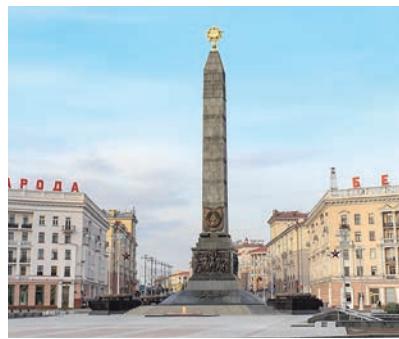




New products were developed by residents of the Hi-Tech Park for the domestic market



The capital repair of the Pobedy Square in Minsk is almost complete



INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

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Introducing Darya Matrosova as the FEP European Professional Photographer of the Year 2020!

Darya Matrosova, from Vitebsk, has won a prestigious contest among professional photographers from the Federation of European Photographers to become the first female photographer awarded the title and the first winner in Eastern Europe. The photographer sent work from her *Accents and Forms* series to the artistic event which brought her victory in the Illustrative / Digital art category. The jury then named the Belarusian the absolute winner. The awards ceremony was planned to be held in the Italian capital but, due to the pandemic, it was hosted online. The Vitebsk photographer will receive her main award — the ‘Golden Camera’ — at a later date.



Anton Stepanishchev



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We can do more jointly

The President calls on the EAEU member states to unite in the face of the pandemic



Act jointly and decisively

“We have treated the problem involving the pandemic which was declared by the WHO very seriously. Every country is working out its own resolutions and forms of response. But together we can do more,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President suggested discussing the topics of ensuring stability and accord in society, preventing attempts to tear up the foundations of the EAEU because of the striving for, first of all, self-protection.

“If we do not join efforts, we will have to restore destroyed economic ties tomorrow, and it will take us a lot of money, time and energy,” he believes.

Mr. Lukashenko called for resolute joint actions, urged to consider not only the current developments but also future prospects, asked them to think about the formation of the regional ‘security belt’ by speeding up the establishment of import substitution enterprises and localising industries of critical importance on the territory of the Union.

“I am absolutely convinced about one thing: it will be easier for us to survive this global crisis together. There are no other options. The logic of any union and any relations relies on togetherness. It will be even better if all our actions are deprived of national egoism, if all our decisions are harmonised with a joint vector,” he said.

“I would like to assure you that all necessary measures are being taken in the Republic of Belarus to prevent the spread of infections. They fully comply with the requirements and norms of the World Health Organisation.”

Within limits of reasonable sufficiency

Aleksandr Lukashenko outlined the most burning issues in the EAEU during the pandemic. He firstly emphasised the importance of preserving transit flows, speaking about the measures taken in Belarus in this respect.

“You all know that we have retained transit via Belarus in the interests of the EAEU. We check all arrivals on the border with the European Union. These are mostly trucks. We check drivers and do it very rigorously. We have earmarked three corridors for heavyweight trucks that transport goods via Belarus. The bulk of the cargo they carry is meant for your states. We

At the initiative of the Chairman of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC), Belarus’ President Aleksandr Lukashenko, a working meeting of the SEEC members was held last week — in video conference format. Among the key topics on the agenda were the issues that are very relevant for all parties: preventing the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection and ensuring economic stability in the EAEU. The meeting was also attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov.

have designated the rest areas for these truck drivers and established tough controls. In other words, there are no obstacles at all. More than that, there has not been a single incidence of rejecting arrivals from your states and any other states if these people comply with the rules established by Belarus,” he said.



The President added, “I believe we should act within the limits of reasonable sufficiency. I think that some transportation corridors between the states should remain in place and not only in Belarus. It would be good to establish such a corridor via Russia to Kazakhstan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and so on.”

In his words, there are proposals to designate the routes and the rest areas where drivers can have a rest and refuel. In these areas enhanced preventive measures should be in place, as was done in Belarus. “These channels will be available to our nationals who return home. Belarus is acting responsibly. We are not closing the border and we do as much as we can to help our people come back home,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

Not to ruin the economy

The President also reminded people of the common rules to regulate external trade. “Exemptions are possible in exceptional cases. However, in general we need to keep reconciling our decisions,” he said, adding that this primarily pertains to meeting domestic needs in products that are currently in high demand or some critical products. First of all, these are medical supplies, including medicines, equipment and protective gear.

“Taking into consideration that the whole world is now seeking to bulk up their medical supplies, it would be a very lucrative business to sell such products to third countries. However, one of the goals of the union is to improve the living standards and the quality of life of our citi-

zens. Therefore, even if we want to send humanitarian aid to third countries, I would suggest putting the needs of the EAEU market first. The same pertains to other types of assistance for our nationals,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

He believes that, in the current situation, the risk of disruptions in the manufacturing sector

— the foundation of any economy — and manufacturing ties has never been so high. “We’ve spent more than six years building these ties and work is still in progress. We can put everything we have achieved at risk even unconsciously by using popular infection containment measures. How will we restore our capacities and technological chains when the pandemic is over?” the Belarusian President said. With this in mind, we should in no way move along the path which will lead to the destruction of the economy.

With this in view, efficient measures are needed to ensure real strengthening of industrial co-operation. “If we use raw materials from each other in manu-



facturing, this should be mutually taken into account while subsidising the final product. Thus, it is of paramount importance that governments should incorporate regulations about manufacturing subsidies into national legislations,” the President stated.

This decision will help resolve the following problem which is evident to all. “The majority of international experts share a view that the world will

face food shortages after the pandemic. Large-scale quarantine measures around the world disrupted production cycles in agriculture. The increased demand for foodstuffs has made it clear that this issue should be addressed at the highest level. By taking timely decisions, we will be able to produce enough food,” said the Head of State.

He stressed it’s important to support the most affected sectors. “We cannot disregard general macroeconomic measures. At the same time, we need to come up with universal and flexible instruments to support the sectors that were affected the worst by the

decrease in economic activity,” the President emphasised.

In his view, to this end it is necessary to promptly adjust the operation of the Eurasian Fund for Stabilisation and Development and the Eurasian Development Bank to meet current economic needs.

Energy process

There are unresolved problems in the sphere of energy industry and prices for energy resources. The President remarked that since the member states have yet to create common energy markets in the Eurasian Economic Union, it is necessary to come to an agreement on how to proceed in the current situation.

“Primarily with regard to prices for and payments for natural gas. It is obvious that due to the drastic change of the economic situation the price should be more adaptive while the mechanism of payments should be affordable for consumers,” Mr. Lukashenko said.

He addressed the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, with a request to promptly consider the matter.

Joint statement

At the end of the working meeting, the leaders of the EAEU countries made a joint statement. Against the backdrop of the spread of the coronavirus, they called on all states to stop armed conflicts, trade wars and economic sanctions. The coronavirus pandemic in the world makes it difficult to trade, causes volatility in global commodity and financial markets, and creates risks of disintegration for economies, noted the participants of the online summit.

Against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, the EAEU states are ready to work together. “We confirm our readiness to continue working together to eliminate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintain the achieved level of integration co-operation and further economic development of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union, ensure social and macroeconomic stability in our countries and maintain business and investment activity”, reads the common statement.

The EAEU presidents aim to continue assisting each other, strengthening health systems, conducting joint research in the development of means for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infections and improving interaction algorithms in responding to epidemics.

The governments, central banks of the EAEU and the EEC have been instructed to co-ordinate measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, strengthen economic co-operation, maintain the stability of domestic markets, including food markets and support citizens and businesses to overcome the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We firmly believe that the advantages of integration will help our countries and peoples to cope with this test with dignity,” the leaders of the EAEU countries stressed.

The video conference was a kind of reconciliation of hours on the eve of the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council scheduled for May 19th, in Minsk. The topic of the recent conversation will continue there — though in the context of the development strategy for Eurasian integration until 2025.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Preserving the workforce

The Head of State finished his working trip to the Lida District of the Grodno Region. He visited a large business — Neman Glassworks — where he learnt about the organisation of glass wool production and technological processes for crystal production while also examining an exhibition of manufactured products. Aleksandr Lukashenko was also informed about the reconstruction of an important object: the M6 Minsk-Grodno-border of the Republic of Poland (Bruzgi) highway.

Need to develop

The format of the President's field trips this year involves discussion with a wide circle of leaders on topical issues. Before turning to the problems of the glassworks, the Head of State touched upon the situation with the coronavirus and the sowing campaign.

He then moved from the local to the global. Many industries and businesses expect the state to offer its support in this difficult time. Aleksandr Lukashenko said that, in the near future, he plans to discuss economic measures to support enterprises. The principal decision of the President is that resources from the Republican budget will be allocated to the regions and distributed by the governors directly on the spot.

"The most important thing now, pay attention to this, is to survive this, as I say, psychosis and preserve the workforce, no matter what the cost," stressed the Head of State.

Another important point is that only those who do something themselves will receive support rather than idly waiting for financial assistance. The President warns that there will be no charity; state support should be sent primarily to large enterprises. He praised those who have managed to maintain production and even increase volumes and sales, and once again recalled the importance of preserving jobs.

"People should understand that we must survive these difficult times (this is our misfortune, not our fault). People should understand that they themselves must act," emphasised the Head of State.

Despite everything that happens today in the world, it is necessary to deal with the economy. This is not the first time the President has underlined how important it's to understand what will happen after the pandemic, "Therefore, I've made a decision not to close the country and not stop production. Because it's easy to stop, even if you can start again quickly, because then there may be nowhere to go with these products. The markets will be occupied by others — those richer and who are faster to power up. Watch the economy so that our production does not collapse."

As far as the work of the Neman Glassworks is concerned, Aleksandr Lukashenko praised those who work here and stated the correctness of the decision made to support and preserve the enterprise. Thanks to help from the state, the lines were updated at the plant, and the production of import-substituting products was organised. Despite this, the manufacturer is still working with losses and accumulating debts. During communication with the workforce, Aleksandr Lukashenko promised support for the company and announced the expansion of production. The President, in particular, noted that the company organised the manufacture of glass wool, for which there is huge demand on the market since it's an import-substituting product, "Therefore, I decided to build another workshop here," noted the Head of State. "We will find the money for this. But most importantly, the products that you will produce are needed not only in the domestic, but also in the foreign market."

Roads and bridges

The development of road infrastructure is another topic that has received close attention. For example, Aleksandr Lukashenko assessed the results of the reconstruction of the M6 Minsk-Grodno-border of the Republic of Poland

(Bruzgi) highway by flying over it by helicopter. The Head of State was told that a 154km section was reconstructed in 2.5 years without interruption to traffic. The cost of construction totalled \$219m, and the work will continue.

The Minister of Transport and Communications, Aleksei Avramenko, also spoke about promising road projects. In particular, this year, it is planned to begin a large-scale modernisation of the M7 highway towards Vilnius, the construction of a bridge over



the Zapadny Bug River in Domachevo (on an equal footing with Poland), and the reconstruction of 12 priority bridges.

A ray of hope

The conversation turned to the main topic of recent months: the spread of coronavirus infection COVID-19. The President noted that in the country the situation is being handled, "Today, a small ray of hope appeared in Minsk. We have more beds available than we hospitalised people. The most important thing is not to allow a surge."

The Grodno Region, which against the background of other regions looks best of all, received separate praise in this regard, but Aleksandr Lukashenko warns

that there's no cause to relax. COVID-19, according to the President, was expected to turn into politics. Complaints are being made every now and again, including abroad, that in Belarus we aren't fighting coronavirus like everyone else.

"In order to follow the Belarusian path, it's necessary to have a system. And this was completely destroyed in the post-Soviet republics, except for us. Infectious hospitals were destroyed, specialists left, nobody trained microbiologists, virologists, epidemiologists. Now they're reaping the benefits and throw stones at us," asserted the President.

However, there is some good news. The country has begun to independently produce tests to detect coronavirus and they are turning out to be more accurate compared to some foreign analogues.

Mr. Lukashenko emphasised that countering the spread of the disease must be consistent, "It's a very difficult and costly job to focus the fight. Not isolating people, not writing out permits, when Moscow was completely locked down. We did not follow."

The Head of State drew attention to the support of doctors, "The main thing is to protect doctors and provide them with protection, starting from the mask and ending with glasses and a respirator — all that is needed. There are no problems with this, or with doctors for treating patients."

Mr. Lukashenko reminded that he signed the decree 'On Material Encouragement of Healthcare Workers'. The document envisages the establishment of a significant additional monthly allowance for work in conditions associated with infectious diseases.

Finally, the President asked people to be calm and not to worry, "Life will continue its path. When all this is over, we'll discuss the issues arising. I have a lot to say on the matter."

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Visa is cheaper, while openness is priceless



By Nina Romanova

On April 2nd, the documents were passed by the House of Representatives and approved by the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus. Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Kravchenko presented the visa facilitation agreement in the Oval Hall. He noted that the agreement 'seeks to ease the visa issuance procedure as much as possible'.

The main provisions of the agreement include reducing the cost of a Schengen visa for

Belarusians to 35 Euros. Many groups of citizens will be able to apply for visas without paying the fee depending on the purpose of the visit and will be able to get multiple-entry visas with longer periods of validity using a simplified procedure.

The cost of Belarusian visas for European Union citizens will also drop to 35 Euros. Apart from that, the list of justifications for issuing free visas for non-commercial purposes will be expanded. The duration of stay for foreigners in Belarus will be doubled from 90 days per year to 180 days.

Once the readmission agreement comes into force, Belarus and the European Union will have to readmit their own citizens, third-country citizens and

stateless persons who do not meet or no longer meet the requirements to legally stay in each other's territory. The visa facilitation agreement is expected to come into effect in June 2020.

The Chairman of the Standing Commission on International Affairs of the House of Representatives, Andrei Savinykh, has commented on the fact in his talk to *SB. Belarus Segodnya*. He said, "Actually, it's a clear step aimed at greater openness to society and people. This is what we wanted. There was a certain political inhibition on the part of some EU countries that politicised the process. In the end, we've done this — not for the authorities or the European elites, but for the people. Moreover, we have opened up at the level of

society much more than the European Union has opened up to us. We've introduced visa-free entry through the National Airport of Minsk and now we are considering the possibility of the same entry through other airports of the country, as well as through automobile checkpoints."

Our citizens and international diplomats reacted to the news as a natural outcome. "What's so surprising about that? Belarusians are calm, peaceful people. We are well perceived by Europeans, and we are Europeans ourselves. Many cultural and historical processes in Belarus did not follow but were progressing in parallel with the European states. It is enough to recall the Magdeburg Right or the Calvinist gathering in Zaslavl where Belarusian educa-

tor Symon Budny — comparable to Jean Calvin in Europe — published his books," says a famous international journalist and experienced diplomat, Mikhail Botyan. The lecturer at the Belarusian State University's Department of International Relations continues, "Belarus has established itself as an independent state now and the international treaties and agreements prepared and concluded by diplomats on behalf of the President are viewed as the key attributes of this independence. It is no accident that our diplomacy is aimed at promoting economic interests as a guarantee of stability and sustainability of the state."

We are a good example of a mutual desire for openness. It would be wise if this trend continues.



Agriculture as a sphere of co-operation

The Belarusian Agriculture and Food Ministry and the Belt and Road Working Committee of the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises have signed a memorandum of intent on five-year strategic co-operation

By Olga Korneeva

“We are ready to co-operate with your association and maintain trade relations with China. We want to promote mutually beneficial liaisons between our countries and strengthen direct contacts between our business communities,” Belarus’ Deputy Agriculture and Food Minister, Igor Brylo, stated.

The memorandum of intent deals with the export of Belarus-made agricultural products (including poultry meat, flax and dairy products) and food, as well as high quality raw materials for Chinese traditional medicine. The document also seeks to promote investments. China will help establish a platform to facilitate exports

of Belarusian products to China and the sale of these products in China’s biggest cities. This platform will also be used to find business partners in China and to set up a centre to assist SMEs in Belarus. The working committee will be authorised to work with the Chinese Government and businesses to promote co-operation with Belarus. There are plans to launch joint ventures in the two countries.

“We believe this memorandum will give a boost to our trade with small and medium enterprises in China. The working committee includes companies that manufacture and process dairy and meat products as well as flax fibre that we would also like to ship to China,” said Aleksei Bogdanov, the Head of the Central Office

for Foreign Economic Activities of the Belarusian Agriculture and Food Ministry.

In January-February 2020, exports of Belarus’ agricultural products to China nearly doubled over the same period of

2019 — to reach \$18m. “Chinese consumers liked our poultry and beef. Almost all our dairy companies, meat and poultry producers are able to export to China,” Mr. Bogdanov added.



First stage of commissioning works completed

The first power unit of the Belarusian nuclear power plant has successfully completed one of the most important and the most ambitious phase of the nuclear facility’s preparation for commissioning: a hot run of the reactor — as reported by the Communications Department of Rosatom (ASE) Engineering Division



The hot run started last December and, since then, over 240 different tests have been conducted — aimed at confirming that the systems and equipment of the nuclear ‘island’ comply with the design characteristics when operating at nominal parameters, as well as when the reactor unit is heated and cooled down.

During hot testing, the operation of all four main circulation pumps and steam blowdown have been checked against operating parameters. Operability of the control systems, protection of the reactor facility and electric supply of their own needs have also been inspected. Tests of the main safety valves of steam generators, pressure compensator and many other operations were performed.

“We have successfully completed the hot run stage, performed

all the necessary tests on the nominal parameters of the reactor plant, as well as during its heating and cooling down. The tests demonstrate that all the equipment and technological systems of the power unit — involved in the test programme — meet the design characteristics,” Vitaly Polyanin, JSC ASE EC Vice-President — Director for the Belarus NPP construction project, said.

A repeat of the test series is provided at the power start-up stage of the unit. The next stage of the preparation plan of the unit for launch envisages the revision of the main and auxiliary equipment of the first and second contours of the energy block; it is scheduled to be completed in mid-June.

Based on materials of belta.by

Range of forest equipment expanding

Timber semi-trailers with a load capacity from 6 to 16 tonnes to be produced at Amkodor-DOMZ jointly with the general designer’s office of Amkodor — Holding Managing Company JSC

By Natalia Yemelyanova

Amkodor Holding is among the leading manufacturers of special equipment in Belarus and the CIS, specialising in production of lifting equipment for all industries and forestry. It serially produces the special 10 tonne timber semi-trailer ‘Amkodor-2310’ for collecting, loading and transportation along logging areas and roads.

A prototype of the semi-trailer was tested not only at the holding’s specialised sites but also in real conditions at the Orsha and Smorgon experimental forestry enterprises. During the tests, the designers took into account consumer feedback and improved the model. The final version of the ‘Amkodor-2310’ vehicle was purchased by the Orsha forestry.

According to the reviews, the semi-trailer has proven to be reliable and easy to maintain. Among its advantages are good manoeuvrability, cross-country ability and stability.

“We are satisfied with the positive feedback from the Orsha loggers. This

means that we have managed to create a successful model, for which enterprises of the timber industry have a constant need,” said the Amkodor-DOMZ Unitary Enterprise’s Director, Vladimir Turovets. “Another competitive advantage of our semi-trailer is that, despite using quite expensive manipulators supplied by the leading world manufacturers, the price of the final product is still lower than that of imported analogues. Since the semi-trailer is domestically produced, payment by instalments on agreed terms is offered. The mechanism of financial instalment (leasing) can be applied.”

Last year, a certificate of compliance with the technical regulations of the Customs Union ‘On the safety of agricultural and forestry tractors and trailers’ was issued for the ‘Amkodor-2310’, making possible to sell these semi-trailers to Russia and other Customs Union member states.

To date, over two dozen models and modifications of harvesters, forwarders, forest loaders and skidders have been produced. The range of forest equipment is being improved and expanded every year.





Money from sand

Reserves of quartz sand in the country make it possible to switch from PET packaging to glass containers

By Sergey Grudnitsky

Our stocks of quartz sand contribute to the transition to glass containers — as announced by the Head of the Department of Natural Resources at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Vasily Kolba, who stated that, last year, an increase in the reserves of sand suitable for the glass industry was registered

“The issue of switching from PET packaging to glass containers is quite acute now. Last year, we received an increase in our reserves of more than five million tonnes of quartz sand. Subsequently, this will facilitate the transition to glass containers. Also, the reserves of quartz sand, which now amount to 60m tonnes, will create reserves for the production of our own raw materials — enabling us to cut imports of quartz glass from neighbouring countries, primarily Russia and Ukraine,” the specialist said.

Vasily Kolba also gave information on reserves of basalt. This year, it is planned to identify at least 10m tonnes

of this natural resource in the country. For the first time in our country, a basalt deposit was discovered in the Pinsk District in 2017. Work dealing with the study of this mineral has reached the final stage by now.

“Basalt has good heat and sound insulation properties, resistance to corrosion and chemical influences,” said Galina Kachanko, the Deputy General Director for Geology at the Scientific-Practical Centre for Geology. “This mineral does not require additional additives: the rock itself is melted down, from which we can get a great deal — for example, threads and various composite materials.”

According to the expert, the professional opinion is that, in the near future, basalt deposits will be more promising than gold deposits.

Moreover, last year, new oil reserves increased by 1.7m tonnes. According to Vasily Kolba, the peat industry is developing well: new production facilities are being created and new technologies and products being developed. About 60-70 percent of the products made from top peat are exported, including to the EU.

Intercontinental direction in deliveries

By Igor Svetlov

Since early 2020, BELAZ JSC has significantly diversified its export supplies by increasing the share of non-CIS countries in the total volume of shipments, as well as developing new segments of the mining equipment market. The share of non-CIS countries in BELAZ exports reached 40 percent in the first quarter of the year.

According to the Q1 results, BELAZ products were delivered to 19 countries, of which 12 were foreign countries. 13.2 percent were sold to the domestic market and 86.8 percent were exported. At the same time, 35.4 percent went to Russia and 11.4 percent to the CIS (Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine).

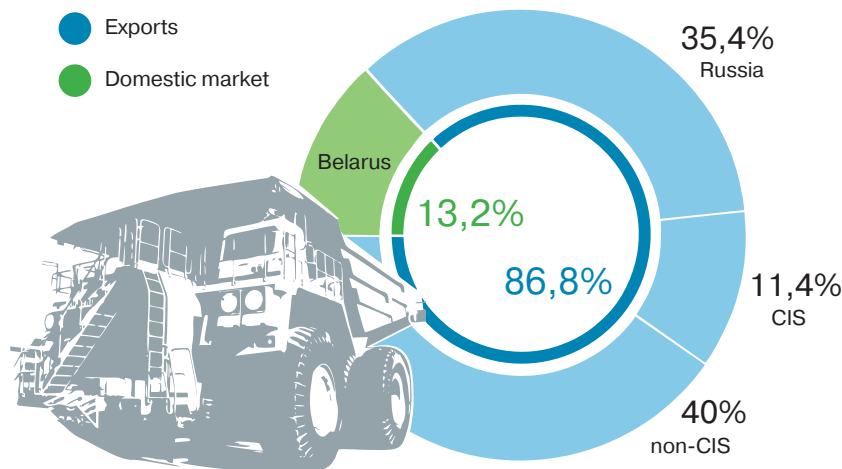
The share of non-CIS countries in the shipments for the first three months of 2020 was 40 percent (28.3 percent more against the first quarter of 2019). In comparison with annual values, this indicator is the highest in the entire history of the enterprise. “The average monthly shipment to foreign countries in 2020 is also the largest in the company’s history. If we compare with the average monthly figures in the record for

the company in 2011, 2012 and 2018, the growth totalled \$0.3m, \$1.9m and \$4.9m, respectively,” the press service of the enterprise notes.

Shipments to non-CIS countries have increased 1.4 fold since the beginning of 2020 compared to the same period last year. The geography of deliveries includes Bulgaria (130 tonne dump trucks), Bosnia and Herzegovina (45 tonne trucks), India (dump trucks with a capacity of 136 tonnes), Mongolia (special equipment: bulldozer and irrigation machines, 130 tonne dump trucks), Poland (dump trucks with a capacity of 30-45 tonnes with an internal combustion engine), Algeria (BELAZ-78221 front loaders).

BELAZ follows the trends of the global market and carefully considers strategy to promote its products and find new customers. “Each region has its own peculiarities. For a specific consumer, a variant of interaction is being developed which provides for the selection of reliable partners who have not only stable connections in the extractive industry of this country, but also appropriate qualified personnel who can ensure the effective operation and service support of equipment,” the press service of the enterprise adds.

Geography of BELAZ equipment deliveries the first quarter of 2020



In Q1 2020, more than 35 percent of BELAZ total deliveries headed for Russian Federation

NEWS IN BRIEF

Photojournalist Tatiana Tkacheva wins World Press Photo Award

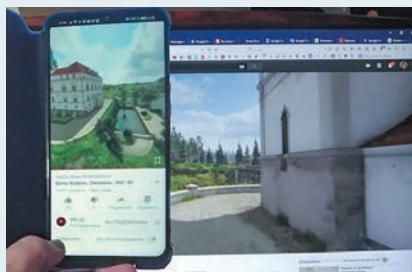


Tatiana Tkacheva, a photojournalist for *Zvyazda* newspaper, has become a finalist at the 63rd World Press Photo Award — the largest and most prestigious annual event in the field of photojournalism. Her works were presented in the ‘Portraits’ category. For many years, Tatiana has been developing the idea of her *Between the Law and Shame* project — searching for heroes, writing texts, taking photos. The project is devoted to women who have had an abortion.

This year, an independent jury named 44 winners among more than 4,000 participants from 125 countries. A total of 74,000 photos were submitted for WPP-2020.

Unique Belarusian *Bely Kovel*: Return panoramic film premiered on the Internet

Bely Kovel has become the third castle in Belarus to be revived as a virtual model. The images in the film are so real that they create the full effect of being present. *Bely Kovel* is located 10km from the



Minsk-Moscow highway, which means it can become an interesting site for many thousands of tourists. Thanks to the efforts of artist Artem Belobrovik and scientific consultant Andrey Shulaev, visitors to the National Historical Museum can enjoy the beauty of the Golshany and Krevo castles in virtual reality glasses for the second year, also measuring using the sundial, inspecting the towers and loopholes and contemplating the magical geometry of the English Park from the bell tower of the Cathedral.

OpenAir Cinema launched in Gomel

It’s possible to watch movies in the new format on a 10x4m high-resolution LED screen which does not lose its image quality even in the daytime, in clear sunny weather. The sound is broadcast on a specific FM frequency, which can be tuned to the car radio. Against the present epidemiological conditions, such movie shows are safe: people can choose their company for viewing on their own.

On April 24th, the Oscar-winning



Parasites film will be shown at the open-air cinema. On April 25th, *The Green Book* will be screened — followed by *The Marathon of Wishes* (April 26th) and *The Art of Deception* (April 27th).

How a squirrel and a fox became friends: a kind story from the Grodno zoo

The Grodno zoo has two new inhabitants now: a small fox discovered near a farm and a squirrel saved from crows in Rumlevsky Park. “They initially lived separately, but our employees decided to put them together so that the animals would not be bored. It’s also easier to take care of them that way. The ‘babies’ treat each other well: they don’t quarrel, sleep side by side and feel good together,” the zoo staff say. It’s important to feed the animals every three hours. Videos about the friendship of the two animals can be viewed on the zoo’s YouTube channel.

Grodno zoo is the first, largest and for a long time the only zoo in Belarus with more than 3,000 animals of 317 species.



New products developed by residents of the Hi-Tech Park for the domestic market

By Vladislav Sychevich



The tests will show

Many companies worldwide are now actively engaged in the development of test systems for the detection of coronavirus. The HTP resident-company — ArtBioTech — has not been in the background but has developed its own kits to test the virus.

The company specialises in the manufacture of kits and reagents for molecular diagnostics. In early April, it received a one-off permit from the Healthcare Ministry to sell unregistered test systems and reagents. Director Aleksandr Rymko tells us, “The developed test system is based on the method of PCR diagnostics and differs from its analogues in that it has a single stage. A reversal is ensured and the reaction occurs directly in one tube. The system is highly sensitive. These PCR test kits are based on genomic sequencing data from WHO and the centres for disease control and prevention. The main advantage is the speed of research; moreover, the systems themselves are manufactured at the lowest cost. The assembly localisation accounts for 95 percent.”

The test kits for PCR diagnostics of

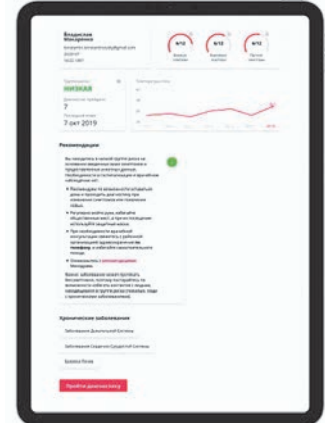
Digit in our favour

Unique developments and applications on the top list of those downloaded around the world have their roots in Belarus. Our IT sector is actively integrating into the global economy and occupying a highly competitive niche. Owing to the HTP, Belarus is significantly ahead of Russia, the United States, China, India, Japan, South Korea and many other technological countries in terms of exports of computer services per capita. Meanwhile, the contribution of the Park’s residents to GDP is equal to industry, construction and agriculture combined. Moreover, its companies are actively working in the interests of Belarusian enterprises. We’ve decided to study the most relevant products that HTP residents produce for the domestic market.

Diagnostics from afar

An online service for monitoring symptoms and determining the probability of infection with COVID-19 coronavirus has been launched in Belarus

It’s now possible to take a diagnostic survey on the site by answering questions about body temperature and well-being. Based on the results, the probability of infection with the coronavirus will be indicated and recom-



Узнайте вероятность* заражения COVID-19

Фиксируйте свои симптомы и их изменение. Получите рекомендации, как вести себя при высокой вероятности заражения. Диагностика займет всего пару минут.

- Помогите снизить нагрузку на систему здравоохранения.
- Внесите вклад в снижение прироста случаев заражения COVID-19.

Пройти диагностику

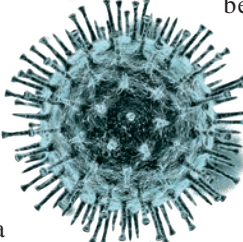
Ранние результаты

functionality of one of our ready-made developments to convert it into a service for tracking symptoms.”

The project has two goals: to provide a tool for

coronavirus consist of five test tubes. A specialist mixes their components, adds a sample taken from the patient and sends it all to the detection indicator. Then the device reads the signal and displays the graph on the monitor. If the line is green, it means that the presence of the virus is confirmed; if it is blue, it is not detected.

“We sent our test systems for pre-clinical testing and obtained rather good results. Only after receiving them did we sign contracts for delivery. On April 3rd, a permit was issued from the Belarusian Society of Laboratory Medicine for 5,000 tests,” adds Mr. Rymko. “We also have a contract with Belmedtehnika for the shipment of 60,000 test systems. As for our capacities, we are able to produce 50,000 samples daily.”



mendations for further steps will be given. A control panel is also available, where anyone can graphically track their symptoms, get recommendations and take a daily survey.

Nikita Kaeshko, a co-founder of the ‘Sens MD’ project, explains, “According to the experience of the development of the pandemic in the world, the major problems are a large burden on the healthcare system and the fact that people get infected when they come to hospital for examinations and diagnostics. We saw a solution to these problems in similar services in the UK and decided to use the

independent home monitoring of symptoms of patients who do not require hospitalisation, and to reduce the burden on healthcare institutions by advising people with mild and non-life-threatening symptoms not to go to the hospital immediately but to stay at home and monitor their symptoms. The service asks the user about 10-12 questions, where it’s necessary to assess the state of health by the most frequent symptoms and symptoms of COVID-19. Then the service analyses the responses based on the logic provided by the algorithm and gives the probability of infection with the coronavirus, as well as recommendations for further steps.

Virtual test drive

To witness the operation of the world’s largest dump truck, to get behind the wheel and visit the workshops where it’s being assembled are now possible without going to the ‘homeland’ of this giant: the city of Zhodino. HTP’s Feeling Digital has solved this task through virtual reality technologies.

A potential buyer just needs to use a special app. Pavel Firsov, a co-founder of the developer company, comments, “The joint project with BELAZ is aimed at solving specific business needs of the enterprise. They created the world’s largest dump truck: of a 450 tonne capacity. However, it’s impossible to demonstrate it to consumers, except at the enterprise itself or in the Kuzbass coal mine where it operates. Clearly, this state of affairs did not suit the dump truck manufacturer which decided to launch a virtual test

drive — to enable people to see all the characteristics and advantages of the vehicle. In parallel, a virtual tour of the company is now possible since it’s very important for potential buyers to see what conditions trucks are produced in. After a while, a mobile version of this app was introduced — available to the company’s marketers and dealers. It is constantly updated and it’s possible to add both

new language versions and new samples of equipment. The app for BELAZ is based on a 360-degree video. There are also fully interactive versions. The presentation of the new generation has already proved itself in neighbouring foreign countries and in South America.”

This format of product presentation has proven its efficiency among lift manufacturers. Feeling Digital has made an application specially for Mogilevliftmash enabling consumers to virtually get into different lift models.



All transport at a glance

Tracking movement of public transport online, finding out the current schedule, actual time of arrival at a specific stop and building a convenient route to the required destination — including between Belarusian cities, taking into account the selected types of public transport — are now possible thanks to the development of another HTP resident: IBA Group. Its ‘Транспорт.BY’ mobile app is an element of the IBA AVM passenger transport dispatcher control system included in the state register.

‘Транспорт.BY’ is not a mere app but a single information system for the entire country, which displays all transport, so that when arriving anywhere in Belarus, users can see the forecast of traffic in time. It’s possible to build a route not only within a single city but also between cities. The railway and all intercity carriers are also displayed. Methods of accessing the system can vary: via the website, through the mobile app, or through USSD requests. An information board can also be installed at the

stop — with either a plain text or a graphic.

Minsk and the Minsk Region, Gomel and the Gomel Region, Lida and Brest are now fully operating in the dispatching system which is being launched in the Brest Region and Mogilev soon. “We plan its further development. When all passenger operators use the system and enter information on their transport, then it will be a fully-fledged and unified system for the entire Republic,” Aleksei Tereshchuk, who heads the ‘Транспорт. BY’ project, said.



Gratitude with a card

Over 1,000 greeting cards with the words #ThankstoMedics marathon is taking place in the country, with the Belarusian Republican Youth Union and Belpochta inviting people to send postcards with words of support to health workers

By Maria Zubkova

The reverse side of the bright cards contains warm wishes and sincere gratitude for the work to everyone who is now helping to cope with a difficult situation, preserve the health of patients, and protect their relatives. More than 700 postcards in which young boys and girls express gratitude to doctors, paramedics and other medical workers have already been sent to various healthcare institutions.

The baton of kindness can be passed by every resident of the country, said the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian

Belarusians to join the marathon. To do this, you need to write words of support to healthcare workers on a postcard, indicate the address of the healthcare institution, add a hashtag #ThankstoMedics, and send it via any mailbox. A stamp for such a card is not required, it will be delivered free of charge.”

At the same time, the campaign started in all regional centres, with Belpochta providing a thousand postcards. Moreover, each region has developed its designs of postcards which are available for download on official Internet resources and in Belarusian Republican Youth Union groups on social networks.

The leader of the Minsk regional organisation of the Belarusian Republican Youth Republic, Kirill Shik, holds a stack of 125 messages from activists, “For the marathon, we’ve chosen postcards depicting a heart — a

symbol of the volunteer movement; we’ll send them to all regional medical institutions. Districts and primary organisations are also to join the action, with each outpatient clinic and clinic receiving our mail messages. The most important thing is to sincerely thank the healthcare workers and find the right words of support for them.”



Republican Youth Union, a member of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly, Dmitry Voronyuk. During the start of the action, he himself signed several postcards for Vitebsk doctors, “I would like to thank the professionals who are now working almost around the clock in their workplaces, saving the lives of citizens. We invite all



Recreating a unique atmosphere

By Olga Korneeva

Reconstruction continues on the site of the Kosovo Palace and Park Ensemble and, by late 2020, an English Park is planned near the Puslovsky Palace

“This year, it is planned to restore the park system and, by late 2020, the creation of the English Park — which the Puslovsky family kept — is expected to be finished. A fountain is also to open,” said Irina Semenyuk, the Acting Director of the Kosovo Palace and Park Ensemble.

The area of the park will exceed 9 hectares, featuring trees and shrubs popular among the 19th century magnates. These will be primarily various types of larch and other conifers which once decorated the surroundings of the palace. “The Puslovskys had more than 130 species of plants brought from different parts

of the world. They will be reproduced,” Ms. Semenyuk adds.

The works are provided by Brestrestavratsiya’s project — approved by the Culture Ministry and financed from the Republican budget.

Restoration of the park and water systems begins in April, though the process has not stopped inside the palace: its unique atmosphere is being recreated. In the central part, where the exhibition and ballrooms will be located, the hall for marriage registration, the walls are now being painted with gold leaf, as it was during the Puslovsky’s life. It is planned to create a modern conference hall with a 3D video projector in the basement.

In March, a six-room hotel opened here, which can accommodate 16 people at a time. There is a room for people with disabilities and a luxury suite. The interior of the rooms is stylised

as aristocratic luxury, with heavy brocade curtains and stucco on the walls. The furniture for the premises is made according to a special project at Pinskdev JSC. The hotel also opened a restaurant in January.

Reconstruction of the Kosovo Palace began in 2008. Work on the site has reached the final stage. It is expected that the first part of the Palace and Park Ensemble will be commissioned in the second half of the year.

The Kosovo Palace was built by the Puslovsky family of magnates and industrialists in 1838. The choice of location was connected with the neighbouring historical estate where, according to the accepted official version, Tadeusz Kosciuszko was born in 1746. Among the guests of the palace were Napoleon Orda, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Eliza Orzeszkowa, Jozef Pilsudski and Wacław Lastowski.

‘Kupala Night’, ‘Dazhynki’ and ‘The Calling of Spring’

By Arina Novikova

Shawls with unique designs reflecting the national flavour will be released in Belarus



On the instruction of the Head of State, enterprises of Belarusian light industry have developed the *Belarusian Headscarves* project. As conceived by the makers, each accessory reflects the uniqueness of our nature and traditions, and could become a new brand of tourist souvenir for Belarus.

The ‘Kupala Night’ shawl for example, depicts a mermaid. In ancient times, Belarusians believed that if a wreath was thrown into the water on Kupala Night and it fell

into the hands of a boy, he might turn out to be the future husband of the girl. Their union would be happy if the young man isn’t taken by the mermaid into the underwater world.

The purity of nature and the beginning of the new crop year are symbolised by the shawl ‘The Calling of Spring’, which depicts the sun, clay whistles in the shape of birds and a lark made of straw.

Meanwhile, the fox — a symbol of beauty and femininity among the Slavs — occupies a central place on the ‘Dazhynki’ shawl. There is also a symbol of fire, a squirrel. The design of the accessory reflects the richness and colourful of the most important agricultural holiday.

According to representatives of the Bellegprom Concern, some of the items from this collection are already being produced by the Baranavichi Cotton Production Association and Orsha Linen Mill, as well as Alesya and Pinsk Polesie enterprises. Soon, shawls with a unique design will be produced by the Fashion Centre and Kamvol.



Bon appetit!

A promotional video about gastronomic tourism shot in Belarus is now available on the National Tourism Agency’s website

By Svetlana Savelieva

“At the request of the National Tourism Agency, four thematic videos were shot about tourism in Belarus. Work on them began last year and was completed in 2020. We are first presenting a video about gastronomic tourism. Later, we’ll show videos on environmental, cultural and educational tourism and city breaks — focusing on the opportunities for short holidays in Minsk and regional centres,”

Yelena Likhimovich, the National Tourism Agency’s Deputy Director, said.

The video on culinary tourism features potato chips with chanterelles, pechisto (stewed meat) with a sauce of hazelnuts, crullers, pancakes, machanka (sausages with pancakes), polendvitsa (air-dried meat), ice cream with cornflowers, birch juice.

The videos are available in Russian and English, each lasting for about three minutes. Short 30-second versions are also prepared. Videos will be used to promote the country at tourism exhibitions, presentations and seminars.





On fire's anniversary, Notre-Dame's great bell broke its silence

A year on from the inferno that gutted Notre-Dame de Paris and stunned the world, the cathedral's great bell rang out last week, as a mark of the building's resilience and that of the medics battling France's coronavirus epidemic

The bourdon bell has sounded just once since April 15th, 2019, when the blaze broke out that consumed the spire and the roof and, officials say, came within half an hour of burning the 850 year old cathedral to the ground.

It tolled at 8pm, coinciding with the hour when Parisians applaud from their windows and balconies in tribute

to the frontline staff risking their lives to treat COVID-19 patients.

"The restoration of Notre-Dame... is a symbol of the resilience of our people, of their capacity to overcome hardships, and to recover," President Emmanuel Macron said.

He reiterated a promise to rebuild Notre-Dame within five years, though the

works to ensure the cathedral is structurally sound are running months behind schedule, delayed first by winter storms and by now the pandemic.

"Our objective is to prepare the cathedral for mass on April 16th, 2024," Jean-Louis Georgelin, the retired army general leading the restoration project, noted. "Of course, that doesn't mean

everything will be finished."

But the cathedral's southern belfry where the 13-tonne bell — cast in 1681 and the second biggest in France — is housed, is structurally undamaged.

President Emmanuel Macron had promised a herculean effort to have the UNESCO heritage site restored in time for the Paris Olympics of 2024.

Potentially habitant exoplanet discovered 300-light-years-away

A team of transatlantic scientists, using reanalysed data from NASA's Kepler space telescope, has discovered an Earth-size exoplanet orbiting in its star's habitable zone, the area around a star where a rocky planet could support liquid water

Scientists discovered this planet, called Kepler-1649c, when looking through old observations from Kepler, which the agency retired in 2018. While previous searches with a computer algorithm misidentified it, researchers reviewing Kepler data took a second look at the signature and recognised it as a planet. Out of all the exoplanets found by Kepler, this distant world — located 300 light-years from Earth — is most similar to Earth in size and estimated temperature.

This newly revealed world is only 1.06 times larger than our own planet. Also, the amount of starlight it receives from its host star is 75 percent of the amount of light Earth receives from our Sun — meaning the exoplanet's temperature may be similar to our planet's, as well. But unlike Earth, it orbits a red dwarf. Though none have been observed in this system, this type of star is known for stellar flare-ups that may make a planet's environment challenging for any potential life.

"This intriguing, distant world gives us even greater hope that a second Earth lies among the stars, waiting to be found," said Thomas Zurbuchen, an associate administrator of NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington. "The data gathered by missions like Kepler and our Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) will continue to yield amazing discoveries as the science community refines its abilities to look for promising planets year after year."

There is still much that is unknown about Kepler-1649c, including its atmosphere, which could affect the planet's temperature.



European Union unveils virus exit plan, hoping to avoid more chaos

The European Commission together with the President of the European Council, has proposed a European roadmap to phase-out the containment measures due to the coronavirus outbreak

With some countries already lifting some lockdown measures, the European Commission rushed out its roadmap for members of the world's biggest trade bloc to co-ordinate an exit from the lockdowns.

While Europe is still in firefighting mode, the necessary extraordinary measures taken by member states and the EU are working. They have slowed down the spread of the virus and saved thousands of lives. However, these measures and the corresponding uncertainty come at a dramatic cost to people, society and the economy, and cannot last indefinitely.

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said, "Saving lives and protecting Europeans from the coronavirus is our number one priority. At the same time, it is time to look ahead and to focus on protecting livelihoods. Even though conditions in the member states still vary widely, all Europeans rightly ask themselves when and in what order the confinement measures can be lifted. Responsible planning on the ground, wisely balancing the interests of protection of public health with those of the functioning of our societies, needs a solid foundation. That's why the Commission has drawn up a catalogue of guidelines, criteria and measures that provide a basis for thoughtful action. The strength of Europe lies in its social and economic balance."

Greenland has lost 600 billion tonnes of ice in just two months

The coronavirus pandemic is at the forefront of everyone's minds right now. However, Greenland's latest loss of ice is a chilling reminder of climate change's ubiquity across the world.

The global warming conversation has been fairly diluted in the news cycle due to the surging coronavirus outbreak. While an unexpected by-product of the virus has seen reduced emissions and cleaner water in some areas, it hasn't completely alleviated the strain on the planet.

The ice caps are melting, as the Earth's temperature endures recurring increases. A new NASA study shows Greenland lost 600 billion tonnes of ice in just two months 'during the exceptionally warm Arctic summer of 2019' — enough to rise sea levels by nearly a tenth of an inch.

Losses continue to surge on in Antarctica, honing in on Amundsen Sea Embayment and the Antarctic Peninsula in the west (that said, snowfall has increased in the northeast helping to maintain mass). However, Greenland's losses last year more than double its 2002-2019 yearly average.

Isabella Velicogna, a senior project scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Professor of Earth System Sciences at the University of California Irvine, explained, "We knew this past summer had been particularly warm in Greenland, melting every corner of the ice sheet. But the numbers really are enormous. In Antarctica, the mass loss in the west proceeds unabated, which will lead to an even further increase in sea level rise."



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Monumentally done!

Updated Order of Victory, restoration of high reliefs, works in the underpass: the capital repair of the Pobedy Square in Minsk is almost complete

The Eternal Flame is burning, automobile traffic has been restored, people are already walking in the underpasses, constantly looking around. Something has changed in the decoration of Pobedy (Victory) Square; outwardly it's almost the same as it was, but at the same time there have been many changes. Just the last touches remain to be done and soon the workers of the construction organisations will collect their tools and move to other facilities. Since the end of last summer, they have been working here almost seven days a week. They have managed to complete ahead of schedule. The memorial is still closed, but we managed to take a look at all its innovations.



By Alina Kasel

From floor to ceiling

We go into the underground passage of Pobedy Square, leading to the metro station of the same name. Three dozen employees of the Goravtomost municipal repair and maintenance unitary enterprise are completing their work. During the time that we were in the subway, there was not a single passer-by or a metro passenger who would not slow their steps in curiosity to take a closer look at what was being done. We see only small areas fenced from pedestrians where tile joints are drying. 4,000 square metres of the underpass ceiling are already ready, as well as about 3,000 square metres of granite floor.

"Yes, we are already at the finish. Plasterers, painters and decorators are making the final touches. If there are bumps somewhere, we remove them and paint over them. When we started this site in November, all the ceilings were dark. We cleaned everything down to concrete, sandblasted, stuccoed, plastered and painted," explains Nikolai Khripko, a repair and maintenance technician for underground pedestrian crossings in Minsk, at Goravtomost unitary enterprise. "As for the granite floor, the foundation for it was once done very well. We only replaced the tiles in some places and replaced about a hundred storm water inlets."

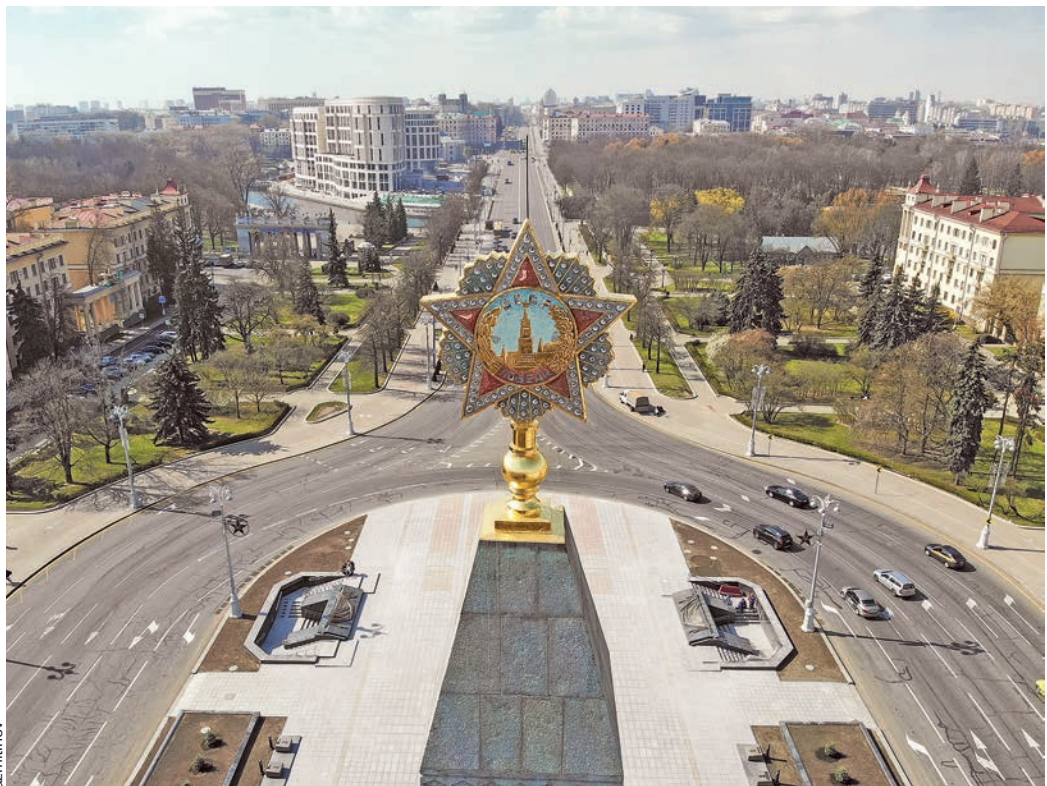
The main theme

Those wishing to attend the memorial hall in honour of all heroes of the Soviet Union who died for the liberation of Belarus, won't be able to do this until May 1st when they will have tidied up a small sec-

tion of a circular underground pedestrian crossing. But we go beyond the fence and see the innovations of this hall and its exits to the Victory Monument and the Eternal Flame.

The concept of the design of the underpass will continue the main theme of the victory of our people in the Great Patriotic War. Overhaul of the floor has already been completed (now with anti-slip), as well as that of the ceiling and walls. Wall inscriptions were also restored, including those written in the Belarusian and Russian languages, 'hitting' the heart: 'Here we bow our heads low before your courage, heroes, before your glory, that raised like an unforgettable dawn on the Earth, for which you gave your life, the sons of the immense homeland and the sons of dear Belarus... Sworn brothers! Your feat is immortal! The names of heroes in our land are unforgettable'.

Specialists have restored the Wreath of Glory made of cast stained glass. For the first time, modern visual technical equipment has appeared in the memorial hall: a multimedia screen which is already broadcasting views of Minsk, historical events of the country and other images. Large information stands appeared at the entrances to the hall with information written in Belarusian, Russian and English about what the country had to go through during the war. An art gallery appeared on the walls near the Wreath of Glory, showcasing the paintings of Belarusian artists: *Defence of the Brest Fortress* by Yevgeny Zaitsev, *Ruben Ibarriuri near Borisov* by Fiodor Baranovsky, *Feat of Seventeen* by Mikhail Savitsky and others... The entire space of this part



Aleksey Vyznintinov



For the first time, modern visual technical equipment has appeared in the memorial hall: a multimedia screen which is already broadcasting views of Minsk, historical events of the country and other images



of the underpass has become filled while the restored memorial plates now look brighter, bearing the names of heroes of the Soviet Union who participated in the liberation of the Belarusian land. It's impossible not to stop and read each name...

Grandeur in granite

We go up to the square where the Victory Monument

rises majestically above us, erected back in 1954 to mark the 10th anniversary of the liberation of Belarus from Nazi invaders. This monument to courage and dedication is the same as before. All the restoration work carried out did not change its appearance. The monument was cleaned, the cracks were fixed and treated with a special composition that would not allow precipitation

to penetrate and damage it. The order of Victory shining in the sun was also renewed: it was cleaned, the lost elements were recreated and gilded. The stylobate of the monument, the bronze coat of arms and the high relief of the pedestal, the bronze sword of Victory, as well as the wreaths and their pedestals, underwent thorough restoration. Granite columns bearing the names of hero-cities located on the sides of the monument (which, of course, also went through this procedure) have acquired evergreen spruce trees — six on each side. Nearby a fresh area was also prepared for flower arrangements.

All the granite floor paving tiles also underwent restoration during the capital repair. A craftsman is working on the Eternal Flame, in which the gas pipeline and granite frame were replaced. He is polishing red granite blocks at the foot of the Eternal Flame — this is truly the final touch. The specialist is here alone. We are the only company on this island of courage and sorrow. Despite the noisy cars and public transport running around the square, for some reason one feels silence, peace and order: there is a blue sky above our head, and kilometres of Minsk's vibrant life lie ahead.

The masters of sound

International Piano Tuners Day is celebrated in April. These highly regarded professionals — able to ‘cure’ musical instruments — are now worth their weight in gold even in big cities. So, if the ‘Red Book’ of endangered professions existed, these specialists would certainly be in it. Glusk, with a population of about 7,000 people, is lucky: there lives a professional who is able to ‘make a voice’ for pianos and grand pianos. If necessary, Leonid Makarevich — one of the oldest tuners of keyboard and string instruments in the country — can also ‘cure’ a cembalo.

By Olga Kislyak

In one of the Moscow recording studios popular with pop stars, musical instruments are tuned every half hour, ensuring the quality of sound is perfect. However, tuners in the Mogilev Region can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Nevertheless, the children’s art school in Glusk has no untuned instruments because there’s someone there who cares for them. Leonid Makarevich recently turned 74 years old; officially he retired in 2006 but remains working.

“We didn’t let him go,” jokes Marina Rudobelets, the Deputy Director of the art school. “After all, Leonid Timofeevich is a real ‘diamond’. We have 24 pianos and 4 grand pianos and a unique master not only tunes them, but also pianofortes and pianos, which our pupils and their families have at home.” He is also invited to tune instruments in Bobruisk, Klichev, Krichev, Cherkov, Chausy, Bykhov... Mr. Makarevich’s wife Tatiana Nikolaevna has also worked as a pianist for fifty years. One of their sons, Dmitry, our student, twice became a scholarship holder of the President’s Special Fund for the Support of Talented Youth. Then he became an artist of the Bialystok Symphony Orchestra in Poland.

“A trumpeter, he got into Bialystok through a competition, but from there he has already moved to London,” says Leonid Makarevich. “My elder and younger sons, Artem and Denis, stayed in Belarus. Though they didn’t follow in the footsteps of their parents, both are able to play the piano.”

The head of the family himself, before becoming a tuner, used to teach the pupils of the local art school to play the button accordion for many years. He recalls, “Since childhood, I have been making friends with this instrument, but I’ve always wanted to learn the profession of a tuner as well. Once the staff of the local house of culture, preparing for the concert, found that their old piano was in poor condition. Since there were no professional tuners within a radius of 50km, I undertook to ‘cure’ it. I had no experience at that time, so I tuned the piano in the way I did with the button accordion. I remember that the musician had barely finished her work. She was upset and I was disappointed together with her. Then I decided that I would certainly become ‘Aibolit’ for musical instruments. After all, with proper care they can serve faithfully for fifty years, if they are set up at least once every six months. At that time our school had 30-35 year old pianos, which the tuner never touched.”



The return of octaves for Lyudmila Gurchenko

In 1997, Leonid Timofeevich finished a special course at the Borisov Factory of Musical Instruments — the only one in the country — and became a tuner in Mogilev. “I was invited to the regional philharmonic by Leonid Tkachenok, who worked there as deputy director. He had absolute pitch, and he was always present in the hall when I was tuning the piano. He listened and gave practical advice. Thanks to him I got to know many famous singers and composers. After all, Mogilev hosted the *Golden Hit* International Music Festival, bringing together many stars from different countries. I remember even now that for Igor Luchenok it was important that the piano pedal didn’t squeak, Russian Lyudmila Lyadova demanded that ‘the top notes of the instrument sound exactly right’, the accompanist of the Lithuanian opera singer Virgilijus Noreika asked to make extended octaves so that the top note of the piano was a little above the norm while Lyudmila Gurchenko’s accompanist asked to return the octaves to their place. Then many artists come up to me and thank me for my work,” he says.

However, Mr. Makarevich did not stay long in Mogilev, as he was lured back to his small homeland. He returned to the children’s art school to ‘cure’ the local keyboard instruments and pianos of his fellow countrymen.

“The oldest instrument that I had to revive dates back to 1910,” the master notes. “It was a German piano, from a family in the town of Bykhov. I found it extremely neglected: it did not sound good at all, there were no strings and the keys sank. It was difficult to get the strings: I sourced them from the old masters in Borisov, who, in addition to enormous experience, had large stocks of original antique parts, including instruments. Alas, today there are only a few such professionals in the country. In the early 1990s, the Borisov



The talent of tuner Leonid Makarevich was highly appreciated by everyone who touched the instruments after the master had worked on them, including star members of the Mogilev *Golden Hit* international music festivals.



PROFESSIONALS ADVISE

- * To prevent a musical instrument from playing out of tune, it must be tuned in at least twice a year.
- * The instrument should be located at least 2 metres from heaters, and direct sunlight should not fall on it.
- * Sudden changes in temperature are also undesirable; a temperature of 14-20°C is considered the norm.
- * When buying a piano, you cannot focus only on its appearance. Appearance is sometimes deceptive, and an instrument that looks beautiful can play out of tune. Therefore, it is better to invite a tuner to buy it with you.

factory (it doesn’t exist today but used to manufacture up to 20,000 pianos a year in the times of the USSR) employed 46 tuners while at the end of the same decade only four remained.”

Leonid Timofeevich ‘cured’ that German instrument within 2 weeks. But there were more complicated orders, too. For example, it took him a month to tune one piano that ‘did not hold its note’. He says it belonged to a large family and was played by three out of their six children.

“The instrument does not hold the tune, when the wooden corks — with which the strings are pulled and fastened — dry out inside tuning pins,” explains the master taking me to the instrument. “I was pulling the tuning pin with the tuning key, but it returned to the starting position every time. All my efforts were in vain. The piano has 220 tuning pins and I had to replace 180 of them.”

Waiting for a decent change

The tuner has a whole suitcase of tools, like a locksmith: a spatium-regulating instrument, a damper, several screwdrivers... There is also an iron: after warming up, it’s used for piano mallets after grinding.

The work is not easy. A specialist takes one and a half to two hours for a thorough examination of the instrument, and even more for ‘treatment’. After standing for several hours bent over, the tuner can hardly straighten his back by the evening. Nor is the profession profitable, perhaps why there’s a problem with staffing. In any case, during the 22 years that he worked as a tuner, none of the students has asked him for apprenticeship. Nevertheless, he enjoys his work. “As long as classical music is alive, tuners will be needed. It’s not without reason that they say that not a single tuner can be compared with the human ear.”

How much is a ticket for a mannequin?

Virtual fans and online tournaments: how athletes and tournament organisers survive the suspension of competitions

Most competitions around the world are on hold. Many athletes, even in self-isolation, are trying to find the opportunity to train and, like the fans, are waiting for life to return to normal. Meanwhile, some sports have already adapted to current realities and switched to online mode.

By Tatiana Litvinova

Grandstand on the sofa

The Belarusian Championship is the only football tournament in Europe that was continued, rather than paused. The matches are watched in many countries, for example, in Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Israel, Croatia, etc. Even in Brazil they want to buy the rights to broadcast the championship. Despite the fact that there is no ban on attending matches for fans, not many people come to the stadiums now. Brest Dinamo solved the issue with the involvement of spectators in an unusual way. The club invited fans to buy virtual tickets and guaranteed their 'presence' at the stadium. During the last two matches in the stands of the Brest squad one could see mannequins with photographs of people attached to them. If thirty such spectators from Russia, the UK, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Iran and other countries 'attended' the first match, then there were many more during the second. The action was joined by spectators from Ireland, the UK, Austria, China, Qatar, the USA, and one of the virtual fans at the stadium was even congratulated on his birthday. There were also many virtual VIP guests in the stands: Marcel Lička, Aleksandr Hleb, Artem Dzyuba, Konstantin Genich and many others. Dinamo notes that part of the money from the sale of tickets will be directed to the



fight against coronavirus in Belarus.

Dinamo Brest is not the first club in the world which decided to attract virtual spectators to the stands. The China Baseball Championship started in the country. Since the matches must be held without fans in the stands, the organisers decided to support the athletes and place robotic mannequins in the seats, which will even beat the drums, creating the usual noisy atmosphere during the games.

Online game

Not only fans are transferred online. Different sports are also trying new competition formats. For example, on Saturday, a virtual chess tournament starts, organised by the current world champion, Magnus Carlsen. Eight chess players will take part in the online championship. It is planned that besides Carlsen, they will include the top three leaders of the rating of the International Chess Federation, Fabiano Caruana from the US and Ding Liren from China. The players will be playing rapid chess. At the first stage, they will hold a round rob-

in tournament, as a result of which the top four will continue to fight in the playoffs. In order to avoid unfair play, the chess players will be at home with cameras turned on.

Basketball players also plan to go online. According to ESPN TV Channel, along with the NBA, it is developing a tournament for the H-O-R-S-E game — well-known to Americans. Its essence is that a player in 24 seconds needs to make a shot in the ring in the same way as the previous basketball player did, and from the same position from which he threw. At the same time, participants will be playing from their own halls and without violating the regime of self-isolation.

Even the famous Grand National horse race, which has been held in England for more than 180 years, has been transferred to virtual mode. The result was modelled using special computing programmes, and then presented in a video format. The broadcast for the race, in which even the dirt flying out from under the hooves of horses was traced, was watched by about 4.3 million people. Formula 1 decided to do the same: instead

of the transferred stages of the Grand Prix, virtual races are held on a racing stimulator, which are broadcast on the Internet.

Quarantine is not a hindrance to training

Many athletes are quarantined or self-isolated due to the spread of coronavirus. It's clear that fully training in this mode is extremely difficult, but world leaders in various sports do not despair and find opportunities where, it would seem, they do not exist.

Pillows and clothes dryers, frying pans and fans, a balloon... What tricks tennis players just use in order not to lose shape in quarantine! Even top players of world tennis arrange such training. Novak Djokovic, for example, instead of a grid builds a wall of chairs and sofa cushions and arms himself with a frying pan. Rafael Nadal didn't get to use kitchen utensils as he plays with his sister with standard rackets, but instead of a net he places chairs on the veranda. The main thing, they assure us, is not to give up and keep positive.

Winning the tournament for the eleventh time

The 13th National Amateur Competition for the Prizes of the President's Sports Club finished with a victory for the President's team. In the final series of up to two victories, it beat hockey players from the Minsk Region: in the first meeting with a score of 7:3, in the second — 8:4.

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This season, the President's team did not know defeat in the competitions that have already become a tradition: during the first stage, it won all six matches, defeating the team of the Grodno Region in the semi-finals and leaving no chance for players from the Minsk Region in the finals. Despite a big score in the second match of the final series, victory on the ice of the Olympic Arena wasn't an easy achievement. Ice hockey players of the Minsk Region opened the second, but after only a few seconds, the President's team took the lead, with Andrei Glebov scoring first, followed by Andrei Bashko. However, by the end of the period everything had changed again: thanks to the pucks scored by Denis Mogilatov and Aleksei Kuveko, the players of the Minsk Region left for the break with an advantage of one goal. In the second period hockey players also exchanged goals: the exact goal of Aleksandr Ryadinsky from the Minsk Region squad was answered with one from Aleksandr Burmistrionok. Everything was decided in the final third of the match, when the team of the Head of State



sent five unanswered goals into the opponent's net: Aleksei Krutikov scored a double while Mikhail Grabovsky, Andrei Mikhalev and Pavel Volchek each scored once.

For the President's team, the current victory was their eleventh in the history of the tournament.

Best of the best

Following the results of the competitions, Sergei Rogovsky from the Minsk Region squad was named the best goalkeeper while his teammate Andrei Rashchinsky was recognised as the best forward. The best defender was Andrei Bashko from the President's team while the top scorer was team captain Oleg Antonenko, who scored 19 (7+12) points. Nikolai Lukashenko, who boasts 17 (8+9) points is placed on the second line in the scorers' race. The cup, medals and other prizes have already found their owners. Spectators in the stands were not left without gifts either: according to the tradition, the fans received them from Aleksandr Lukashenko.

ARENA

● New dates for Tour de France cycling race in 2020 announced

The Tour de France was scheduled to run this year from June 27th to July 19th but the competition was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.



According to the updated information, the prestigious race will be held from August 29th to September 20th, 2020 along the previously approved route. "The organisers of the Tour de France have reached an agreement with all interested parties, from local communities to state authorities," a statement on the competition's website said.

● International Fencing Federation ends its international season ahead of schedule due to the coronavirus pandemic



All international competitions scheduled for the period from April to June have been canceled, including the World Cup stages that were qualifiers for the Olympics. At the same time, all the results of the qualifying events that athletes showed before March of this year will remain in force, and the fencers' ratings will be frozen until it is possible to hold the final qualifying competitions for the Games in Tokyo.

BELTA



Melody of the week

It's hardly possible to stop a melody when the soul is singing. At Gomel's park.

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.

April 23rd is English Language Day. The commemorative date of the United Nations was established during the UNESCO General Conference in 1995. English is one of the six official languages of the organisation. The UN allocated six days on its calendar — one for each of the official languages. The aim of the new holidays is to strengthen the traditions of multilingualism in the world. The date of the celebration of the English language was the birthday of William Shakespeare — the great English poet, writer and the most famous playwright in the world.

April 23rd is World Book and Copyright Day. It was announced at the 28th session of the General Conference of UNESCO on November 15th, 1995 in memory of the three geniuses of world literature William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616).



April 26th is International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day, marking the catastrophe that occurred in 1986 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. On the decision of the UN General Assembly, it is

celebrated annually starting from 2017. It is also a day of remembrance for those killed in radiation accidents and disasters. The Republic of Belarus marks the Day of the Chernobyl Tragedy. This is a nationwide day of sorrow.

On April 27th, 1930, Mai Dantsig was born in Minsk, a Belarusian painter, teacher, Honoured Artist of Belarus (1973) and People's Artist of Belarus (1995). His works include *Silence*, *My Logoisk*, *Vitebsk — the Birthplace of Chagall*. He is also known for his works of monumental paintings: a mosaic panel in the Partisan cinema house and a mosaic in the Yubileinaya Hotel. His creativity is distinguished by a bright individual manner, the main features of which are epic, monumental-generalised interpretations of forms, expressiveness of colour solutions, and the depth of psychological characteristics. The laureate of the Lenin Komsomol Prize of Belarus (1968) died in 2017.



On April 27th, 1945, the Belorussian SSR was accepted as a founding member of the United Nations Organisation (UN).

The legal basis for this became the law adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in February 1944 on granting powers to the USSR republics in the area of foreign relations. The USSR demand at the Dumbarton Oaks conference in August 1944 to include all 16 republics among the original members was rejected. Only Ukraine and Belarus were included as the republics that suffered the greatest casualties in the war.



On April 28th, 2005, Belarus and Poland signed a protocol which secured agreements on the further development of cross-border tourism in the areas of the Avgustovsky Canal and Belovezhskaya Pushcha.



On April 29th, 2005, Minsk hosted the opening ceremony of the 'Partisan Belarus' memorial architectural and sculptural sign. The memorial was designed by Valentin Zankovich, a Belarusian architect and sculptor, a laureate of the Lenin Prize, one of the authors of the Brest Fortress Hero and Khatyn memorials. At the top of the solid granite column is a composition depicting a family of partisans. A woman who holds a

weapon in one hand and a child in the other, and a man with a rifle on his shoulder. A banner is freely fluttering above them... At the base of the column there are bas-reliefs reminding us of what happened during the years of World War II: how people went into the forests, set up partisan detachments, stood up for the defence of their native country with arms in their hands...

On April 30th, 1945, the Soviet Banner of Victory was raised over the defeated Reichstag in Berlin. Together with the rifle units, the Reichstag was stormed by the tankers of the 23rd tank brigade (Colonel S.V. Kuznetsov). Assaults cleared the building of the Nazi units metre by metre, room by room. As they took possession of the building, Soviet soldiers raised Red Banners. By the end of the day, the Reichstag was taken. On its pediment, scouts of the 756th infantry regiment of the 150th infantry division — M.A. Yegorov and M.V. Kantaria, led by deputy battalion commander for political affairs, Lieutenant A.P. Berest — established the Red Banner. For their heroism M.A. Yegorov and M.V. Kantaria were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

