

Belarusian foreign political vector confirms west to east interest during top-level meetings in Minsk, welcoming President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, while President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, pays official visit to Minsk

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Vadim Streltsov of Belarus becomes world champion in weightlifting

## Gold medal and maximum tickets

Having lifted 407kg in the double event, Belarusian weightlifter Vadim Streltsov becomes under 94kg world champion

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# Conversation about sport, and hockey in particular

Alexander Lukashenko conducts session discussing development of hockey, and wider sports in the country

By Sergey Kanashits

We have many good recollections connected with hockey, including the IIHF World Championship, held in Minsk; specialists called it the best achievement since we beat Sweden at the Olympics in Salt Lake City. Moreover, Dinamo Minsk regularly gathers full stands at Minsk-Arena, with Belarusians viewing ice hockey as more than just sport: it's a social phenomenon.

It's no exaggeration to say that at least half of all boys dream of becoming a courageous ice hockey player, hitting the ice with a flourish. The image is romanticised similarly to that of Alexandre Dumas' Musketeers!

However, there's a paradox, since we still lack sufficient talented players, despite numerous ice hockey schools and rinks, and an unprecedented financing programme at state level.

Dinamo Minsk hasn't played well this season, noted Mr. Lukashenko during the session, saying, "I'm more than concerned with the state of affairs in ice hockey. If this trend continues, the most radical measures will need to be taken promptly. As for HC Dinamo Minsk, they are going from best to worst. Today, we might win with a five-goal advantage, then lose with the same goal difference tomorrow. There's no consistency."

Moreover, the President underlines, "The state lacks money to spare so clubs need to become self-sufficient, earning income, and spending



The World Championship in Minsk — one of the brightest pages in the history of Belarusian ice hockey

it, according to the country's laws. State support will reduce according to my decisions."

In 2014 alone, billions of Roubles were spent on the provision of facilities and equipment for ice hockey clubs, so there should be a corresponding return.

Discussion focused on how best to identify young talent and attract experienced coaches eager to work with children. The Belarusian Athletics Federation's project '300 Diamonds for the Queen' was named as a good example.

One of the major messages of the meeting was that clubs must become more independent, and promote Belarusian players. For instance, Dinamo should employ no more than

a couple of foreign players, so that Belarusians have the opportunity to take a leading role in national teams. Meanwhile, the aim is to unify junior and adult teams under a single system.

The Chairman of the Belarusian Ice Hockey Federation, Igor Rachkovsky, commented, "It was a very constructive meeting, with clear decisions made. Moreover, we voiced to the President our proposals regarding the development of the domestic championship. These include the introduction of a minimum level of salary, in order to protect players: a modest amount of Br8.5m. Half of the players in the country's championship receive this minimum rate while the maximum is 10-fold more,

at Br85 (as earned by just over 10 of the top players). As far as Dinamo is concerned, the major task is to find a new head coach. Candidates have been identified. Importantly, we want Dave Lewis' assistants to be on the coaching staff of Dinamo Minsk."

The Federation is to gain greater power, including making all major appointments. Fans will be pleased to hear that Belarus is aiming to host another world championship. Plans are being elaborated, with Mr. Rachkovsky noting that the Federation will make every effort to win the application for an event sometime after 2022. Naturally, our national team will have to raise its game to prove its worth: a long journey lies ahead.

## Weighty share in balance of payments

By Alexander Pimenov

**Belarus' Prime Minister, Andrei Kobyakov, and leadership of High-Tech Park Administration JSC to discuss prospects for Park development**

Mr. Kobyakov recently toured construction at the High-Tech Park and received a report on its development plan. He has instructed the High-Tech Park's administration to put together a comprehensive plan for the Park, taking into account housing plans by resident companies.

Park Director Valery Tsepka notes that about 150 companies are currently resident, employing over 22,000 people.

Mr. Tsepka states that, in 2015, output at the High-Tech Park is expected to reach almost \$800m; in 2016, it may reach \$1bn. According to Mr. Tsepka, up to 90 percent of goods are exported, with export growth standing at roughly 140-150 percent per annum.

He comments, "This year, we've seen good growth. As far as geography is concerned, North America accounts for 40 percent of orders, while Europe's share stands at 43 percent. This year, CIS states account for a much smaller share than last year."

At present, the High-Tech Park has customers in 55 countries across the globe. In H1 2015, the High-Tech Park's net forex earnings reached \$315m. According to the National Bank of Belarus, these earnings represent 26 percent of the foreign trade service surplus in the national balance of payments.

## Places enough for all

By Olga Pasyanova

**In time for festive celebrations, Belarusian Railways adds over 90 trains for New Year holidays — including 80 on inter-regional lines**

The busiest days are soon to arrive: Catholic Christmas (December 24th-25th) and New Year's Eve (December 30th-31st). According to the Belarusian Railways' Press Service, more trains are being placed on the most popular routes — connecting Minsk with Brest and with Gomel. New trains are being added to the Minsk-Vitebsk, Minsk-Grodno, Minsk-Pinsk and Minsk-Polotsk routes, with additional carriages added to inter-regional trains.

International travel will also become easier over the holidays. Additional trains connecting Brest and Moscow have been approved, commencing on December 28th and 31st and January 1st and 2nd from Brest, and returning from the Russian capital on December 29th, January 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

Belarusian Railways also plans to launch additional trains on the Minsk-St. Petersburg-Minsk and Minsk-Moscow-Minsk routes.

## Ideas 'getting younger'

By Aelita Syulzhina

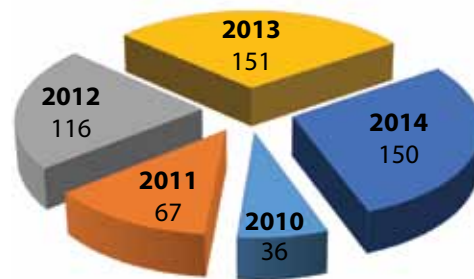
**Science is known to drive progress, as few would disagree. The National Statistical Committee of Belarus has studied the financing of science, finding that, last year, Belarus spent Br4.1 trillion (or 0.52 percent of GDP) on scientific research and developments: less than the optimal level (globally) of 1 percent of GDP.**

Last year, around Br150m was spent on research per scientist. The sum has risen five-fold over the recent five year period. However, even in 2014, less than a half of research conducted within the country was financed from the Republican budget: of 457 organisations involved in scientific work, 64.3 percent are commercially run.

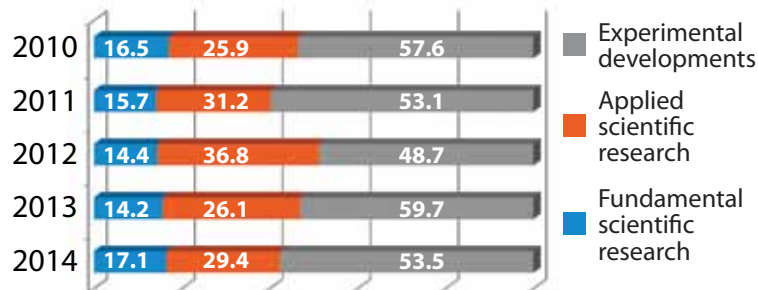
Belarusian science is 'getting younger', with around 25 percent of the 17,400 scientific workers aged under 30 years. Meanwhile, 20 percent have a scientific degree. Women account for 39.3 percent of candidates of science and 17.7 of doctorate degrees. Unsurprisingly, technical disciplines lead, with 60.1 percent of scientific workers having a technical education.

## Expenditure on scientific research and developments

Per worker, involved in scientific research and developments: Br. million



The structure of internal current expenditure on scientific research and developments by type of work (in % towards the result):



## Belavia opens daily route to Kharkov

By Dmitry Umpirovich

**Minsk becomes most convenient transfer hub for passengers without direct flights between Ukraine and Russia**

Belavia is quickly expanding the geography of its direct flights in the Ukrainian direction, with Kharkov joining Belavia's daily flight network.

Kharkov international airport website states that, from December 17th, cities directly connected will include Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad, using spacious Boeing-737s and 500s. The flight time from Minsk will be approximately the same as that between Odessa and Minsk.

According to the Director of the Transport and Communications Ministry's Aviation Department, Vladimir Kostin, there are now three daily routes to Kiev. Flow between our Belarusian and Ukrainian capitals is so large that a fourth daily flight may launch.

# Active time for political contacts

By Vasily Kharitonov

Azerbaijan can always rely on Belarus, as we are reliable strategic partners, noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, on meeting the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, in Minsk. The head of the Belarusian state noted the tradition of annual top level visits, saying, "On coming to grips with Belarusian-Azerbaijani relations, our trade turnover began to increase and all political issues disappeared. I pray to God to have similarly good relations with every leader, as I enjoy with the President of Azerbaijan."

The President of Belarus notes that, even in difficult economic times, our two countries have maintained turnover at the previous level, despite a considerable fall in trade with other states.

"We've taken a great step in creating a good foundation for our relations," stressed Belarus' Head of State.

Mr. Aliyev replied that Azerbaijan sees positive dynamics and efficiency across all areas of co-operation with Belarus.

He stated that Belarus is enjoying rapid economic growth and solving issues of social welfare. He commented, "It's a difficult time for every country but Belarus is preserving its positive dynamics of development, while ensuring public-political stability. We're all subject to the economic crisis; nevertheless, Belarus is among those countries less affected."

Mr. Aliyev underlined his desire to welcome Mr. Lukashenko's next official visit, stressing, "Each visit provides further political confirmation of the strategic character of our relations. We're solving a great many issues across various political spheres: foreign policy,



Ilham Aliyev and Alexander Lukashenko during their meeting in Minsk

economic and industrial."

On behalf of the Azerbaijani people, the President of Azerbaijan wished Belarus well in new achievements, saying, "As friends, we'll always remain close, being pleased at your successes."

The presidents of Belarus and Azerbaijan met in narrow format to discuss military-industrial co-operation and liaisons in petrochemistry, expanding joint production and, especially, assembly of machinery in Azerbaijan. They also discussed opportunities for new co-operative manufacturing with Azerbaijani companies, using locally produced components.

In particular, the President of Belarus noted the great efficiency of a joint Belarusian-Azerbaijani project to assem-

## MT REFERENCE:

Alexander Lukashenko is hopeful that the recent top-level meeting will inspire further bilateral co-operation, and solid agreements. He views as promising the establishment of facilities to process Azerbaijani raw materials and semi-finished goods in Belarus, for onward sale to third countries, including the EU. Belarus' geographical location and its membership of the Eurasian Economic Union are advantageous.

ble Belarusian MTZ tractors and MAZ machinery, at Ganja Automobile Factory. Since 2007, the facility has assembled over 6,000 'Belarus' tractors and around 3,000 automobiles and trailers.

According to the Belarusian leader, a great many opportunities exist to expand bilateral interaction. For example, the assembly of reliable and affordable MAZ buses (small and medium sized) for

public transport, produced jointly with Swiss Stadler, and assembly of eco-friendly comfortable urban gas-fuelled buses.

Mr. Lukashenko hopes to see Belarus help improve Azerbaijan's transport infrastructure, such as by laying railway lines between the centre of Baku and its suburbs, and setting up additional transportation with Heydar Aliyev airport.

Mr. Lukashenko has suggested that he and Mr. Aliyev focus on areas of mutually beneficial co-operation, taking into account the global crisis. He emphasised, "Our time requires that we find quick and efficient solutions, to expand economic collaboration, including on the markets of third states." He sees potential in the sphere of IT and information protection, wishing to pursue joint projects.

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cal location and its membership of the Eurasian Economic Union are advantageous. The governments of Belarus and Azerbaijan are being given corresponding instructions on further elaboration of these and other areas.

The presidents also discussed possible interaction in the sphere of production co-operation, implementing major infrastructure projects, and attracting investments. Mr. Lukashenko underlined that negotiations had been constructive and efficient, bringing confirmation of the strategic character of bilateral relations. He stated that no obstacles exist between Belarus and Azerbaijan.

After the negotiations, the presidents signed a joint declaration confirming their intention to facilitate political dialogue between their countries, strengthening high-level trust, mutual understanding and multi-faceted co-operation.

In the presence of both heads of state, Belarus and Azerbaijan signed a treaty and an agreement for a programme on socio-economic co-operation until 2025.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus signed a protocol on co-operation in the sphere of obligatory state social insurance with the State Social Protection Fund of Azerbaijan.

Agreements on co-operation were also signed by the national academies of sciences of our two countries, the Belarusian Republican Foundation for Fundamental Research and the Science Development Foundation, under the President of Azerbaijan. According to the Belarusian Head of State, these should facilitate further expansion of mutually beneficial Belarusian-Azerbaijani ties in political, trade-economic, sci-tech and humanitarian co-operation.

## High expectations Belarus hopes to raise level of partnership with India to strategic

By Olga Savelieva

"We traditionally view relations with India as a priority of our foreign policy, not only in Asia but globally. We highly appreciate friendly ties between our two countries and are sincerely striving to develop them further. We hope to raise our co-operation to the level of strategic partnership," noted Belarus' Prime Minister, Andrei Kobyakov, on meeting the Ambassador of India to Belarus, Pankaj Saxena.

The Belarusian Head of Government stated that, this

year, Belarus hosted Indian President Pranab Mukherjee's visit, signing a number of agreements. "India's decision to open a credit line to finance projects in Belarus is significant," said the Prime Minister.

Mr. Kobyakov underlined that Belarus hopes to increase shipments of potash fertilisers and engineering products to India while welcoming the arrival of Indian pharmaceutical companies. He believes that co-operation between Belarus and India should also focus on educational and sci-tech spheres.

The PM expressed gratitude to India for the inclusion of Belarus on the list of country-participants of the Indian Technical & Economic Co-operation Programme (ITEC). "Belarus is ready to provide India with its R&D developments across various areas.

A good example of collaboration is the export of Belarusian aerospace and electro-optical laser technologies to India. I want to believe that co-operation in these and other areas will further enhance," added Mr. Kobyakov.

## Real partnership has enough reserves

By Alexey Fedotov

**Dialogue between EAEU and EU to enhance efficiency of Eastern Partnership, notes Belarus' Deputy Foreign Minister, Yelena Kupchina, at Foreign Ministers of Eastern Partnership Member States meeting in Tbilisi, as part of sixth round of EaP Informal Ministerial Dialogues**

Ms. Kupchina stresses the necessity of greater differentiation and increasing the effectiveness of the initiative through implementing

regional projects. She also wishes to promote dialogue and co-operation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the European Union, aiming for a single economic zone between Lisbon and Vladivostok.

Major attention was paid to the initiative's implementation and prospects for further development after the Eastern Partnership Riga Summit, including in the context of a revised European Neighbourhood Policy. During the plenary session, the head of the Belarusian delegation stated Belarus' principle approaches towards col-

laboration within the Eastern Partnership.

During the Informal Ministerial Dialogues, Ms. Kupchina met several delegation heads, including the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, and the Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs of the EU's European External Action Service, Helga Schmid. They discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral and multilateral co-operation, giving attention to relations between the Republic of Belarus and the European Union.

# Seek and you shall find

*MT* reporters investigate mineral rich Gomel Region of Belarus to discover scope of deposits of ‘black gold’

By Svetlana Mikhovich

## Pripyat flexure

The head geologist of the Mozyr oil investigating expedition of deep drilling, Alexander Suslenko, accompanied us in our investigations. Having been exploring oil deposits in Belarus for 40 years, he is an expert.

We left Minsk early in the morning and, after three hours, reached our destination. Alexander met us near the village of Chirkovichi (in the Svetlogorsk District) to show us well #51, on the Novo-Berezinskaya site. As he explained, we'd never find the way independently.

Geologists are working there at the moment, drilling an exploration well for Belorusneft. Driving along the country lanes, we notice several oil cranes in the fields. “It's nothing extraordinary: this region — known as the Pripyat flexure — is rich in hydrocarbons, so cranes are everywhere. Another of our sites is the Western Zhukovichi exploration well, which is situated not far away. Oil has already been discovered at the site where I'm taking you but, at this Western Zhukovichi exploration well, drilling is in full swing,” Mr. Suslenko explains.

Oil has been extracted from the Pripyat flexure for a long time, so it hosts the most exploration works. “All the necessary infrastructure for oil exploration has been built here so there's no need to invest a great deal, e.g. to build pipelines. Moreover, the area is rich in hydrocarbons. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't search for oil in the Brest or Vitebsk regions though,” adds Mr. Suslenko. He stresses that the Podlyassko-Brestkaya and Orshanskaya basins are viewed as oil promising, and that major exploration is planned. Next year, seismic specialists will launch exploration and, in a year or two, drill rigs might appear in these regions.

“Oil exploration is a long-term process. Initially, seismic specialists conduct studies and prepare a preliminary report on whether the necessary structures exist. Later, a sci-tech council decides whether to drill an exploration well, to collect samples of soil for thorough analysis. If the decision is positive, we start drilling up to 2.5-5m — depending on the revealed structure. This process isn't cheap, costing around \$1-1.5m. Accordingly, mistakes should be avoided! If we discover oil in two out of four wells it's seen as economically feasible. In some years, every well drilled was a success,” Alexander tells us.

As we chat, we approach a drill rig, whose top is visible above the forest canopy.



Profession of oil workers in Belarus is now one of the most prestigious



Echelon drilling rig allows to drill around ten wells

## Work for the determined

The territory where drilling is in full swing is surrounded by metre high earthen-works: an ‘obvalovka’ (to contain oil in case of a spill). The 53m drill rig sits centrally, with a ‘town’ on either side, of around two dozen trailers, containing living quarters and facilities: a canteen, a bath, a drying house and a foreman's ‘office’.

On the day of our visit, the latter is occupied by the foreman's assistant, Yevgeny Makarevich, whose turn it is to be on duty. Several days later, he'll be replaced by the foreman himself, Valery Yatsukhno. Working independently, Yevgeny is overseeing the work of 30 people, who operate in shifts, with four days off after each four working days. Just 15 people work simultaneously. The foreman and his assistant monitor all aspects

of drilling, ensuring that safety requirements are met, and that equipment is operated and maintained properly. Today, Yevgeny is working on the drill rig, so we have the chance to see how it operates. The workroom has several computers, each showing data from the rig.

Taking a short break, we ask Mr. Suslenko about Belarus' distinguished oil deposits. He replies, “We've oil for around 30 years, relying on the pace of Belorusneft's extraction, which is 1.6m tonnes annually.” The projection makes me anxious but he asserts, “When I came to Belarus after graduating from Lvov State University, volumes of distinguished reserves were also predicted at 30 years. Almost four decades have passed but our deposits are not yet exhausted, as we keep finding new ones.”

Exploratory drilling costs money and the expedition faces financial problems at present. In the past, Mozyr's geologists drilled around 12,000-15,000 metres annually; this year, only 2,400 metres have been drilled so far.

“We're currently working on just one well, in Western Zhukovichi. By the end of 2015, we plan to launch works at another site, not far from here and, if everything goes well,

we'll begin drilling a third well.”

After Yevgeny enters his office, we ask him to guide us around the site. On receiving our helmets, we go to the drilling site, where the working day is in full swing. It's extremely noisy: the process never stops and the geologists are close to reaching their goal. The well is 1,170m deep and, according to studies, oil should be found at around 1,900m. Every day, drillers penetrate another 30-40 metres. “Actually, we aren't mining but finding,” explains Mr. Suslenko. “We're searching for oil, while Belorusneft is mining it. As soon as we reach the required depth, we pass the work on to its specialists.”

Everyone is busy at the site: workers are lubricating drill pipes, cleaning up the solution poured into the well and controlling the equipment. The chief driller has the most responsibility, since he controls the drilling process. He places a new chisel inside the drilling pole, within the equipment's parameters. The process must not be stopped so the chief driller must stand near the drill throughout his shift of eight hours, regardless of the weather: burning sun or rain. Only his assistant can replace him.

Drillers experienced and young work shoulder to shoulder at the site. Vasily Kruglov admits that he's been working for 46 years and has never thought of changing his profession. “I love this work. I've gotten used to it. I love nature and the site is surrounded by forests,” he muses.

After watching the drillers' work, Yevgeny takes us to the upper decks of the drift. From a height of 30-40 metres, workers replace pipes. After just 25 metres, I'm tired and need to stop but Yevgeny is still climbing vigorously. “Not everyone can work in the drift,” he admits. “Those from cities tend not to stay long, as they need robust health and a real love of this work.”

As we're about to depart, Mr. Suslenko assures us that Belarus will never be without oil since only 50 percent is ever extracted from a mine. “Nature, probably, leaves the rest to our grandchildren,” he concludes.

## Challenges are the same for all

By Vladimir Khromov

### German Energy Agency Dena ready to co-operate with Belarus on climate change issues

“We understand that issues of climate change can only be addressed by increasing energy efficiency. Moreover, this should be a global effort. It's the only way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. With regard to Belarus' achievements in this area, we can see that the country has been dealing with the problems it faces in a resolute and consistent way,” Dena Agency Director Kristina Haverkamp has told journalists.

The German Energy Agency is ready to intensify interaction in other areas, explains Ms. Haverkamp, saying, “Belarus is facing challenges that relate to energy efficiency, reformatting and reforming the energy sector. These issues are coupled with the need to ensure a reliable electricity supply. We're working on these issues both at Government level and at the level of experts.”

Referring to Belarusian legislation in the field of renewable energy, she adds that this corresponds to the principles upon which the German regulatory framework has been built. “According to our observations, the Belarusian Government has contributed to the development of renewable energy in the same way as the German Government. However, Belarus has needed to adjust its network infrastructure, to develop renewable energy. Germany has ensured the production of renewable energy simultaneously with the development of associated infrastructure. We believe this was one of the reasons for changes in Belarusian renewable energy legislation,” notes Ms. Haverkamp.



At the forum

Minsk recently hosted the Belarusian-German Energy Forum for the fourth time. The event included panel discussions to exchange experience in the area of energy systems and renewable energy resources, as well as energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in buildings. Participants visited a number of facilities in the sphere of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

The Belarusian-German Energy Forum was organised by the representation of the German economy in Belarus, under the auspices of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy of Germany.

# Special focus placed on potassium branch development by the state

Another potassium plant will soon be operational in the country: Slavneft is launching a major construction in Minsk's Lyuban District — Nezhinsky Mining and Processing Works. The first brick was recently laid on the site at an event attended by the President of Belarus.

By Alexander Benkovsky

The project is on a grand scale: it envisages the construction of a potassium chloride mining and processing plant (of 1.1-2m tonne annual capacity) on the foundations of the Starobinskoe potassium salt deposit. Speaking at the ceremony, the President pointed out that the opening of this new facility will make it possible to increase potassium production in the country to 14m tonnes a year. "Potassium fertilisers are major exports for our state; it's an important source of foreign currency. Every year, we sell over 90 percent of all that we produce abroad," said Mr. Lukashenko. "Belarus is among the few states which produces three basic types of fertilisers: potassium, nitrogen and phosphorous. This is an important task for all responsible global organisations — including the UN — as it helps to ensure enough food. At present, around 1bn people globally suffer from starvation. It's impossible to feed them without agriculture, while the latter cannot exist without mineral fertilisers. With this in mind, the focus of our action is promising."

We can say with pride that Belarus leads the world market in potassium production per capita. The focus of our chemical branch development is based on the reconstruction of existing production facilities and the construction of new plants. The Nezhinsky plant is the third of its kind and, according to the President, the Belaruskali plant (in Soligorsk) is currently undergoing modernisation. Moreover, a new facility is being built near Petrikov, which has been under construction for two years without the help of foreign investment.

Mr. Lukashenko stressed that



A shaft miner precisely lays tunnels with the help of a laser beam

the launch of the Nezhinsky facility will result in an additional \$860m of exports annually. Accordingly, tax revenues and fees will rise — a positive effect on the country's economic situation. "As part of this plant's construction, gas pipelines will be laid in 21 residential areas of the Lyuban District. In addition, a railway station will be built and 37km of railways. The Lyuban water abstraction and sewage facilities will be reconstructed. In the future, Lyuban will become an economically developed town resembling the mining capital of Soligorsk." The president has asked the local authorities to prepare a plan of the town's general development, taking into consideration the proposed changes. The plant will create at least 2,000 new jobs, enough for around 20 percent of the



Belaruskali Association's Krasnoslobodsky mine

town's population. "By the time the construction is finished in 4-5 years, Lyuban should have changed. We need to build accommodation and offices; around 1,500-2,000 new flats will be needed," Mr. Lukashenko

said, "This town should be the most modern, beautiful and functional in the area."

The project, worth \$1,66bn, is being realised using investments from the BIN Group — which in-

jects \$268m (or 15 percent of the total budget), while covering interests on the \$400m+ credit. China's participation is also envisaged. An agreement was recently signed with China's Development Bank to open a credit line of \$1.4bn (via Belarusbank) for 14 years, on 4 percent per annum interest. The Belarusian Government will act as a credit guarantee. Slavkali's Head, Mikhail Gutseriev, explained how the facility would operate. The sales market is actually ready: potassium chloride can be sold to China independently or via the Belarusian Potassium Company. Clearly, the geography of sales would be much wider. According to Mr. Gutseriev, at current price levels, the Nezhinsky plant will pay for itself by 2030. By that time, the company will have paid around \$8bn of taxes to the budget. Slavkali has enjoyed no special privileges in its bid, as Mr. Gutseriev noted, investors must keep competitive by working under the same conditions as their rivals.

Belarusian deposits of potassium salts are viewed as the most extensive on the planet. Three major mines are located in Belarus: Starobinskoe, Oktyabrskoe and Petrikovskoe. In the 1960s, deposits near Soligorsk were first mined and it was believed then that no less than 3.5bn of potassium salts were available. Since then, Belaruskali has produced around 1.4bn tonnes of potassium fertilisers but new mining technologies and additional geological studies lead us to believe that the true deposits are much larger. The Starobinskoe site has no less than 4.7bn tonnes of potassium and Petrikovskoe, which is only beginning to be worked, produces 1.9bn. It is clear that our mining companies have plenty of work until at least 2120.

## Government sums up economic results

By Alexander Voronaev

**First nine months of 2015 come under Government scrutiny, highlighting positive macro-economic parameters despite complex economic situation**

Prime Minister Andrei Kobyakov explained the main task to the Government, saying, "The Council of Ministers needs to take prompt and systematic measures to expand specific avenues of economic development, while ensuring balanced economic progress. We're aware of basic approaches. However, under today's conditions of great instability and lack of sustainable global markets, the Government and the National Bank will continue focusing on enhancing macroeconomic sustainability, and preserving necessary levels of social protection."



At the governmental session

Although our economy is 'shrinking' (by 3.7 percent in these nine months), Belarus is managing to sustain its repayment of foreign debt in full, and within set terms, without any damage to international reserve assets. This is a great advantage. The country allocated Br16.4tr from the national budget (2.6 percent of GDP) to pay debt in these first nine months of 2015.

Meanwhile, the foreign currency market remains stable, with pure sell-

ing of foreign currency by individuals and companies to banks reaching almost \$350m this year so far.

Our foreign trade is in balance, which is good news. As Mr. Kobyakov noted with satisfaction, our foreign trade balance is among the best of the past 15 years, at \$1.2bn. The country's balance of payments has improved and, importantly, all state obligations regarding social allowances and state support of the private sector are being fulfilled.

"At the same time, we've lacked economic growth over these nine months. Industrial production volumes stood at 92.9 percent of last year's (comparing the recent three months). We are falling rather than growing in the field of industry," noted the PM, adding that investments have also fallen, by 13.9 percent.

The greatest reduction in in-

dustrial production has been seen at enterprises run by the Industry Ministry, and by the Architecture and Construction Ministry, and at Bellegprom, Bellesbumprom and Belgospishcheprom concerns. Agro-industrial goals are not being met.

"Our task is to ensure restoration of economic growth, while meeting three major priorities: not increasing

our foreign debt, considerably reducing our dependence on external factors and ensuring sustainable and balanced growth without inflation or devaluation. Exports and investments are major sources of growth under these conditions," Mr. Kobyakov explained, adding that it's vital to encourage construction, using foreign investments and foreign credit lines.

### DIRECT SPEECH

Vladimir Zinovskiy, Economy Minister:

Looking at how our economy has performed since early 2015, there are two impressions. While we've seen unfavourable external challenges, we've also improved our foreign trade balance (which is now positive). In addition, inflation is within our ceiling, standing at 10.1 percent; we've not observed such low inflation since 2011. We believe that forecasts will be met. State paid salaries have slightly risen and there are some other positives. On the other hand, the Government cannot be satisfied, since many macroeconomic figures have not been met. Industry, agriculture and construction have demonstrated poor results.

# 'Country with a great many beautiful places'

John Rosman was born and grew up in New York but has realised his American dream not in the USA but in Belarus. Minsk has been his home for the past seven years, where he runs his own business, has a flat and is involved in promoting cycling.

By Oksana Mytko

"I love New York, as it's my native city. I received my education there, working as a programmer and earning good money. However, at a certain point, I understood that this city and its lifestyle weren't right for me. New York and its outskirts lack much of a natural environment, where you can go to relax from the urban bustle. If you want a green corner, you need to purchase it. Land is privately owned, as are forests. Many city children never go into a forest at all, only seeing berries and mushrooms in the shops. I didn't want to have to buy my own slice of nature, so began to look for a place to live abroad," John says.

Having travelled a great deal, he eventually settled upon the Soviet Union, moving to Leningrad for four months before the USSR collapsed. John continued to live in St. Petersburg for 13 years, and then lived in Protvino for a further four: the city of physicists, in the Moscow Region.

Living in Russia, he had many times visited Belarus and had grown to feel an affinity for our country. In 2008, John moved to Minsk permanently, explaining, "It's a safe, clean city with so many trees and large parks. I haven't run a car since living in the USA, preferring my bicycle. In this respect, Minsk is very convenient, having wide pavements, which allow you to cycle away from the traffic. It's a great advantage for me. Moreover, Minsk's bicycle infrastructure is still developing."

John has founded a company involved in software development and, in his spare time, cycles round Belarus, enjoying its landscapes and sights. "It's wonderful that Belarusian nature isn't privately owned, remaining open to the public. There



John prefers to travel the city by bicycle

are a great many beautiful places and wild corners, with no influence of civilisation. I love to gather berries and, although I'm not fond of picking mushrooms, I know them well. I'm also impressed by Belarusian marshes. I once became bogged down but escaped safely. It's lovely that Belarus has preserved its marshes, as most are gone in the

West. They help preserve the ecological balance, which is very important," he stresses.

John makes most of his trips (his 'pokatushki') round Belarus by bicycle; he believes that this brings far more vivid impressions than in travelling by train or bus. "Nothing similar is possible in America," he comments. "Local land is private

and travellers need to go by road. In Belarus, I can cycle through forest roads and villages and fields. It's great."

Mr. Rosman is not merely an ardent bicycle lover: he has been helping develop Belarus' cycle movement, heading the Ecological Transport Fund and being a member of the Minsk Bicycle Society public association. John aims to develop better bicycle infrastructure and supervises the *Bicycle Kitchen: a Garage 38* project. This free public workshop for bicycle repair, in Minsk, allows any cyclist experiencing difficulties to drop in for repairs and advice.

The former New Yorker is now seriously learning Belarusian. "I'm not progressing fast but I'm persistent," he explains. John attends language lessons once a week, and also listens to Belarusian radio, as well as reading books by Belarusian classical writers.

While putting down roots in Belarus, John hasn't lost ties with his three sisters in the USA or with his brother, who is in France. They chat by email, and sometimes visit each other. John saw his sisters in America four years ago while his younger sister and brother have come to Belarus. He hasn't started a family of his own. "I'd always planned to do so, but haven't gotten around to it yet," he answers shortly.

The American plans to apply for Belarusian citizenship, explaining, "I'm truly happy here. I only regret that I failed to come to Belarus earlier. I love Belarusians and their tolerance: it's such a very wise attitude. Belarus doesn't make war with anyone — as other countries do. There is no race or religious intolerance. There are no ethnic ghettos, or areas off-limits to others. It's a calm, promising and peaceful country."

## Advice from Dr. Zhukova



## Avoiding conflict

*Modern life brings much stress; how can we protect our health, keeping our self-control?*

A. Stasevich, Logoisk

Throughout life, we inevitably face conflict at one time or another. We set goals but come up against obstacles, or suffer misfortune, wanting to blame others for our frustration. Meanwhile, relatives and colleagues believe that we alone are to blame for our failures, which leads to misunderstanding and resentment, creating a situation of conflict.

Of course, we all want to avoid such unpleasantness, so we need to recognise others' feelings and maintain good communication. We should speak respectfully, remaining polite, as the best way to finding solutions. Words spoken in anger are not quickly forgotten, so it's important to control your emotions. The world around us and other people won't always fall in line with our desires, and expressing anger won't change that. In fact, losing our temper almost always makes things worse, and can cause ill health.



### Recommendations on how to behave in a conflict situation

- Try to divert from the situation before it develops into an argument;
- Do not rise to others' attempts to inflame you (such people do exist). Others may want to offer advice and judgement but you don't have to engage. You can choose to listen politely and choose to disagree without having an argument;
- Keep your cool and be careful of the conversations you initiate. Focus on the positive;
- Rather than maintain an argument, once you've stated your position, stop speaking. Trouble-makers will run out of steam if you don't respond;
- If you find yourself becoming angry, try changing the topic of conversation;
- Control your emotions and your behaviour, remaining relaxed. If needed, try closing your eyes and repeating a mantra of calm endurance and self-control until you feel your equilibrium returning. Try to remain positive;
- Cultivate your talents rather than focusing on your shortcomings. This is the best path to mental and physical health.

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

## Travel cards more convenient

By Dmitry Amichkov

**Minsk's transport workers aiming to eliminate queues at metro and Minsktrans offices early each month, with travel cards issued for ten days, two weeks or a month**

Minsktrans explains that the new longer duration travel cards will be ready to use as soon as they are activated, and will come on sale in late 2015. Moreover, passengers will be able to buy travel cards prior to the day needed, making the pro-



cess convenient, and not reliant on a particular calendar date.

It's quite possible that, in future, payment will depend not on distance travelled but on time spent travelling. Accordingly, passengers would only need to scan their cards once, on entering public transport. Short-term travel cards could be valid for 30 minutes, an hour or 24 hours.

## Surely there is no obstacle to top status

**A monument to Anastasia Slutskaya to be erected in Slutsk in 2016 to mark the city's 900th anniversary**

The Minsk Regional Executive Committee's Chairman, Semen Shapiro, met recently with residents of the Slutsk District. For around 90 minutes they questioned him on street plans, road, school and kindergarten construction, agriculture and industrial development in the area.

People were also eager to know whether Slutsk has any chance of being named the cultural capital of Belarus next year. The Governor said that he sees no obstacles to this, stressing,

"Of course, I'm not responsible for the issue. However, I can confirm that Slutsk is in a good position to be acknowledged as a cultural capital. The city boasts a rich history and culture and its residents are highly educated people." It was also noted at the meeting, that in 2016, a monument to the 'Belarusian Jeanne D'Arc', Anastasia Slutskaya, will be erected in the city, following a joint decision between the Slutsk District Executive Committee and Belarus' Culture Ministry. As the Slutsk District Executive Committee's Chairman, Andrey Yanchevsky, noted, the monument will mark Slutsk's 900th jubilee.

# Initiatives pave the way

## International assistance helps Belarus to face challenges and explore new opportunities of the climate change

By Victor Mikhailov

Is there a chance for Belarus to join the Europe's list of melon exporters in the near future? Such perspective started to take shape when during unusually hot summer of 2010 a number of agricultural households in the southern regions of Belarus managed to grow an impressive harvest of watermelons and melons. The public attention to the issue was boosted in summer 2014 when the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko demonstrated perfect melons and watermelons grown in his garden in the Minsk region and suggested that governors of Belarus's southern regions turn attention to growing melons and other cucurbits or vine crops for export.

The new weather conditions present Belarusians with new opportunities, as well as brought the issue of climate change high on the current agenda of environmental challenges. Since 1989, the country is witnessing an unparalleled warming, with a sharp increase in winter temperatures and average temperatures between 1989 and 2012 1.1°C higher than the climate norm (5.8°C yearly average). According to researchers, Belarus experienced a shift in agro-climatic zones. As the result the products line of local agricultural sector could be expanded with a variety of southern vegetables and fruit, including melons.

However, warm climate brings new challenges and threats. It is expected that climate change will affect Belarus primarily through an increase in extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, making agriculture, forestry, industry, energy and housing the most vulnerable sectors. Taking into consideration that these sectors provide 40 percent of GDP, there is a need for the country to strengthen its climate change policy to address the gradually increasing complexity of the challenge and enhance the potential positive effect.

Currently Belarus has no overarching adaptation strategy, although a strategy draft plan is under development. Different adaptation mechanisms are scattered across various legal documents, including two key programmes: the National Programme for the Development of Forestry of Belarus for 2011-2015, and the National Programme on Climate Change Mitigation Measures for 2013-2020.

With due account of new concepts and provisions for post-2015 agenda, the country submitted its new climate action plan to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in September 2015. The plan comes in advance of a new universal climate change agree-



Works begin at Yelnya marsh, to restore hydrological regime

ment, which the participating parties aim to reach at the UN climate conference in Paris, in December this year. In case of success, the agreement will come into effect in 2020, empowering all countries to act to prevent average global temperatures rising above 2 degrees Celsius and to reap the many opportunities that arise from a necessary global transformation to clean and sustainable development.

However, adaptation to climate change alone is not enough. The full-scale solution also requires disaster risk and greenhouse gas emissions reduction, increase of energy efficiency and a shift to sustainable renewable energy in industrial and residential sectors.

International development assistance empowers the country with further capacity building in development and implementation of its national low-carbon development strategies consistent with national priorities and emission reduction targets; assists Belarus in the development and implementation of its national strategy and action plans on adaptation, as well as facilitates green investments, minimising financial burden on public funds.

UNDP in Belarus, EU, Global Environment Facility (GEF), GEF Small Grants Programme, the World Bank and a number of other international organisations and NGOs support measures focused on energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable wetlands management, flood protection, green economy approaches in Belarus.

The UN Express Belarus for SDG initiative that trained across Belarus in late October 2015 featured the First Climate Change Hearings that took place on 29 October in the city of Vitebsk. The event, organised by UNDP in Belarus in a partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus and the Vitebsk State University, featured a series of presentations and open discussions from the key UNDP implemented projects that tackle various

aspects of climate change.

Educating future generations about the causes and effects of global climate change is crucial, as implementing adequate solutions depends on a well-informed public. This issue was successfully addressed by the UNDP-ENVSEC 'Environment and Security' project that pioneered climate change education in Belarus' universities. Under the project's framework a new study course 'Climate Change: Consequences, Mitiga-



Energy efficient house in Grodno

tion, Adaptation' have been developed and tested in practice. The four-unit study course applies innovative educational approaches to help students and young people to understand, address, mitigate, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Climate change is expected to affect water resources, population and economy in the Pripyat River and Neman River Basins. Taking into account possible climate change impacts, the project strengthened Belarus' capacity in managing flood and related disasters in the regions, designed a flood risk map and provided human and institutional capacity strengthening in deploying and enhancing a regional flood early warning system.

The housing sector consumes more than 16 percent of the total final electricity consumption and about 33 percent of total final thermal energy consumption and is responsible for about one-third of total greenhouse gas emissions (one of key contributors to a human induced global warming) in Belarus.

The UNDP-GEF project 'Improving Energy Efficiency in Residential Buildings in the Republic of Belarus' is looking at high-tech solutions to turn residential houses from using fossil fuels, facilitate a shift to renewable energy sources during their operational phase. The project also demonstrates how the potential for greenhouse gas emission reductions in buildings can be realised in practice. The initiative promotes a new model of green residential housing featuring

energy-efficient construction and appliances, as well as energy-generating technologies, such as solar water heating, solar photovoltaic systems, and heat pumps. The model, suggested by the project, envisages a fourfold reduction of thermal energy consumption that will result in GHG emission reduction of up to 10 thousand tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per building in the course of its operational phase.

Belarus' natural mires are important stores of carbon. Between 1960 and 1980 around 1.5 million ha of peatlands were drained for agriculture, forestry and peat mining. The carbon, which was locked for thousands of years started to leak into the atmosphere with knock-on effect on carbon balance in the atmosphere.

UNDP Belarus, GEF, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, the UK), Belarusian Ministries of Environment and Forestry joined efforts in developing long-term restoration solutions, acknowledging the rewetting as an effective way of tackling greenhouse gases emissions from these landscapes. The rewetting approach involves blocking drainage canals by constructing various water-regulating facilities (dam, dykes, etc.) and, thus, elevating water levels to or above the peat surface.

This approach was successfully applied in practice by the UNDP-GEF project 'Renaturalisation and Sustainable Management of Peatlands in Belarus to Combat Land Degradation, Ensure Conservation of Globally Valuable Biodiversity, and Mitigate Climate Change' (Peatlands-1) by restoring hydrological regime of 12 dis-

turbed peatlands on the overall area of 28,000 ha. The rewetting helped to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 300,000 tons per year. The project also developed a regulatory framework that specified the procedure and rules for renaturalisation of degraded peatlands, and designed Belarus' first practical recommendations on the environmental rehabilitation of degraded peatlands.

The developing strategy of restoring and sustainable use of the country's peatlands with regard to climate change was taken further as part of the UNDP-GEF project 'Landscape Approach to Management of Peatlands Aiming at Multiple Ecological Benefits' (Peatlands-2). The project focused on developing and testing the method of restoring peatlands, damaged by forest amelioration. Works are underway to restore a hydrological regime at Belarus' three large raised bogs with the overall area of 3,570 ha.

Grazing on peatlands is also seen as a strong driver of their degradation and a source of GHG emissions. The Peatlands-2 project set the challenge in converting 400 ha of degraded peatlands, formerly managed for intensive agriculture, to meadows that will be further used for mowing and pasture. Apart from this, the project propelled planting black alder trees on 200 ha of degraded peatlands as an efficient tool to mitigate climate change. These measures will contribute to reducing the negative impacts on the carbon balance.

A total of 51,000 ha of Belarusian peatlands have been renaturalised by international projects in the last decade, once again turning them into carbon sinks. According to the BirdLife International, in October 2015 Belarus' efforts in peatlands restoration were recognised by the UNDP Equator Principles as being in the top 8 percent of global environmental achievements.

In the last decade more than 10 international assistance projects, implemented by UNDP in Belarus with \$US 20 million of financial support from international donors, helped the country to prepare for the challenges posed by climate change and explore in-depth its potential positive effects. These initiatives also paved a way for successful deployment of best available contemporary technologies, innovative hands-on experience, and the best international practices in the field.

The international cooperation in the country's climate change policy is gaining momentum, fueled by mutual understanding of the necessity to scale collaborative action in the area. In the very near future, three more 'climate change' focused initiatives will join Belarus' portfolio of UNDP implemented environmental projects. Recently the GEF has announced plans to provide Belarus with \$US 8.5 million for the implementation of projects aimed at helping Belarus to achieve the transition to 'a climate-resilient country/economy?'. Being an active contributor to the climate change policy dialogue in the region, Belarus welcomes new opportunities in designing and implementing new approaches that could be instrumental in exploring shifts in climatic conditions, and essential in delivering efficient climate solutions.

# 'Save our planet before it is too late' proclaim demonstrators worldwide

On what may be the biggest day of climate change activism ever seen worldwide, tens of thousands of people marched as far afield as Sydney and Madrid to send a message to leaders gathering for a UN summit: 'Save our planet before it is too late'

More than 2,000 events were being held in cities including London, Sao Paulo and New York, on the eve of the Paris summit which runs from November 30th-December 11th and will be attended by about 150 heads of government. Berlin was keen to do its bit, with some 17,000 people taking part in a rally in the German capital, according to organisers.

"A binding aim and clear plan of how we stay under the two degree target, that is what counts," said one woman who had travelled to the event from Hamburg. Anti-war campaigners joined a monster climate change march in London, as the UK weighs up whether to start bombing ISIL militants in Syria. Passions were just as strong in the Spanish capital, with marchers in Madrid determined to take a stand for future generations.

"We are here to defend our planet, to fight for a better place for our children to live in the future," said Greenpeace activist Jorge Puebla. "We have caused too much damage to our planet in the last 30 years and I really don't know if we are going to be able to recover it."



People participate in a human chain to show solidarity for climate change

In debt-burdened Greece, day to day difficulties are still high for many but in Athens thousands turned out to add their voice to calls for a legally-binding accord. A human chain almost a kilometre long sent a message from climate change protesters

in Brussels, with their planned march cancelled because of the terror threat in Belgium. In Sydney, about 45,000 people are estimated to have marched through the central business district towards the Opera House.

Protesters held placards reading:

'There is no Planet B' and 'Say no to burning national forests for electricity' ahead of what many believe is a last-chance summit to prevent disaster. Hopes are high that the Paris summit will not fail like the previous such meeting six years ago in Copenhagen.



## More shoppers go online for bargains

**Euphoric and excited amid the frenzy to secure the best bargains, they poured into New York stores as soon as the doors opened**

As the US retail industry spreads its sales across the holiday period, spending has risen overall. It has declined over Black Friday weekend itself — but almost 100 million people were still expected to hit the shops.

"I think some of the things are really nice, at least the deals on the TVs, the deals on the TVs are really good. They are less than half," said Anam, one customer.

For several years now Britain has embraced Black Friday fever: the indications this time are that many have taken to shopping online rather than heading to stores.

Overall sales are estimated to be 20 percent up on 2014.

"Black Friday is the biggest shopping day globally with the exception of singles day now in China, so it is a very important shopping day and it's not going away," said Shannon Edwards, CEO of fashion shopping website Styloko.com.

However, Asda, one of the UK's Black Friday pioneers, pulled out this year citing 'shopper fatigue'.

## Robots which tap into your feelings on show in Beijing

**Over 100 experts, 12 international organisations and more than 120 companies were represented at Beijing's World Robot Exhibition**

There they 'met' robots that act just like humans like Xiaolou. The humanoid robot was made by Chinese company Tami Intelligence and it is known for its capacity to interact with people. So how is it possible?

"The robot has plenty of facial expressions, and it can give people a good feeling of interaction. And it can follow the human by which I mean it can imitate your gestures when you are in front of it. The robot recognises if you are male or female and also tells your age and whether you are happy and the degree of your happiness," explained Lui Boyi, a product manager at Tami Intelligence Technology.

But it was a female who stole the show — don't they always. Android Geminoid F is her name and visitors crowded around to talk to her and take a snap or two. The robot was created by Hiroshi Ishiguro Laboratory



at Osaka University. They say it is still a work in progress.

"Of course, our final goal is creating some artificial intelligence system out of showing intelligence by using this robot. But still it's difficult for example the voice recognition system doesn't work, especially in a noisy environment," notes Kohei Ogawa, a teacher at Osaka University.

A large section of the exhibition was devoted to robots for industry.

## Southern Australia burns as fatal bushfires destroy wildlife and livestock

**Swathes of southern Australia are a blaze after fourteen bushfires broke out**

The fires have claimed the lives of two people and killed wildlife and livestock. A number of houses have been burned to the ground and authorities fear the situation will get worse before it gets better.

Emergency services say three people are missing and thirteen are being treated in hospital. Wildfires are a summer hazard in Australia, but weather forecasters say climate change is increasing the risk of bushfires and the duration of the dry season is now longer. October has been declared the hottest month since records began.

## Rio's Olympic whitewater slalom course put through its paces

**The test events for next year's Rio Olympics are coming thick and fast now**

After sailing, badminton and field hockey, the latest venue to be put through its paces was the Whitewater Stadium in the Deodoro Olympic Park, which was officially opened last week. Brazil's Pan American Games kayak champion, Ana Satila, was full of praise for the Olympic canoe slalom course.

She said, "It is all marvellous, incredible, it is a unique course. Out of all those I have kayaked on before it is my favourite, and I want to congratulate the organisers, I am very impressed. I was in London and I can say that it is all very good, the Brazilians are doing everything to represent our country, and for us to paddle the best we can."

## All eyes on King Tut's tomb in search for ancient Egypt's lost Queen Nefertiti

**Speculation is mounting that Tutankhamun's tomb could lead the way to the last resting place of the lost Queen Nefertiti, in what would be the most remarkable Egyptian archaeological find this century**

Experts say scans of the site make it 90 percent likely that there is something behind the walls. British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves, leading the investigation, said last month that he believed Tutankhamun's mausoleum was originally occupied by Nefertiti and that she had lain undisturbed behind what he believes is a partition wall.

"My close examination of these scans highlighted the apparent presence of closed doorways on the west wall, potentially leading to an additional Tutankhamun period store-room," he noted.

**Materials prepared with aid of information agencies**



# Belarusian painters and sculptors at *Art Capital* in Paris

## First time for Belarusian pavilion at Grand Palais des Champs-Elysees

By Vladimir Mishin

Paris' Grand Palace of Fine Arts, built in 1897 for the 1900 Universal Exhibition, annually hosts major international exhibitions, under the patronage of the president of France and its culture minister.

The current *Art Capital* exhibition, inside the historical Grand Palais, featured over 2,000 painters and sculptors, from over 40 countries, among them Spain, Canada, China, Sweden, Japan and Belarus, with South Korea as the guest of honour.

Eleven Belarusian masters demonstrated their works to French spectators and specialists, as well as art dealers: contemporary Belarusian painters and sculptors Victor Alshovsky, Yuri Anushko, Anna Belousova, Yelena Ventriyon-Makarevich, Larisa Zhuravovich, Maxim Petrulya, Sergey Portenkov, Pavel Semchenko, Alexander Slepov, Ales Falei, and Valentina Shoba.

The Belarusian pavilion was organised by the Belarusian Embassy to France, with assistance from the National Art Museum of Belarus, the Cultural Centre of Belarus in France and Priorbank JSC, as well as Belarus-born Arkady Volodos, who permanently resides in France.

As part of the opening ceremony for the Belarusian pavilion, the Ambassador of Belarus to France, Pavel Latushko, addressed those attending, noting that the Belarusian delegation

of painters and sculptors represented every region of Belarus, as well as the capital of Minsk. Mr. Latushko underlined the importance of presenting the Belarusian school of pictorial and monumental art at one of the most prestigious exhibition venues worldwide.

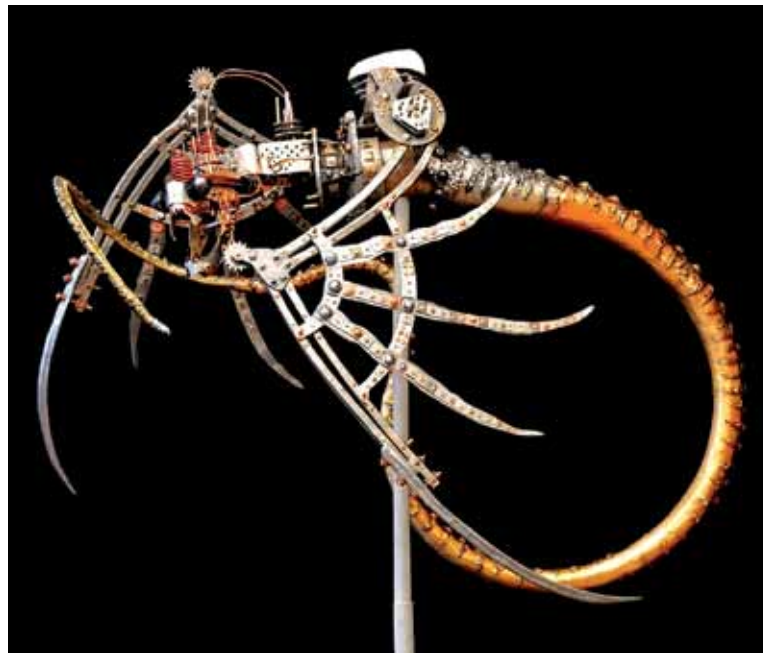
The Belarusian Ambassador also said that Belarusian painting and sculpture have deep historical roots and traditions. In particular, Belarusian culture is proud of such outstanding painters and sculptors as Ivan Khrutsky, Walenty Wankowicz, Marc



Sergey Portenkov

Chagall, Leon Bakst, Mikhail Savitsky, Zair Azgur and Andrey Bembel.

Mr. Latushko emphasised that the participation of Belarusian representatives at the exhibition gives French audiences the chance to learn about our rich culture. In fact, more than 40,000 spectators annually visit the *Art Capital* exhibition. On the opening day alone, the Belarusian pavilion received around 500 guests.



Sergey Portenkov's work



Valentina Shoba

As part of this event, two Belarusians — a painter and a sculptor — were awarded the Taylor Award. As a result of this year's vot-

### MT REFERENCE:

The Brian Taylor Association was registered on December 7th, 1855, by Baron Taylor, under the official title of the Taylor Association of Painters, Sculptors, Architects, Engravers and Designers. Its major goals are to provide assistance to painters, and to develop and stimulate arts in all manifestations. The Taylor Award is annually bestowed in two artistic directions: painting and sculpture. The decision to award this prize is made by a commission comprising 12 people selected by the Association's members through voting.

ing, painter Valentina Shoba from Grodno and sculptor Sergey Portenkov from Gomel have become laureates of the Taylor Award: the first time such an award has been granted to a Belarusian artist.

Sergey Portenkov's work was delivered to Paris on the last day before the exhibition opening at the Grand Palais, by Belavia, and with the support of the dispatch service of the Belarusian Ministry of Communications and Informatisation

The Belarusian Ambassador hopes Belarus will continue to take part in future years. He negotiated

with the President of the Salon of Drawing and Pictorial Art on Water, Catherine Jeagues and the Vice President of one of the most prestigious exhibition projects in France, the *Paris Autumn Show* (Salon d'Automne de Paris) — Jean Deville. Together, they discussed the future of joint projects in the sphere of pictorial and monumental art.

## Fashion setters' ethnic motifs

By Natalia Uryadova

**EthnoStyle Fashion Festival held in Minsk for first time, gathering light industry enterprises and designers at National Beauty School**

National motifs beyond traditional linen dresses and embroidered blouses were on display on the catwalk, with each collection truly unique. The Centre of Folk Crafts — Skarbnitsa — has made a thorough study of folk costumes, finding examples from across the regions and villages, to ensure that designs are authentic.

From Pinsk's Polesie Knitting Factory, designer Anton Yaroshchik, notes, "I've tried to expand the range of clothes enjoying popularity, placing Belarusian motifs on modern 'day' dresses, and adding gold embellishment in some cases. I also use hand made accessories, made from glass,



TATIANA STOLYAROVA

felt and acrylic crystals." Anton's collection of sweatshirts, wrap scarves, fleeces and puff gilets, aimed at young people, comprised 12 stylish outfits with their own artistic interpretation of folk traditions.

Minsk's Elen Carotte workshop presented its vision of school uniform — made from linen. Designer Diana

Loveikina is a fan of natural materials, commenting, "They're always on trend." Minsk designer Yelena Sergeeva's felt collection of coats, earrings and beads also hit a high note.

The Director of the National Beauty School, Yelena Troitskaya, tells us that the festival is a pilot project. "We presented just 12 collections,



TATIANA STOLYAROVA

Ethnic motifs enjoy popularity among designers

although we received many more applications. We plan to continue the project in spring. To ensure a spirit of competition between designers, we'll also organise a contest. Apart from traditional prizes, winners will receive the opportunity to present their works and attend master classes abroad," she comments.

## Master remembered

**Gomel's Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace hosts exhibition by Gomel-born famous monumental painter Gennady Zharin**

Over 20 works are on show, on loan from the master's relatives. Gennady Zharin, who died in 2014, had always worked primarily in monumental painting, creating various large-scale pieces for the Belarusian capital.

He designed mosaics, which grace four high-rise buildings in Minsk's Vostok-1 micro-district, and decorations for Yakub Kolas Square metro station in Minsk, as well as the National Library of Belarus' Land of Blue Lakes composition. Tapestries at Minsk's Town Hall are his, as is the coat of arms on the building and at Minsk City Executive Committee's Hall.

Gennady Zharin was born in Gomel in 1946.

# Unique exhibits reveal diversity of Korean life

*Lifetime of Koreans* exhibition hosted by National Art Museum in Minsk, from museums of Seoul, organised jointly with Dongguk University Museum and the Korea Foundation, with support from the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Belarus



By Veniamin Mikheev

The exhibition includes decorative-and-applied art works as well as masterpieces of traditional secular and religious Korean painting and sculpture. The collection covers a period of almost one thousand years — from the Koryo dynasty (from

the 10th to the 14th centuries) to the modern age.

*The Lifetime of Koreans* narrates everyday Korean traditions, culture and rituals, across various themes, such as childbirth, weddings and 60th anniversaries.

On show are clothing items and those commonly found at home, in-

cluding kitchen tools and crockery. The section devoted to spiritual life features masterpieces of religious culture, paintings and sculpture.

Three areas of Korean life are portrayed: spiritual, social and everyday. Each is thought provoking, revealing aspects of life in Korea with which foreigners may be unfamiliar.

## Waiting in anticipation

By Yevgeny Skorokhodov

**Belarusfilm National Film Studio prepares to launch filming for winners of Open Republican Contest of Cinema Projects**

The competition was held in August, and work is now being launched on filming the winning entries. The first is *Hold on to the Clouds*: a television drama with 8 episodes, written by Valentin Zaluzhny and Ilya Tsofin, and directed by Roman Gapanyuk. The story follows the challenging work of a crew tasked with putting up power transmission lines, under the guidance of experienced foreman Vladimir Kovalev. As they work, we hear their concerns and worries, and learn about their mutual friendship and supportiveness, which helps them overcome any obstacle.

Actor, director and scriptwriter Roman Gapanyuk graduated from the Higher Theatrical College (named after Shchukin) and worked as a director for Brest Drama and Music Theatre. He directed *A Special Case* and *A Sure Remedy*, as well as 8-part series *In the Constellation of Sagittarius* (2015).

*Traces on the Water* is a feature-length film written by Andrey Golubev (based on Nikolay Ilyinsky's novel *Foreign Native*). Dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the militia, the events take place in 1947, on the territory of Western Belarus. The army is battling isolated groups of bandits, trying to restore peace, as well as law and order in the war-torn land.

# Sincere revelations by Fanny Ardant

By Victoria Popova

**Fanny Ardant spends three happy days in Minsk, presenting *Obsessive Rhythms* at Listapad Film Festival**

At her press conference, actress Fanny answered questions freely, chatting about 'l'amour' in her beautiful French accent. All the men present fell a little in love with her. She adores Minsk and hopes to soon return. Fanny loves her work as a director and enjoys Russian literature and music. She also appreciates men's ability to love.

Answering the question as to whether her name helps her to find finances for her directorial experiments, Fanny smiled and spoke in Russian — for the first time during the conference: 'No'.

She gestured coquettishly and everyone accepted that as a negation, "You know, this was tricky, as I'm not a salesperson. When, for the first time, I had to negotiate with rich people to fund my picture, I was asked: 'What's the age of your film's audience?' I was embarrassed, as I had no answer. With this in mind, I shoot my films with modest budgets; each member of our production team — actors, operators and decorators — views this as magic. Like craftsmen, they try to do their job perfectly. My films are hand made."

**Why did you decide to shoot a story about unhappy love? Margo — in *Obsessive Rhythms* — loves, but is unhappy.**

*Margo doesn't notice that her love is dying. My first work as a director, 'Ashes and Blood', narrated*



Fanny Ardant at Listapad Festival

*the start of her love. Now, 'Obsessive Rhythms' details its end. The beginning of a love story is always blindly passionate. Our eyes only open when the feeling fades. I've always been fond of love stories in books. As a teenager, I read almost all works of Russian literature on the theme of unhappy love. I've always loved Anna Karenina more than Madame Bovary.*

**Is it coincidental that Margo is played by Asia Argento, who resembles you?**

*It's most probably a subconscious choice. I'm rather insistent and probably dwell on certain ideas. The single conclusion I've come to is that there are no answers as to why love comes and leaves.*

**As an actress, you worked with such giants as Francois Truffaut,**

**Alain Resnais, Franco Zeffirelli and Francois Ozon. Have they pushed you as a director?**

*Probably, the greatest influence they've had on me has been their enthusiasm and energy; I've learnt from them. Each has their own unique style and particular view of the world and cinema. However, they're also united by passion and a strong desire to work. I've always thought it a blessing to work as an actress or a director. It's a divine gift to be cherished and enjoyed.*

**Why does *Obsessive Rhythms* take place in Italy rather than France?**

*I wanted to tell this story without any relation to a certain city. The film features few city views (streets or cars). When people are unhappy, they fail to notice such elements.*

*Moreover, I've always loved how foreigners speak French with an accent. Words gain a unique melody. Among the actors, there is only one who is French — Gérard Depardieu. One of the major metaphors of the film is 'to find oneself between a wolf and a dog'. In France, this phrase indicates twilight: the time when daylight ends and night has not yet fallen. It's impossible to distinguish a dog from a wolf at this time. We each face a similar twilight when we lose something important in our pursuit of a mirage. Interestingly, French historians describe Stalin's years with this metaphor.*

**Is Margo a sister of Truffaut's *The Woman Next Door*?**

*Both burn their lives, being in love with love. They lack wisdom or a strategy to withstand reality. Only literary characters can live for love alone, such as Romeo and Juliet. In real life, love tends to pass — as in Pushkin's 'Eugene Onegin'. In 'Anna Karenina', when Vronsky is informed of Anna's suicide, he's sitting on a warm train, with terrible toothache, which matters more to him than the tragedy.*

**Do you love to write scripts?**

*Yes. I'm inclined to enjoy my own company, rather than seeking out the high life. I have only a few friends. Staying home alone, with my notebook, in which I write about my characters, is a true pleasure: like dating myself.*

*One thing I love about being a playwright and director is that you can inspire people to leave a film or a performance arguing as much as they do after a football match. I adore this.*

## Mastery of past armourers and soldiers

**Military helmets and banners of Belarusian lands on show at exhibition in Nesvizh**

The small exhibition hall of Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve is hosting *Military Helmets of Defensive Weaponry and Banners of Belarusian Lands, from the 11th to 17th Century*.



On show are helmets, as well as armour, javelins and banners from the 11th-17th century: 40 exhibits in total. "Using each helmet as an example, we can trace the development of armourers' mastery, as well as seeing most types of helmets used by our ancestors and their rivals: early sectorial, spheroidal, pot helmets, bassinets, sallet and armet-type helmets and burgonets," notes a museum curator.

A highlight of the exhibition is a reconstructed helmet (the original being lost), as thought to have been worn by Radziwill the Black, from the mid-16th century, and thought to have been made by famous European master Kunz Lochner.

# Gold medal and maximum tickets

Having lifted 407kg in the double event, Belarusian weightlifter Vadim Streltsov becomes under 94kg world champion

By Igor Leshin

The competition in Houston wasn't easy for the athletes from the Mogilev Region. After the first exercise — the snatch — Streltsov managed to lift 175kg, ranking sixth. However, even before his departure to the World Championship, Vadim had underlined that he was focused on the clean and jerk. He wasn't

mistaken. Having lifted 230kg, Vadim took gold in this nomination, and the champion's title.

Belarusian Alexander Venskel lifted 178kg in the snatch, placing him close to the leaders before the second exercise. Having lifted 220kg in the clean and jerk, he attempted 230kg, in a bid for gold, but failed, leaving him fourth, with a total of 398kg.

The leaders of the Belarusian national women's team, Dina Sazanovets and Marina Shkermankova, failed to live up to their coaches' hopes in the under 69kg category, with Sazanovets finishing seventh (lifting 244kg) and Olympiad bronze medallist Shkermankova placed ninth. Chinese Xiang Yanmei, having lifted 263kg across two events, took gold.



Vadim Streltsov on medals podium

## MT REFERENCE:

The national weightlifting team of Belarus has received the maximum number of Rio 2016 Olympic tickets following the 2015 IWF World Weightlifting Championship, which finished in American Houston: six men and four women. Following the results of the 2014 and 2015 world championships, the Belarusian men's team is ranked fifth globally, while our women's squad is among the top ten (placed eighth). In the overall standings of the 2015 IWF World Weightlifting Championship, Belarus was ranked eighth, thanks to Vadim Streltsov's gold (sum of two events in the under 94kg category).

# Cup battles at Borisov-Arena

Dinamo Minsk and BATE Borisov play European cup matches

By Yegor Glebov

## BATE retains its chance

In the home match, BATE drew against Leverkusen Bayer — 1:1 — and continues to fight for a place in the Champions League play-offs. The team from Borisov has drawn a line under domestic matches this season, playing brightly, boldly and, most important, efficiently.

After Roma's devastating defeat by Barcelona (6:1), BATE's prospects lifted. On December 10th, the Borisov squad will face Roma in Rome, needing to win in order to reach the Champions League play-offs. Moreover, Roma has been already beaten in Borisov.

It seems that BATE has put aside fear, becoming somehow more mature. BATE's head coach Alexander Yermakovich no longer



Nenad Adamović's victorious goal

gives the impression of an embarrassed young school graduate thrown among academics. Of course, Luis Enrique, Rudi Garcia and Roger Smith are experienced professionals but no one is born a master; experience lends wings. Who would have thought, a year ago, that BATE would do so well

this season? At that time, the Borisov players were doing pretty badly; now they're demonstrating their strong character and showing good results.

## Dinamo winning battles

Dinamo Minsk has earned its first points in the Europa League, defeating



BATE in action

Czech Viktoria — 1:0, with Nenad Adamović scoring.

Dinamo lost its chance to reach the play-offs in the previous round, being beaten at home by Villarreal. In the last but one round, Viktoria Plzeň pinned hopes not on itself, but on Rapid Vienna. However, Dinamo, playing its last home game of the season, refused to submit and didn't allow the Plzeň club into the play-offs.

Sadly, the stands weren't even half full, showing fans' despair.

Oleg Veretilo is likely to have played his last match as part of the Minsk team, following a decade with the squad.

In the final round of the Europa League group stage, Dinamo, having lost its chance of reaching the play-offs, will face local Rapid in Vienna.

# Meshkov HC in Champions League play-offs

By Kirill Karin

After defeating Spanish Logrono away — 32:28 — Brest Meshkov HC qualifies for EHF Champions League play-offs and, regardless of the result at the final meeting, the champion of Belarus will keep first place in Group C

The match in Logrono was a true challenge for Meshkov HC. As in the previous meeting between these two teams, the first period finished to the Brest club's advantage — 17:11. However, in the second period, they were soon down in numbers.

As the previous match, against

Spain at the Victoria Sports Complex, finished in defeat (31:33) Meshkov fans were on the edge of their seats. Sergey Bebesheko's team needed to finish ahead by at least three goals to move forward. Spain was also determined to claim victory, and the referee seemed to be biased towards the guests.

Arenas Garabaya did well in defence, and Viaña Malmagro forced his way through Meshkov HC's de-



Brest handballers achieve good result

fenders, quickly reducing their lead to first two goals and then just one. This continued until the end of the match, with the players fighting for

every pass. The match was interrupted repeatedly, either to provide assistance to players or to give a penalty.

Dmitry Nikulenkov managed two goals in the last three minutes before the final whistle, despite the squad being two men down, and then another. This was followed by a final goal from Rastko Stojković, taking the Brest club four balls into the lead and keeping it in with a chance of making it through to the next round.

# Silver and bronze in Odense

By Igor Grishin

Danish Odense hosts 31st World Trampoline, Tumbling & DMT Championships, with Belarusian national women's trampoline team, comprising Tatiana Petrenya, Anna Gorchenok, Maria Lon and Polina Badygina, winning team silver, while bronze is claimed by Belarusian Nikolay Kazak, Vladislav Goncharov, Oleg Ryabtsev and Artem Zhuk

In the qualification round, Tatiana Petrenya, Anna Gorchenok, Maria Lon and Polina Badygina were ranked fourth but, in the final, in which just three athletes from each squad competed, they scored an impressive 160,090 points, to claim silver, behind the Chinese, and ahead of the Russians.

In the men's tournament, the Belarusian squad kept third place through until the finals, with 172,585 points, to win bronze.

The World Championships in Odense, Denmark, was a selective event for the 2016 Olympic Games for trampolinists in individual programmes, with the top eight men and women automatically receiving tickets to Rio de Janeiro (no more than two per country). Competition for tickets was high, with a record 136 men and 90 women competing this year. Those ranked between 9th and 16th will have the chance to receive tickets to Rio next April.

During pre-Olympic week, five more tickets will be given, while the remaining three places for men and women will be distributed by the International Association of Athletics Federations.

Belarus was represented at the World Trampoline Championships by Tatiana Petrenya, Anna Gorchenok, Maria Lon and Polina Badygina, as well as Nikolay Kazak, Vladislav Goncharov, Oleg Ryabtsev and Artem Zhuk, while Dmitry Doroshuk, Edgard Vichis, Nikita Pavlenko and Artur Perfiliev comprised the national tumbling team.

# Accent of the week



Grodno-born Painters of the Paris School exhibition presented in Grodno by Belgazprombank, from its corporate collection

## Exhibitions

### NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street

Until 11<sup>th</sup> December. *From Realism to Impressionism* (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century painting) Until 21<sup>st</sup> December. *Modus Vivendi* Until 30<sup>th</sup> December. *Celebrating Victory Day in Museum* Until 11<sup>th</sup> January. *The Colour of Life* Until 25<sup>th</sup> January. Roman Zaslunov's painting

### NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 30<sup>th</sup> December. *Ancient Belarus* Until 31<sup>st</sup> December. *Major Presentation of Museum Relics: 79 Steps Inside History* Until 17<sup>th</sup> January. *Museum of New Year's Tree Decorations* Until 1<sup>st</sup> June. *Belarus' Trade on the Scales of History*

### MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square

Until 27<sup>th</sup> March. *Talking Machine*

### MUSEUM OF MATURE AND ECOLOGY OF BELARUS

12 Karl Marx Street

Until 6<sup>th</sup> March. *Jungles*

*behind the Window*

### MUSEUM OF MATURE AND ECOLOGY'S EXHIBITION HALL

9A Bogdanovich Street

Until 17<sup>th</sup> January. *Mummies*

*of the World*

### ZABRODIE ETHNOGRAPHICAL COMPLEX

Zabrodie village

Until 26<sup>th</sup> December. *Museum of the First World War and Retro Machinery*

### PICTURE HOUSE

89/3 Pobediteley Avenue, office 3

Until 31<sup>st</sup> December. *Great*

*Classics of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

## Theatres

### BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square

04.12. Don Quixote 06.12. The Firebird.

Chopiniana. Bolero 08.12. Aida

09.12. Passions (Rogneda); Rita, or the

Pirate Triangle 10.12. Pagliacci

### BELARUSIAN STATE

#### ACADEMIC MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myashnikov Street

04.12. 1900 05.12. Red Riding Hood.

Generation NEXT; The Gypsy Baron

06.12. Golden Chicken; Shalom Aleichem!

08.12. Blue Cameo 09.12. Yunona and Avos

10.12. Tours of the Daugavpils Theatre

(Latvia); Theatre Director

### MAXIM GORKY NATIONAL

#### ACADEMIC DRAMA THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street

04.12. Oedipus 05.12. Love Circle 06.12. Tricks

of Khanuma 08.12. The Twelfth Night 09.12.

Taming of the Shrew 10.12. Caught by the Net

### YANKA KUPALA NATIONAL

#### ACADEMIC THEATRE

7 Engels Street

04.12. Local Cabaret 05.12. Office 06.12. Pan

Tadeusz 08.12. The Black Lady of Nesvizh 09.12.

The Pinsk Gentry 10.12. People of the Marsh

### THEATRE-STUDIO OF FILM ACTOR

13 Pobediteley Avenue

04.12. Abduction of Yelena

05.12. Who Laughs Last 06 and 08-09.12.

#13 10.12. ...Forgetting Herostratos!

### REPUBLICAN THEATRE

#### OF BELARUSIAN DRAMA

44 Kropotkin Street

05.12. The Poet's Diary 06.12. The Contract

07.12. Named Gospodin 08.12. Maybe?

09.12. Living till the Premiere 10.12.

The Chernobyl Prayer

### MINSK CONCERT HALL

5 Oktyabrskaya Square

07.12. Comedy 08.12. Cuckold

# Kaleidoscope of history unveiled

## December of decades and centuries past comes to life

**December 4th.** In 1903, Lazar Lagin was born in Vitebsk — a writer and author of fantastic and satiric stories and Old Man Khottabych novel.

**December 5th.** In 1925, a Belarusian figure of folk arts and a choir conductor — Victor Sharetsky — was born.

**December 6th.** In 1933, an expert in ethnic music — Zinaida Mozheiko — was born in Orsha. She launched production of gramophone records — including of musical folklore of Belarusian Polesie, as part of the Musical Folklore of World Nations (winning UNESCO Grand Prix).

**December 7th.** In 1958, singer Svetlana Solodkaya was born in the village of Dudichi, of the Dyatlovo District. She's a soloist at the State Folk Choir of Belarus, the *Svyata* Ensemble of Folk Music and the State Dance Company.

**December 8th.** In 1938, a Belarusian historian and publicist — Ivan Sachenko — was born. He studied the theory and practice of national and foreign media, as well as publications of Belarusian writers.

**December 9th.** In 1891, Belarusian poet Maxim Bogdanovich was born.

**December 10th.** In 1870, a graphical painter, a theatrical decorator and a teacher — Ferdynand Ryszczyc — was born. He was known as the author of the first Belarusian poster.



**December 4th.** In 1959, the State Literary-Memorial Museum of Yakub Kolas opened in Minsk's house where the People's Poet of Belarus lived since late 1944. It's located on the territory of the National Academy of Sciences.

**December 5th.** In 1812, Belarus' Berezina River be-

came the point which strong French army failed to pass.

**December 6th.** In 1918, the first Catholic service took place in Belarusian.

**December 6th.** In 1925, the 1st all-Belarusian art exhibition opened in Minsk to lay grounds for systematic Republican shows.

**December 7th.** In 1966, the Belarusian Voluntary Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments was founded.

**December 7th.** In 1973, the BSSR Academy of Sciences' Bio-organic Chemistry Institute was founded.

**December 8th.** In 1918, the first Belarusian conservatory opened in Vitebsk (now known as the I.I. Solletrinsky Musical College).

**December 8th.** In 1991, Minsk was acknowledged the CIS capital, with the Commonwealth's headquarters.

**December 8th.** In 1991, the Maxim Bogdanovich Literary Museum opened in Troitsky Suburb.

**December 8th.** In 1999, presidents of Belarus and Russia signed an agreement to establish the Union State.

**December 7th.** In 1941,