition. Belarus' Deputy Information Minister Igor Buzovsky highlighted the importance of the event for the international relations, "For eighty years already, our land has been experiencing the joy of freedom. We never lived in peace and tranquility for such a long period before. Therefore, the opportunity to create and to write books is a great happiness for us. Personally, I am lucky to have visited China five times. The experience we gain during the peaceful time makes it possible to build a future, while the relations between the countries, built through the book, open up bright prospects."

## A holiday for true connoisseurs of books

### Dear friends!

I cordially welcome the guests and participants of the 31st Minsk International Book Fair and the 10th Writer and Time International Symposium.

Your unique cultural and business platform has once again united the best ideas, talents, novelties from the world of literature and publishing in the very heart of Belarus, while organising a holiday for true connoisseurs of books.

The theme of the 80th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from Nazi invaders gives particular significance to this year's event. The works of Belarusian classic writers, which have received a new interpretation in the works of contemporaries, are inextricably linked with this topic.

Today, it is important that the thoughtful word of the writer lays the spiritual and moral foundations of human life, fosters a sense of responsibility for the fate of the country, and contributes to the consolidation of society in the face of modern threats and challenges.

I am confident that the forum will be successful, will be remembered by its participants and guests for its substantial dialogue and will contribute to the strengthening of international cultural ties.

I wish you all fruitful work, pleasant meetings and interesting discoveries.

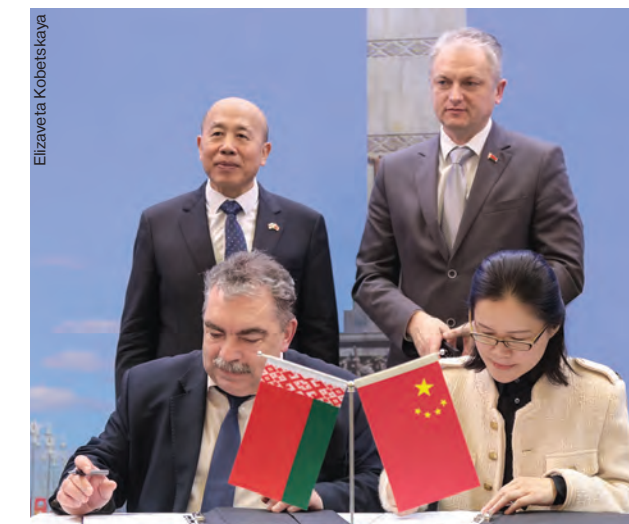
**Aleksandr Lukashenko,**  
the President of the Republic of Belarus

techniques honed in dozens of other countries proved to be untenable in Belarus. Why? This question was answered by the experts who worked on the project implementation. The series of books was prepared by the EcooM Analytical Centre in liaison with the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House.

According to the director of the centre, Sergei Musiyenko, the books have literally gone to the people, "The popularity with the audience is understandable. The texts, the design, the visualisation are all at the highest level. The world's best authors, from Australia to Vietnam, worked on the publications. What gives them special value is their independent view — it has made the project unique."

The book *We Know Them, We are Proud of Them!* by Irina Ovsepyan, a journalist of the Belarus Segodnya Publishing House, is based on the project published in the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. Now there are prospects for the second volume of the book, the author has shared, "These are the fruits of our joint work with artist Oleg Karpovich. Our task was to show the cultural and artistic figures that our country is proud of, through the prism of their biography and the era they lived in. And they lived in the 20th century. It was a terrible, bloody and at the same time grandiose time — time of the greatest tragedies, collapse and major breakthroughs. We want the reader to love our characters as much as we love them."

Columnist of the newspaper *SB. Belarus Segodnya* Political Information Department Andrei Mukovozhchik unveiled two premieres at the fair. They are different in content, yet neither of them will leave anyone indifferent. According to the author, *The Agitator's Notebook* is actually a desk book for the ideological vertical. The second novelty is *Fugitive and Funny*. The author has confessed that this book is an attempt to laugh at once painful past.



The exhibition also showcased a captivating book *Conversations about the Future, which Doesn't Exist Yet. Russia and the World in the XXI Century*. The authors compilers — Russian journalist and media manager Andrei Bystritsky and Iranian scientist and diplomat Mehdi Sanaei — gathered Russian intellectuals of different beliefs and schools as interlocutors to discuss the problems of the future.

Belarusian publishers presented other significant novelties of the year — fresh volumes of memoirs by People's Writer of Belarus Nikolai Cherginets *Difficult Roads of Life*, long-awaited reprints of Belarusian literature classics, and more.

Russian publishers arranged over 40 events at the fair — presentations, discussions, and meet the artist sessions. The exhibition also featured the award ceremony of the winner of the 63rd National Competition *The Art of the Book*, where 150+ books from 35 publishing houses contended for the prize.





# A war on children

UN: Gaza war killed more children than in four years of worldwide conflict

The UN said that more than 12,300 children died between October and February in the Gaza Strip, mostly in Israeli airstrikes, citing its own data and reports from Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry. At the same time, the UN’s own calculations show that 12,193 children were killed in fighting in all armed conflicts globally between 2019 and 2022. At least 31,272 people have been killed in Gaza since October last year, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Although it is run by Hamas, the ministry’s casualty figures for previous conflicts have been found to be accurate.

Philippe Lazzarini, Head of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), called the numbers ‘staggering’. “This war is a war on children. It is a war on their childhood and their future,” he said. The head of the UN agency spoke just before a US official warned that Washington would not be in a position to resume funding for the UNRWA, following a scandal around the alleged involvement of 12 of its 13,000 Gazan employees in the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th. “We have to plan for the fact that

Congress may make that pause permanent,” Matthew Miller, a State Department spokesman, said of a freeze on US contributions to UNRWA. The ongoing war in Gaza, which has already led to at least 20 children dying from starvation, has caused ‘relentless mental harm’ to minors there, charity group Save the Children said. The charity warned about the emotional distress for Gaza’s children from dodging bombs and bullets as services and tools for parents to care for their children are ‘further and further out of reach’.

## Vladimir Putin wins election in landslide

A record number of nearly 76m voters cast their ballots for incumbent President Vladimir Putin in Russia’s presidential election, Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairperson Ella Pamfilova announced

Russia held its presidential election on March 15th-17th. Voting for the first time lasted over three days and incorporated online voting, which was available in about one-third of the country’s regions. According to the CEC data, incumbent President Vladimir Putin was in the lead with 87.28 percent of the vote after 100 percent of the ballots counted. Central Election Commission Chairperson Ella Pamfilova also said that voter turnout in the presidential election had set a record in Russia’s modern history, reaching 77.44 percent. “More than 75.9 million voters cast their ballots for the incumbent head of state. This is a record number compared to 2018, when over 56.4 million people voted for Vladimir Putin,” Pamfilova said at the CEC information centre. CEC will sum up the final results of the Russian presidential election on March 21st. During a telephone conversation, on behalf of the Belarusian people and himself, President Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated his Russian colleague on the convincing victory in the presidential election.



## Protest against sending Western troops to Ukraine

A rally against sending Western soldiers to Ukraine has taken place in Paris, with several thousand demonstrators tearing up EU and NATO flags and waving French tricolours instead

“We came to say that we do not agree with the escalation of the Ukraine conflict. Lawmakers should demand this issue be debated at the Parliament and put to voting as enshrined in the French constitution,” said Florian Philippot, the leader of The Patriots party, who initiated the protest, being one of the most staunch opponents of NATO in France. The demonstrators tore up EU and NATO flags and waved French tricolours instead. “Long live free France!” Parisians chanted. “One of our goals is France’s withdrawal from NATO. This alliance is constantly pushing us toward war and looking for enemies,” Mr. Philippot underlined, adding that the EU is following suit. The protesters carried banners reading

‘We are not willing to die for Ukraine,’ ‘Let’s stop pumping weapons into Kiev,’ ‘For a peaceful solution in Ukraine’, ‘No third world war!’ and ‘Moms against war’. The protesters demanded that France pull out of the EU and stop being a NATO member. French President Emmanuel Macron said on February 26th at a meeting in Paris — where representatives of about 20 Western countries discussed further support for Ukraine in the conflict with Russia — that the possibility of sending Western countries’ ground troops to Ukraine was raised. He remarked that no consensus was achieved, but such a scenario could not be ruled out in the future. Macron later added that ‘not ruling something out does not mean doing it’.

## Archaeological discovery

Archaeologists say they have discovered what may be the largest mass grave ever excavated in Europe at a site in southern Germany

Roughly 1,000 skeletons of plague victims have so far been found in mass graves in the centre of the city of Nuremberg, which experts believe may contain a total of more than 1,500 people, according to a press recently published release. The remains were discovered during an archaeological survey prior to the construction of new residential buildings in the city. Melanie Langbein, from Nuremberg’s department for heritage conservation, said that eight plague pits were identified, each containing several hundred bodies. “Those people were not interred in a regular cemetery although we have designated plague cemeteries in Nuremberg,” said Langbein. “This means a large number of dead people who needed to be bur-

ied in a short time frame without regard to Christian burial practices. ”Because of this, an epidemic such as the plague is ‘more than likely’ the explanation for the mass graves, according to Langbein. Nuremberg suffered plague outbreaks roughly every 10 years from the 14th century onward, she said, making it a challenge to date the remains. Archaeologists used radiocarbon dating to date one mass grave to between the late 1400s and early 1600s, and found shards of pottery and coins dating from the later end of that range at the site. They also discovered a note from 1634 detailing a plague outbreak that killed more than 15,000 people in 1632-1633, which says almost 2,000 people were buried near St. Sebastian Hospital.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



# European Union is entering the twilight zone

The EU has started this year in deep crisis, where farmers are just the tip of the iceberg

The deindustrialisation process is gaining momentum in Europe. Enterprises are reducing their activities and looking towards Asia and America, where the investment conditions are more favourable. Consumer spending is falling, and the economy is entering a recession. Brussels' policy is assessed by experts as a failure. What is next?

By Piotr Petrovsky, political scientist

## From the garden to the jungle

Last year was marked by fictitious economic growth in the EU, whose GDP rose by only 0.5 percent, which is a statistical error. The insignificant growth became possible due to the countries of the Iberian Peninsula — Spain (+0.6 percent) and Portugal (+0.8 percent), which are remote from the conflict in Ukraine. At the same time, Germany (−0.3 percent) and France (0) entered recession.

According to the official data last year, consumer spending in Germany decreased by 0.8 percent, government spending fell by 1.7 percent for the first time in almost 20 years, while fixed asset investments dropped by 0.3 percent. German exports fell by 1.8 percent, and imports plummeted by 3 percent. The German manufacturing sector shrank its activity by 2 percent, including in the processing industry — by 0.4 percent. The total deficit of general government budgets in Germany amounted to 82.7 billion Euros.

*The EU's ongoing collapse is due to the preposterous severance of ties with Russia and the sanctions war arranged by European bureaucrats — not only with Russia and its allies, but also with China. This is added by an increase in EU defence spending, indicating that the pillars, which once supported the miracle of the European garden, are being destroyed with the hands of the European elite.*

## The global trend

The unfavourable conditions that Brussels has put the European economy in are hitting the entire industry. As noted by Eurostat, the industrial production volume in 27 EU countries last October fell by 0.5 percent on a monthly basis. The annual figures are even more impressive — a decrease of 5.5 percent. Ireland has become the record holder for deindustrialisation — minus 7 percent per month, and the staggering minus 34 percent in annual terms. This is due to changes in the activities of large multinational companies, such as Apple and Pfizer for example, which decided to limit their presence in the EU. Industrial production also declined in Slovakia (−13.1 percent) and Estonia (−11.5). They are followed by Luxembourg (−8.4 percent) and Lithuania (−8.2). There has been significant production shrinkage in Slovenia (−7.3 percent) and Romania (−7.1).

Special attention is riveted on Germany — the EU's economic driving force. Gunnar Groebler, CEO of the German steel conglomerate Salzgitter AG, stated the problem of 'creeping deindustrialisation' in Germany. In his opinion, the greatest threat looms over energy-intensive industries — primarily steel and chemical ones.

This, in turn, can result in the loss along the entire value chain in Germany. Goebler's words are confirmed by statistics — the industrial production volume dropped by 2.9 percent in December after a 0.1 percent decline in November.

## Washington is rubbing its hands

Economic competitors such as China, India, the United States, Japan, and South Korea benefit from the fatal energy policy of the EU elites. Gas prices in Europe have skyrocketed to become nearly 6 times higher than the average cost over the past 10 years, and 4-5 times higher than current prices in the United States.

The protectionist policy in the United States in its current form was started by Trump with his tariffs on aluminum and steel, and import duties. The Biden administration, in its turn, did not even think about abandoning it — on the contrary, it even deepened and expanded this trend, consistently adhering to the 'Buy American' slogan.

*Subsidies to the energy sector, which keep domestic American prices within reasonable limits, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes \$369bn in investments to promote clean-energy programmes, are doing their job — European production is lured to the United States. On top of that, the Biden administration is shifting the burden of financial and military assistance to the Kiev regime to Europe.*

## Ritual sacrifices

The decrease in spare cash in the EU has led to a reduction in subsidies to agriculture. The fact is that small and medium-sized farmers play a more social than economic role for the European Union, creating and retaining jobs in the countryside and hence, mass employment.

However, the EU has now begun to shrink from helping certain segments of agriculture. Another ideology is being promoted. It requires farmers to cultivate less land and use less intensive methods in order to curb harmful emissions. This means reducing agriculture and producing less food.

*This explains why farmers in the EU rebelled against the current policy of Brussels, which leads to imminent bankruptcy and redistribution of the agricultural market in favour of multinational companies that will quickly buy unprofitable farms for a song.*

The consequences of mass protests by farmers include not only the blockade of Ukraine borders, but also the blockade of huge logistics hubs. For example, farmers in some areas of Germany used tractors to



**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**

*"There is no EU, no Europe as an independent entity. It is completely under the thumb of the United States. Whatever they decide in Washington, Europeans subscribe to. Even to their own detriment, which is surprising at times. Take Germany for example. Why did they decide to destroy such a high-tech economy — out of fear, or to please someone?"*

**During a meeting with representatives of foreign and Belarusian media, on July 6th, 2023**

block entry roads to highways. This, in particular, caused the shutdown of production at the Volkswagen factory in northwestern Germany. Furthermore, members of the union representing Germany's train drivers are about to go on a warning strike across the country due to disputes with the Deutsche Bahn state-owned railway operator over working hours and wages.

## Growing dependence

The current actions of the European elites are completely opposite to the original idea of the EU's 'strategic autonomy', which became part of its Global Strategy doctrine of 2016. By the way, the document envisages strengthening the military-political and economic independence of the EU from NATO. In 2020, the European Parliament even began to use the concept of 'strategic sovereignty', focusing on the interaction of Brussels with the main centres of power — the United States, Russia and China.

*However, there immediately arose contradictions between the desire for the EU autonomy and the Euro-Atlantic solidarity of Europeans and Americans. Despite the obvious crisis in Euro-Atlantic relations and the US aspiration to absorb Europe in pursuance of its interests, Brussels bureaucrats abandoned a balanced and independent foreign policy.*

## The rating is going down

Failures both in the foreign arena and in domestic politics cannot but affect the growth of public discontent in Europe, which is especially important in light of the election campaign to the European Parliament and the national elections in nine EU countries this year. The most interesting ones are expected to be the regional elections in Germany, where the Alternative for Germany (AfD) right-wing opposition party has every chance of winning in the eastern lands; and the parliamentary elections in Austria and the Czech Republic, where Eurosceptics who seek to restore relations with Russia have great chances to lead the governments.

The European Parliament is also expecting changes. According to the Euractiv forecast, European bureaucrats in ruling parties, despite retaining the majority, will be seriously pushed back by Eurosceptics.

The most intriguing part of the forecast is the fiasco predicted to the globalist forces of the Greens and the Liberals. Even though one should not expect that the elections to the European Parliament will drastically change the situation, the recorded year-over-year decline in the ratings and authority of the ruling elites increasingly demonstrates the intensification of the EU legitimacy crisis in the eyes of ordinary citizens.



EUROPE

The Minsk Times  
Thursday  
March 21  
2024

9



Spring is rightfully considered the most beautiful time of the year. Nature is revived after long winter hibernation. The singing of birds outside the window, the flowing stream and warm rays of the sun create a wonderful atmosphere of joy, harmony and movement. The higher the sun rises, the more enthusiastic about travelling everyone gets. We will guide you through the places to visit in Belarus where you can catch the first warm days.

By Sofia Arsenyeva

Brest

The southernmost city of the country knows how to pleasantly surprise tourists. When Vitebsk is still covered with a thick layer of snow, people in Brest already show off their spring coats and walk bareheaded. It is in Brest that you can see the first snowdrops, the first storks, and the first thunderstorm.

Also, it is in Brest Region that they start harvesting birch sap earlier than in other regions. By the way, Kirill Kvetka, a famous Belarusian gardening blogger, lives in the city over the Bug River. The young man became famous on the Internet thanks to his impressive flower collection. He seems to know absolutely everything about seeds, seedlings and cuttings. What is most important is that the guy willingly shares his knowledge with others. Kirill has set up a luxurious Kvetka Park on the territory of the Brest State Technical University, which will blossom vigorously with the onset of warmth.



Belovezhskaya Pushcha

If you want to see the awakening of nature in all its glory, go to legendary Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Snow-white galanthus bells are about to show up on the thawed areas. There will be bluebells, lungwort, primroses, pasqueflowers... The main rule is to admire but keep your hands to yourself. Plucking early bloomers may lead to a considerable fine.

The old-growth forest in early spring is especially delightful not only for its flora, but also for fauna. Wild animals are happy about the approaching warmth and leave their burrows to frolic in the sun. Thus, during hiking or cycling along the Pushcha routes, there is a great chance to unexpectedly encounter its fluffy inhabitants. Some places even provide equipped observation towers, from which bison, deer, wild boars, foxes and cranes are perfectly visible.



The scent of spring

Turov

The inhabitants of Polesie are the first in the Blue-eyed country [Belarus' nickname] to feel the departure of winter — as snow begins to melt, the rivers overflow their banks in a matter of hours, and local fields and swamps turn into one big endless sea. No roads, no bridges — some sections can only be crossed by boat. The locals are certainly used to it, while visitors are completely delighted with the waywardness of nature. That is why spring is the peak of the tourist season in Polesie. Kayaking and boat rides are top activities.

Ancient Turov boasts an authentic floating hotel with cabins instead of rooms, and portholes instead of windows. The famous Turovsky Meadow Nature Reserve is located along the banks of the Pripyat River. Hundreds of thousands of birds flock to nest there in early spring, making it a unique place for birdwatching.

The Botanical Garden

The garden of the Belarus' National Academy of Sciences has such secluded corners that winter never reaches them at all. A ticket of only ten Belarusian rubles will take you to the tropics — the temperature in the central part of the greenhouse is +25 degrees. There is a lot of light in the glass building, pleasant music is playing in the background, and colourful parrots are chirping in a lively manner.

A variety of palm trees, cacti, citrus fruits impress visitors right from the doorstep — there are about sixty types of lemon alone here, not to mention oranges and grapefruits. The garden has bananas, avocados, macadamia, and even a coffee tree that blossoms with white buds. The marvellous scents you can smell in the air deserve a special mention — from familiar jasmine and mimosa to completely exotic ones that are difficult to describe. By the way, in case you get hungry, there is a cafe right inside the greenhouse.



Sanatoriums

Prices for health resort vouchers traditionally rise from April, before the start of a new holiday season. Therefore, if you have long planned to improve your health in Belarus, now is the time. Pine forests with the purest air and a countless number of different wellness procedures are just what the doctor prescribed for everyone tired of the prolonged cold and snow.

Forget the stereotypes that sanatoriums are for pensioners. Belarus follows the latest trends in the wellness industry and is ready to offer all the best — from mud and pearl baths to Thai massage. Here is also a real exclusive — the Sosnovy Bor health resort in Minsk Region features the amber room that helps get rid of migraines and chronic ear, nose and throat diseases. And sanatoriums in Grodno Region are located next to unique radon springs.



# Aleh Hapon talked about his unusual path in sports and the best achievement of the Belarusian national beach soccer team at the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup

The Belarusian national beach soccer team achieved the highest result in history at the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup held in the United Arab Emirates on February 15–25th — it became the fourth. Yet, the players have noted that they wanted a higher result and could do better than that. At the start of the tournament, they defeated the Japanese, Senegalese and Colombians. In the quarterfinals they were victorious against the three-time world champions Portuguese. The Belarusians only lost to the Italian team in a penalty shootout in the match for reaching the final. Alas, the Belarusian squad suffered a loss to the Iranian team in the dispute for bronze. Aleh Hapon, the forward of Belarus’ national team, summarised the team’s participation in the tournament, “We have achieved a high result, but the sediment has remained. We were very close to the final. Perhaps we lacked concentration... So the emotions are mixed now.”

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Aleh Hapon was one of the players who set the tone for our national team’s performance at the tournament — he scored a hat-trick in the match against Senegal. The footballer also showed great game in subsequent matches. Unfortunately, Aleh could not enter the field in the decisive game — he received two yellow cards and had to watch the match from the stands.

— *This is probably the worst feeling! Even when you get injured and sit on the bench, you feel close to the team. When you sit in the stands and realise that you are healthy and ready to help the national team, but you can’t ... It was really frustrating to face an expulsion like that.*

— **When our team was going to the World Cup, everyone was talking cautiously about the expectations of the tournament. Did you have any anticipation that you would be able to fight for the medals?**

— *We had a very strong group — the Japanese were the finalists of the last World Cup, the Senegalese took fourth place in 2021, the Colombians were strong, too. We had not even got out of the group before. In general, it is hard to make any predictions until you see other teams in action. Before the opening game, we were told, “You must beat Senegal!” We also realised that the first match was the most important one. It turned out to be very emotional, but we persevered. Then we just took it one match at a time... I will repeat myself — there is a feeling that we should have been in the final, but we were unlucky this time.*

— **Has the attitude of the opponents towards our national team changed?**

— *It has been two years now [since their attitude changed]. Head coach of the national team Nicolas Alvarado, and my friends from beach soccer have repeatedly said that no one wants to play against Belarusians now. Many countries stick to the so-called European football, which is mostly technical, nice and emotional. We are used to working hard on the field and playing in a physical manner. We have our own style, and other teams are now wary of meeting with us on the field.*

— **The fourth place is probably the most bitter. Have you increased your ambitions after this performance?**

— *For sure. It has made us incredibly hungry for winning medals now!*

...Currently, the players of our national team have focused all their attention on the clubs. Pre-season training is underway. That is why the day before Aleh went from Minsk to St. Petersburg to join BSC Kristall,



Aleh Hapon scored a hat-trick in the match against Senegal



Before beach soccer, this player tried his hand at baseball, association football and futsal

## The catcher in the ‘sandbox’

where he has been playing for several seasons already. The biography of this athlete is anything but ordinary — if only because his sports path began in Skidel... in baseball!

— *Now, Skidel has football and volleyball facilities, and more. In general, sport is developing there. Back in my childhood, there were only two sports clubs — baseball and rowing. I immediately realised that kayaking and canoeing were not my thing, so I came to the baseball club at the age of seven to try my hand at this sport. I played at the catcher position, and I did well. We had a good adult team — it became the champion of Belarus. Although baseball is not a particularly common sport in Belarus, many people were involved in it back then. At first, baseball players trained on the football field, and when the main team began to win, the construction of a baseball stadium started.*

— **When was the last time you went out on the field?**

— *At the age of 10–11. Then I got into football — the coaches of FC Neman Grodno noticed me. It was not difficult to adjust to it after baseball. Besides, I have always liked football. As a child, we played with the older guys at the stadium from morning till evening. We had a very good coach, Pavel Rodnenok, in the Neman club, but when it was time to switch to the reserve team, he left the club. The head coach was supposed to be another specialist, with whom I had a conflict. So there was no option with the reserve for the Grodno team. Still, there were chances to move to the first league. I was entering university at that time, and coach Vasily Savich invited me to play for the university’s futsal team, which was the reserve*

*for UVD–Dinamo. I started there and then moved to the main team.*

— **Why did you eventually replace the parquet floor with sand?**

— *There was a pause in the season from April to September, and we played beach soccer during that period to keep fit. Once I was offered to try myself in this sport. I came to one training session, the second, the third, and I liked it.*

— **Apart from the playing surface, are futsal and beach soccer very different?**

— *Dynamics and speed of decision-making are very important in futsal. Seconds decide everything there. In beach soccer, you can carry out longer attacks, fight tactically — as they say, play with your head, not just with technique. Although the sports are somewhat similar, but due to the different surface, there are differences in the training process since completely different muscles are involved.*

— **Baseball, beach soccer... These are not the most typical sports for Belarus. Are you in principle keen on everything unusual and new?**

— *I liked baseball for its uniqueness. As for beach soccer, I must admit that I did not plan to stay long in it — everything was fine for me in futsal. I had to choose one direction and I was leaning towards futsal. Then I got a phone call and was told that I was called up to the Belarusian national team. I was excited about the opportunity and decided that I should try. So I came and met the guys in the team. I was immediately placed with Ihar Bryshitel. For the first two days, we did not talk at all. Then we got to know each other, he began to share his*

*experience, told me where he played, how he travelled the world, and I thought that I wanted to do it too.*

— **Do you remember your first match for the national team?**

— *If we talk about the official one, it was September 2017 — the Euro Beach Soccer League Superfinal in Terracina, Italy. I was not supposed to play in that tournament. Twelve players were taken to play in the starting lineup, and two players were selected as reserves — I was one of them. I was sitting on the bench, when Denis Samsonov suddenly broke his little finger during the match. Nico Alvarado looked at me and I understood everything. We won 2–0 in that match against the Ukrainian team, but I did not really do anything special to be remembered for. My first goal for the national team happened in 2018 in Baku, where I scored a goal against the Azerbaijani national team with a bicycle kick.*

— **Our beach soccer squad has been the most successful among team sports in the country in recent years. Do you have a close-knit team?**

— *I think we are one of the closest-knit teams in our sport. When Nico became the head coach, he unified all the players. He made some rearrangements, introduced some rules of his own, and it brought us all together as a team. Of course, we spend a lot of time together with the guys — probably even more than with our relatives. Thus, if we count all the training camps and competitions we attend, I can say that I see my friend from university times Mikita Chaikouski at least 200 days a year! It is about the same with everyone else from the team.*

## ARENA

● **Sharangovich earned the 50th point for performance in the NHL season**

Belarusian hockey player Yegor Sharangovich has reached the 50-point mark in the 2023/24 National Hockey League regular season. On March 17th, the Belarusian’s Calgary Flames confidently beat the Montreal Canadiens



with a score of 5:2 on home ice. Sharangovich took part in the fourth scoring attack of the Flames, giving a pass

to Nazem Kadri. This point became the 50th for Yegor in this season, with a total of 28 goals and 22 assists.

● **Belarusian wrestlers claimed four medals at the tournament in Armenia**

The International U23 Freestyle Wrestling Memorial Tournament named after the

Honoured Coach of Armenia, Lyova Vardanyan, was held in Yerevan. The Belarusians won one gold medal (Vladislav Kozlov), two silver (Ilya Khamtsou and Aleksey Parkhomenko) and one bronze (Ivan Hramyaka). Wrestlers from Belarus, Armenia, Moldova, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Iran and Russia took part in the competition.

● **Belarusian speed skaters won 13 medals in the Russian Cup final**

The final of the Russian Speed Skating Cup with the participation of the strongest Belarusian and Russian athletes has come to an end in Kolomna. The representatives of the Belarusian team claimed 13 medals at the tournament — 7 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze.





Ivan Yanvanovich

Photo of the week

Roe deer in the forest of Loev District

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



of people reminding us that we are all one big family and that we, so different, are actually very similar to each other.

**March 22nd** is World Water Day. It is observed by the decision of the participants of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This holiday is a unique opportunity to remind humanity of the extreme importance of water resources for the environment and the development of society.



in France in the 12th century, though. Real tennis was popular with the French aristocracy before the French Revolution. Some tennis terms came from there.

**On March 22nd, 1874**, the first game of tennis was held in New York, USA. It is generally believed that tennis originated



‘training ground’, where a system of physical and psychological abuse of prisoners was practised. Before the outbreak of the World War II, political opponents of the Nazi regime were held there — primarily communists, socialists, and clergymen opposed to the regime. During the World War II, Dachau gained an ominous reputation as one of the most horrific death camps.

**March 23rd** is World Meteorological Day — a professional holiday for weather forecasters of all countries. The Republic of Belarus celebrates the Day of Employees of the Hydrometeorological Service. On this day in 1950, the Convention of the World Meteorological Organisation entered into force. The holiday reminds of the importance of preserving the planet’s atmosphere and hydrosphere.



**On March 23rd, 1876**, Pavel Yablochkov, a Russian electrical engineer, received a patent for the electric candle he had invented. It became the first electric light source. Soon, the ‘Russian light’ illuminated

city streets, shops and theatres in many countries. This invention marked the beginning of the practical use of electric charge for lighting purposes.



the first two and a half years of operation, the Minsk metro transported 100 million passengers. At present, the Minsk metro consists of three lines and is the most popular form of public transport in the city, carrying about 230 million passengers annually.

**On March 24th, 1999** (on the night of March 24–25th), NATO commenced the military campaign against the sovereign Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, without the sanction of the UN Security Council. As a result of the NATO aerial bombing, which lasted 11 weeks — from March 24th to June 10th, 1999 — more than 1.5 thousand civilians were killed.



**On March 25th, 1994**, the Simeon Polotsky Museum–Library, a branch of the Polotsk National Historical and Cultural Museum–Reserve, was opened in Polotsk. Part of the



**March 27th** is World Theatre Day. It was established in Vienna during the 9th World Congress of the International Institute of Theatre under UNESCO in 1961. This day is traditionally held under a single motto, ‘Theatre as a means of mutual understanding and strengthening peace between peoples’. Usually, two of the most popular genres are played in the theatre — comedy and tragedy, the symbols of which are theatrical masks. The mention of the first theatrical performance dates back to 2500 BC.



**On March 28th, 1989**, Minsk–2 International Airport (now Minsk National Airport) received its first passengers. In 1977, the construction of a new airport Minsk–2 began on the outskirts of the Belarusian capital. The most advanced architectural and technical solutions



were used in its construction. Minsk National Airport is currently the main air gateway of the Republic of Belarus.





Ivan Yanvanovich

Photo of the week

Roe deer in the forest of Loev District

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



of people reminding us that we are all one big family and that we, so different, are actually very similar to each other.

**March 22nd** is World Water Day. It is observed by the decision of the participants of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This holiday is a unique opportunity to remind humanity of the extreme importance of water resources for the environment and the development of society.



in France in the 12th century, though. Real tennis was popular with the French aristocracy before the French Revolution. Some tennis terms came from there.

**On March 22nd, 1874**, the first game of tennis was held in New York, USA. It is generally believed that tennis originated



‘training ground’, where a system of physical and psychological abuse of prisoners was practised. Before the outbreak of the World War II, political opponents of the Nazi regime were held there — primarily communists, socialists, and clergymen opposed to the regime. During the World War II, Dachau gained an ominous reputation as one of the most horrific death camps.

**March 23rd** is World Meteorological Day — a professional holiday for weather forecasters of all countries. The Republic of Belarus celebrates the Day of Employees of the Hydrometeorological Service. On this day in 1950, the Convention of the World Meteorological Organisation entered into force. The holiday reminds of the importance of preserving the planet’s atmosphere and hydrosphere.



**On March 23rd, 1876**, Pavel Yablochkov, a Russian electrical engineer, received a patent for the electric candle he had invented. It became the first electric light source. Soon, the ‘Russian light’ illuminated

city streets, shops and theatres in many countries. This invention marked the beginning of the practical use of electric charge for lighting purposes.



the first two and a half years of operation, the Minsk metro transported 100 million passengers. At present, the Minsk metro consists of three lines and is the most popular form of public transport in the city, carrying about 230 million passengers annually.

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