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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● NO. 43 (1001) ● THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2023 ● WWW.SB.BY



People are the main value

The President's order has been fulfilled: 41 people have been evacuated from the Gaza Strip, which was engulfed in fire. These are citizens of Belarus, as well as members of their families.

The Belavia evacuation flight landed at Minsk National Airport late in the evening on Thursday, November 16th. There were 19 rescued adults and 22 children on board. The youngest was barely three years old. Despite the fatigue from the long flight, the passengers were smiling as they stepped off the ramp. To set foot on a land where there is no war is real happiness for them. → **4**



Safety, quality and import substitution. What else does the President require from officials?

The Head of State first got acquainted with the work of the 1868th artillery ordnance depot. Various types of weapons and military equipment are stored and repaired on the territory of a military facility.

The President was informed about the purpose of the artillery ordnance depot and its structure. The depot chief Yevgeny Maslyukov said that the weapon depot was established in 1941 and was heavily involved in World War Two. It has been located in Gomel since 1945. The territory has a section dedicated to storing small arms, shops to repair weapons and hardware, and outdoor sites for weapon storage.

Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin told the President that all the small arms in storage of the Belarusian army are properly inventoried and are in good order. For instance, among other things an assault rifle was demonstrated to Aleksandr Lukashenko. The President wondered whether it was a new one or whether it had been refurbished. The depot chief noted that it is difficult to guess from how the weapon looks because used assault rifles get refurbished to mint condition at the artillery ordnance depot, and they are impossible to tell apart visually.

Then the Head of State examined the shop where artillery weapon systems get repaired. For instance, the shop fixes Gvozdika



Military and economic security — these issues were the focus of attention of the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, during a working trip to Gomel

modernising, and preserving our weapons. Today I made sure that our military are great people. We pay a huge amount of attention to keeping our military fed, clothed, well-rested and training in good barracks. As a military man I can say that it is nothing if you don't have weapons and ammunition," the Head of State said.

Upon completion of his visit to the artillery ordnance depot in Gomel, the President was presented with a grenade launcher.

at your level. By preserving diamond processing, we managed to develop jewellery production in the country, which enables us to make products with a higher profit margin. Today diamond processing accounts for 20 percent of our production, jewellery accounts for 80 percent," Ruslan Sorokovoi said.

Both the enterprise and the holding company hit all performance targets, the Director General said. In his words, the plant buys raw materials mainly in Russia. The plant is also starting to co-operate with Zimbabwe as well.

A new line of business for Kristall is the production of minted gold bars for the Finance Ministry. The ministry sells them to economic entities, banks and other credit and financial organisations of Belarus. This is a serious contribution to import substitution, because previously the bars were supplied to Belarus from Western European countries.

The President instructed to take these issues under special control,

"Can we do everything for the National Bank? Then we should import nothing from Switzerland starting next year. And this year as well."

Aleksandr Lukashenko got familiar with the stages of jewellery production and diamond processing at the plant.

While on a tour of the jewellery plant, the President also talked to Kristall workers. "I've been planning to come here for a long time. This is not because you make such beautiful things... I think the most beautiful thing in the world is the woman. Moreover, a woman looks even prettier if she wears diamonds, gold and so on (I don't think so personally, but women themselves do). I am calm about such things. I have never had them. For me this is a raw material and a finished product. Yet, I am happy if these products can help our women look even prettier," Aleksandr Lukashenko noted during a conversation with the staff.

According to the President, in the past he would receive many proposals to privatise the enterprise.

"I flatly refused. This is a state-run enterprise and will remain so. At least as long as I am the President. Our people have learned to make this beauty, and it is not for sale. It was not about diamonds and gold for me. It was about losing competencies, specialists, which would be a catastrophe. These are really world-class specialists," the Head of State said.

Communicating with the staff, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that Belarus has withstood the sanctions pressure.

The President also recalled the task of import substitution and improving the quality of all products produced in Belarus, "We will push for it. Next year, we will force everyone to do quality work."

At the same time, Aleksandr Lukashenko supported the idea of establishing a single state quality mark in Belarus. This proposal was put forward by one of the workers of the industrial group Kristal.



"We will declare next year the Year of Quality. I have already spoken about this. We produce a lot. We make high-quality products. However, we should take the quality to a new level in order to be competitive. Because we have an open economy. We need to improve the quality further in order to stay competitive," the President stated.

The Head of State mentioned that, for instance, not only Germany makes top quality products. China is also making substantial progress in this direction. Belarus is currently working with China on launching its own car production in the country, and Aleksandr Lukashenko intends to bring up this topic again during his next meeting with the President of the People's Republic of China. The Head of State suggested using the Soviet quality mark as the basis for the modern Belarusian one, as he liked the look of the Soviet mark. He gave corresponding instructions to the government.

The USSR State Quality Mark was used to mark serial products, which were made by enterprises of the Soviet Union for civilian use and met high quality standards (consumer goods and engineering products). The five edges of the mark were associated with a five-pointed star and with quality elements: reliability, affordability, safety, aesthetics, and innovation.

Belarus pays close attention to penetrating new markets. For instance, to co-operation with countries on the African continent. Good relations have been established with Zimbabwe. A return visit of the Head of State to Equatorial Guinea is expected.

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised great prospects for advancing co-operation with these countries and the region as a whole. It is also important for the operation of enterprises like the industrial group Kristall. There are large deposits of precious metals and diamonds in Africa. Nevertheless, interaction proceeds in agriculture, for example. Zimbabwe has received a good harvest thanks to Belarusian machines and vehicles.

After the tour of the industrial group Kristal the President was gifted Belarus' map that had been made using vermeil and natural diamonds. Diamonds

of different sizes were used to designate Minsk, regional and district centres on the map. The Head of State also received a pen made of bog oak that is about 4,050 years old. The oak was caught in the Sozh River near the village of Karpovka, Loyev District.

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and Akatsiya self-propelled howitzers, as well as the Giatsint cannon and Vasilek automatic mortars.

"We definitely have to take care of import substitution. Importing these things costs too much. Put pressure on the manufacturing sector!" Aleksandr Lukashenko noted.

After that, the President went on a tour of the shops that repair military optics and small arms.

Special emphasis is placed on the storage conditions of weapons:

"Do we have the same security for nuclear weapons?" Aleksandr Lukashenko asked.

"Better".

"Even better? Incredible..."

After the tour of the artillery ordnance depot Aleksandr Lukashenko praised the army for properly storing weapons and military hardware.

"It is a good facility. Sensible. It is already not the future but the present. It is the way we've been following while improving,

The Gomel-based industrial group Kristall, the managing company of the holding company Kristall was the next item on Aleksandr Lukashenko's itinerary.

Kristall Director General Ruslan Sorokovoi reported to the Head of State on the progress made as part of the effort to modernise diamond processing production and measures being taken to improve the efficiency of the enterprise. The Gomel jewellery plant Kristall was established in 1972 as one of the seven Kristall plants in the Soviet Union. Today only two Kristall enterprises continue operating in Belarus' Gomel and Russia's Smolensk.

"In 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union we faced the problem of keeping the manufacturing division busy. The fact that diamond processing still exists somewhere outside India (today more than 90 percent of all the diamond processing happens in India), including Belarus, is solely thanks to the decisions taken



Belarus is valued, we have proven that we are respectable partners

On November 20th, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, reviewed personnel issues

THE HEAD OF STATE APPOINTED:

Aleksandr Chervyakov — Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the People's Republic of China;

Igor Marshalov — Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Zimbabwe;

Igor Bely — Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of South Africa with concurrent accreditation to the Republic of Botswana, the Republic of Mozambique and the Republic of Namibia;

Sergei Malinovsky — Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Serbia with concurrent accreditation to the Republic of North Macedonia;

Roman Romanovsky — Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Indonesia with concurrent accreditation to Malaysia, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of the Philippines.

The President also agreed to the appointment of Aleksandr Matsukov as Consul General of the Republic of Belarus in Mumbai, India.

All personnel decisions of this day were diplomatic appointments, Aleksandr Lukashenko invited the new ambassadors to China and Zimbabwe for a separate conversation.

"I have specifically invited you for a separate meeting in order to talk about your appointments. I want to emphasise that these two countries are extremely important," the Belarusian leader said addressing Aleksandr Chervyakov and Igor Marshalov.

According to the Head of State, Belarus and China have already established co-operation across key areas, contacts have been made, therefore the new ambassador will not have to work from scratch.

"I won't say that in Zimbabwe we are building our relations from scratch. I visited the country last year. Naturally, the existing contacts are not only my achievement. In fact, despite the work done before and after the visit, there is still a lot to do. However, we already helped [Zimbabwe] harvest enough grain to feed its people. But there is still a lot of work ahead," the Belarusian leader noted. "We need to establish diplomatic presence, strengthen our foothold in this country. After all, they are looking forward to seeing us there. They appreciate us, we have proven that we are reliable people.

In addition, they want us to bring our technologies in mechanical engineering and other industries — construction, healthcare, education (personnel training is very important), and agriculture — to Zimbabwe. The neighbours of Zimbabwe especially Mozambique, expressed their intention to co-operate with us when the learned about our plans in Africa," the Head of State added.

Speaking about China, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that this country, along with Russia, is among Belarus' key partners, "They help us both technologically and financially. Therefore, there will be a lot of work."

Speaking about co-operation with Mozambique, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that it should develop in sync with co-operation with the neighbouring Zimbabwe where Belarus has already established its presence. Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa discussed this topic with his counterpart from Mozambique.

"Figuratively speaking, while establishing presence in Mozambique, we need to piggyback on our co-operation with Zimbabwe. They are very interested in us. Our technologies, especially in the agricultural industry, can stand them in good stead," the Head of State explained.

There are quite a lot of problems in Africa's southern region, and Belarus can help address them, as was the case with Zimbabwe.

"Zimbabwe is glad to have been able to finally feed its people. They couldn't harvest grain crops. Now they are harvesting them two or three times a year. They have met their people's needs for this food staple. Why can't we help Mozambique? We can. Therefore, we need to figure out the situation there and focus on the country that needs our help the most. Naturally, this is not charity," the Belarusian leader said.

As for co-operation with Serbia and the work of the Belarusian diplomatic mission in this country, as the President noted, the situation must be seriously studied.

"We need to wrap our heads around the policy that Serbia is pursuing and plans to pursue in relation to Belarus.

If they want [to co-operate with Belarus], we should see the results of this co-operation in the trade and economic dimension. If they want to support European and American sanctions against Belarus, this is their business. They want to have the cake and eat it too, figuratively speaking. Yet, they should make up their mind. If they have forgotten our kindness towards them, they can go ahead and support the sanctions," Aleksandr Lukashenko set the task.

Aleksandr Lukashenko told the diplomats to strengthen contacts with those countries that also strive for constructive co-operation, "If the West and America do not want to co-operate with us, it is fine, and we will retain our diplomatic presence where it is needed. In addition, we should transfer most of diplomats to those areas where we see progress. We have movement in many countries, we co-operate with many countries. We need to strengthen them," the Head of State specified.

The President described co-operation with the countries of South-east Asia as follows,

"Apart from some occasional trade and economic contacts, we have hardly got our foot in the door. We need to gain a foothold there. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are promising destinations, and we should come up with one and a half, two or three projects in each of them. This is your task."

Regarding India, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, "We should establish closer co-operation with India, primarily in economy and trade. This is a huge global power. We should identify our interests there."

'It's a difficult period, but we are prepared for this'

The Belarusian Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, met with Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation Imangali Tasmagambetov on the eve of the session of the CSTO Collective Security Council. Belarus will preside over the CSTO in 2023.

"You and I are facing an important task. We need to hold a session of our military-political alliance at a high organisational level. It's a difficult period, but we are prepared for this, and I hope that this summit of the military-political organisation in Minsk will help build up our efforts to strengthen defence and security of CSTO members," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President of Belarus drew attention to some features of the current moment,

"You understand that we are going through a difficult period in the post-Soviet space. First of all, this is due to conflict situations, including in the CSTO area of responsibility. I have always emphasised: it is good that at this moment in the south, in Central Asia, we have found the outcome of some conflict between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan also ended. We need to think about the future — how the two states are going to live there. It is clear that in both cases the problems had been accumulating for many years. These are long-standing points of tension. Yet, we have seen something positive happening in this regard.



Imangali Tasmagambetov

This is not because we presided there, but during this period (there were good steps) there was a moment, a movement, a trend towards calming the situation in the post-Soviet space. I emphasise once again that this is in the area of responsibility of the CSTO. Because both Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are members of the CSTO."

Imangali Tasmagambetov thanked the Head of State for the opportunity to personally discuss problematic issues and current work processes related to a number of important events — a joint meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Defence Ministers and the Committee of Secretaries of the CSTO Security Councils, as well as a session of the CSTO Collective Security Council.

Regarding the implementation of the action plan for the implementation of the decisions of the Collective Security Council (November 2022 session) and the implementation of priority areas of the Republic of Belarus during the chairmanship of the CSTO, a report has been prepared. Imangali Tasmagambetov announced its details to the President, "32 out of 34 measures have been implemented. Two measures have not been fulfilled, unfortunately. These are, first of all, our international contacts with European international organisations, such as the OSCE, primarily because of their stance. The second item was the Armenia assistance document which the Collective Security Council instructed us to finalise."

The CSTO Secretary General added that the Armenian side did not express any interest in the document, despite the fact that all allies supported the decision. "Moreover, in the final part of our work they asked to remove it from the agenda."

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People — the main value



The President's order has been fulfilled: 41 people have been evacuated from the Gaza Strip, which was engulfed in fire. These are citizens of Belarus, as well as members of their families.

By Svetlana Isaenok

The Belarusian side, in contact with colleagues from Israel and Egypt, as well as with the assistance of Russia and Qatar, carried out work to organize the exit of Belarusian citizens and members of their families from the Gaza Strip. This was reported by the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. As a result, more than 40 people passed through the Rafah border crossing into Egyptian territory.

At the border with the Gaza Strip, our citizens and members of their families were met by employees of the State Security Committee, who were carrying out the instructions of the President of Belarus to evacuate refugees. In the video published in the Telegram channel Pul Pervogo, there are frames in which they, addressing the rescued citizens, note, "As our Head of State said, the most expensive thing is bread while the main value is people. Hold on! This nightmare is already over!"

Another video, which was also published on the Telegram channel Pul Pervogo, shows KGB officers handing over food packages to refugees.

Last Thursday at 11 o'clock an evacuation flight of Belavia Airlines took off from the Minsk National Airport to Egypt. There were also two doctors and two psychologists from a special response team Zubr of the Emergencies Ministry. They went to provide assistance and accompany Belarusian citizens evacuated from the military conflict zone.

"We take with us equipment for providing outpatient and emergency care, as well as equipment for monitoring and diagnosing diseases. This is not the first time we have taken part in such missions, so we will fulfil the leadership's task in full," said Yuri Geleklidi, chief specialist of the medical division of the Belarusian Emergencies Ministry's special operations unit Zubr the day before.

The Belavia evacuation flight landed at Minsk National Airport late in the evening on Thursday, November 16th. There were 19 rescued adults and 22 children on board. The youngest was barely three years old. Despite the fatigue from the long flight, the passengers were smiling as they stepped off the ramp. To set foot on a land where there is no war is real happiness for them.

'It was very scary. We thought we were going to die...'

Svetlana Panasyuk returned to Belarus with her husband and three children. "The situation in the Gaza Strip today is very terrible. Every day it gets worse and worse. We fell asleep and thought: thank God we are alive. When we woke up, we

thought about the same thing. We learned about the flight from friends, because communication there does not work — neither telephone nor Internet."

Svetlana's mother Galina was waiting for them in Belarus. She lives in Volkovysk. On the day of arrival, the woman met her loved ones at the airport, "I cried all the time while they were there. I cried and prayed that they would survive and return here. And my prayers were answered. Now I won't let them go back for anything."

Svetlana says that the process of evacuation from the combat zone was very difficult.

"It was only when we left the Gaza Strip that we realised we were safe. It was especially dangerous at the Rafah border crossing. It is constantly under fire. When we were driving there with our family, they shot at us. It was very scary. We thought we were going to die," Svetlana's husband says.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Palestine to Belarus, Ahmed Mohammed Almadbukh, who arrived at the airport to meet a special Belavia flight, also told journal-



ists about the difficulties of evacuating from the Gaza Strip, "The evacuation process is very difficult now. It depends on many factors. Including whether cars can move around populated areas. Because the main streets are blocked by rubble. Everyone makes their way as best they can. The checkpoint on the Palestinian side was completely destroyed. People evacuated as best they could. Everyone goes their own way, risking their lives: you may get there, but you may not get there..."

The diplomat expressed gratitude to our country for saving people,

"We are very grateful to Belarus for saving the lives of these people. Staying in the Gaza Strip now is tantamount to death. You could say that these people were born again when they were saved. There are many chil-

dren on board, and their lives are the most valuable. The most important thing is that now these people will have the opportunity to raise their children in a peaceful environment and wait for their grandchildren."

'At one moment there was nothing left'

Getting on the flight was a real salvation for many of those who arrived. After what they saw and experienced, some of them needed help. Chief specialist of the medical division of the Belarusian Emergencies Ministry's special operations unit Zubr Yuri Geleklidi, who together with his colleagues accompanied the evacuation flight, told reporters about the outpatient care provided. According to him, people were depressed and worried. Psychologists worked with children.

Salah Erkaerk, who arrived on this flight, is not one of those who can be surprised by the sound of gunfire. He has already survived several armed clashes. But such a war, he says, has never happened.



"It's just awful. And it's a miracle that we were able to get out of the Gaza Strip. Thank you! Our area in Gaza is completely destroyed. But my wife and I have worked all our lives, built apartments for our children, and opened a physical therapy centre. And at one moment there was nothing left — all our money, savings. There is nothing more. And we ourselves barely escaped," Salah says bitterly.

After their house was completely destroyed, they went to a refugee camp.

"A lot of people came there. Very. There was no light, no water, nothing," the head of the family says.

Therefore, when the family learned that there was an opportunity to fly on a special flight, they decided to get to the border crossing, no matter the cost. And they succeeded.

'I always knew: Belarus is like that, it will never abandon its people, never!'

The head of another family, the father of five children, Palestinian Ilnedi Mohammed, proudly says that his son is already Belarusian, just like his mother is Belarusian. He is incredibly glad to be on peaceful land,

"Thank you! I am very grateful to the Belarusian people. We in the family did not rely on anyone more than on the President of Belarus. And these hopes came true. We had strong, reliable, good people with us. Thanks to them! Because where we lived there was death. At every step. Even when you are sitting at home, it is not safe. And only our President was able to save us."

Alina Mahdi leaves the arrival hall not only with a happy smile, but also with a beautiful bouquet. The flowers were presented by the eldest son, who works and lives in Novopolotsk. The woman, along with her husband and two children, returned on an evacuation flight. She left the country 20 years ago, but did not lose contact with her homeland, often flew to relatives,

"The President organised this flight for us. I always knew: Belarus is like that, it will never abandon its people, never! And the Motherland will forever remain the Motherland. She is the dearest and most beloved."

Her son Mahdi Faris Nedal, a citizen of Belarus from Novopolotsk, thanks to the evacuation flight, was finally able to hug his mother, father and two brothers. "I was really looking forward to this moment. Thank God they are alive. I am sure that in our country they will be welcomed with open arms. We have an apartment in Novopolotsk. Let's move them in with us. The main thing is that they arrived. I think the state will not abandon us. And I would like to say on my own behalf: many thanks to Aleksandr Lukashenko for his personal order. We are very grateful to him for this. If I saw him, I would hug and kiss him!"

Movement along a given trajectory

Growth of GDP and personal income: how the Belarusian economy is developing



By Vladislav Sychevich

Positive trend

At the beginning of the year, the President set the goal of achieving a positive growth trajectory, doing everything possible to adapt the economy to unprecedented external pressure. Despite the West's attempts to strangle the Belarusian economy with a lasso of sanctions, our country is successfully developing and responds to all the apocalyptic forecasts of overseas 'experts' with confident growth in GDP and household incomes. Thanks to timely measures taken at the level of the Head of State and government, the dynamics of economic growth have been restored and maintain a positive trend.

Since May, GDP has been growing monthly. Based on the results of nine months, the growth rate was 103.5 percent.

Industrial enterprises operate stably. By the way, in terms of industrial production growth rates, Belarus remains a leader among the EAEU countries. This dynamic is accelerated by the mechanical engineering industry. Maximum production volumes have been achieved over the past five years for combines and certain types of household appliances. During January–September, about 49 thousand passenger cars were produced. And this is almost four times more than in the same period last year. During this period, 2.2 times more televisions were produced compared to January–September 2022. Inventories of finished products decreased by almost Br1 billion.

The situation in the country's financial market is also stable. In general, there was a net supply of foreign currency in the foreign exchange market. International reserve assets of Belarus as of November 1st, 2023, amounted to \$8.1471 billion in equivalent.

This year, domestic demand provides significant support to the country's economy due to the dynamic recovery of investment and consumer activity. The growth rate of investment in fixed assets amounted to almost 112 percent. At the same time, sources and mechanisms for investment financing of infrastructure projects are being actively sought. Thanks to this, more than 1.7 thousand kilometres of roads have already been repaired in the country this



year, and seven bridge structures have been reconstructed. Physical culture and health complexes were put into operation in Fanipol and Uzda. One of the largest schools for 1.5 thousand children began operating in Grodno. Six new kindergartens were opened, construction of a new polyclinic building at the Nesvizh Central District Hospital was completed, and four district hospitals were reconstructed. Recently, a new clinic and radiological building of the Mogilev Regional Oncology Dispensary was put into operation in Grodno.

Order on the shelves

The level of annual inflation has been maintained within acceptable parameters, Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko said yesterday during a meeting of the Council of Ministers,

"The measures taken jointly with the National Bank made it possible to maintain the inflation rate within acceptable parameters."



DIRECT SPEECH

Finance Minister Yuri Seliverstov,

"For nine months, the execution of the republican budget is about 77 percent, local — about 73 percent. The consolidated budget surplus is Br1.5 billion. This trend continues. We think that we will fulfil the annual plan for republican budget revenues in November ahead of schedule. As for the locals, they are on track; by the end of the year everything planned will be completed. At the end of the year we planned a deficit, but I think that we will be within zero values. In terms of salary growth, everything is going according to schedule. All decisions were made. A decision has already been made on the base rate from January 1st in the amount of Br250. So we don't have any problems here."

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"The shock restructuring of the global political, economic and financial relations prompts every country to think beyond protective and compensatory measures. We need to calculate the strategic prospects for the development of the national economy (hence the state). We need to look to the future."

During a government conference to discuss the improvement of the system of planning and overseeing the implementation of strategic projects on October 20th, 2023

The most important qualitative indicator of the economy's performance is the real disposable income of the population. They increased by 5.1 percent in January–August.

"In addition, in September we reached a wage level of Br1,940 (an increase in real terms of 10.1 percent). The task of increasing the level of income in the budget sector is being progressively solved," the head of the government noted.

Foreign trade indicators are also growing. Over nine months, the growth rate of physical export volumes amounted to 127 percent. Simply put, Belarus supplied 27 percent more products in physical volumes. As for foreign trade in goods, in September the balance was positive for the first time since the beginning of the year. This means that the mechanisms used to increase export supplies are working. Diversification of export supplies continues and helps compensate for external shocks, as well as level out lost markets.



Results of the Belarusian economy for January–September 2023

Belarus' GDP grew by 3.5 percent



Industrial production increased by 8.1 percent



Retail turnover increased by 6.7 percent



Wholesale trade turnover increased by 11 percent



Passenger turnover increased by 9.4 percent



Real cash income increased by 5.1 percent



HOWEVER

Next year the Belarusian economy will continue to develop dynamically. And it's balanced. The guidelines are set by Presidential Decrees No. 307 and No. 308 of October 2nd, 2023. Due to large-scale investment and production programs, the sale of Belarusian products to foreign markets and the expansion of domestic demand, GDP growth is planned by 3.8 percent, and real disposable income of the population will increase by 3.5 percent.



Selfie amid the President's quote, ballet and potato pancakes: what did visitors remember about the national exposition of Belarus at the Chinese international exhibition in Shanghai



One of the main centres of attraction of the national pavilion was the stand with a quote from our President

The national exposition of Belarus at the China International Import Exhibition in Shanghai has now completed its work. This sixth forum brought together more than 150 countries and international organisations. The event attracted more than 3,400 exhibitors and nearly 400,000 trade visitors, marking a full recovery to pre-pandemic levels.

'Belarus will be strong if China is strong'

Our country was represented by more than 70 companies. During these days, the Belarusian pavilion not only introduced visitors to the economic and export potential of the country, but also surprised them every day with a cultural programme. The results of this event, bright in all respects, were shared in Belinterexpo of the BelCCI.

One of the main centres of attraction of the national pavilion was the stand with a quote from our President, which read in two languages: 'Belarus will be strong if China is strong'. The phrase caused a real stir and hit the top of Chinese TikTok. As the organisers specified, throughout the exhibition, Chinese visitors took photographs near the inscription and next to the photo of the President of the Republic of Belarus.

However, the national exposition has become an object of particular interest from the Chinese media due to its unique design, cultural programme and thematic days of Belarusian regions.

For example, the design of a food pavilion, decorated in the style of the Kossovo Castle, attracted the attention of the media and became an object of admiration: taking into account historical elements and adding pink accents, the stand in the image of a castle acquired a trendy Barbie style, which became a magnet for everyone who wanted to create bright and creative photographs.

However, this was not the only

thing that attracted visitors: at the tasting area, where master classes on preparing dishes of national Belarusian cuisine were organised, entire queues formed of people wanting to taste dishes that were exotic for Chinese consumers.

The interest in Belarusian cuisine was so great that if on the opening day of the exhibition about a thousand tastings of national dishes were organised, then in the following days their number more than tripled.

The main character on this site was Anton Kalenik, who is among the top 200 best chefs in the world, the first chef in the CIS to join the Worlds Chefs Guild Master Chefs Society.

"The exhibition was magnificent," chef Anton Kalenik did not hide his emotions, "The attitude of the Chinese towards our cuisine was impressive! They especially loved my potato pancakes, homemade spread with sausage and cheese, as well as fried oatmeal with nuts, pasta with cheese and cottage cheese donuts. Our stand became the most visited at the exhibition, which is not surprising, because the queues for tasting Belarusian cuisine simply did not stop.

However, our pavilion attracted people not only with daily food, but also with spiritual food." Performances by the stars of the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus delighted guests throughout the entire period of the exposition. The audience had the opportunity to enjoy the concert of the string quintet Serenade. Ballet performances added refined aesthetics and dance grace to the exhibition days. The Adagio from the ballet *Swan Lake* and *Esmeralda* received a storm of applause and admiring glances from the audience.

Summing up the preliminary results, Belinterexpo noted that during the exhibition, a significant number of documents on co-operation were signed both between enterprises and within the framework of the Days of Belarusian Regions. For example, enterprises of the Belgospischeprom concern signed 7 documents totalling more than \$6 million. Agreements totalling \$85 million were also concluded as part of the Day of the Gomel Region.

In addition, an important event was also the signing of a memorandum of co-operation between the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee and rep-

representatives of the city of Qingdao (Shandong Province) in the context of the creation of the Industry Park. At the exhibition, representatives of the Brest Region and Anhui province signed an action plan for the development of trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural co-operation for the period from 2023 to 2025.

An Agreement was also signed to establish sister city relations between the city of Dunhuang, Gansu Province, and the Novogrudok District of the Grodno Region. In Liaoning province (China), it is planned to start ice cream production in co-operation with a Slutsk enterprise.

In addition, there is interest from Chinese investors in the construction of a restaurant in Mogilev and other promising opportunities.

"At the moment, work continues to summarise the signed contracts," Belinterexpo noted in conclusion.

Based on materials of sb.by



Anton Kalenik: 'The attitude of the Chinese towards our cuisine was impressive!'

It's all about the numbers

Internet availability in Belarus is much higher than in Europe

The digital transformation of the European Union is an ambitious undertaking in every sense. According to its authors, European companies should massively master cloud technologies and make friends with artificial intelligence by 2030. And the population, in turn, is planned to be provided with 100 percent access to the Internet with gigabit bandwidth. At the very beginning of the 'digital' decade, it was assumed that in addition to the budget allocated for these purposes by the EU, private capital would also be involved in financing the idea of universal digitalisation. However, after a short time, the Union's billions of euros have disappeared somewhere, and there is no particular enthusiasm on the part of potential investors. It is difficult to say how much 5G networks will cover the whole of Europe by the end of the decade, but so far access to the network, at least at more modest speeds, is not available to everyone in the EU. For some, it is purely physical: there is neither optical fiber nor stable coverage with cell stations. Or for financial reasons: you can be friends with the network through space communications from anywhere on the planet, but this pleasure is too expensive. In this sense, Belarus, where the issue was taken under state control, clearly gives the European Union a head start in the digitalisation of households.



By Tatiana Shchedrenok

The digital 'compass' of the current decade aims the European community to create a capacious ecosystem where, as a result, everyone should be happy. Digitised business will begin to flourish, and residents of EU countries will gain greater opportunities. Thanks to the dissemination of the figure, it is expected to attract investment into the economy, increase its efficiency and expand citizens' access to innovative services, including the public sector. However, there are doubts that these rosy plans are destined to come true.

The European Commission was clearly not pleased with the interim results of the technological transformation programme. Its recent report provides data that is far from planned. In particular, only 56 percent of households are connected to fiber optic lines. The commissioning of standalone 5G networks is behind schedule. And in general, modern means of communication are just a dream for many Europeans. This is evidenced by the fact that more than half of rural households are deprived of access to stable Internet communications, and 9 percent are completely cut off from the fixed communication network. However, 42 percent of Europeans lack basic digital skills. Apparently, with such obvious infrastructure gaps, they simply do not see the point in increasing technical literacy. So is it time to aim for 5G scaling?

If things continue to move so slowly, European Commissioners note, Europe will not advance much in the area of digitalisation. Without additional investment and incentives, less than 60 percent of Europeans will be able to use the Internet and email in 2030. Unfortunately, opinion polls show that European companies are not particularly eager to invest in digital projects, which, among other things, require significant energy costs. As you know, energy resources are a sensitive topic for Europeans. The bet on renewable energy sources (RES) in the current geo-economic conditions is clearly losing. And not all participants in the European alliance have sufficient quantities of traditional energy sources. Price turbulence in the energy market is unlikely to contribute to their reduction in prices in the near future. In such a situation, progress literally becomes golden. And business, as you know, knows how to count money.

Skepticism towards high-tech innovations is observed even in countries with strong economies. Thus, the Industrie 4.0 platform, assessing the state of German digital technologies, notes a very low level of knowledge of citizens in this area. And where, in fact, does the desire to get them come from, if, for example, you choose an Internet provider and a more or less tolerable tariff in Germany — a real quest. The main problem is expensive and slow. Only 1.6 percent of households are connected to modern communications via fiber optics. Copper cable is still the basic material for data transmission. The leader of the German telecommunications market, Telekom, did not spend money on updating its outdated infrastructure for a long time, finding it unprofitable. Given the generally low quality of services, German prices per gigabyte are among the most hefty in the world. Under such conditions, you will inevitably give up the benefits of the new technological order.

For comparison: In our country, broadband Internet is not a luxury item and is available to everyone. This is clearly evidenced by the rating of the authoritative website Cable.co.uk.

Its experts analysed data on the cost of 3,356 access packages to the global network in 219 countries. Belarus is in fourth place among the countries with the cheapest fixed-line Internet. But the countries of Western Europe did not even make it into the top 50. The closest neighbors — Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia — occupy 24th, 38th and 84th positions, respectively.

Unlike European citizens, Belarusians also have no problems with mobile communications. Population coverage with cellular mobile telecommunications services using LTE (4G) technology, according to Belstat, is 98 percent. As a result of practical, and not declared digitalisation, 89.5 Belarusians (aged 6 to 72 years) are Internet users. Moreover, 77.4 percent use the network daily. Of course, some people ignore digital technologies. But this is his right to choose, and not restrictions from the communication network.

Frankly speaking, the dreams of Western politicians about the widespread introduction of ultra-modern digital formats amid the absence in some places of elementary infrastructure for at least any

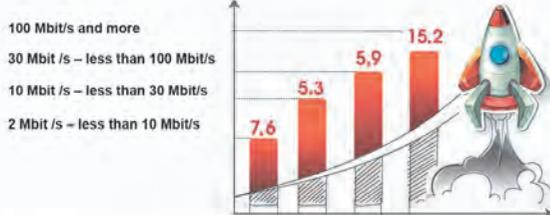
Global Broadband Availability Rating		
Place	Country	Average cost per month, in USD
4	Belarus	7.34
24	Latvia	15.44
32	Poland	17.59
38	Lithuania	18.97
64	Italy	28.69
69	Portugal	31.67
70	Spain	31.85
73	Sweden	32.94
76	Great Britain	34.20
78	Germany	34.59
79	Greece	35.02
82	France	35.66
84	Estonia	36.37
90	Austria	39.35

According to the British resource cable.co.uk

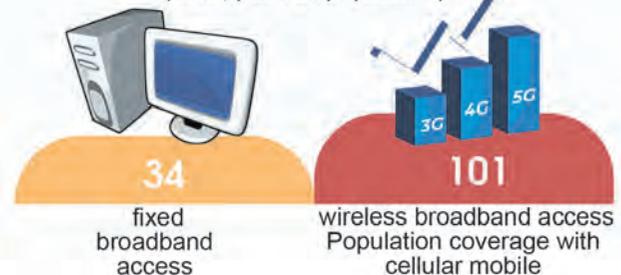
decent communication are surprising. Isn't it time to come down to earth? Take a look into an ordinary European house. Look at the state of communications and the amount of family bills for services. And, finally, compare the urgent needs of people with the capabilities of the European Union treasury, which has so many items of expenditure that are far from the needs of ordinary Europeans. And now Brussels administrative structures are looking for another €200 billion to provide everyone and everything with gigabit Internet. But such speeds at the everyday level are completely unnecessary. For unmanned vehicles and industrial digital platforms, yes, stable high throughput is needed. But for the digitalisation of households, more modest characteristics are quite enough. Or is another grandiose digital push for comprehensive 5G coverage nothing more than the appropriation of money from the European treasury by contractors?! Budget funds ran out and the project failed. In Slavic vocabulary this is called the capacious word 'cut'. The value of technological innovation is not in its complexity or capabilities, but in its ability to improve the standard of living and comfort of citizens. In Belarus, we proceed from this parameter. That's why our citizens are digitalised. The EU apparently has other priorities. There are expensive, grandiose projects, but not everyone has the Internet.

DIGITALISATION OF HOUSEHOLDS IN BELARUS

Number of subscribers and users of fixed broadband Internet access by data transfer speed (units, per 100 population)



Number of Internet subscribers and users (units, per 100 population)



LTE technology (4G) 98 percent



Share of the population aged 6-72 years using the Internet (in the total population aged 6-72 years)



Photo of the Belarusian Embassy in France



Belarus invited UNESCO experts to study situation in Belovezhskaya Pushcha

The Deputy Permanent Representative of Belarus to UNESCO, Kirill Grushevsky, said at the plenary meeting of the 42nd session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris that Belarus invited UNESCO experts to study the situation in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, the Foreign Ministry of Belarus reports

It is noted that the Belarusian diplomat stated the country's readiness to promote unification initiatives aimed at overcoming dividing lines between countries and peoples.

At the same time, Kirill Grushevsky expressed regret over the ongoing outright politicisation of the activities of the UN specialised agencies, among which UNESCO is no exception. It is noted that he drew attention to unilateral coercive measures practiced by individual Western states, the victims of which are primarily the most vulnerable segments of the pop-

ulation, including in countries not directly affected by such measures.

The Foreign Ministry reported, "The topic of freedom of speech is also becoming the subject of political manipulation and one of the ways to combat alternative points of view. In this regard, Kirill Grushevsky reminded that several dozen representatives of the Belarusian state media are currently under Western sanctions for performing their professional duties."

The diplomat also informed that Belarus has sent an invitation to UNESCO with a proposal to visit Belovezhskaya Pushcha

by experts of the World Heritage Centre, as well as the International Union for Nature Conservation. The invitation was prepared in accordance with the decision of the 45th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which expressed extreme concern about Poland's construction of a border barrier in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. By the way, on December 14th, 1992, Belovezhskaya Pushcha received the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Invited experts will have to assess the negative impact of the barrier erected in the protected forest.

Biden-Xi summit: modest outcomes

Biden and Xi's four-hour meeting results in modest agreements amid stark differences

The outcomes were modest, but they met the low bar US officials set headed into the leaders' first face-to-face encounter, amid rising tensions, in more than a year.

Both leaders made clear they want to prevent the competitive relationship from spilling over into conflict. The agreed to restore military-to-military communication to avoid misunderstandings, and a US official said China will take steps to crack down on companies in China that produce precursor chemicals for fentanyl, in an agreement that Biden said would 'save lives'.

But, even so, the leaders issued no joint statement. As expected, no progress was made on the most sensitive areas of the US-China relationship, including Taiwan — where there's the greatest risk of conflict.

The two sides reiterated old talking points, with Biden reaffirming the US One China policy. Xi warned Biden to stop arming Taiwan, according to a readout from China's Foreign Ministry. Biden, the official said, declared the US was committed to continuing to help Taiwan defend itself and maintain deterrence against a potential Chinese attack, and also called on China to avoid meddling in the island's elections next year.

Nor were any agreements or reassurances announced with regard to the conflict in the Middle East, after Biden urged Xi in the meeting to use his influence over Iran to urge the country not to escalate the conflict involving Israel and to stop Iranian-backed militants from attacking US forces in the region.

At the same time, the American side could not resist provocations. Speaking to reporters, Biden called Xi Jinping a 'dictator', and the Chinese Foreign Ministry quickly responded to Sleepy Joe's rhetoric, calling his words 'extremely wrong and irresponsible'.



Eurozone recession fears harden

Ten EU countries, including Germany, will experience an economic downturn in 2023, while Estonia will set an anti-record, according to the European Commission's (EC) fall economic projection

According to materials supplied by the European Commission, Germany's GDP would contract by 0.3 percent at the end of the year. Estonia is anticipated to experience the greatest decline (2.6 percent), followed by Ireland (0.9 percent). At the same time, Malta will have the highest GDP growth in the EU in 2023, with 4 percent followed by Croatia with 2.6 percent. Many observers were surprised by the European Commission's prediction for Sweden, which predicts a 0.5 percent fall.

The European Commission does not

consider sanctions against Russia as a factor impacting the decline in European economy.

"Europe has been through a year of zero-growth and is now heading into a year in which both monetary and fiscal policies are designed to put a brake on growth," UniCredit economics advisor Erik Nielsen said.

"The European economy has been flat on its back for a year (and) the monetary and fiscal policy plans for 2024 seem to accept the high probability of another lost year."

No progress over border protests

Polish truckers are blocking the border with Ukraine, preventing thousands of Ukrainian trucks from crossing in an increasingly bitter dispute between the otherwise close allies

Some 20,000 Ukrainian trucks are stuck at three crossings after Polish haulage workers launched protests under the banner of the Committee to Protest Transporters and Transport Employers. This group, previously unknown in the public domain, is organising the demonstrations without any formal backing from politicians or political parties.

The demonstrators' key demands include: restrict entry for Ukrainian trucks into Poland by introducing permits; and ban the creation of trucking companies in Poland with capital from outside the European Union.

Both of these demands are protectionist in nature, aiming to safeguard the in-

terests of Polish truckers while potentially affecting Polish consumers.

Polish truckers are particularly sensitive to the increased competition from Ukrainian trucks after sanctions led to the loss of significant business, carrying goods to Russia and Belarus, which they're struggling to replace.

Poland has been one of Ukraine's most ardent EU supporters in its fight with Russia; however, its fervour cools when that support encroaches on Polish business.

If the Polish authorities do not resolve the issue of blocking border crossings with Ukraine, the European Commission may begin criminal proceedings against Poland.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“The world has been recently living in a constant state of tension and uncertainty. Financial, pandemic, geopolitical crises are replacing each other so quickly that people simply do not have time to take a breath, and they lose confidence in the future. A stable economy is always a powerful anchor amid extraordinary conditions. But today the economic borders of any state are so transparent and trade relations are so intertwined that it is practically an impossible task for any state to achieve economic stability on its own. The aligning of integration efforts in the format of our Eurasian union, the SCO and BRICS will contribute towards the emergence of the largest coalition of states if we act promptly, if we don’t drop the ball as people say. If we miss time, we will never make up for it. The one who runs faster now will be in the vanguard within a couple of decades.”

From a speech at the plenary session of the 2nd Eurasian Economic Forum in Moscow on May 24th, 2023

By Vladimir Volchkov

Impact by segmentation

It is difficult to understand the logic of a layman. I’m talking about Joe Biden. Undoubtedly, he is an old-timer in politics, an experienced master of various types of geopolitical and intranational political games. For the last 30–40 years, the United States has firmly kept the globe under its control not so much thanks to its fleets, but due to the dominance of its transnational corporations and financial sector.

By pulling the monetary strings, the Americans brought under control, if not all, then very many world processes.

And now the Democratic administration has famously destroyed this advantage. In fact, during the three years of his reign, the owner of the White House broke, if not all, then a significant part of the tools with which he kept the world in check.

Bankers in Hong Kong also spoke about this. They expressed fears that due to geopolitical turmoil their influence was declining.

“My biggest fear is that one more geopolitical escalation — and then you have a market event,” said Deutsche Bank AG Chief Executive Officer Christian Sewing. His colleague, Citadel founder Ken Griffin echoed him. In his opinion, ‘deglobalisation is a giant wild card’.

“We don’t know what a deglobalised world looks like,” the financier of the unknown fears.

Geopolitical aggravation is very worrying about money rulers. So deep that they are even, to some extent, willing to go against their governments. In particular, Griffin urged listeners, despite all the political contradictions between Washington and Beijing, not to give up investing in China. Apparently, he perfectly understands that it is easy to leave a certain region, but then it is painfully difficult to return.

Out of control

Chairman of UBS Group AG Colm Kelleher has calculated that approximately half of the world’s financial assets are now in the ‘shadow sector’. He was referring to when corporations and consumers lend to money managers and other non-

Cash flows under shading

Global bankers are worried: half of global finance is already in the shadows

Maybe money doesn’t rule the world. But the economy is certainly firmly in its grip. Until recently, who had the most money? Correct answer: global bankers. Global financial magnates in the pre-Covid era could influence many processes: economic, technological, social, political... It is already difficult to say who decides the fate of the presidential or senatorial seats in the United States — voters or the ‘electorate’ on Wall Street. However, power begins to slip out of the hands of the moneyed aces. A conference in Hong Kong in early November brought together more than 300 leading bankers. Their speeches were replete with fears, doubts, and anxiety. Moreover, it turned out that today the banking sector and classical financial institutions do not control about half of the cash flows. If this continues, the wolves of Wall Street risk turning into sheep.

banks. “The next crisis, when it happens, will be in that sector. It’ll be a fiduciary crisis,” the expert noted.

As lawyers say, I would partially agree with the thesis of the experienced banker. In fact, the role of banks in the financial system does not guarantee prosperity. The crisis in 2008 began with banks. Another question is that this sector has always managed to not only get away with it, but also get rich from the recession. Apparently, what bankers are now concerned about is not the likelihood of a crisis itself, but the inability to manage it.

If we talk about ‘shadow’ financial flows, then we should understand them not as some kind of criminal schemes or money laundering (although these plots are also present), but those transactions and active operations that pass by the global banking system. In this context, the fears of world tycoons are not unfounded. And numerous sanctions act as a powerful trigger for this process.

No matter what restrictions are introduced, no matter what price ceilings are set, world trade has not collapsed. It’s just that other routes and routes have been lined up.

Sanctions were introduced against Russian oil, and Europe imposed a partial embargo on it. But these political

noises did not fundamentally affect the volumes of supply and demand. Europeans switched to Middle Eastern oil. The Asian region began to buy more hydrocarbons from Russia. Indeed, logistics routes have become more bizarre and inadequate. But, in fact, the flows of raw materials have not dried up and have not changed significantly.

But with finances the situation is more interesting. Financial logistics has become more casuistic and less transparent. And it is already passing by key (at least those that still want to consider themselves such) financial structures. This is the growth of ‘shadow’ finance.

The way the world works is that difficulties do not always ‘kill’, but provoke innovative thinking. And it is actively developing in the field of finance. Fortunately, even before the geopolitical aggravation, the banking sector began to have numerous financial alternatives, primarily related to various digital platforms and solutions.

Their key attraction was confidentiality. And now this criterion is almost the main factor of competitiveness.

In addition, regional payment systems are developing: using alternative SWIFT financial information exchange systems and using national currencies and other instruments and mechanisms independ-

ent of international players. Now their scale is becoming global.

Reality and forecasts

The IMF recently published its forecasts on the consequences of economic fragmentation. According to experts, global GDP could lose from 0.2 to 7 percent.

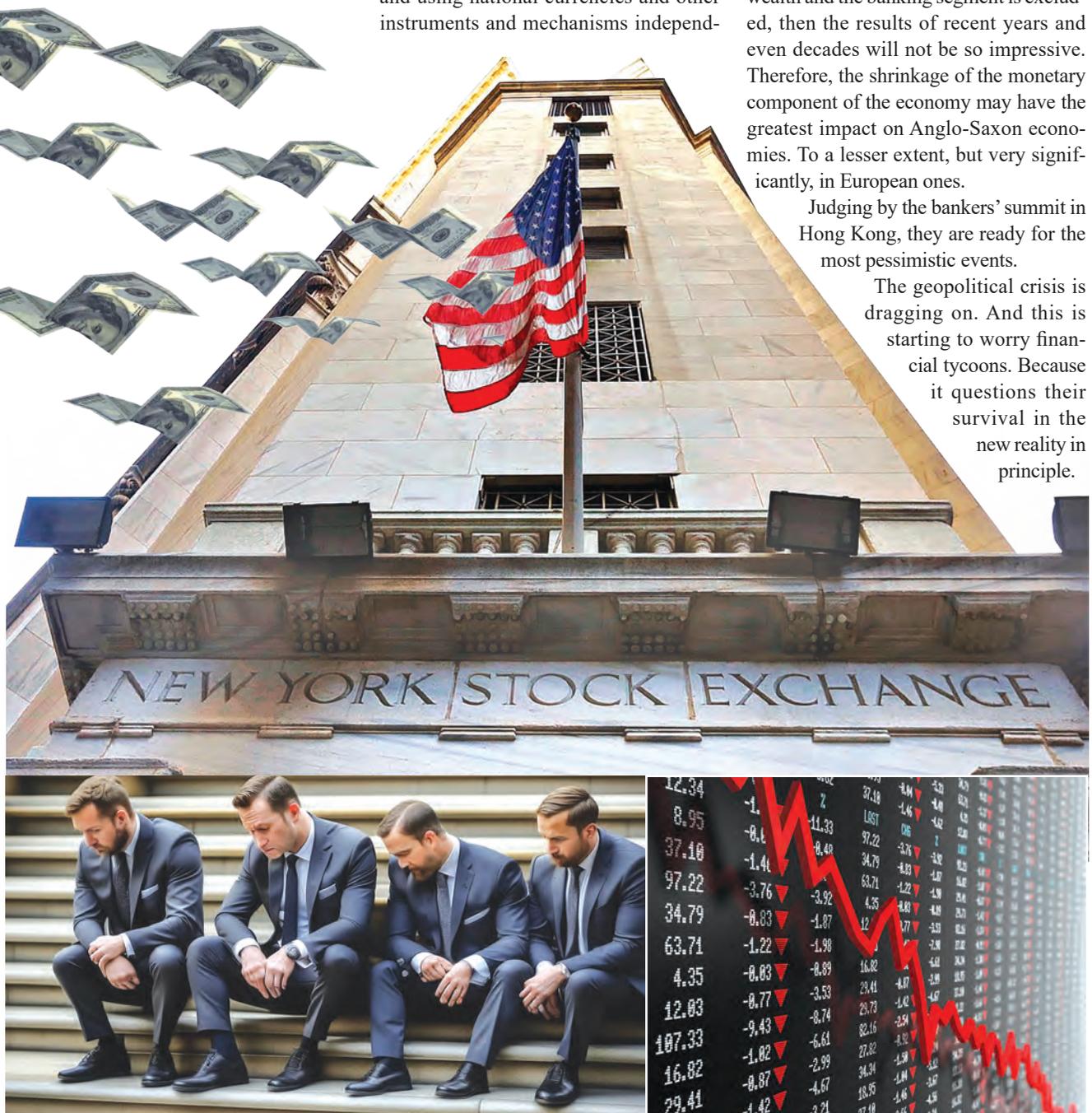
Such a huge discrepancy is due to too many different scenarios that world development can take. Although in this case the epithet ‘degradation’ is more suitable. Another question is that losses will be distributed very unevenly across regions and individual countries. Some will sink more deeply, but there will be states that will be in an advantageous position. And there is a feeling that the so-called developed countries may not be among the beneficiaries.

They will also suffer the most from the destruction (let’s call a spade a spade) of the global financial system.

Let’s face it, control over cash flows was, in fact, one of the key advantages of developed capitalism. Both globally and nationally. It was financial services that provided a significant share and dynamics of the gross product in the United States. If the financial sector is ‘cut off’ from their wealth and the banking segment is excluded, then the results of recent years and even decades will not be so impressive. Therefore, the shrinkage of the monetary component of the economy may have the greatest impact on Anglo-Saxon economies. To a lesser extent, but very significantly, in European ones.

Judging by the bankers’ summit in Hong Kong, they are ready for the most pessimistic events.

The geopolitical crisis is dragging on. And this is starting to worry financial tycoons. Because it questions their survival in the new reality in principle.





The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

"It is necessary to pay more attention to advertising the available offers for family and tourist holidays. Taking into account the fact that such holidays are in significant demand, consider expanding the range of environmental and educational tourism services provided."

During the setting of new tasks for the Belarus Presidential Property Management Directorate on August 22nd, 2022

Routes of vivid impressions

What opportunities does domestic tourism offer?

In recent years, the global tourism market has radically changed its development vectors. The pandemic, sanctions, and political tension have forced everyone, without exception, to reconsider their approaches to travel. The absolute trend of the present time is domestic tourism. Our reporters found out where to look for the most profitable and unusual offers for a quality holiday in Belarus.



By Anna Kurak, Valentina Kozlovich

Rediscover the Brest Fortress

The Brest Hero Fortress Memorial Complex is one of the most visited tourist sites in the country.

For many years now, on June 22nd at 4 am, a large-scale military-historical reconstruction of the first battles of the Great Patriotic War has been held here. And every year something new appears in the Brest Fortress. Since 2015, there have been new exhibitions here — *Museum of War — Territory of Peace and Chronicle of the Brest Fortress*. In particular, an additional excursion route to the basements of the 333rd regiment has appeared. In 2018, the implementation of the Union State project began. During this time, some buildings and ruins were overhauled and restored. And in 2021, a permanent exhibition was opened in Fort No. 5, dedicated to the history of fortification. In 2022, more than 34 thousand people visited the fort, and over 900 excursions were held there last year.

Virtual walks and real history

But what about unexpected tourist sites and routes on the map of your home country? Director of the National Tourism Agency Dmitry Morozov says, "This year, in the wake of the 2nd CIS Games, quite a lot of completely new sightseeing tours have appeared in the cities where the competitions are held — Molodechno, Zhlobin, Soligorsk and others. Previously, there were no well-developed approved texts for excursions, and

there were no trained personnel. But a grandiose sporting event attracted guests to these places."

In addition, new museum institutions are appearing on the basis of historical objects, which have been actively restored in recent years.

"We used to have one bright cluster — Mir – Nesvizh. Now Kossovo – Ruzhany is competing with it in a good way. The popularity of the route Bobruisk – Zhilichy – Krasny Bereg is growing rapidly. Recently, after a long reconstruction, the luxurious Bulgakov Palace opened its doors to visitors. In the



north-west of the country — Krevo – Golshany. There is still partial restoration and conservation going on, but branches of local museums are quite active in working with tourists," Dmitry Morozov enumerates.

Today, traditional excursions have begun to be supplemented with virtual tourism products.

"In the Bereza Historic and Regional Studies Museum, the exhi-

bition Bereza-Kartuzskaya created a three-dimensional tour. To fully immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the difficult interwar period, you can use a digital on-site guide. Minsk has a virtual tour dedicated to the Stalag-352 concentration camp. An unusual approach in terms of graphics; the memories of prisoners of war are heard in audio format," the Director of the National Agency explained.

The scale of industrial tourism is also growing. Today, more and more enterprises of various profiles invite adults and children to get acquainted with technological processes at various levels — from creating candies and sewing clothes to assembling dump trucks. What is important is that they are now trying to supplement classic excursions with unusual, memorable details.

Did you go on vacation? Tell about it!

In order to popularise domestic tourism in Belarus, this year the social advertising competition called #ПознайБеларусь (#DiscoverBelarus) was held for the third time. Interest in it from the participants is only growing.

For more than twenty years, a nationwide tourism competition has been held in the country.

The winners are selected in 13 categories — agro-estate, travel company, tour guide, sanatorium, museum, accommodation facility, event, eco-, religious and industrial tourism object, photo and publication in the media, and the most active traveller who took the largest number of photographs against the backdrop of the country's attractions. The winners receive not only valuable prizes, but also the opportunity to provide information support for their facilities and services — this is expensive in our time.

Don't forget that a powerful tool these days is content from ordinary people on social networks. First-hand impressions, vivid photographs, up-to-date data — all this is very important for the tourism industry.

Popular visa-free regime

Since January 1st, 384,343 residents of neighbouring EU countries have used visa-free entry into Belarus. Including 231,605 citizens of Lithuania, 88,501 citizens and 27,016 non-citizens of Latvia, as well as 37,221 citizens of Poland (according to the Border Committee of Belarus as of 11/20/2023). Many of them came specifically for tourism purposes. The authorities of those countries do not like this. For all sorts of far-fetched reasons, they are trying to limit the travel of their citizens to us. Belarus is an open state and welcomes guests. The Sports and Tourism Ministry noted that inbound tourism is performing well this year. Of course, the vast majority of tourists are from Russia. But there are many visitors from Turkey, China, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Many people are interested in sanatorium-resort treatment, sightseeing, and nature tours.

In January – July of this year alone, the volume of exports of tourism services exceeded \$116 million (an increase of 135 percent compared to the same period last year).



Walkability

There are about 1,200 tour guides working in the country. Their number is growing every year: this year more than a hundred new specialists were certified. However, this is not yet enough — specialists are needed for new popular routes. For example, in Kossovo-Ruzhany.

Another popular area where accredited specialists are always needed are routes to historical sites, which are associated with the study of history in schools. Today, great emphasis is placed on ensuring that the younger generation studies the country's past not from dry figures and facts from textbooks, but in a living and accessible form. Activities outside the classroom are welcome.

Book for next year

How much does a vacation in Belarus cost? Experts tried to calculate the arithmetic mean more than once, but they never came up with a figure.

"Each person has his own capabilities and needs. Some people like kayaking and spending the night in a tent on the river bank, while others relax on a grand scale in hotels with spa complexes," Director of the Tourism Department of the Belarusian Sport and Tourism Ministry Irina Voronovich explains.

"But for a general understanding, you can take the most popular type of vacation in the country — sanatorium-resort. The average bill for seven days is about a thousand Belarusian roubles. This includes accommodation, food, treatment in a mid-level health resort," Director of the National Tourism Agency Dmitry Morozov, said.

In the summer, Belarusian sanatoriums were fully booked; right now it is very difficult to find a ticket for the next month. Bookings are already underway for next year.

"This speaks better than any numbers about the real demand both from our citizens and from foreigners," Irina Voronovich emphasised.



The IOC is gone nuts

The head of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, delivered out another portion of pearls



WORLD FRIENDSHIP GAMES 2024



Thomas Bach

At the forum of international federations taking place in Lausanne, important sports officials puff out their cheeks sedately and pretend to be smart, as if they are independent people in making decisions. The agenda, as usual, was set by the leader: Thomas Bach from the high rostrum did not miss the opportunity to once again make several loud statements, however, contrary to common sense. Including regarding the Friendship Games, which will be held next September in Moscow, Yekaterinburg and, with a high degree of probability, in Minsk.

By Sergei Kanashits

Over the past couple of years, Thomas Bach has said so much that a collection of jokes could be published. You won't find complete and clear thoughts there—all wobbling and contradictions. The head of a once serious and authoritative organisation designed to maintain political neutrality and monitor the rights of athletes is increasingly reminiscent of the famous cat Vasily from the Strugatsky brothers' cult work *Monday Begins on Saturday*. Like that same cat Bayun, he wanders around the oak tree, now to the right, now to the left, muttering, clearing his throat, howling, mooing, getting down on all fours from tension — in a word, he is suffering unspeakably. He doesn't know more than half of a fairy tale or a song, and therefore, once he starts, he can't finish. "The malfunction drove him into such a rage that several times he flung himself at the oak, ripping its bark with his claws, hissing and spitting while his eyes glowed with a satanic gleam and his furry tail, thick as a log, would now point at the zenith, then twitch spasmodically, then lash

his sides..." A quote from the classics hits not the eyebrow, but the eye — just a portrait from life!

First, Bach spoke about the possible cancellation of the Olympics in Paris next year. The boss cheerfully reported: There will be games! "We have very strong geopolitical tensions, but to say that we will sacrifice the Olympic Games in Paris would be a completely wrong approach," Bach said. "According to the UN, there are 28 wars in the world currently. Our goal is a humanitarian mission for athletes and sports. We try to take this into account; people need something that will unite them." Hypocrisy of the hundredth level. The main thing is that it doesn't blush and doesn't lead the eye. Although the question suggests itself: why, if there are 28 wars in the world, are only Russia and Belarus subject to severe sanctions? Moreover, our country is not a party to any military conflict at all. The guru of self-righteousness and duplicity did not disappoint when answering another question: is the IOC going to introduce sanctions against Israel and Palestine, which are in a state of violent confrontation? You don't

even know whether to laugh or cry at this jesuitism: "The IOC adheres to the principles of individual responsibility, and athletes cannot be held responsible for the actions of their governments". How does this even fit into their bright democratic heads?

Then the top of the IOC became very excited about the Friendship Games. Not at all embarrassed, Bach called these competitions politicised and warned athletes against possible participation in them. James McLeod, Director of the IOC Department for Relations with National Olympic Committees, spoke next and continued the chief's fascinating thought, "Given the growing politicisation of world sport, we ask all National Olympic Committees to exercise caution in relation to this initiative. Indeed, any participation of NOCs in the Friendship Games would be contrary not only to the recommendations of the IOC Executive Committee of February 25th, 2022, regarding international sports competitions held in Russia, but also to the overall goal of the Olympic movement to preserve the independence and autonomy of sport." The IOC is clearly

gone nuts. And there is a reason.

There is no doubt that the Friendship Games will be held on a wide scale and whether they like it or not, this competition will become a notable event in the international sports schedule. It is planned that more than 10 thousand athletes from more than 100 countries can take part in the competition, and the prize fund will be about \$50 million (each winner will hit the jackpot of 40 thousand dollars — there is something to fight for). Something similar has already happened in world sports: the Friendship-84 competitions were organised in Moscow after the Olympics in Los Angeles, which the USSR and many countries of the socialist camp boycotted. The 2024 competition, like 40 years ago, will also take place almost immediately after the Olympic battles. The IOC will certainly forcefully twist the arms of all its satellites and will do everything possible to prevent athletes from other countries from coming to Russia and Belarus. We'll see what comes of this, but the flywheel has already been launched, and its swinging certainly cannot be stopped by the usual empty nonsense, which, moreover, does not fit in with common sense and elementary logic. In addition to the Friendship Games, next year, we recall, Russia will also host the open BRICS Games, which will be held in Kazan from June 12th to June 23rd — a month before the Olympic Games. Athletes from Russia and Belarus, Brazil, India, China and South Africa, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia and other countries will compete for medals.

The Strugatskys' cat Vasily finally became completely exhausted, meowed quietly, sadly, took the harp under his arm and slowly hobbled along the dewy grass. Thomas Bach, unlike him, is not going to go anywhere. Despite the clause in the Olympic Charter that limits the maximum term of office as head of the IOC to 12 years, Bach expects to repeal this law introduced by his predecessor Jacques Rogge and continue to tell everyone lies. A similar initiative has already been introduced. And that's normal for them: this is different.





Anton Stepanishchev

Photo of the week

The Dazhynki holiday symbolises the successful completion of the harvesting campaign and gratitude to the people of the most peaceful profession — grain growers. In the photo: at the Dazhynki-2023 festival-fair of village workers in the Vitebsk Region

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



November 16th is World Philosophy Day. It was proclaimed at the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2005 and

is held on the third Thursday of November annually in order to introduce the world community to the wealth of philosophical thought at the global level. The term comes from the Greek word *philosophía*, which means 'love of wisdom'.

November 17th is International Students' Day. It was established in 1946 at the World Student Congress held in Prague in memory of Czech patriotic students who were shot by Nazi occupiers in 1939.



On November 17th, 1869, a ceremony was held in the northeast of Egypt to open the Suez Canal for shipping,

connecting the Mediterranean and Red Seas. The canal had an immediate and invaluable impact on world trade. It allowed water transport to travel in both directions between Europe and Asia without going around Africa. The channel also played an important role in the expansion and further colonization of Africa.



On November 18th, 1793, the Central Museum of Art was opened by a special decision of the Convention in the

Louvre. The royal palace was turned into a public museum. Now the Louvre is the most famous and largest museum in the world. It is here that such masterpieces of world art as Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, the ancient Greek sculptures *Venus de Milo* and *Nike of Samothrace* are kept.

On November 18th, 1870,

the first official pigeon mail line linked Tours and Paris. Homing pigeons are excellent fliers and can cover long distances at high speed. A man noticed this ability of pigeons a very long time ago and began to use it for his own purposes. The Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and other peoples have already used pigeons to receive messages.



November 19th is Day of Missile Forces and Artillery. The holiday was established to commemorate the outstanding merits of the missile forces and artillery in the fight against the Nazi invaders during the Great Patriotic War. In particular, in the defeat of the invaders at Stalingrad, and the date November

19th is the day the counter-offensive of Soviet troops began at Stalingrad in 1942, in which artillery played one of the key roles.



November 20th is Day of Workers of Agriculture and Processing Industry of the Agro-Industrial Complex in the Republic of Belarus. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the national economy of the Republic of Belarus, which has centuries-old agricultural traditions.

For centuries, agriculture has been one of the main occupations of Belarusians and currently plays a significant role in the country's economy. Belarus is one of the leaders among the countries of the post-Soviet space in terms of production volumes of main types of agricultural products.



November 20th is World Children's Day. It is celebrated annually at the call of the UN to commemorate the adoption of the

Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the 14th session of the UN General Assembly on November 20th, 1959 (adopted by the 44th session of the UN General Assembly on November 20th, 1989).



On November 21st, 1783, the Montgolfier brothers hot air balloon took off for the first time with people on board. The pioneers of aeronautics were the physicist Jean Francois Pilatre de Rozier and the Marquis Francois Laurent d'Arlandes. They soared over Paris for 25 minutes, rising to a height of more than 1000 metres and flying 9 kilometres.

November 21st is World Television Day. It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on December 17th, 1996, to commemorate the first World Television Forum, held at UN Headquarters on November 21st, 1996. Television was recognised as an important tool for influencing – orienting, directing and monitoring public opinion. It is difficult to overestimate his influence and impact on world politics.



November 23rd is World Watercolour Day. The Mexican watercolour artist Alfredo Guati Rojo (1918-2003) was the initiator of the establishment of this holiday. He was convinced that watercolour is capable of conveying the beauty of the world just as well as oil painting.