



Our new project  
*The Belarusian  
Statehood* tells about  
its history, symbols,  
foundations  
and institutions

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Let's meet spring  
in Belarus — the gentle  
breeze hints  
that it won't be  
long to wait  
for real heat

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INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

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Craftswoman from Grodno Anastasia Matusevich

## We embroider the Motherland

Folk crafts, architecture, national rituals and dishes — what else does the overall picture of Belarus consist of? The trade union of workers of culture, information, sports and tourism launched a unique project called *Cultural Heritage of Belarus*. The result will be a huge panel three metres wide and two and a half metres long, on which the craftsmen of each region will depict famous sights of their land with the help of hand embroidery. All districts will join the initiative to show what their area is best known for. These are architectural buildings, folk crafts, arts, coats of arms, national clothes, rituals and dishes — which were carefully passed down from generation to generation, included in the State List of Historical and Cultural Values and convey the identity of our people. The huge picture is a gift to the Belarusians, which will be ready for the Independence Day.





# New era of partnership between Belarus and China

From February 28th to March 2nd Aleksandr Lukashenko was on a state visit to the People's Republic of China. It is the highest protocol status of foreign visits.

In Beijing the Belarusian Head of State was welcomed taking into account not only the diplomatic protocol but friendly relations between the countries, a special level of relations of all-weather and comprehensive strategic partnership, on which the leaders of Belarus and China agreed back in September 2022. Aleksandr Lukashenko's motorcade moved exclusively accompanied by a group of motorcyclists, which emphasises its special status.

The Belarus President's visit to the People's Republic of China was of historical significance. By the way, it was the 13th visit on record since Aleksandr Lukashenko became the President, and it was the 13th time Aleksandr Lukashenko had met with the current China President Xi Jinping. It is considered a lucky and noble number in China. There are multiple examples of that in the Chinese culture.

China had recently lifted severe anti-COVID-19 restrictions and Aleksandr Lukashenko was one of the first dignitaries to visit China after it happened. The visit took place in a period of important political events in China and against the backdrop of a complicated period of geopolitical transformation on the planet.

## Belarus and China have no closed topics for co-operation

Prior to talks between the Heads of State in Beijing Aleksandr Lukashenko had substantial meetings with representatives of top Chinese government officials.

First, with Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Keqiang. Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded that back in the day Belarus borrowed China's practices in a number of areas, primarily in matters concerning the creation of free economic zones.

*"We have no closed topics for co-operation. Most importantly, we have never set ourselves the task of being friends and working against third countries. We are doing everything in the interests of our peoples — Belarusian and Chinese. We have many proposals, a lot of plans," the Belarusian leader stressed.*

China is traditionally one of Belarus' top three trade partners. In 2022 Belarus-China trade totalled \$5.79 billion, over 113 percent as against 2021. Belarus' merchandise export amounted to \$1.61 billion, with import at \$4.18 billion.

Another important meeting was with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Li Zhanshu. Aleksandr Lukashenko mentioned amendments to Belarus' Constitution, which gave a constitutional status to the Belarusian People's Congress. There are no organisations exactly like this in the world, but it has similarities with the National People's Congress of China, the President noted.

"Expansion of contacts with China is a priority for us. In foreign policy. Thanks to joint efforts the notion 'comprehensive strategic partnership' has acquired special significance in relations between Belarus and the People's Republic of China. Today Minsk and Beijing continue building up the constructive political dialogue, successfully advancing economic interaction, and expanding regional ties," the Head of State stated.



## Time for important political and economic decisions

During the four-hour negotiations with Xi Jinping the Belarusian Head of State said he supports China's

initiatives in the area of international security and in matters concerning development.

"Today's meeting is held at a very difficult time which requires new nonstandard approaches and responsible political decisions. First of all, they should be aimed at preventing global confrontation which will have no winners. You have recently stated it, both clearly and unambiguously, addressing the world community. Belarus has been actively proposing peace and fully supports your initiative on international security," the Belarusian leader said.

The President of the People's Republic of China noted the need to fill the new status of bilateral relations with content.

*"Today we have a good opportunity to develop a plan for the entire range of bilateral relations... Mr. President and I are united by the common desire to advance China-Belarus relations. We've been friends for years. We maintain strong and unbreakable friendship. In conditions of instability and turbulence of the international situation China is actively intent on working together with Belarus to enhance political mutual trust and practical co-operation for the sake of dynamic, healthy, and stable advancement of bilateral relations," Xi Jinping said.*

At the part of the talks with the President of the People's Republic of China, open to the press, Aleksandr Lukashenko voiced a proposal to create joint ventures and develop co-operation.

The President of Belarus noted that the potential of bilateral projects is enormous, "Our manufacturers are interested in studying the skill sets and technologies of Chinese companies to form a component base, produce engines, transmissions, axles, other units and assemblies. I suggest setting up joint ventures in machine tool engineering, electric transport, and production of parts for agricultural machinery both in Belarus and in China."

Aleksandr Lukashenko also voiced a number of other proposals that were in line with the joint work on social and economic development and modernisation.

The two leaders communicated much longer than planned, which clearly indicates a mutual interest in addressing items on the agenda and focus on results.

A massive package of documents on co-operation in various spheres was signed in the presence of the Heads of State. Aleksandr Lukashenko and Xi Jinping personally signed the main document. It is a joint statement on further advancement of exemplary relations of all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership between Belarus and the People's Republic of China in a new age.

The cumulative economic effect of the Belarusian-Chinese agreements made and formalised during state visit of the President of Belarus is estimated at more than \$3.5 billion.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also held meetings with heads of major Chinese companies, during which matters of investment in various spheres and co-operation in automobile production were discussed.



**Belarus intends to fulfil the procedures for joining the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation by the Delhi summit in June, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko said as he met with SCO Secretary General Zhang Ming in Minsk**

"For us to become a full member of the organisation, we need to carry out certain legal procedures. We must join the decisions taken by the SCO earlier. We have set ourselves an ambitious goal to complete this work this year, before the Delhi summit. It's a fast pace, a serious pace. But if you support us, it will be a good example for others. Moreover, being an observer, we were seriously preparing to join the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. Therefore, we will definitely be able to meet the deadline, before we meet again in

## SCO highly appreciates the contribution of Belarus

Delhi in June," the President stated.

Aleksandr Lukashenko thanked Zhang Ming and the entire SCO secretariat for the work they are doing with regard to Belarus, which was actually accepted into the family of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation at the last summit in Samarkand. Then it was decided to give a green light to Belarus' accession to the SCO.

Later, in a conversation with reporters, Shanghai Co-operation Organisation Secretary General said that the Belarusian path to joining the SCO can be called un-

precedented. Zhang Ming recalled that Belarus officially applied for accession to the SCO in June 2022, and after only 2.5 months at the summit in Samarkand, it was decided to start the procedure for the Republic of Belarus to join the organisation, "It was unprecedented in terms of the speed of decision-making. This speaks of the mutual trust of the SCO member states in Belarus and appreciation of the fact that Belarus shares the values and principles of the SCO. Over the years the country, being an observer country, has played a very im-

portant role in co-operation with the SCO."

Under the chairmanship of India, all SCO member countries discussed and considered this matter. At the moment, discussion and consideration is still underway, Zhang Ming added, "I would like to note that the contribution that the Belarusian side has made to the organisation over the years is recognised and appreciated by all member states."

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by





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The meeting place for the heads of state was the Jomkhuri residence in the Saadabad palace and park complex. According to the protocol, the negotiations of the presidents were preceded by a solemn ceremony of an official meeting.

During negotiations with Ebrahim Raisi, Alexander Lukashenko emphasized:

- The current contacts between Belarus and Iran, especially in the last two years, are really your merit. To be honest, maybe even for my reason, because of Belarus, we have somewhat weakened attention to the Iranian state. I often think about this and conclude that we needed to live through this period - a period, perhaps, of a less intense relationship. This period is characterized by the fact that we realized how much we need each other, how closely we must cooperate in this world.

The President of Iran noted that Belarusian-Iranian relations have always been on the rise. But in the last two years, he says, they have really shown a breakthrough. By the way, in 2021 the trade turnover between Belarus and Iran exceeded \$33 million, having increased by more than a third compared to 2020. Over the past year, mutual trade has tripled and exceeded \$100 million.

The head of the Belarusian state thanked his Iranian counterpart for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to the Belarusian delegation:

*"An old Iranian proverb says: 'A friend is God's grace.' And I believe that I came to my friends. I am pleased to visit Tehran again, the capital of present-day Iran, which became the cradle of one of the most commercially and culturally advanced civilizations, through which trade routes passed long before America was discovered... In modern terms, your ancestors knew about logistics, export, transit, there are many more of those who have been strangling your country with sanctions for more than forty years and are trying to instill so-called democratic values. They apparently just forgot that every nation has its own values that stem from its culture, lifestyle, upbringing, religion, and these values must be taken into account. This is the guarantee of peaceful coexistence. Where this is forgotten, wars begin.*

The current visit to Iran is the third one for Alexander Lukashenko.

- Every time I observe with great respect the tenacity with which your people resist external pressure, attempts to impose someone else's will. And how you, in spite of everything, develop modern technologies and nuclear energy. And, as we decided today with the President of Iran, we can be very useful to each other if we truly unite our efforts, the Belarusian leader said. - From the experience of my communication with the former presidents of Iran, the negotiations that we had, I noted that the peculiarity of the current visit is that we can enter a new stage, a new stage of our cooperation. The peculiarity of this cooperation will be the highest efficiency. The agreements that have already been reached allow me to make such a statement.

During a meeting with his Iranian

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko made an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran on March 12-13. The main topic of the meetings in Tehran was the development of interaction across the entire spectrum of bilateral relations with an emphasis on trade and economic cooperation. The presidents' talks were held in narrow and expanded formats. The parties discussed the implementation of projects in the fields of industry, agriculture, transport and logistics. Special attention was paid to the situation in the region and in the world as a whole.

## Minsk and Tehran signed a road map until 2026



counterpart, Alexander Lukashenko assured that Minsk would do everything necessary to fulfill the signed agreements.

Following the talks, the presidents of Belarus and Iran signed a roadmap for comprehensive cooperation between the countries for 2023-2026. The document provides for comprehensive cooperation between Belarus and Iran in the political, economic, consular, scientific and technical fields, as well as in education, culture, art, media and tourism.

- It is gratifying that we have similar positions and approaches to many issues on the international agenda. The main thing is that Belarus and Iran are committed to the idea of building a just multipolar world, the Belarusian leader said following the talks with the President of Iran.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the last time he visited Iran was 17 years ago:

- I must state that no sanctions, no pressure could stop the movement of the Iranian people towards their independence and ensuring their security...

*We discussed in detail the level of our relations today. And we unequivocally determined with the President of Iran that there was some kind of small pause in our relations. Today, the peculiarity of this visit is that we have successfully overcome this pause. We agreed on a lot. And the peculiarity of this visit is also that for the first time we agreed on all issues of bilateral cooperation and signed many treaties, agreements and memorandums of intent... In total, I can estimate the current visit, if we implement all our agreements, within the framework of 100 million dollars. We agree with the President of Iran that sanctions are a time of opportunity. It is very important for us not to lose this time.*

The President noted that March 18,

As was emphasized, scientific and technical cooperation deserves special attention. The existing developments should become a good basis for deepening contacts and transform into promising commercial projects. Belarus and Iran also intend to strengthen cooperation through inter-parliamentary relations.

Ebrahim Raisi, in turn, stated:

*- Despite the threats and sanctions that are applied against the Islamic Republic of Iran, during this time we have been able to achieve high results and transform sanctions into opportunities. We are ready to share our experience with the friendly country of the Republic of Belarus in this direction... Good agreements have been reached in the spheres of industry, trade, transport and agriculture. We are confident that these agreements will be fulfilled. The will of the two countries is to develop relations in all spheres without exception. Iran is also interested in developing relations with Belarus on the platforms of international organizations, in particular, in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the EAEU. And we had very good, fruitful talks in this regard.*

During a meeting with media representatives following the results of the talks, the President of Iran emphasized the following:

- Without a doubt, the current visit of the Head of the Belarusian State can become a starting point in the development of

2023 is a significant date for Belarus and Iran - it is the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

- This is a good reason to take our cooperation to a new level. And there are such opportunities. And today President Raisi and I took advantage of this opportunity. We absolutely trust each other. Our peoples support us in this. We stated that we achieved a high level of trade between us last year. This is a threefold increase compared to 2021. But they stated that this is far



from the opportunities that the two states have, - the Belarusian leader said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that a big shortcoming in relations between Belarus and Iran was previously due to the fact that the parties correctly understood the situation, agreed on many things, but did not implement everything:

- Therefore, in the current conditions, it is fundamentally important to strengthen our existing ties, expand contacts and implement all the agreements reached. Without any delays and red tape. We will cooperate in all areas, including in the humanitarian sphere. The humanitarian sphere is one of the main areas of cooperation.

bilateral relations. The roadmap for comprehensive cooperation between Belarus and Iran will help bring our relations to a strategic level.

Aleksandr Lukashenko invited his Iranian counterpart to visit Minsk at a convenient time.

After the talks, the presidents together visited an exhibition of Iran's leading medical and scientific-innovative manufacturers. The exposition demonstrated samples of products from a number of leading Iranian medical and scientific-innovative manufacturers.

Based on materials from sb.by and belta.by



## Belarus intends to fulfil the procedures for joining the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation by the Delhi summit in June, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko said as he met with SCO Secretary General Zhang Ming in Minsk

"For us to become a full member of the organisation, we need to carry out certain legal procedures. We must join the decisions taken by the SCO earlier. We have set ourselves an ambitious goal to complete this work this year, before the Delhi summit. It's a fast pace, a serious pace. But if you support us, it will be a good example for others. Moreover, being an observer, we were seriously preparing to join the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. Therefore, we will definitely be able to meet the deadline, before we meet again in

## SCO highly appreciates the contribution of Belarus



Delhi in June," the President stated. Aleksandr Lukashenko thanked Zhang Ming and the entire SCO secretariat for the work they are doing with regard to Belarus, which was actually accepted into the family of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation at the last summit in Samarkand. Then it was decided to give a green light to Belarus' accession to the SCO.

Later, in a conversation with reporters, Shanghai Co-operation Organisation Secretary General said that the Belarusian path to joining the SCO can be called un-

precedented. Zhang Ming recalled that Belarus officially applied for accession to the SCO in June 2022, and after only 2.5 months at the summit in Samarkand, it was decided to start the procedure for the Republic of Belarus to join the organisation, "It was unprecedented in terms of the speed of decision-making. This speaks of the mutual trust of the SCO member states in Belarus and appreciation of the fact that Belarus shares the values and principles of the SCO. Over the years the country, being an observer country, has played a very im-

portant role in co-operation with the SCO." Under the chairmanship of India, all SCO member countries discussed and considered this matter. At the moment, discussion and consideration is still underway, Zhang Ming added, "I would like to note that the contribution that the Belarusian side has made to the organisation over the years is recognised and appreciated by all member states."

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**The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, made an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran on March 12th-13th. The development of interaction across the entire spectrum of bilateral relations with an emphasis on trade and economic co-operation was the main topic of the meetings in Tehran. The Presidents' talks were held in narrow and expanded formats. The parties discussed the implementation of projects in the fields of industry, agriculture, transport and logistics. Special attention was paid to the situation in the region and in the world as a whole.**

# Minsk and Tehran signed a road map until 2026

The Jomkhuri residence in the Saadabad palace and park complex was the meeting place for the Heads of State. According to the protocol, the negotiations of the Presidents were preceded by a solemn ceremony of an official meeting.

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised during negotiations with Ebrahim Raisi, “When I gave you a lot of credit for progress in bilateral relations, especially in the last two years, I did not do that just to flatter you. To be honest, our focus, and in particular, my focus on Iran somewhat weakened at some point. I often think about this and assume that we were meant to live through this period, a period of a less intense relationship. Yet, during this period we realised how much we needed each other, how closely we should co-operate in this world.”

The President of Iran, in turn, noted that Belarus-Iran relations have been developing consistently. Yet, the last two years saw a real breakthrough. However, the trade between the countries exceeded \$33 million in 2021, an increase of more than a third compared to 2020. Over the past year, the trade increased even more significantly: in 2022, Belarus-Iran trade hit \$100 million, which represented a threefold increase.

The Head of the Belarusian State thanked his Iranian counterpart for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to the Belarusian delegation,

***“An old Iranian proverb says: A friend is God’s blessing. I believe that I am visiting my friends. I am happy to pay another visit to Tehran, the capital of present-day Iran, the cradle of one of the most commercially and culturally advanced civilisations; trade routes had passed through its territory long before America was discovered... In modern terms, your ancestors knew about logistics, exports, transit much more than those who have been strangling your country with sanctions for more than forty years trying to impose the so-called democratic values. They apparently forgot that every nation has its own values that stem from their culture, way of life, upbringing, religion, and these values must be reckoned with. This is the guarantee of peaceful coexistence. Forgetting about this leads to wars.”***

This is Aleksandr Lukashenko’s third visit to Iran.

“During my every visit I see the tenacity with which your people resist external pressure and attempts to impose someone else’s will and I have a great respect for that and for your achievements in the field of advanced technology and nuclear energy. And, as we have agreed with the President of Iran today, we can be very useful to each other if we truly join our efforts. The experience of my communication with the former Presidents of Iran and the negotiations that we have had suggested that the ongoing visit is remarkable as it will offer an opportunity to reach a new stage of our co-operation. And this co-operation will be highly efficient. I make such assumptions based on the agreements that we have already reached,” the Belarusian leader said.



During a meeting with his Iranian counterpart, Aleksandr Lukashenko assured that Minsk would do everything necessary to fulfil the signed agreements.

Following the talks, the Presidents of Belarus and Iran signed a roadmap for comprehensive co-operation between the countries for 2023-2026. The document provides for the development of co-operation between Belarus and Iran in the political, economic, consular, scientific and technological avenues and also in education, culture, art, media and tourism.

“I am pleased that we have similar positions and approaches to many issues on the international agenda. The main thing is that Belarus and Iran are committed to the idea of building a fair multipolar world,” the Belarusian leader said following the talks with the President of Iran.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the last time he visited Iran was 17 years ago, “I must state that no sanctions, no pressure could stop the movement of the Iranian people towards ensuring their independence and security...”

***We have thoroughly examined the current status of our relations. And the President of Iran and I came to the conclusion that the relations experienced a little setback. However, the ongoing visit has helped to successfully restart the relations. We have agreed on a lot. This visit is remarkable for one more thing: for the first time we have reached agreements on all issues of bilateral co-operation and signed many treaties, agreements and memorandums of intent... I can estimate the current visit at about \$100 million if we implement all our agreements. The Iranian President and I agree that sanctions are a time of opportunities. It is very important for us not to linger.”***

The President noted that on March 18th, 2023, Belarus and Iran will celebrate a landmark event — the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

“This is a good occasion to significantly upgrade our co-operation, after all we have every opportunity to do so. And today President Raisi and I have taken advantage of this opportunity. We absolutely trust each other. Our peoples support us in this. We have welcomed significant progress in bilateral trade last year, a three-



fold increase over 2021. However, we believe that this lags far behind the potential of the two states,” the Belarusian leader noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko admitted that the two countries failed to implement some of the agreements, although the parties were on the same page on many things and had a clear understanding of the situation, “Therefore, in the current conditions, it is of fundamental importance to cement our ties, expand contacts and implement all the agreements reached, without delay or red tape. We will co-operate in all areas, including in the humanitarian sphere, which is one of the main areas of co-operation.”

As was emphasised, scientific and technical co-operation deserves special attention. The existing developments should become a good basis for deepening contacts and transform into promising commercial projects. Belarus and Iran also intend to strengthen co-operation through inter-parliamentary relations.

Ebrahim Raisi, in turn, said,

***“Despite the threats and sanctions that are used against the Islamic Republic of Iran, we have been able to achieve high results and transform sanctions into opportunities. We are ready to share our experience with the friendly Belarus in this regard... Good agreements have been reached in the field of industry, trade, transport and agriculture. We are confident that these agreements will be brought to fruition. The two countries are willing to develop relations in all areas without exception. Iran is also interested in developing relations with Belarus within the framework of the international organisations, in particular, the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). However, we had very good, fruitful talks in this regard.”***

During a meeting with media representatives following the results of the talks, the President of Iran focused on the following, “Without a doubt, the current visit of the Belarusian Head of State can become a starting point in the develop-

ment of bilateral relations. The roadmap for comprehensive co-operation between Belarus and Iran will help bring our relations to a strategic level.”

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# The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus: for people and for the sake of country's future



Statehood is the most important value and testifies to the nation's ability to develop independently — the President of Belarus is convinced of this, and this point of view has found a warm resonance in the hearts of Belarusians. Belarusian statehood has its own history and foundations. As well as unique and unshakable symbols, institutions and traditions. *The Belarusian Statehood* project of *The MT* tells about the main ones.

MOTHERLAND

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**The President of the Republic of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,**  
*"We have not only strengthened, but rather cemented our principles: sovereignty, preservation of historical memory, patriotism, protection of the traditional family as a union of a woman and a man, and much more. It is true that these ideas do not fit into current legal trends of the global liberal ideology. Yet, this is our path, our civilisational and moral choice... We've created and adopted a unique legal document. It combines traditions and innovations, rule of the people, and the unity of government. It can be called a constitution of the future without false modesty."*  
**During the solemn ceremony to sign the decision of the national constitutional referendum held on March 4th, 2022**



Belarus celebrates Constitution Day on March 15th. The Basic Law of our country embodies the historical experience of the formation of the Belarusian statehood. The Constitution is based on the inalienable sovereign right of the Belarusian people to independently determine their own destiny and be a full-fledged subject of the world community.

## Hierarchy of values

The most important constitutional norm is the provision of Article 2, which defines the hierarchy of values in the country. According to this article, a person, his rights, freedoms and guarantees for their implementation are the highest value and goal of society and the state. Among the basic principles that permeate the norms of the Constitution are:

- the rule of law;
- guarantee and observance of human and civil rights;
- democratic procedure for the formation of government bodies.

The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus became not only a reflection of political and socio-economic changes, but also a document that determined the vector of development of national statehood and improvement of democratic institutions for decades to come.

## Stages of constitutional construction

- In the history of modern times, Belarus had several constitutions: 1918 (temporary), 1919, 1927, 1937, 1978, 1994. The Belarusian constitutions of the Soviet era of 1919, 1927, 1937, 1978 established a system of state bodies, secured the basic rights of the individual, allowed the preservation of the ethno-cultural identity of the Belarusians, and generally paved the way for the self-determination of the Belarusian people in an independent state.
- The current Constitution was adopted on March 15th, 1994. For the first time in the history of Belarusian statehood, it consolidated the status of the republic as a unitary democratic social legal state, established the principles of a democratic system, the priority of human rights and freedoms. For the first time, the Constitution introduced the position of the President of the Republic of Belarus. Then, at the turning point in the development of the country, the Belarusian society, more than ever, needed a strong national leader capable of consolidating citizens and ensuring the achievement of strategic goals in the socio-economic and political spheres. On July 10th, 1994, People's Deputy Aleksandr Lukashenko was elected President.
- The majority of citizens voted for giving the Russian language equal status with Belarusian and supported the proposal to establish the new National Flag and the National Coat of Arms of the country at the referendum on May 14th, 1995. On November 24th, 1996, a new version of the Constitution was adopted at a nationwide referendum (the powers of the authorities were redistributed, a bicameral Parliament was created). In addition, Belarusians opposed the abolition of the death penalty. The next referendum, at which the question of amending the Constitution was submitted, was held on October 17th, 2004.
- The development of Belarus and the emergence of new threats in the world required the improvement of legislation: on February 27th, 2022, the current version of the Basic Law was adopted by popular vote. An important aspect is that the Basic Law has been supplemented with a new chapter dedicated to the Belarusian People's Congress. The main role of the Belarusian People's Congress is to stabilise society at all stages of its development, and its decisions are binding on all bodies.

## Important highlights

- Article 4 stipulates that democracy in the Republic of Belarus is carried out on the basis of the ideology of the Belarusian state, as well as the diversity of political institutions and opinions. The ideology of political parties, religious or other public associations and social groups cannot be established as mandatory for citizens.
- According to Article 18, the Republic of Belarus in its foreign policy proceeds from the principles of equality of states, non-use of force or threat of force, inviolability of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs and other generally recognised principles and norms of international law. The Republic of Belarus excludes military aggression from its territory against other states.
- Article 32 states that marriage as the union of a woman and a man, family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood are under the protection of the state. Parents or persons replacing them have the right and obligation to raise children, take care of their health, development and education, instill culture and respect for the laws, historical and national traditions of Belarus. A child should not be subjected to cruel treatment or humiliation, involved in work that may harm his or her physical, mental or moral development. At the same time, children are obliged to take care of their parents, as well as of persons replacing them.



## Interesting facts

- The constitution (from Latin *constitutio* — establishment, arrangement) is a legal document that determines the structure of the state, the rights, freedoms and obligations of citizens and has the highest legal force. According to the theory of the social contract, the Constitution establishes an agreement between society (citizens) and the state on the most important issues for society.
- The 1994 Constitution of Belarus has been written for four years, since 1990. During this period, the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the BSSR possessed the power of constitutional law, which secured the sovereignty of power, territory and independence of the country. In drawing up the Basic Law of the country in 1994, the experience of constitutional construction in Austria, the USA, France, Germany, Sweden and other countries was used. Of course, taking into account the peculiarities of the development of the Belarusian society and its historical traditions.
- Since 2004, every year from March 10th to March 15th, events of the All-Belarusian patriotic campaign called 'We are citizens of Belarus!' are held in all regions of the country on the initiative of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRSM). During the action, representatives of the legislative and executive authorities, veterans of war and labour hand over passports of citizens of the Republic of Belarus in a solemn atmosphere for 14-year-old boys and girls — the best representatives of gifted youth, excellent students, participants of scientific and practical conferences, winners and prize-winners of republican competitions, festivals and school subject contests.

- Article 54 obliges everyone to protect the historical, cultural, spiritual heritage and other national values. Preservation of the historical memory of the heroic past of the Belarusian people and patriotism is the duty of every citizen of the Republic of Belarus.
- Article 70 states that the costs of preparing and holding elections in Belarus are covered by the state. In cases stipulated by law, funds of political parties, other organisations and citizens may also be used for this purpose. At the same time, it is prohibited to finance expenses for the preparation and holding of elections in Belarus by foreign states and organisations, as well as foreign citizens.
- Article 81 determines that the President is elected for a period of five years directly by the people of the Republic of Belarus on the basis of universal, free, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. The same person may be President for no more than two terms. Candidates for the post of President are nominated by citizens of Belarus with at least 100,000 signatures of voters.



# Lawlessness Service of Ukraine

## Investigation of the Television News Agency on an attempted terrorist attack at the Machulishchi airfield: new details of a dirty provocation



Information about an attempted terrorist attack at the Machulishchi airfield and the detention of a Ukrainian saboteur seriously stirred up the media field. Recently, new details of a large-scale operation of the State Security Committee in co-operation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Border Committee and other law enforcement agencies were shown in the evening air of the Belarus 1 TV channel. Journalists of the Television News Agency have prepared a large amount of material on the investigation of the incident, the channels for recruiting agents of the SBU (SSU) and connections leading to foreign special services.

### Background of the event

...In focus there is a stunned and almost naked terrorist Nikolai Shvets on the floor of a cottage in Borovlyany during the arrest. Ukrainian nationalist, recruited by the SBU. Agreed to be trained to carry out missions to undermine aircraft on the territory of other states. He passed a mandatory polygraph test and received the operational pseudonym Gaspar.

The terrorist training began in the fall of 2022. Shvets got a laptop with a drone flight simulator for this. The next stage will be real flights at the test site near Kiev with grenade models. The curators said that the mission of Shvets could be a sabotage in the Russian Engels at the airfield with strategic bombers.

However, in December, Shvets will receive another task: Belarus, Machulishchi airfield, blowing up an A-50U aircraft called 'the eyes of the Russian air forces'...

Shvets received a special mobile phone with special programmes that allow one to remotely monitor not only the actions of the agent, but also the environment. Special SBU spy applications are able to automatically delete all data from the phone in case of unauthorised access.



Citizen of Ukraine Nikolai Shvets

### Route and preparation

On January 15th, 2023, Shvets left Kiev for Warsaw with drones and money. Vitaly Yakutik, a radical, a participant in the 2020 protests from Belarus who fled to Poland, will transport the devices to Belarus. However, Shvets himself will not be able to enter our country from the first entry due to the vigilance and professionalism of the Belarusian border guard Andrei Mironchik. Hastily, the SBU prepared a new route Warsaw-Riga-Pskov for the agent. He will safely cross the Russian border, hitchhike to Pskov and from there to Minsk by regular bus. All the same Yakutik from Poland will help him to rent a house.

"While implementing operational and search activities, we found out that Poland's special services were highly likely to be involved in this attack. The assumption is based on the fact that the attack involved several people from among the so-called self-exiled opposition who are currently on the territory of Poland. These people had a role in organising the delivery of weapons, drones to the territory of the Republic of Belarus, they

helped the terrorist enter the territory of the Republic of Belarus, and assisted in developing and implementing his evacuation plan," the KGB operative said.

Shvets began the final preparations for the terrorist attack in a rented apartment under the strict guidance of the SBU.

Explosives, a drone, batteries and control panels were in a cache in a forest near Minsk.

The curators demanded to commit sabotage in Machulishchi before February 21st, because then the plane, according to the SBU, had to leave Belarus. Shvets was shown through a video link on a smartphone how and what needs to be connected in the drone.

On February 19th, Shvets will try to fly a drone for the first time. The aircraft responded to commands with a delay. The signal was lost, it was impossible to fly up. He needed a repeater to amplify the signal. It will be delivered by another accomplice Mikhail Demin. A citizen of Belarus, very often visiting Ukraine.

### Details of the explosion and search

Nikolai Shvets tells the investigation, "I received a parcel with a repeater somewhere in five days. This is a small handkerchief with a battery and an antenna. It serves as a signal amplifier. The idea was to put it as high as possible on the horizon, and naturally, it would have amplified the signal at times."

On the morning of February 26th, Shvets arrived by car in the area of Machulishchi. Closer to 10 o'clock in the morning, two explosions thundered in the parking lot of the airfield in Machulishchi. Shvets managed to upload a video of the approach to the cloud storage, but his state of mind was on the verge. He was in a hurry. He fell and lost his backpack with equipment.

"The suspect in the terrorist act was identified by us on the same day, February 26th. Together with the internal affairs bodies, we organised a set of urgent operational-search measures, as a result of which we found that citizen Shvets, who was involved in an attempt to commit a terrorist act at the Machulishchi airfield and was evacuated to the city of Stolin on February 26th," the KGB operative reports.

Very quickly, even an all points bulletin of a bomber appears in the media. And the SBU is already starting to inflate the information-psychological operation. Firstly, in order to go into the shadows, not to be associated with the incident, to shift the focus, for example, to the GUR of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine Budanov, a competing special service. But they failed. And then bad hat Azarov appears with the statement that all this is the work of his fake organisation from a couple of fugitive traitors...

But let's back to February 26th. What actually happened after the attack?

"Additional security measures were urgently introduced at the state border of Belarus, which made it possible to disrupt the initial plan to evacuate the terrorist to the territory of Ukraine. Accordingly, the foreign intelligence agency put in place a contingency plan for his evacuation," the KGB operative explains.

The escape plan is to arrive in the village of Sloboda. Shvets will leave the car there...



Aleksey Bibikov

Andrei Mironchik, the head of the detachment of the Bruzgi border control department of the Grodno Border Group, is the same border guard who did not let the Ukrainian saboteur into Belarus

### Capital punishment for SBU

While in the shelter, over time, Shvets sees a forced reboot and cleaning of his smartphone. This tells him that operatives found a rented apartment in Minsk (the first telephone was left there). The failed terrorist attack, the frustrated evacuation plan, conflicting reports and the feeling of an imminent denouement — a meeting with the Belarusian special services — drove Nikolai Shvets into a hysterical state. He calls his brother Vladimir, with whom journalists of Television News Agency spoke on the phone, begs to contact the curator from the SBU.

The KGB operative says, "After the Ukrainian special service realised that the option of evacuating Shvets to their territory through Stolin failed, an emergency scenario was implemented to withdraw him to the suburbs of Minsk. He was secretly placed in one of the cottages of the gardening company, where the terrorist's escape from the inevitable finale was interrupted."

### KGB spokesman Konstantin Bychek reports,

*"The operation to search for and detain the criminals was directly controlled by the Head of State. He immediately gave instructions to close the state border and take other comprehensive measures aimed at identifying and bringing to justice all those involved in terrorist activities."*

**Shvets was captured with a huge amount of evidence — both for working with drones and with other devices. He actively confesses. More than 20 people were detained, a criminal case was initiated. Its end result, under the amended legislation, could be the death penalty.**



# Investments paid off

One of the most significant projects for the country's economy implemented in recent years has been a large-scale modernisation of the woodworking industry, carried out by decision of the President. The state has invested more than \$4 billion in this area, and enterprises have also made a significant contribution to the technical re-equipment. As a result, the volume of production increased several times in comparable prices, the depth of processing of raw materials exceeded 90 percent, and almost the entire range of manufactured goods is both import-substituting and export-oriented. Our journalists visited woodworking enterprises and saw how they work in the current difficult economic conditions.

By Irina Mendeleva, Anna Kasper

## The priority is to expand sales markets

It is well known that our country produces several times more furniture than it consumes. That is why it is necessary to constantly expand the geography of supplies and assortment. Modernisation, a well-built strategy and work with personnel help FanDOK to withstand competition. In 2021-2022 alone, more than Br10 million were invested in expanding production, as a result of which furniture production tripled in a year: in December 2022 alone, it was produced here for Br1,600,000.

Growth in production volumes, a waste-free line, a wide geography of deliveries — the modernisation of woodworking enterprises has significantly increased their competitiveness



CNC machine operator of FanDOK Georgy Mayer

from timber harvesting to finished products — the Bobruisk enterprise wins in the market in terms of prices. This allows them to compete with popular foreign brands, to replace the products of those who have left our country and Russia.

Before sawing round timber, FanDOK first determines exactly what will come of it, so it is possible to work with virtually no waste.

Investments in the furniture factory of the enterprise allowed to significantly expand the range. The premises were renovated at the production facility, several production lines were

on the market, says Director General of FanDOK, “Now we are implementing a programme to modernise the drying equipment of the plywood plant, which will further increase the volume of plywood by 12 percent. At the same time, equipment for the manufacture of chairs is being installed in the furniture workshop. It is planned to establish the production of new products by the end of this year.”

## From Russia to Türkiye

Slonimmebel is an export-oriented company that successfully competes with domestic and foreign market players. To maintain a high level of external sales in production, new technologies are introduced annually, modernisation is carried out, which entails the

ports in the total volume of shipment is 92 percent. The furniture is successfully realised in the markets of Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Türkiye and Georgia. The company has consistently worked in difficult economic conditions during the epidemiological situation.

When purchasing materials, Slonimmebel focuses on domestic goods. Board materials for the production of furniture — MDF and chipboard are purchased mainly in Ivatsevichi, Mosty and Smorgan. However, only fittings are of foreign origin. The company specialises in the production of bedroom furniture sets — more than 1,500 of them are produced per month. About 400 more units are the production of cabinet furniture.

In the workshops, work does not stop even for a minute. Every now and then wagons and carts pass, loaded to the top with material and already finished products. There are areas where manual labour is indispensable. Painting of products is done mainly by hand. Stroke after stroke, gold paint is applied to the details of future bedrooms.

With the help of 320 people, real masterpieces are created in the workshops. In them — a piece of work of each worker.

Director of Slonimmebel Oleg Shvaydyuk has been with the company for 3 years. The head notes the social stability of the enterprise and the maximum employment of the team, “To maintain a high level of exports, we annually introduce new technologies and modernise production. At the end of 2022,



Most of Slonimmebel's products go outside the country

FanDOK mainly produces the raw materials and primary products required for the manufacture of products independently, ranging from logging and butchering. The enterprises of the open joint-stock company also produce lumber, plywood, furniture boards, block-board and other woodworking products.

Russia, Europe, Central Asia — the geography of exports is expanding every year. The trend towards environmental friendliness, which is gaining popularity in the world, has worked in favour of Bobruisk manufacturers. FanDOK does not use chipboard and artificial materials — everything is only natural. That is why the furniture of the Bobruisk enterprise is in demand in the foreign market.

For example, in the near future the company will ship a large batch of furniture to Uzbekistan. Director General of FanDOK Andrey Partyankov recently visited this country in person and established business ties. The first shipment to Azerbaijan is also planned.

Thanks to the full production cycle —

purchased, both new and not used by other woodworking enterprises. The latter have been improved and modernised.

Also, the factory installed equipment for the production of door panels from solid wood with a capacity of three thousand pieces per month. The products were in high demand.

It is noteworthy that here they rely not only on the mass consumer, but also offer exclusive options, Andrey Partyankov emphasises, “We recently participated in a tender for the supply of furniture to the Zhilichi Palace and Park Ensemble and won. We put there 165 pieces of various furniture with elements of carving, gilding, made by the hands of our craftsmen. Wood carvers Sergey Malkov, Vladimir Kalinkin and Yuri Syugay are creative people, real artists. You set a task for them, and they solve it in a complex way — from drawing, sketch to implementation.”

They don't stop there. Improving technologies and production is a constant work. This is the only way to stay



Wood carver of FanDOK Vladimir Kalinkin

development of a new range of products. In 2022 alone, more than Br1 million 700 thousand of investments were disbursed. This year, Slonimmebel plans to expand its product range, focusing on the development of new types of facade.

Most of Slonimmebel's products go outside the country. The share of ex-

the growth rate compared to the corresponding period last year is 115.4 percent. Last year we upgraded our fleet of vehicles and purchased new machines.”

Slonimmebel plans to increase production volumes. A new line is being installed, which will allow the company to expand its product range.





The village of Khomichi was burned twice, and in the first post-war years, people were blown up on mines



## Real genocide

There are numerous evidences about the atrocities of German executioners on the territory of Belarus during the Great Patriotic War: how they burned innocent peaceful people alive, shot, hunger in the camps. In the village of Khomichi, Bykhov District, all 182 houses were destroyed, about 200 people were exterminated. But even after the invaders left it, the war did not end for the surviving villagers, who returned to their native lands after wandering through the forests and swamps. They were crippled, died and blown up on mines. Retreating in 1944, the sedimentary invaders left them many deadly 'souvenirs': they mined not only approaches to the Khomichi, but also gardens, cellars and wells...

# Bloody aftermath of war

By Olga Kislyak

### They took revenge for contact with the partisans

Before the war, Khomichi was a large village: 972 residents. When it began, the region became a partisan zone. For the assistance of the villagers — to the people's avengers — the village was burned twice by the punishers: part of the huts were destroyed in February 1944, the rest in June of the same year.

Here's what Fedor Podolyan said about the atrocities of the invaders, who at that time commanded the partisan former, stationed and operating in the Bykhov District, "At the end of January 1944, I led the battle near the village of Yezva. The forces were unequal: there was a battalion of the 31st German Infantry Division against us, reinforced by artillery, tanks and mortars. I had to retreat. The Nazis occupied the village and burned it. The population managed to leave — towards the village of Khomichi. But not all civilians were saved. In January-February, the invaders found them, hiding in huts in the Toshchitsy forest, and shot. I personally saw the corpses of the dead — a man of 70-80."

Leonid Danilov from Khomichi was 17 years old in 1944. He also hid from punishers in the thimble with his mother and fellow villagers and was caught back then, "For three weeks I and five more fellow countrymen, dug trenches under the supervision of the Germans, and as they finished work, we were driven to Mogilev on foot, from there — by train — to Kobrin. I managed to escape. I joined units of the Red Army later, hit the front and was wounded twice. When I returned home, I did not recognise the village: it was completely burned, it was recovered from scratch. And although the time was already peaceful — the war continued: the mines left by the Nazis took the life of the villagers and the soldiers."

### Dangerous way home

A resident of Khomichi Sergei Parfenov, who lived in the occupied territory in the war, recalls, "When the front approached our village in February 1944, the locals rushed at the scatter. The Germans seized me and several more lads, sent to the Rogachev District. About 40 more of our old people, women, children were killed. When I returned to Khomichi in June, my beloved village, it just burned out... It was necessary to somehow settle down in the ashes, but we were scared. The Germans mined streets, sheds to the arson. As a result, many of ours were blown up by enemy shells. Only before my eyes — about 30 people."



Sergei Zhizhiyan: mines can still be found by sappers in our district

"Khomichi is the only village in Bykhov District, which the Germans mined during the retreat. Moreover, not only the village itself, but also the surrounding territory — 10–15 kilometres from all sides. A fellow countryman Ivan Nikiforov told me: during the Great Patriotic War, leaving the Khomichi, his grandmother buried simple belongings on the site near the hut. Returning after the release, she rushed to pull them out, and there was an explosion... She survived, but forever remained disabled — her leg was torn off," confirms the Director of the Bykhov District Museum of Local History Sergei Zhizhiyan.

### By minefields

Archival documents state: in 1944, 258 civilians were blown up in the Mogilev Region, of which 49 died, in 1945 there were already 490 victims (139 died). In Bykhov District, explosions continued until the beginning of the 1950s. On September 19th, 1947, when re-studying the plots in the Danujok forestry, a forester was injured at the village of Khomichi. In the same year, when working on a telegraph line, the master: the pillar was mined.

In the liberated territory, peaceful life was established with great difficulties. It was necessary to restore the destroyed, build a new one, plough and sow. And especially often, the explosions rattled in the fields.

On June 19th, 1947, a tractor was blown up on the Dzerzhinsky collective farm of the Bykhov District, its parts scattered 50 metres. The tractor drivers were seriously injured. On August 25th, 1947, with ploughing land on the collective farm Novaya Zhytsio [New Life in Belarusian], another tractor ran into the anti-tank mine: two villagers died.

"The war continued — already psychological. Locals understood: they could meet death at every step. Very often, horses were blown up on enemy shells. If we take into account that in the first post-war years the horse was the main draft power, then the loss of each of them became very noticeable for the peasants. The cows also stepped on mines. People were afraid to plant gardens, go to the forest in mushrooms and berries. And most importantly — they were afraid for the children. Those were crippled, died by negligence, a misfortune, stepping on mines, choosing explosives or trying to disassemble them. Demining

of the territory fought-miners, instructors, whom the Mogilev Regional Council of Osoaviakhim sent to special courses. But the main works fell on the shoulders of the military," Sergei Zhizhiyan specifies.

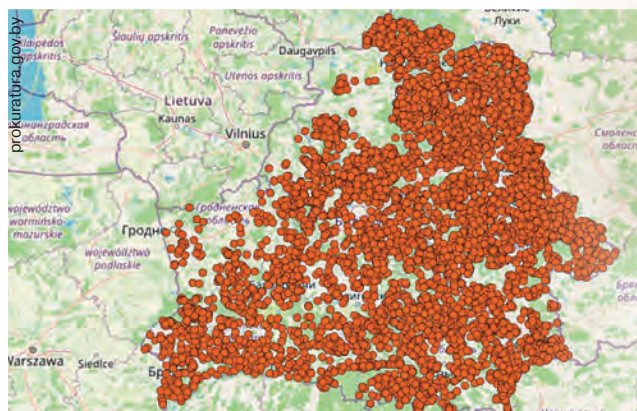
### The sapper errs only once

In the consolidated table on emergency incidents, during cleansing in the Mogilev Region for 1944-1945 there are names of the military who undermined during the neutralisation of German shells.

On July 21st, 1944, when cleansing the former advanced in the area of the village of Prybor of the Bykhov District, the minister of the commander of the 2nd platoon Mikhail Korovatsky hooked the anti-personnel fragmentation mine. Korovatsky was killed, three villagers, who were nearby, were injured: in the back and legs (one of them had to amputate). In August 1944, the fighter Konstantin Corze accidentally stepped on a mine near the village of Nikonovichi, when the trophy weapon was analysed. He died, and his comrade Yegor Baranovich, Dmitry Korovskoy was wounded in his stomach and both legs...

In 1946, the most distinguished by the clearance of fighters and instructors of the Regional Council of Osoaviakhim presented to government awards. Yaroslav Lashkevich from the Bykhov District — to the Order of the Red Star, his brother-the instructor-exterior Oleg Lashkevich — to the For Military Merit medal. Their colleagues D. Narovsky, S. Pugachev and A. Streltsov were awarded the Excellent Miner order. And it was all at that time for 18 years.

...There is a mass grave on the outskirts of the village of Khomichi. The ashes of 150 Red Army men rest in it. Nearby are several single mounds. There are also soldiers who died at different times. Among them is one member of a gapping team. In total, ten members of a gapping team were buried in the Bykhov District. This land became their front line: cleansing it of the 'surprises' of the war, the heroes saved human lives, sacrificing for this their own.



### MAPS OF BURNED VILLAGES

On the initiative of the Prosecutor General's Office and on the basis of information received during the investigation of the criminal case on the fact of the Genocide of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War and the post-war period, the National Cadastral Agency recently published a spatial layer containing information about the location of the burned settlements by the fascist occupiers and their accomplices during the war years. The filling of the indicated layers about the burned settlements continues.





# Maidan in Georgian

The new law on foreign agents provoked riots in Tbilisi

**The first days of March became a real test of strength for Georgia. The country is facing a serious political crisis. The reason for this is an attempt by stoolpigeons from the West, sitting across the ocean, to rock the country. The trigger for the start of protests by the pro-Western part of society was the draft law on foreign agents approved by the ruling Georgian Dream party and adopted by parliament in the first reading.**

By Anastasia Tselyuk

## What is behind the protests

On the evening of March 7th, a real Maidan broke out near the building of the Parliament of Georgia. Several thousand people gathered on Rustaveli Avenue in the centre of Tbilisi. Representatives of the so-called 'civil society' took to the streets of the city to express their dissatisfaction with the bill on foreign agents, which involves the creation of a register of NGOs and media receiving funding from abroad. The initiators of the document claim that the draft is a softened version of a similar American law. The opposition initially began to criticise the Georgian version proposed by the

parliamentarians, calling it pro-Russian. In response, the ruling party introduced another version of the bill — the American one, thus showing the opposition how tough it is. As a result of discussions by parliamentarians, the Georgian version was adopted in the first reading. True, the adoption of a softer version of the bill did not save the country from protests and a wave of criticism from the European Union.

After the law was adopted in the first reading, protests began in Tbilisi in the evening.

*The reason for the sudden rebellion lies not in the law on foreign agents. The unwillingness of the United States to lose its influence in Georgia was the stumbling block.*

The West is well aware that the loss of a serious lever of influence on the country's politics — local NGOs and public organisations that live at their expense, will lead to the departure of Western values imposed on Georgia. For example, Anti-Russian sentiment. Americans firmly believe that Georgia should hate Russia. The US authorities, who are pulling the Ukrainian authorities like puppets by the strings, really want Georgia to get involved in the conflict that has developed between Russia and Ukraine. Here

are just such desires so far remain only wet dreams of the State Department.

## 'Tops' of Georgian Protest

While the power structures were trying to calm down the dissatisfied, the main instigators of the Georgian Maidan raised their voices. The head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borrell, said that the bill is incompatible with the values of the EU and contradicts Georgia's goal of joining the union. In the United States, meanwhile, they noted that those responsible for the suppression of protests could fall under US sanctions. True, the most interesting was yet to come. The unrest in Georgia was supported by Armenian pro-Western NGOs, in particular Pashinyan's former adviser Arsen Kharatyan.

Meanwhile, the US State Department issued a statement saying that the law on foreign agents, which caused protests, was 'inspired by the Kremlin' and its adoption would harm Tbilisi's Euro-Atlantic ambitions.

*One is tempted to say in response to this: 'Well, these demons saw the hand of the Kremlin even here'. And also ask the West a question: is there anything in this world where the Russians and Putin are not to blame? It is a rhetorical*

*question to which Western countries are not yet ready to give a clear answer.*

A wave of spontaneous rallies led to skirmishes and clashes between demonstrators and the police. It was especially hot in Tbilisi on the night of March 8th-9th. Not without special effects in the form of protesters near the ranks of the special forces with calls to 'go over to the side of the people', demonstration performances with flowers, howling from the 'Stop violence!' series. The crowd tried to storm the Parliament, built barricades, set cars on fire, threw Molotov cocktails at the police. The security forces had no choice but to use water cannons and tear gas in response. On this occasion, the Western media and a number of telegram channels, as expected, raised a fuss about the use of force against peaceful protesters.

*Already familiar situation, isn't it? A kind of deja vu, only the August events in Belarus and the January events in Kazakhstan were replaced by Georgia. Among the Georgian flags were the flags of the EU, the USA and Ukraine, in the crowd there were drummers who set the general rhythm, and also the name of the action 'Women's March'. Everything is just like in 2020 in Minsk.*

Only late at night did the special forces manage to disperse the crowd, the most active participants in the action were detained. And President Salome Zourabichvili announced that she would veto the law on foreign agents, "I am with you because today you represent free Georgia. Georgia, which sees its future in Europe and will not give anyone the right to take away this future. This law must be abolished in any form."

The ruling party of Georgia decided to withdraw the bill from the Parliament. However, the opposition party Girchi — More Freedom, as well as representatives of a number of NGOs, announced that they would continue the protests, demanding the release of detainees and clarity on the procedure for withdrawing the bill. A little later, the Georgian Foreign Ministry announced the release of all the detained protesters.

*Unfortunately, the Georgian government does not realise that one has only to take one step towards the crowd, and the arrival of a puppet government is guaranteed.*



## Children at risk of poverty in EU

**One in four children in the EU is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which amounts to twenty million children under the age of eighteen without secure fundamental rights**

The current cost-of-living crisis is making the situation even worse, especially for low-income families relying on welfare benefits, said Eric Grosshaus, Advocacy Officer for Child Poverty and Social Inequality at Save the Children Germany. "The money they receive from the government is not sufficient for healthy nutrition and is putting children at risk of malnutrition and thus lifelong negative consequences for their health and development," he noted.

Choosing between heating and food

should not be a reality for these families, said S&D MEP Brando Benifei at the launch of Save the Children's report — *Guaranteeing Children's Future* — which has assessed the state of child poverty in the different member states.

The report shows that the poor living conditions of these children are reflected in their access to healthy food, (free) education, adequate housing, social services and health care (including mental health, the great forgotten area until the arrival of COVID-19).

## Harmful gas from the USA

**American shale gas, which flows through the Lithuanian gas terminal in Klaipeda to Estonia, causes serious environmental damage, according to a statement published on the website of the Estonian green movement, the Estonian socio-political daily newspaper *Postimees* reports**

As stated in the article, shale gas has a strong impact on the environment and the communities in which it is produced. It pollutes drinking water and produces large amounts of toxic substances, sometimes even radioactive ones. Shale gas is banned in many EU member states.

Millions of litres of water and about 150,000 litres of chemicals containing known carcinogens and toxins — such as lead, uranium, mercury, radium, methanol, hydrochloric acid, formaldehyde

— are used to extract gas from one field. During this process, a large amount of methane is released into the atmosphere, which harms the environment.

The Estonian green movement believes that fossil gas, regardless of its origin, is not the solution for Europe. "Just as tobacco companies are not encouraged to prepare health bills, oil and gas companies should not have a say in the development of legislation necessary to protect our climate," the green movement said in a statement.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



# Brain pandemic

## What was the result of the mindless total isolation of COVID-19?

The world is the most complex self-organised system. Its measured rhythm cannot be stopped by the wave of someone's hand without having catastrophic consequences. However, in 2020 they tried to implement it. And what was the result? The rise in unemployment in the world, the decline in the quality of school education, the increase in cases of domestic violence and the increase in deaths from drug overdose. This is only a small part of the consequences that the wholesale ill-conceived global isolation campaign has led to during COVID-19.

By Svetlana Isaenok

### Retrospective review

On January 30th, 2020, WHO designated COVID-19 as PHEIC, an emergency event that 'poses a risk to public health in other States as a result of the international spread of the disease and potentially requires a coordinated international response'. A month later, the world started talking about the beginning of a pandemic. One of the most common strategies to combat the coronavirus has become the almost complete isolation of people. A number of scientists have made statements that this is the only way the world can survive. Three years later, as the pandemic subsided, think tanks timidly and timidly began to issue statements about what had happened because of such policy decisions. We looked into the reports of international organisations to understand how our world has changed in the end.



### Interpersonal relationships

Months of isolation were often the last straw for already cracked families. The fact that the number of applications to New York family lawyers asking for help in processing a divorce increased by 50 percent during the first week of the New York 'pause' order, the American media wrote back in the first wave of COVID-19. Britain's largest family law firm reported a 95 percent increase in divorces during the pandemic on CNBC in January 2022. Divorce surge was also observed in China.

### Domestic violence

Quarantine measures and isolation have led not only to new problems, but also exacerbated those that existed before, the UN is confident. In particular, there has been an increase in cases of domestic violence, which, of course, primarily affects women and children. The problem of violence against women has become so widespread that the organisation has called it a shadow pandemic.



### Global education crisis

With the lockdown, schools and universities were also banned.

**147 million children missed more than half of in-person classes in 2021. As a result, the current generation of children could lose a total of \$17 trillion in their lifetime income.**

From March 2020 to February 2022, schools around the world were partially or completely closed for an average of 41 weeks. The longest — in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The loss of social, cognitive and emotional skills is another non-obvious consequence of not being able to learn for such a long time for a huge number of students.

### Drug pandemic

In an article published this year in the *Molecular Psychiatry* journal, researcher Gavin Barth claims that before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States was in the midst of an opioid epidemic, with overdose deaths rising from 70,000 to 100,000 annually as a result.

"Mass lockdown, economic uncertainty, reduced access to health care caused by the pandemic, likely combined with the opioid epidemic, contributed to the increase in deaths," the scientist claims.

### Consequences yet to be assessed

Over the past two years, almost all spheres of world life have plunged into chaos due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It reversed more than four years of progress towards eradicating poverty and pushed an additional 93 million people into extreme poverty in 2020. The pandemic has disrupted critical health services, causing, among other things, an increase in deaths from tuberculosis and malaria and a drop in immunisation coverage for the first time in a decade. Due to extended school closures, 24 million students, from preschool to university levels, are at risk of not returning to school. Would all these consequences have existed if the world community had not decided to suddenly put everything on pause?

**According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report released by the UN in August 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused 15 million deaths. At the same time, a reservation is made that the pandemic has become a direct or indirect cause of their death.**

On February 14th, 2023, an interactive web-based real-time COVID-19 deaths dashboard hosted by the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Systems Science and Engineering reported 6,855,584 deaths directly from the virus. Will the world community undertake to determine what killed the rest?

### Mental health

Back in February 2020, scientists were warning the world to be very careful with lockdowns.

A year ago, the WHO recognised that the global prevalence of anxiety and depression had increased by 25 percent. One of the main explanations for this increase was the unprecedented stress caused by social isolation because of the pandemic. Associated with this were restrictions on people's ability to work, seek support from loved ones, and participate in their communities. Loneliness, fear of infection, suffering and death of loved ones, grief after bereavement, and financial problems have also been cited as stressors leading to anxiety and depression.

"The information we have now about the impact of COVID-19 on the world's mental health is just the tip of the iceberg. This is a wake-up call to all countries to pay more attention to mental health and do a better job of supporting their populations' mental health," Director-General of WHO Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said a year ago.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres also spoke on this topic,

**"The magnitude of the impact on people's mental health is only now becoming clear. This could have serious consequences for many years to come."**



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

"Keeping people in stuffy apartments is not a good idea. We will kill them like that. Many problems are surfacing now that we should deal with instead of closing the border and keeping people indoors. This is why I don't understand those, who advise isolation, shutting down, and fencing off. It is necessary to work like we've always done with pinpoint precision."

During a meeting with Chairwoman of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus Natalya Kochanova on March 31st, 2020

### The rich got richer and the poor got poorer

Thoughtlessly introduced quarantines have literally put down entire sectors of the economy in some countries. The World Bank reported last year that in 2020 'economic activity contracted in 90 percent of countries, the global economy contracted by about 3 percent'. By January 2021, almost every country's economy was in recession.

**The International Monetary Fund has estimated that the pandemic as a whole will cost the global economy \$13.8 trillion by the end of 2024.**

As the 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report reveals, the steady progress in poverty reduction seen over the past 25 years has been reversed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**For the first time in the memory of a generation, the number of people living in extreme poverty has increased.**

### Healthcare

Due to the pandemic, as well as forced isolation, the ability of residents of various countries to receive treatment for other diseases has worsened. Throwing all its strength to cope with COVID-19, the world forgot that other diseases have not gone away.

"Measures taken by governments around the world, such as lockdowns and other restrictions, took a heavy toll, particularly on vulnerable communities... Many lost their livelihoods and were unable to access treatment for their disease or its after-effects," said WHO Goodwill Ambassador for the Elimination of Leprosy Yohei Sasakawa.

Furthermore, the death rate from tuberculosis in the world increased to 1.3 million for the first time since 2005.



# Let's meet spring in Belarus

Snowdrops have already bloomed in the southern regions, but the gentle breeze hints that it won't be long to wait for real heat

By Sofia Arsenyeva

## Tie ribbons to twigs

According to the ancient Belarusian tradition, one need to thoroughly trample the land, warm it up and wake it up in order for spring to come not only on the calendar, but also on the streets. It is best to do this at numerous folk festivals with round dances and fun games. For example, in Strochitsy, Vyazyinka or Dudutki.

Girls in folk costumes go out to the high hills and call spring with ritual songs, older housewives bake cookies in the form of larks, and children tie coloured ribbons on trees. In addition, they choose the Vesnyanka girl from all the ladies in the round dance, who is carried around the field on a harrow and thereby asks nature to be favourable to the future sowing season.



## Nest with storks

A blue-eyed country is the land under the white wings. The stork is considered one of the unofficial symbols of the country along with the bison and cornflower. Therefore, the locals always wait for the arrival of this bird with special trepidation. There are villages in the Brest Region where feathered families build nests literally on every power line pole. They even build special platforms for them.

By the way, the largest black stork population in the world lives on the territory of the Srednyaya Prip'yat nature reserve. This spectacular bird, unlike its white counterpart, nests away from people, so it's hard to find it.



## Enjoy the scents of flowers

The first flowers — galanthus and primrose — are blooming in the Brest flowerbeds. The daffodils are about to open their buds. Environmentalists believe that there is nothing surprising in this, given the mild weather in the Brest Region in February.

If you want to see the awakening nature in all its glory, you should visit Belovezhskaya Pushcha. The relic forest is especially good not only for flora, but also for fauna at this time of the year. Therefore, while walking or cycling, you can unexpectedly meet local fluffy inhabitants. On some routes, observation towers were equipped, from which a view of grazing bison, deer, wild boars, foxes, and cranes opens. In addition, the Pushcha houses a museum of nature and archaeological exhibitions.



## Organise a theatre marathon

Visit Mogilev for cultural impressions. The 16th International Youth Theatre Forum 'Mart.kontakt' will be held here from March 20th to March 27th. Performances will be presented by teams from Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Bulgaria. The festival playbill features timeless classics and modern dramaturgy. The main platform of the forum is the Mogilev Drama Theatre, which is celebrating its 135th anniversary this year.

The building impresses with the richness of the interiors: a two-ton chandelier with three hundred light bulbs, balconies with wooden carvings and the lower boxes. The governor's box has also been preserved, where Emperor Nicholas II of Russia and his family watched performances. Rachmaninoff and Chaliapin once performed on the stage of this drama theatre.



## Admire the flow of the rivers

When the wayward Prip'yat River overflows its banks, Polesie turns into a real sea: the end and edge of the water cannot be seen for many kilometres. And this is not a natural disaster, but an order established thousands of years ago. Even Herodotus wrote that supposedly there is a sea in these parts. The ancient Greek could not even imagine that we have such powerful rivers.

The Poleshukhs themselves have long learned to tame Prip'yat River — they build high bridges, and everyone has a boat in their house. Boat trips (from all-inclusive cruises to kayaking), birdwatching and, of course, fishing are offered four tourists in the spring. We recommend that the most desperate travellers take a tour to the unique village of Kudrichi, which is located in the very depths of the Polesian swamps. One can only get here by boat.





# This is how we excelled

The 2nd Winter Children of Asia International Sports Games were held in the Kemerovo Region from February 23rd to March 5th. Our athletes competed there for the first time, and the debut was successful: the guys won 11 awards — one gold, five silver and five bronze! After the athletes returned home, there was much to discuss, because the guys had accumulated a lot of emotions over the nine competitive days.



By Tatiana Litvinova

More than 850 athletes from 12 countries participated in the multisport forum. For most of them, Children of Asia was the first international competition in their lives. The level of organisation was spectacular: the tournament was held in four cities, the athletes lived in the Athletes' Village, and almost 400 journalists worked on the coverage of the struggle that unfolded on the ice, slopes and beyond! Even before the start, our guys had time to get acquainted with the region that hosted the competition — the organisers provided a tour of the significant places of Kuzbass, during



The first medallists of the Children of Asia Games — short track skaters Daniil Bychkov, Ksenia Lukashevich, Matvei Mager and Darya Stepanova

Daniil Bychkov won another individual bronze medal at a distance of 500 metres. Eva Bedritskaya won silver in ski jumping, and figure skater Vasily Borokhovskiy became bronze medalist in figure skating, only two single skaters from Russia were ahead. Our skiers Konstantin Kaspierovich and Victoriya Zhemkova won silver and bronze in friendship relays, a trio of skaters consisting of Fyodor Danilov, Roman Chernyavsky and Radomir Minin won bronze in the team race...

Let us particularly tell you about the representative of the speed skating team Polina Sivets. This girl became the flag bearer for the Belarusians at the opening ceremony of the competition, and after that brought her the only gold at the Children of Asia Games. Polina won silver in the first event — the 1500 metres race. But that was just a buildup before her signature distance — 3000 metres. On it, the Minsk resident performed simply brilliantly — 4 minutes 30.72 seconds and a new ice rink record! Later

without awards. Alas, in the team competition, the performance of the guys who got into the strongest group was not very successful. They lost to the teams of the Siberian and Ural Federal Districts at the preliminary stage, and to their peers from Kazakhstan — in the fight for the final fifth place. However, they were better in individual skill competitions: forward Matvei Shevtsov received the prize for the fastest lap.

Head of the delegation Vasily Yurchik thanked the organisers for the invitation after the end of the competition, “This is an invaluable experience for children who go in for sports, their first international tournament. Here the principle of struggle must be manifested until the end, until the last moment. Literally on the last day, the team’s ranking was replenished with two medals. The guys had a chance to win them, and they did not miss it. It is worth a lot when a child sees: any goal can be achieved. It is possible to show a high result, it is possible to take first place. Furthermore, it just takes a lot of work.”

At the closing ceremony, the participants of the 2nd Winter Children of Asia International Sports Games were greeted by the world dance champions 158 crew, the ballet of modern choreography Dance FM, the winner of the Voice show Dina Garipova and not only — the end of the competition turned out to be no less bright than the event itself. In addition, Director General of the Children of Asia Games International Committee Vladimir Maksimov noted, “These were the best winter games. But I think this is how it should be, we should develop. We see smiles in children, and this is the result of the joint work of many people. By the end of the competition, the athletes united and became one team, communicated and danced together. The competition was a success!”

However, Vladimir Maksimov met with the President of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Belarus Viktor Lukashenko during the games. Maksimov shared: the arrival of our team in Kuzbass aroused great interest among fans, ordinary Siberians, who treat Belarus very warmly. Viktor Lukashenko, in turn, noted, “Participation in the Children of Asia Games is a great experience and necessary practice for young Belarusian athletes. It is important for athletes at this age to perform at this level. If you see our teams in the Children of Asia projects in the future, we will gladly consider these proposals.”



Vasily Borokhovskiy coped with the excitement and took bronze

which it was possible to inspect the coal mine and see the main sights of Kemerovo. But there is no time to relax: as soon as the opening ceremony died down, the athletes concentrated on earning awards.

Short track skaters Darya Stepanova, Ksenia Lukashevich, Matvei Mager and Daniil Bychkov won silver in the mixed relay. The number of awards won grew every day. In short track, our men’s quartet became third in the relay, and



Polina Sivets did a great job as the captain: she won gold and two silvers

Polina confessed, “I thought about how to technically run the distance, spread out the forces. I am satisfied that we managed to show the same seconds as in Minsk, although our ice is faster.”

However, the competition did not end there for Polina: she won another silver in the mass start. As the coach of our skaters Ruslan Tobolich said after the competition, even before the start they set the task of winning at least four medals, and the guys did an excellent job!

Hockey players were not left

## ARENA

### ● Belarusian Dzinara Alimbekava-Smolenskaya won the overall standings of the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup

The final leg of the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup, which was attended by the strongest athletes from Belarus and Russia, ended at the Zhemchuzhina Sibiri winter sports centre in Tyumen.

Dzinara Alimbekava-Smolenskaya won the overall title of the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup among women. For 17 individual races in the tournament, our biathlete scored 1750 points, ahead of the second Russian Viktoriya Slivko by 70 points. Irina Kazakevich (1672) took the third position overall.

Russian Eduard Latypov became the



winner of the men’s standings of the Commonwealth Biathlon Cup.

### ● Belarusians became the best in the Basketball Friendship League 3x3

According to the results of the six legs held, the first place was taken by the national team of Belarus, for which Siarhei Vabishchevich, Jan Marynin, Maksim Karattsou and Kiryl Vaskautsou played in the final round in Smolensk. The silver medallists were the basketball players of Ostrovets, for which Vatslau Bugaeu, Kiril Volodkin, Roman Verabei and Aliaksandr Kudrautsau, who was recognised as the best defender of the final round of the competition, played. Bronze awards of the Friendship League went to the



athletes of the Russian team Baikal.

Soon Belarusians and Russians will start fighting for the awards of the United Continental League 3x3 in St. Petersburg.

### ● Belarusian women’s judo team wins international tournament in Iran

More than 500 athletes from 20 countries competed at the first International Nowruz Games for Women in Tehran, who competed for medals in 9 sports. The national team of Belarus led by Head Coach Maryna Slutskaya also took part in the judo tournament. As a result of the competition, our team, which included five girls, won gold medals. Kseniya Danilovich, Ulyana Minenkova, Yana Makretskaya, Anastasia



Semenova and Darya Kontsevaya became the champions of the games.

### ● FC Dinamo-BSUPC football players won the Belarusian Super Cup among women’s teams for the third time

In the duel for the first trophy of the new season, Yury Maleeu’s wards defeated FC Minsk in the penalty shootout — 4:2. At the end of the first half of the meeting, Anna Pilipenko brought the Dinamo forward, while Ksenia Kubichnaya equalised the score in stoppage time of the second half — 1:1. The goalkeeper of FC Dinamo-BSUPC Ekaterina Ulasevich became the hero of the penalty shootout, she parried two kicks from her opponents.

The next championship of Belarus among women’s teams starts on March 17th.





## Photo of the week

Unique tarpan-like wild horses live in the Naliborskaya Pushcha

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**On March 18th, 1633**, in the charter of King Vladislav IV Vasa, a printing house at the monastery of St. Peter and Paul in Minsk was first mentioned, which

was allowed to have it 'for printing books and perpetuating in them fit people, both spiritual and secular'.

**March 18th** is Day of Internal Troops in the Republic of Belarus. It is a professional holiday of the country's public order guards. On this day in 1918, a security escort team of 23 volunteers was created in Vitebsk. This date is considered the day of the formation of the internal troops of the Internal Affairs Ministry of Belarus.



was allowed to have it 'for printing books and perpetuating in them fit people, both spiritual and secular'.

**On March 18th, 1892**, the Stanley Cup, the prize for the best hockey team was established. This award is given annually to the winner of the National Hockey League playoff series. It is a silver vase almost 90 cm high with a massive cylindrical base. The prize got its name from Lord Stanley of

Preston, the Governor General of Canada, who came up with the idea to award the best hockey team in Canada with a special prize.

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**On March 18th, 1965**, the first spacewalk in history was performed by Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov from the Voskhod 2 spacecraft. This mission was

an important milestone in the Soviet lunar programme. Cosmonaut Alexei Leonov was outside the Voskhod 2 for about 12 minutes. Based on the results of the first spacewalk, a conclusion was made about the possibility of a person to perform various work in outer space.

**On March 19th, 1913**, Alexander Pokryshkin was born (1913-1985), a Soviet military leader, air marshal, famous ace of fighter aviation during the Great Patriotic War. The first three times Hero of the Soviet Union. During the war years, he made over 600 sorties and personally shot down 59 enemy aircraft in 156 air battles.



**On March 20th, 2003**, the United States and its allies started Operation Iraqi Freedom, subjecting Baghdad and other cities of the country to massive bombing and shelling. The war led to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the creation of a new military-political situation in the Middle East.



**March 20th** is International Day of Happiness. It was proclaimed in 2012 by a UN resolution to recognise the importance

of happiness in the life of every person. The holiday is intended to show that happiness is one of the main goals of mankind and calls on all countries to direct efforts to improve the well-being of every person.

**March 20th** is Signals Intelligence Service Day in the Republic of Belarus. Signals intelligence is the unique intelligence collection method.



Humanity has not yet come up with a more effective and at the same time safe means of reconnaissance. The Belarusian electronic intelligence is the legitimate heir to the glorious military traditions of Soviet military intelligence.



**On March 22nd, 1874**, a game of tennis was held on the grounds of a cricket and baseball club on Staten Island (New York, USA)

for the first time. There are many references to the ball game among the ancient Romans and Greeks. But still it is generally accepted that tennis originated in France. However, some tennis terms originated there.



**On March 22nd, 1943**, fascist punishers burned the Belarusian village of Khatyn and its inhabitants. 149 people died, including 75 children. Only five children and one adult,

Iosif Kaminsky, survived. The terrible fate of destruction, together with Khatyn, was shared by 9200 out of 100,000 villages and localities of Belarus. Some of them, burnt together with people, like Khatyn, were not revived after the war. In 1969, a memorial complex was erected on the site of the village in memory of the victims of fascism in Belarus.

**On March 22nd, 1933**, the first concentration camp in Nazi Germany began operating in Dachau. It was the first 'experimental ground' in which a system of punishments and other forms of physical and psychological abuse of prisoners was worked out. Until the outbreak of World War II, political opponents of the Nazi regime were kept in Dachau. But already during the World War II, Dachau gained ominous fame as one of the most terrible concentration camps. The prisoners of the camp were 250,000 people, of which 70,000 were tortured and killed. A memorial complex was opened on the territory of the camp.

