



**Belarusian
medical services
enjoying increased
demand among
foreigners**



**The World of
Wildlife exhibition
hosted by Minsk's
Red Roman
Catholic Church**



INTERNATIONAL

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Sportsmen training at Raubichi National Olympic Sports Training Centre

IBU European Open Biathlon Championships 2020 to be held in Raubichi

The continental championship — scheduled to start on February 26th — has been moved to Raubichi as the organisers weren't able to guarantee the necessary conditions for the event due to warm weather in Estonia. The Belarusian side announced its readiness to host the event.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, assessed the preparation of the Raubichi National Olympic Sports Training Centre for the upcoming event and personally tested the track along with the team.

“The important thing is the statement by the IBU head that — for supporting and, virtually, saving the event — they will think about passing the World Cup stage to Raubichi in the near future, featuring leading, top athletes,” Mr. Lukashenko said. Apart from the European Championships, the sports complex near Minsk will also host the IBU Cup stage: on March 4th-7th.



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The agenda of the President's meeting with the heads of leading state media was diverse and eventful, tackling information sovereignty, projects to create a news TV channel and a national system for measuring media audiences, analytics in print media and quick news on Internet resources, countering disinformation attacks and delivering objective information to the general public. The conversation lasted more than three hours.

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised its relevance, "Confrontation and geopolitical instability in different parts of the world, including in our region, are all on the agenda nowadays. The most important component of independence of any state is information sovereignty. This is the right to pursue one's own information policy in the state, to form a national information infrastructure and to ensure information security... We, as a sovereign and independent state, must uphold this right at all costs, including in the information field. It may seem that we don't have to fight on this front, but, alas, it is necessary."

At the crossroads of information flows

Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded the audience that in order to counteract new risks, challenges and threats, the Concept of the Information Security of Belarus was adopted slightly less than a year ago.

"I don't know how effective it is. You know this better than me. But this is the first serious step towards developing a strategy for our information security. Perhaps, as a living creative body, it's necessary to improve the idea," he said.

The President underlined that the Belarusian media will face increasing threats in the near future. He noted that today the press is not only a means of delivering information, but also a fully-fledged weapon, moreover, of mass destruction.

Independence and information sovereignty



BELTA

"Falsified facts, fakes, deep fakes, so-called post-truth, when the audience is skilfully manipulated, deliberately taking it away from really important problems — this and other information poison is akin to chemical weapons. It's only the beginning. Even more complex things await us, which will be difficult to control, at least in a short period of time. Untruths build up in layers for the susceptible population, making them defenceless against their destructive impact. Information warfare now plays a special role in society."

According to the Head of State, competition in the information field is fierce today, and Belarus is penetrated by various media streams from all sides. "Many of them are openly destructive. Belarus is in a complicated situation in this regard. We should not be compared to countries that may seem similar to us such as Switzerland, Austria, and so on. Absolutely not, because those countries are part of the large and powerful European Union. They can always rely on their allies, whereas in our situation we seem to take flak from both allies and from competitors. Even major foreign media often resort to insinuations and at times glaring falsehoods and libel."

Objectivity is the best advantage

The Belarusian leader oriented the state media towards an honest and objective conversation with the audience,

"It's extremely important to catch and hold people's attention in these complicated conditions. It is also important not to lose the trust of viewers, readers and listeners. Mass media should have an honest and objective conversation with people and convey our position to them. You can do better at this."

Nevertheless, Mr. Lukashenko drew attention to the fact that our media mainly take an honest position. They do not manipulate information and do not descend to the levels of fake broadcasts, truthfully showing the informational picture of the day. However, we still must think about improvements in the quality of the supply of material. Moreover, even with the rapid development of Internet broadcasting, the traditional media, the President believes, doesn't lose its demand, "I personally carefully monitor your products, especially television and talk that the Internet will completely edge out television is false. At least 55-60 percent of the population will watch TV regularly..."

May online media be a supplement to traditional methods at this stage. Maybe, they [online media] are currently going step by step alongside traditional media; maybe, they are slightly better in certain respects. But traditional media will always exist."

Scope for improvement

The Head of State noted that broadcasters often lack intensity and fast responses. In addition to that, it is high time they shifted away from foreign platforms. "Not everything these platforms offer is of good quality. We need more television content of our own."

Mr. Lukashenko believes that the print media, in order to stay afloat in the modern digital world, must actively engage in analytics, "Of course, we have always been and will be objective. But our news, our honest position should be conveyed to everyone and heard by everyone. We have nothing to be ashamed of, we work for our country and our people."

Mr. Lukashenko is convinced that a talented journalist can and should be a leader in public opinion, "Today the image of any media outlet should be shaped by original journalism. We need new faces, interesting personalities and themes. You should be talented and convincing while delivering information."

Media executives made a number of suggestions to the President. Among them were the creation of a news TV channel like Euronews, the construction of a modern media centre, the creation of a national media body and several others. The Head of State has been attentive to these initiatives but noted that their implementation should be clearly prioritised. The principle of modernisation of any sphere is relevant here: there is no extra money. Mr. Lukashenko advises reporters to adopt a simple principle: brief and to the point. Life is accelerating more and more, and the media must keep that pace.

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Projects accepted for implementation



The new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the People's Republic of China, Nikolai Snopkov, will soon travel to Beijing. While being appointed, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he expects a real breakthrough in relations between the two countries.

By Dmitry Kryat, Dmitry Umpirovich

During a working meeting last week, the President stated once more, "The Chinese should know that Belarusians are stable and reliable people and true friends."

Nikolai Snopkov will fly to China at a difficult time. Not only because of the coronavirus outbreak. As the Head of State pointed out, the world has gone through even more difficult times. "The fact is that, in connection with this coronavirus, fake news is being thrown into the media space," said Mr. Lukashenko, making a reference to the previous event at the Palace of Independence — the meeting with heads of the leading state media.

The Chinese side should be fully satisfied with the appointment of Nikolai

Snopkov as Ambassador. He supervised the direction of interaction with the country in his previous position of Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration. The work ahead is expected to be significant and export growth is among the priorities. The market is inexhaustible and Mr. Snopkov — in an interview with media — estimated it at \$10 trillion. "My task is to work out in detail what we can deliver to the Chinese market and, most importantly, how to do it, taking into account the existing trade and customs barriers and the insufficient volume of production for the supply of goods in demand on the Chinese market. All these need to be analysed again in a practical, applied way and reported to the President, so that appropriate instructions can be prepared for specific individuals," he noted.



Beijing

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Imports are a separate task and, according to Mr. Snopkov, these should be reasonable, especially with regard to intermediate goods, "They give us significant savings in relation to similar intermediate goods of the same quality supplied from the Russian Federation and the European Union. For example, such savings, according to the calculations of the Econ-

omy Ministry, amount to about \$400m per year. This ensures an increase in value added and GDP growth. With this in mind, we need to work with the components supplied to our enterprises."

An increase in the number of joint ventures between China and Belarus also leads to such growth and Mr. Snopkov believes joint business is the long-term basis for economic co-operation.

At the same time, it's important to try to avoid mediation — in cases where this is possible.

Nikolai Snopkov also explained that, in addition to leading the diplomatic mission, he will continue to serve as a representative of the state in the management bodies of the Chinese-Belarusian Great Stone Industrial Park.

What unites Minsk and Bern

Favourable business conditions and a stake in the economy: the President meets the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

By Polina Konoga, Dmitry Umpirovich

Switzerland is among the top five investors in our country and, with this in view, the meeting of Aleksandr Lukashenko with the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, is a notable event. The Head of State assured the guest, "The economy is the key. We are ready to provide Swiss businesses with the most favourable conditions for investment."

Eastern Switzerland

Switzerland has long established itself as a reliable investor. In nine months of 2019 alone, the volume of direct foreign investment on a net basis in our country amounted to \$41m. Notably, the turnover of services (January-November 2019, reached \$264.8m) exceeds the turnover in goods, while Switzerland is among the top ten importers of services.

Welcoming the guest, the President first drew attention to the similarity of our countries. It is no accident that Belarus is sometimes called an Eastern Switzerland. "I don't object to this since Switzerland has earned such a favourable status in the world thanks to its policy, permanent neutrality and very high



level of integrity in relations with other states," Mr. Lukashenko said.

In the modern world, this is actually the most important indicator. According to the President, there are some small differences however: Belarus is a country of forests, plains and lakes, while Switzerland is known for its ski resorts. However, our bilateral relationship, in spite of the geographical features, is always good. "Though I think that we have space to grow further, especially in the

sphere of trade and economic relations," Mr. Lukashenko noted.

A decision to appoint a Swiss ambassador to Belarus and open the country's embassy in Minsk is a positive example of co-operation. The President believes, "This will be a good step towards deepening our liaisons. Your visit is very important and timely. I'm sure it will give impetus to the deepening of our co-operation."

Historical meeting

Ignazio Cassis later admitted, the comparison of Belarus with Switzerland doesn't offend him in any way. On the contrary, the fact that his country serves as an example for Belarus is a great honour.

"Our countries have much in common, including many common challenges," he told journalists. "We share a similar geopolitical situation, surrounded by neighbours, including large and powerful states. We need to assert ourselves and defend our place in this environment. The development of di-

plomacy and search for our own place on the global arena are a very important way to do this."

The Swiss began his conversation with Mr. Lukashenko by saying that when he comes to another country, he primarily meets not politicians but representatives of his diaspora. Belarus is no exception in this regard. The owner of the Stadler Rail Group, Peter Spuhler, who does not live in Belarus permanently but often works there, joined Mr. Cassis at breakfast, as also did a representative of the Red Cross Society. The Swiss guest explained that it was very important for him to know their feelings and perception of our country. "All of them unanimously praised and greatly appreciated the development and dynamics that is seen in Belarus," he said.

According to Mr. Cassis, now is the right time to intensify co-operation between the two countries. "We can develop and strengthen our political, economic and humanitarian relations. There are prerequisites for this," he believes.

One of the important elements of such co-operation, Mr. Cassis stated, is not only the visit but also the opening of a Swiss embassy in Minsk. At the same time, he noted that Belarus is also increasing its level of representation in his country: the Swiss side has already accredited the Belarusian Ambassador. Up to now, our state has only been represented at the level of charge d'affaires.

FACT

BelTA announced that Ignazio Cassis invited the Belarusian President to attend the World Ice Hockey Championship to be held in Switzerland this May. "This would be the first such unofficial but very important step," he said. Aleksandr Lukashenko thanked the guest, saying, "Thank you. If this happens, we will entrust Peter Spuhler with organising this visit."

New page of co-operation

Belarus' Foreign Minister, Vladimir Makei, and the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, opened the Swiss Embassy in Minsk in a solemn ceremony. Located at 11 Svobody Square, it previously housed a branch of the Swiss Embassy which officially opened in February 2008.

Vladimir Makei stressed, "A new page has opened in the history of our relations. We are greatly interested in developing comprehensive contacts and co-operation and we see some promising areas — such as agriculture, industry and high-tech. I am convinced that the opening of the Embassy will contribute to further strengthening our comprehensive co-operation."



Capitals need to move production

The Head of State made a trip to the Gomel Region, primarily focusing on the Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Mill and the sulphate bleached pulp plant on the same site. In addition, the President spontaneously visited several other industrial enterprises of the Svetlogorsk District. Implementation of investment projects, personnel issues and the environment, recent negotiations with the President of Russia — Aleksandr Lukashenko commented on a number of relevant topics during his working trip.

Immediately on arrival at the Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Mill, the President was interested in the details of how wood raw materials are supplied to the enterprise and asked whether there was enough supply. The Head of State was told that the requirements are growing and there is a need for additional rail transport. Aleksandr Lukashenko gave the necessary instructions in this regard. The Head of State espe-

cially drew attention to the fact that additional supplies of wood for processing to the Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Mill will make it possible to more efficiently use the country's forest resources, including low-grade wood. As the President was informed, the technology used at the enterprise enables a sought-after product with high added value to be produced from low-grade wood. Moreover, it's a non-volatile production.

"This is our wealth [forest resources]. It's necessary to process it into paper and cellulose, so as not to take it abroad for nothing. That was the idea of building this enterprise."

The Head of Bellesbumprom Concern said that the plant was put into operation, is working and is gradually reaching its designed capacity. Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that the main task now is to obtain greater added value for products.

The President directed the sulphate bleached pulp mill towards a new stage in its development, "We need a depth of pulp

processing. We need to make appropriate packaging materials and bags from it."

The Head of State spoke about the task of maximising avoiding the use of polyethylene, which is harmful to the environment, "We need to move away from this towards paper packaging. We have plenty resources for this. From this pulp, therefore, it's necessary to create such packaging and other materials."

The President announced the decision no later than this year to build a workshop near the plant and buy the necessary equipment, "It's not cheap. Probably, it will cost 80m Euros, but we'll go to the expense. We'll install the equipment here and we'll be processing the pulp here. And so, from the 400,000 tonnes that you will manufacture, we will process 300-350,000 tonnes here on the spot and deliver to our enterprises. Just 50,000 tonnes will remain for export."

Mr. Lukashenko said the production of viscose pulp should be the second area of development, which also should

not be delayed. The Head of State noted that viscose pulp will be in demand here, at the neighbouring plant in Svetlogorsk. Currently, these raw materials are imported.

As far as previous production problems in co-operation with the Chinese CAMCE Company are concerned, the President appreciated the fact that domestic specialists eventually managed to independently master the company's facilities, "Well done. Thank you very much for that! This is the second reason for my visit: to thank you for the fact that, having rejected an unscrupulous partner, you've built up this enterprise yourself and get good results today."

During a visit to the enterprise, the President talked with the workforce. Before that, he carried out a symbolic start-up of the equipment for the sulphate bleached pulp production line at the Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Mill.

The President also decided to spontaneously visit several enterprises that were not initial-

ly on the trip route. Visiting the Svetlogorsk Ferroconcrete Plant, Mr. Lukashenko demanded that the situation with employee turnover at some enterprises be resolved, as well as additional measures to be taken to strengthen production discipline.

The President also visited the House Building Plant in Svetlogorsk, where he instructed



The Svetlogorsk Pulp and Board Mill

the company to work out additional measures in the field of housing construction, "Housing construction is a big issue. It's a driving force behind the economic sector. With building a house, you need a lot to equip it. We need to take a look at what can be done in the sector."

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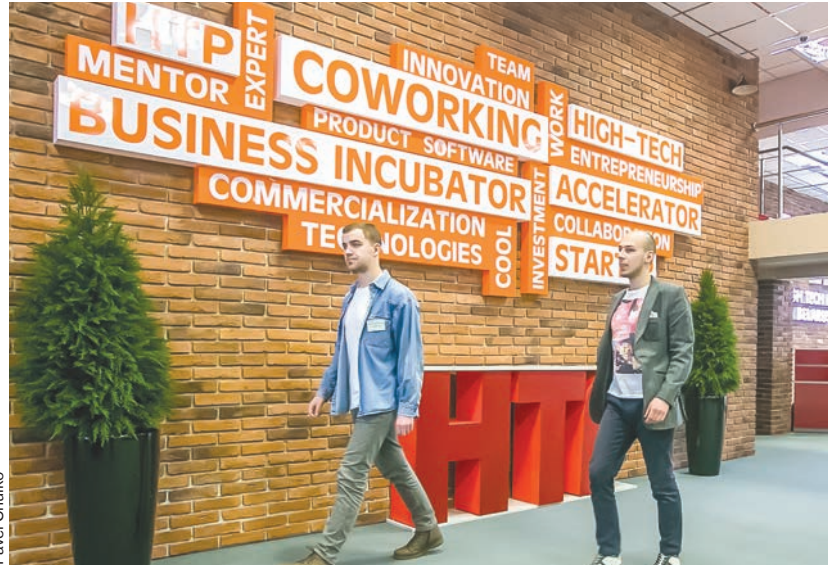
Digitalisation as economic engine

Plans to identify branches of Belarusian economy to better utilise Hi-Tech Park products

At a recent session of the Council of Ministers focusing on the results of the socio-economic development, Prime Minister Sergei Rumas noted that many sectors of the economy have huge potential for growth regarding the acceleration of their digitalisation.

“It was decided that attention will be given to specific

industries where products developed by the Hi-Tech Park can be used. The sphere of services (healthcare, transportation, tourism) and the real sector (the manufacturing sector, agriculture) were mentioned,” said the First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus, Dmitry Krutoy, adding that enterprises in all branches of the economy should be more active in this regard, particularly taking into account the high results achieved by the Hi-Tech Park, including in 2019. “The growth rate of added value is 109.3 percent which is the highest figure among all branches of the Belarusian economy. For instance, the Hi-Tech Park’s share in Minsk’s gross regional product already stands at 17 percent. Once again, record



At High-Tech Park

high foreign currency earnings growth has been achieved. As much as 90 percent of exports went to Western countries and the USA,” he noted.

“We already often say that

digital technologies are our new oil, which we can use to compensate for various disadvantageous policies, but the passiveness of our state agencies that fail to avail them-

selves of this potential beggars belief. We also regret the fact that cutting-edge Hi-Tech Park products, for instance, precision farming technology or an environmental monitoring technology, are not used by Belarusian companies, but European ones. One starts to wonder why,” the official said,

stressing that industry should more actively explore the potential the IT industry offers.

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Sharing experience and showing achievements

Representatives of the metallurgical industry from Russia, Ukraine, Italy, the UK and Kazakhstan find out about the Belarusian Steel Works’ experience: BSW — Management Company of BMC Holding JSC welcomes participants of the 4th international *Electro-Steel: Technology, Equipment, Materials* conference

By Igor Svetlov

The participants visited the company’s production facilities, later discussing key trends in the industry and issues related to improving its efficiency. The agenda for the forum’s plenary sessions included issues of operation and maintenance of arc steel furnaces, taking into account the possibilities of new technologies and technical solutions, as well as ways to reduce costs and improve the reliability of equipment.

The international *Electro-Steel: Technology, Equipment, Materials* conference is a large-scale forum that annually gathers industry representatives from vari-

ous countries. It is aimed at technical managers and specialists of ferrous metallurgy enterprises where arc steel furnaces are used.

An important part of the forum is its practical aspect: visiting enterprises where metallurgists get an opportunity to get to know the experiences and achievements of their colleagues. This year, Belarusian Steel Works has been chosen for such a visit. The conference participants expressed genuine interest in the experience of the company in terms of increasing production volumes and expanding the product range while ensuring stable and reliable operations in the steelmaking industry.

THE MT REFERENCE

BSW — Management Company of BMC Holding JSC is a high-tech enterprise in the metallurgical industry of Belarus. Structurally, it consists of four industries connected by a single technological chain: steelmaking, rolling, pipe, hardware and infrastructure workshops. Every year, over 80 percent of Belarusian Steel Works’ products are exported.

Belarusian Energy Ministry outlines plans for 2020

The physical launch and the power start-up of the first unit and the integration of the Belarusian nuclear power plant into the national power grid are expected to happen in 2020, informs Belarus’ Energy Minister Viktor Karankevich at the Ministry’s extended session

“This year, we aim to deliver nuclear fuel, execute the physical launch and the power start-up of the first unit. In other words, the first few kilowatt-hours will be transmitted to the power grid. 2020 is the final year of the five-year term, during which we have to finish key projects. Those include the implementation of measures to integrate the Belarusian nuclear power plant into the power grid and the country’s economy,” the Minister said, adding that the first unit of the Belarusian nuclear power plant is nearly ready. “Virtually all the construction and installation operations are over. Finishing work is nearing completion. The main process equipment is going through testing, which allows the power unit to work with nuclear fuel imitators. It is necessary to analyse the operation of the entire first unit as part of the technology chain and see whether the equipment operates within all the specified parameters.”

Mr. Karankevich stressed that the construction and commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant is an important project not only for diversifying fuel and energy resources (in other words, important for the energy industry). The project is important for the entire economy. “It is kind of a stimulus for the development of new enterprises, including energy-hungry ones,” he said.

A project to install a 10MW electric boiler in a new boiler house in the town of Kostyukoviichi was implemented in 2019. “It is the first among the projects and measures designed to integrate the Belarusian nuclear power plant into the power grid. It is necessary to implement similar projects at a total of 19 installations with a total installed capacity of 836MW. All are being implemented on schedule and are expected to be commissioned in 2020,” the official added.

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Belarusian Steel Works’ workshop

New, youth-oriented, aggressive

BelGee rolls out new crossover Geely Coolray (SX-11) and officially presents it

By Natalia Yemelyanova

According to BelGee Director General, Gennady Svidersky, the new Geely

is meant for youth. Its carbon mirrors and panoramic roof are meant to emphasise the dynamic power of the Coolray. The car boasts an intelligent high-beam

control, an automatic parking assistant, a 1.5td three-cylinder turbo direct injection, front-wheel drive, a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission and fuel consumption of 6.1 combined L/100km.

The car will be available in two versions and the price of Geely Coolray in the 'Comfort' range will make around \$19,000. The 'Flagship' will cost \$20,000. Sales have already been launched.

"This is a long-awaited car, one of the most modern of the latest achievements of the automotive industry. We are betting on it," Mr. Svidersky said.

As for the level of localisation of the new car, it's planned to increase this to 50 percent within a year; the localisation level for all other models is 52 percent.

According to Mr. Svidersky, none of the company's models

will be removed from production, as it was previously planned. If the demand for one model increases, the output of the other will simply be cut.

In 2020, BelGee plans to enter the markets of other EAEU states. "We completed agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Armenia over the past year. We also negotiated with Serbia and Lithuania," Mr. Svidersky announced.

The official also detailed the company's plans to expand the geography of exports. At the moment, BelGee actually operates in the market of Belarus and Russia. In 2019, the company's output exceeded \$300m (more than 20,100 cars). Around 17,600 cars were sold, mostly to Russia (10,700); in Belarus, nearly 7,000 were sold. BelGee now employs over 1,300 people and its net profit was around \$12.5m last year.



BELTA

Belarusian textiles presented in Moscow

Bellegprom Concern's delegation led by its Chair Tatiana Lugina takes part in the *Textilegprom* large-scale industry exhibition in Moscow

By Svetlana Savelieva

At the exhibition Bellegprom was represented by the Orsha Linen Mill, Gronitex, Lenta, Slonim Worsted and Spinning Mill and Polesie.

Tatiana Lugina held a number of business meetings during the event. She discussed issues of increasing the efficiency of participation of Belarusian and Russian enterprises in industry exhibitions, in particular in the upcoming Russian Textile Week, scheduled for March,

with the President of Roslegprom, Aleksandr Kruglik, and representatives of the Russian Union of Entrepreneurs of Textiles and Light Industry. The two parties emphasised the need for joint work to protect the common market from illegal imports, support exporters and provide domestic enterprises with industry raw materials.

The conversation with the Director General of the Russian Union of Leather and Footwear Manufacturers, Aleksandra

Andrunakievich, tackled issues regarding the decrease in demand for leather products. Both in Russia and Belarus, the demand for leather and leather shoes is declining, and the volume of consumption of leather goods is reducing. As a result, an agreement was reached on the development of joint measures to support leather and shoe enterprises.

Ms. Lugina also held talks with the State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of Russia, Viktor



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Yevtukhov, and Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission's Board, Mikhail Myasnikovich. The sides discussed the labelling of goods and examined current areas

of co-operation in the field of light industry, including protecting the EAEU domestic market, as well as providing enterprises with domestic raw materials.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Foreign investments (except banks) in Belarus at \$10bn in 2019

Among the main investors in Belarus were economic entities of Russia (45.1 percent of the total), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (18 percent) and Cyprus (7.6 percent). FDI made up \$7.2bn, or 72.3 percent of the total foreign investments.



In 2019, Belarusian organisations (apart from banks) invested a total of \$5.8bn abroad. Belarus mainly invested in the economic entities of Russia (61.9 percent of the total), Ukraine (15.5 percent), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (9.8 percent). FDI accounted for 91 percent of all the investments that went abroad.

Belarus' tourism services export tops \$250m in 2019

Growth reached 115 percent against figures from 2018, announced the Belarusian Sports and Tourism Ministry. In 2019, Belarus saw more than 4.924m foreign visitors.

Belarus has stepped up efforts to liberalise visa rules and promote in-



bound tourism. For example, since the visa free travel programme was launched (January 2017), over 350,000 people from 70 countries have visited Belarus. In 2019, this number rose by 40 percent over 2018.

After two separate visa free areas were merged into a single Brest-Grodno zone, more than 30,000 tourists from 42 countries visited the region.

Auroch population in Belarus makes up 35 percent of the global total

In Belarus, measures are being taken to protect, stabilise and increase the number of species of wild animals that are disappearing at a global level, including the European auroch. In early 2020, ten auroch micro-populations were registered in the country, with a steady positive trend



in their growth. The number of animals has increased over 6.2 times in 29 years reaching 1,962 as of March 2019. In recent years, the 11th Dyatlovo auroch micro-population is being formed, with new animals already being born.

Belarus is currently in first place in the world regarding the number of wild aurochs and their share makes up 35 percent of the world population (4,442 animals).

The first triple birth registered in Belarus this year: in Vitebsk

The babies were born to a family of Vitebsk residents, Margarita and Yevgeny Malishevsky. Nikita, Vasilisa and Artem, as well as their mother, are still under the care of doctors and are doing well. "My father has a twin, so my husband and I considered the possibility of having two chil-



dren at once and hoped it would happen. When we learnt of triplets, we were very happy," Margarita admits. The 32 year old mother is a phthisiologist, while her husband works as a geodesist. The friendly family already have 7 year old Varvara and 2 year old Platon. "My daughter is a great help. She is looking forward to our return home. My husband and parents will also be around to help," Margarita adds.

Under the dome of history

By Tatiana Kondratieva

Reconstruction of the Old Castle in Grodno continues and, in 5-6 years, the historical and cultural site will be a point of attraction for tourists from all over the world. The castle is being restored as it was in the 16th century, during the time of Stefan Batory. A month ago, experts began the final covering of the dome, which will later be put on the entrance gate. The structure will be sheathed with several tonnes of tinned copper.

It was the dome of the Old Castle which aroused heated discussion among the scientific community and even caused some controversy in the first stage of design. Initially, the designs were based on the image of the castle on Tomas Makovsky's engraving of the 16th-17th century. However, the project was later studied by Polish experts who came to the conclusion that the dome was too round — which contradicted the canons of castle construction of that era. As a result, the dome was slightly 'deflated' and became more like an onion.

Production of the new shape of the dome began in mid-September, near the castle walls. The 'onion' consists of several elements: a steel frame, wooden armour, and the copper plating itself. At the beginning of October, the first 'fitting' was held and then the frame was covered with wood. In early December, a team of specialists engaged in covering the domes arrived at the Old Castle. They have already worked on reconstruction sites both in Belarus and throughout Europe.

The workers firstly covered the site with a green tent and put wooden structures around it. Before starting the plating with copper plates, they demonstrated a rough version, which satisfied the architects.

"We work with contract firm Grodnozhilstroy," master roofer Svyatoslav Burmeister invites us into the tent. "I work with my two sons and an assistant. The composition of our team is constant, it has not changed for many years. With our help, many temples have been given their present appearance. We order copper plates in Germany. Here they are, twisted into bobbins. Each weighs about a hundred kilograms. This is copper, protected on both sides by tin. In total, about two tonnes of the material will be required for covering the dome.

BELTA



How do we work? We lay the protective material on the wooden covering, then mark it with a rope net. Only after that do we carefully measure and cut out the desired size detail from tinned copper. Every other facet is sheathed. Three facets of the dome (out of eight) are ready."

It's likely the work will be completed closer to the spring. Until then, the dome will be hidden from prying eyes. Experts will also soon begin working with another pearl of the Neman River area: the dome of the bell tower of the Holy Dormition Zhiroviichi Monastery is waiting for its turn.

"Elements are connected by a special lock," Mr. Burmeister says, showing us the smooth sections. "The technology of such double vertical and double horizontal folding was known several centuries ago. They are still highly reliable and durable, mainly due to their sealed connections. No moisture will get under the metal skin. How-

ever, this work is very laborious as we work mostly with our hands."

The first stage of reconstruction is underway in the castle and is expected to finish this year. Works include restoration of the gallery connecting the palace and the entrance gates, restoration of the gate itself, construction of the wall above the Neman to the Middle tower (and the tower itself), as well as construction of maintenance facilities: a house for measuring and a stone building.

"This is the most unusual and complex project that our company has implemented," says Viktor Bartosh — who oversees the district under the construction of Grodnozhilstroy JSC, adding, "Speaking about the dome, its steel structure alone weighs about five

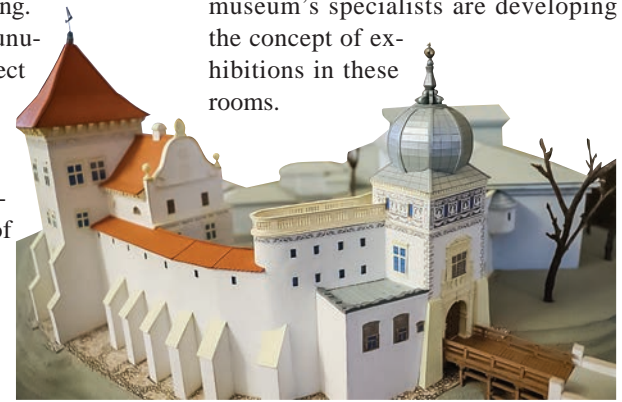
tonnes. Its 'fitting' has already taken place and it was decided to make the lining on the ground. After the 'onion' is covered by wood and sheets, its weight will increase to 13 tonnes."

General construction works at the first stage are continuing at the same time. There is an increasing number of finishing in stone required. Almost all the window openings complement the stone frames, and the Middle tower has recently been decorated with four stone balls. A total of 35 people are employed on the construction site.

"Work is underway on the internal finishing plaster and installation of stone — to reach the roof of the Middle tower. Individually produced tiles have been ordered," Mr. Bartosh explains. "In the course of the construction, some points have been identified that have not been worked out by the Grodnograzhdanproekt Institute. Now we are thinking about how to make a vertical layout of the slope from the Neman side."

Meanwhile, preparations for the second stage of reconstruction have begun. It will deal with the main building of the museum. "Pre-project works will be completed soon, and we will inform the Culture Ministry about them," says Yuri Kiturko, the Director of the Grodno Historical and Archaeological Museum. "In 2020, about \$3m will be spent, most of which will be spent on the interior of the castle. Another \$500,000 has been allocated for the design of the second stage of construction. Along with the construction work, interiors are being developed, including the chapel, the royal bath, the alabaster hall, and the officials' rooms."

Considerable work is still to be done — including painting, items made of wood, iron and other materials. Belrestavratsiya has already started making stained glass windows. In addition, the museum's specialists are developing the concept of exhibitions in these rooms.



Zapadniy Bug River

By Irina Sergeeva

"This agreement is very relevant. Today, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable De-

velopment raises the issue of environmental protection, including water resources, because they are the most vulnerable and important in

Joint water protection

Governments of Belarus and Poland sign agreement on co-operation in the protection and management of cross-border waters in Bialowieza, Poland

the context of cross-border co-operation," said the Deputy Minister of Belarus' Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Andrei Khmel.

According to the document, the parties will liaise in the field of joint monitoring of surface and groundwater in cross-border areas, exchange data, protecting water from pollution and excessive consumption, identifying pollution and impact on water quality. The areas of co-operation listed in the agree-

ment also include protection against floods and adverse effects of ice, drought control, prevention and elimination of emergency water pollution.

Special attention is paid to the protection and use of aquatic ecosystems and biological resources dependent on water, to specially protected natural areas and the maintenance of the natural regime of border riverbeds.

The agreement will be a key factor in attracting foreign investment for joint pro-

jects to restore and preserve the environmental status of water facilities, including the reconstruction and modernisation of wastewater treatment plants located in the Zapadniy Bug River basin.

After the ratification of the agreement, the parties will begin working on the national memberships of the Belarusian-Polish commission for co-operation in cross-border waters which is expected to hold its first session this August in Brest.



Come here for medical treatment

Last year, Belarusian clinics serviced over 165,000 foreigners from 136 countries. An increasing number of patients from abroad are registered annually in the Republic and among them are even those whom the world's leading clinics have refused to help. Health care in our country occupies a leading position among the post-Soviet states, as evidenced by the results of international studies. Transplantation, orthopaedics, oncology and cardiology are among the most popular areas. Specialists tell us more about how foreign patients are treated in Belarus.

By Olga Kosyakova

With one's own feet

The Republican Scientific-Practical Centre of Traumatology and Orthopaedics is a leading healthcare institution in the field of diagnostics, treatment and rehabilitation of patients with diseases and injuries of the musculoskeletal system. Every year, about 700 foreign citizens from more than 50 countries, including Russia, the CIS, the USA, Libya, China, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Sudan and elsewhere apply for medical care at the Centre.

Nine year old Aleksandra Martirosyan, from Kazakhstan, has recently been operated on at the Centre and the little girl is already in good mood. She was taken to Minsk by her grandmother Marina who noticed Aleksandra's condition several years ago. "She began to grow quickly and one of her legs was rapidly overtaking the other. When I was looking for a clinic on the Internet, I came across Minsk. In summer, we came for a consultation at the Centre: I immediately knew I wanted my granddaughter to be operated on here," she says.

Oleg Sokolovsky — who heads the laboratory of traumatology and orthopaedics for children and adolescents at the Centre — shows us Aleksandra's photos. "The knee joint is responsible for 70 percent of the growth of a lower extremity. The girl had one leg longer than the other by 2cm: the healthy leg was shorter than the other. In her case, the reason was vascular disorders that accelerated



The Republican Scientific-Practical Centre of Traumatology and Orthopaedics



The Cardiology Republican Scientific-Practical Centre

the growth of one of the legs. Actually, deformity of lower extremities is a frequent orthopaedic pathology. While a child is growing, we can eliminate the defect using a low-traumatic intervention. We operate on such patients every week. This intervention is not done everywhere," he explains.

Previously, in some countries, operations were performed to destroy the growth zone in 12-13 year olds but the result did not always satisfy patients and surgeons. Another option was an operation to lengthen an extremity using the Ilizarov device, or to shorten a longer leg. However, these interventions are significantly more traumatic. Modern doctors use a low-traumatic technique, implanting titanium braces to restrain abnormal growth. A child can get up and walk on the day of the operation.

Gradually, the patient's healthy leg will catch up with the operated one. Doctors say that when the difference is gone, the implants will be removed, and the legs will grow simultaneously.

Aleksandra says that she didn't even have time to get scared, while Marina admits, "I am very grateful to the surgeons and the anaesthetist.



Aleksandra Martirosyan and her grandmother Marina



They've done a professional job. Actually, the staff are all great; we were welcomed warmly and made to feel at home."

"Foreigners' interest in the Republican Scientific-Practical Centre of Traumatology and Orthopaedics lies in the professionalism of the team of doctors working here," states the Centre's Director, Mikhail Gerasimenko. "We ensure timely diagnosis, including remotely, as well as remote communication with the attending physician."

The Centre is equipped with high-tech equipment combined with the latest achievements of medical science. If necessary, its specialists use complex solutions to optimise the process of diag-

nosis and treatment of foreign patients. Importantly, the absence of a strict visa regime in our country for foreign citizens and the optimal cost of services contribute to the Centre's popularity.

Moreover, the Centre constantly implements and applies the latest innovative technologies, including the use of AR-glasses during operations, cellular technologies and unique solutions that return patients to the joy of movement and hope for a full life. Another piece of the intellectual property of local specialists are the various metal structures and implants that have no analogues elsewhere in the world.

Waiting for the heart

We are talking to Yevgeny, from Kiev, at the Cardiology Republican Scientific-Practical Centre. He has come to Belarus to undergo transplantation and, exhausted by the disease, he is here waiting for a donor heart.

Five years ago, Yevgeny had acute myocarditis. He was thirty-four years old when a serious illness affected the heart muscle. He went through the intensive care unit at several hospitals and, initially, a fatal diagnosis of dilated cardiomyopathy was named.

FIGURES

Last year, **165,000** foreign patients spent **\$46.5m** at our clinics

In Ukraine, a Health Ministry programme allows for the allocation of state money to the country's citizens for treatment abroad. "Last summer, it was recommended that I undergo heart transplantation," Yevgeny says calmly. "My condition was getting worse, and the money for the transplant was unable to be allocated from the budget. It is impossible to find out when an operation will be conducted as all the information is kept secret. According to open data, our country has reduced the budget for treatment abroad by 40 percent. That is why I collected money myself. I was tested here and passed a course of treatment; now I'm waiting for an operation. I'm told the waiting time is not likely to be long as I have a popular blood type."

"The total exports of the Centre's medical services are \$1.5m annually," Aleksandr Mrochek, the Director of Cardiology Centre, says. "We can say that heart transplantation has already become an ordinary operation for us. We have successfully conducted re-transplantation and the 'heart-lungs' transplant complex. All over the world, these operations are considered difficult to perform. Our surgeons are ready to perform them but, of course, it is better not to bring them to this point, but to do timely lung transplants since the heart also suffers when there are lung issues."

Patients who've been refused by well-known global clinics — from Israel and Switzerland where the cardiology area is very developed — often apply to the Cardiology Centre. There is nothing surprising in this: the more the clinic works and declares its achievements at scientific conferences abroad, the more the attention of doctors and patients is focused on it.

SPECIALIST VIEW

Dmitry Kalistratov, Head of the Business Activity, Pricing and State Property Department at the Health Ministry:

An increasing number of foreigners come to us annually to get medical care in a variety of areas: oncology, orthopaedics, cardiology, ophthalmology and dentistry are only some of the popular spheres. Not only the quality of treatment, and the conditions of their stay but also the cost of medical services look attractive. We are ready to accept foreign citizens to provide them with medical help, including high-tech and rehabilitation assistance. It should be noted that the introduction of a visa free regime in Belarus contributes to the development of medical tourism. This directly affects the creation of a favourable image of the country in the world.



Venice Carnival started amid 'coronavirus and high tide fears'

It's Venice carnival time again: beware the masked faces lurking near the gondolas and the ancient buildings

The event first started in the 9th century but was entirely outlawed by the Holy Roman Emperor, Francis II in the 18th century. It was then brought back in the late 1970s and it leads nicely into the Roman Catholic period of Lent.

The masks come in all shapes, sizes, designs and colours. Some even make their own. The main appeal to wearing a mask is to allow yourself to be whomever

you want for just a short period of time.

The carnival will last until February 25th and it attracts even more tourists to the busy tourist city than usual. This year, however, the picturesque Italian town seems to be less packed than normal.

As a regional newspaper reports, hotels in Venice — which tend to be almost sold out over this period — got only an average 70 percent of their rooms booked. According to the media, this might be due to mixed fears over the coronavirus epidemic and the 'acqua alta' (high-tide), which severely hit Venice last autumn, causing relevant infrastructural damage.

Some events even got cancelled. Others,

like 'Il Ballo Del Doge' (The Dance of the Doge) — one of the most important moments of the carnival — had their attendance number halved.

This year's Venice carnival, however, will also be remembered as the first one to use a highly technological system that will count how many tourists will walk into specific areas at a specific time. Venetian authorities said this will help them know more about how tourists move within the city in order to study how they use its different spaces.

No risk for privacy violations, though, as no facial recognition system is used.

Macron calls for co-ordinated EU nuclear defence strategy — with France at centre

Addressing military officers in Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron called for a more co-ordinated European Union defence strategy, with France and its nuclear arsenal to play a central role in it

His speech came one week after Britain has exited the EU, leaving France as Europe's only nuclear-armed state.

Mr. Macron's vision over nuclear weapons laid emphasis on deterrence theory: countries with such weapons should be less likely to attack each other for fear of mutual destruction, the arms serving therefore as guarantors of peace.

"The strategic stability which goes through the search for a balance of forces at the lowest possible level, is no longer guaranteed today," he declared. "Behind the crisis of the great instruments of arms control and disarmament, it is the security of France and Europe which is at stake."

France is one of the nine countries in the world to have nuclear force. It has reduced the size of its arsenal, which today stands at fewer than 300 warheads, Mr. Macron confirmed.

Russia and the United States are far ahead with more than 6,000 warheads each. In addition to this list, with a reduced arsenal, stand China, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea.

Mr. Macron's speech comes at a time when NATO allies, who would ordinarily look to the USA for help in a nuclear standoff, worry about Washington's retreat from the multilateral stage.

South Korea's *Parasite* makes history by winning best picture

South Korean film *Parasite* has been named best picture at this year's Oscars, becoming the first non-English language film to take the top prize

The 92nd Academy Awards took place on celebrated the year's best in cinema. For the second year in a row, the event

did not have a host, though Steve Martin and Chris Rock took to the stage to introduce the first presenter and get the crowd laughing. The programme included an upbeat opening performance by Janelle Monae and a showstopping surprise: a performance by Eminem of *Lose Yourself* from the 2002 film *8 Mile*, which was the

first hip-hop song ever to win an Academy Award for Best Song.

By capping off its banner night with a 'Best Picture' win at the 2020 Academy Awards, Bong Joon Ho and the *Parasite* team made Oscars history. It's the first foreign-language film to win 'Best Picture', the first movie to win the top honour without receiving any Oscars in the acting category since *Slumdog Millionaire*, and it made director Bong the first filmmaker to win 'Best Original Screenplay', 'Best Picture', and 'Best Director' for the first time since Alejandro Inarritu managed the sweep with 2014's *Birdman*. *Parasite* also became South Korea's first winner in the newly rechristened 'Best International Film' category.

Renee Zellweger won best actress for playing Judy Garland in *Judy*. Joaquin Phoenix was named best actor for *Joker*.

Brad Pitt and Laura Dern scooped the supporting acting awards for their roles in *Once Upon A Time in Hollywood* and *Marriage Story* respectively.

The World War One epic had been the favourite to win best picture, but its awards all came in the technical categories.



Deadly storm Ciara cuts path of destruction across Europe

Fierce winds and heavy rains claimed at least six lives across northern Europe as storm Ciara disrupted travel, grounded hundreds of flights, flooded roads and left vast areas without power

In one of the region's most violent storms for years, one man died, and another was reported missing in southern Sweden when their boat capsized.

In the Czech Republic, one man died when his car went off the road trying to avoid a fallen tree. Several other people were also injured in the country as winds blew up to 180 kilometres an hour, leaving 100,000 people without power, even toppling over a truck.

In Slovenia, a 52 year old man died when a tree fell on his car as he travelled in the northeast of the country. In southern Poland, a 40

year old woman and her young daughter were killed by roofing torn away by the storm-force winds. Police in London said that a man was killed in his car when a tree fell on to a motorway southwest of the capital.

In the west of Germany, falling trees seriously injured three people: two women in Sarrebruck — one of whom was in a critical condition — and a 16 year old boy in Paderborn.

The storm caused extensive flooding in England, cut power to 130,000 homes in northern France and played havoc with air, rail and road travel in several countries. The storm also cut power to 35,000 households in northern Austria.

It forced more than 700 flights in four German cities — Frankfurt, Munich, Dusseldorf and Cologne — to be cancelled.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Belarus' heart, a deer's kiss and a bluebird

Photographers reveal the secrets of Belarusian nature at the *World of Wildlife* exhibition hosted by Minsk's Red Roman Catholic Church (St. Simeon and St. Helena Roman Catholic Church)



Pavel Martinchik. They take one fish, look at another, note the third and eat the fourth. The seagulls of the Minsk Sea like to have dinner against the sunset.

The wolf came out of the wood cautiously but confidently, sinking its powerful paws into the fresh snow. The animal was fully grown and licking its lips. Should I run? Or should I hide? No, I'd better enjoy the beautiful shot — like dozens of others!

In the heart of the Belarusian capital — at the Red Roman Catholic Church on Independence Square, an exhibition of the Belarusian Wildlife Photographers' Club has opened and its participants can talk about photo hunting for hours.

A good shot can sometimes be made by accident. "For example, this shot happened when I took a photo of seagulls on the Minsk Sea," Pavel Martinchik recalls, adding, "I went for a walk that day but, as always, I had a camera with me. I suddenly noticed how the birds were hunting for baby fish. I dropped onto the sand and began taking pictures. This single shot features everything I saw: one seagull is approaching the water, another bird is hunting, the third has a fish, the fourth overshadows the sun and others are 'the audience' flying nearby."

However, in different situations it can take a week to make a single successful shot. "I was once waiting for a little bird for five hours, hardly moving. Finally, our hero — the kingfisher — came quietly landing on a twig. It was so beautiful that I was caught in a daze," smiles Svetlana Karpeichik. "I was confused and forgot everything. It was impossible to think about an exposure or an aperture: I hurried to take a shot since the bird could have flown away at any moment. It sat there for a short while then suddenly dived again. I've learnt the bird gets its food under water."

Alas, many fail to see that such natural treasures surround them, or they simply do not appreciate what they have. "There are plenty of examples, take the upper marshes. For us, these are associated with mud and reeds while foreigners view them as something incredible: in Europe, there are no marshes left at all," says Sergey Plytkevich, the Director of the Planet Without Borders Foundation for Tourism Development and Wildlife Support. "People also come from the Baltic States to take photos of the white-tailed eagles, Golden eagles or owls. We have preserved many rare species and can top Europe in this regard!"

The free of charge exhibition will run until March 1st.

Prepared by Natalia Plytkevich and Anton Pikus



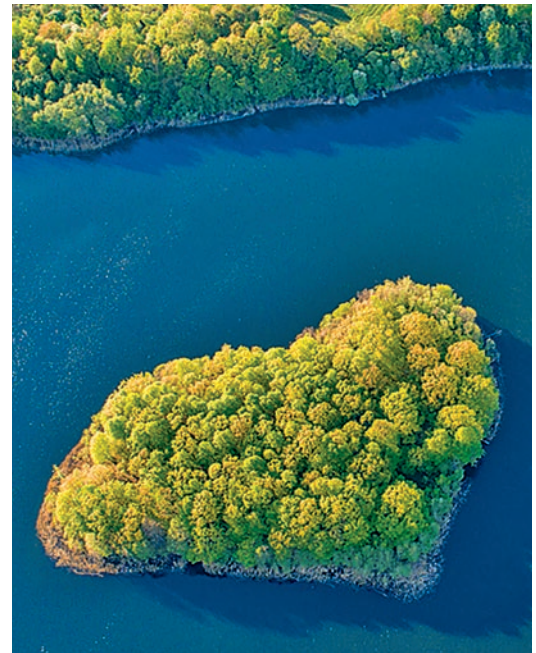
Svetlana Karpeichik. After five hours of waiting, our hero — the kingfisher — arrives, with the aim of hunting. It is looking for prey in the water and then falls like a stone, putting its sharp beak forward — to appear on the surface a second later, holding a fish in it.



Alla Erdman. In Belarus, foxes are treated with nervousness. In 2003, a collectible coin with a face value of 50 Roubles was even minted, featuring its image. The eyes sparkle brilliantly, as they are made of diamonds.



Sergey Plytkevich. Fights with rivals are in the past. Victory is achieved and a worthy reward follows: a wonderful lady's kiss.



Sergey Plytkevich. To conquer the 'heart' of Belarus, you need to visit Usaya Lake in the Vitebsk Region. The local nature is happy to welcome guests, while the country's most romantic island is asking to be placed on a poster with the words 'A Warm Welcome'.

Sergey Plytkevich. Aurochs in Krasny Bor produce an incredible sight. Unimaginable power is felt when a whole herd of these beautiful animals rush in your direction.

Suit for virtual appearance

VR suit from Belarusian developers wins 'IT Oscar'

In January, Belarusian developers from VRTek Company became real newsmakers. At the CES 2020 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, their TESLASUIT platform suit won the prestigious DreamlandXR Awards as the best wearable accessory for 'Augmented Reality'. As soon as the winners returned to Minsk, *The MT* reporters tried on the unusual costume and were completely won over: virtuality has the possibility to make our real lives more comfortable and safer.

By Olga Pasiyak

For everyone according to their own specifications

...The outfit that you need to wear before diving into virtual reality weighs almost one and a half kilograms. To be more precise, at first, you need to sign a document, confirming that you don't suffer from any chronic diseases. It was then that my desire to try on a suit begins to waver: what if, like in science fiction films, it gives me an electric shock? The developers reassure me that it is absolutely safe and has been used in rehabilitation and sport for more than 50 years already. It's painless and very effective. Here goes!

Externally, the trousers and a jacket are somewhat reminiscent of a diver's suit, but in reality everything is much more complicated. Before us is a combination of four types of tissues and three systems. The first is the transmission of tactile sensations through sensors hidden inside the suit. For this, technology for electrical muscle stimulation and percutaneous nerve stimulation are used.

The second system is motion capture, for which 10 sensors located along the entire body are responsible. With their help, my digital double should appear on the screen. The third system is tied to the collection of biometric data, enabling the system to get information regarding my electrocardiogram and psycho-emotional state.

VRTEK's business development manager Kirill Sharshakov connects a Power Bank to my suit, explaining that the outfit is completely wireless, although an earlier generation of suit



WHAT'S NEXT?

The authors of the project are currently working with corporate clients, but their plans are to make the smart suit accessible to consumers. However, one suit is not enough, as it's necessary to have the relevant content and specially recreated digital objects in virtual reality. That's why they're working on all production cycles: from textiles to scientific research (there are six people with medical education in the team, and three of them are doctors of science).

How would such an outfit be useful in the home? The simplest is for fitness and health. It's much more pleasant to run not just around the room, but on the ocean shore. The company is also working on individual product lines for medicine and sports. There are already successful examples of sports integration in Russia in boxing, in Europe in rugby and negotiations are underway to use TESLASUIT in the training programme for American football. In addition, they're testing software and hardware solutions with world experts to study the possibilities of rehabilitation of the human body.



Tatiana Stolyarova

MIRACLE GLOVE

In January, at CES 2020, the company announced a new product: the TESLASUIT Glove, enabling users to feel the weight and texture of objects. They plan to test it in the second half of the year. TESLASUIT chief developer and founder, Sergey Khurs, says there were several reasons for the appearance of the unusual glove, "Firstly, in the field of XR-training, the issue of using one's hands is acute. The appearance of a glove can solve the problem of training specialists who work, for example, with valves. Secondly, there is demand in the market for innovative and effective learning solutions. We wanted to create something truly progressive, enabling a huge step forward in the world of virtual reality. And thirdly, since we consider our product as a universal interface between the human body and the virtual world, we decided to supplement the kit with one more element to make immersion in virtual reality more realistic. This means that our users will really feel the reality of the virtual world."

was powered by a wire connected to a computer.

"Now we have to calibrate the suit according to your personal sensitivity.

Saving the oil platform

"An average VR training takes 15-40 minutes. This can save 2 to 3 weeks of regular training," says Kirill Sharshakov. "Our major emphasis is on the use of the costume in industrial training and simulations. In virtual reality, it's not enough just to look, it's important to survive the sensations. Some industries require procedures that can lead to injuries at work; people who are in extreme situations for the first time are especially at risk. Thanks to such training, we can understand even at the initial stage if a person is not suitable for a job. We work with the gas, mining and chemical industries, as well as with the automotive industry, aerospace and public services, such as firefighters."

I have to prevent a catastrophe on... an oil platform. In virtual reality glasses, I find myself at an emergency. On the left are computers and remotes while on the right are some drawers and safes. Everything is too realistic, there is also a stunning mountain landscape outside the office window, but there is no time to admire it, I need to save the situation. This is where the first effect of the costume works: I feel the spray from the oil fountain falling on me. To navigate the platform, I have two controllers in my hands: I need to select the desired point, press the button, and I'm already there.

"Run out into the street! You are an engineer!" Kirill encourages me. However, I'm not much of an engineer and by the time I get to the valve, there is already an irreparable disaster. Thank God, I didn't feel the effect of the blast wave, although there is such a function.

"Only a minute has passed," Kirill smiles when I take off my VR glasses.

Yeah, but it seemed to me that my whole life flashed before my eyes.

We adapt it for each person, as well as for size. The better the settings, the better the training. This procedure takes only five minutes," he explains.

Kirill tunes the impulses — affecting my arms, legs, back and abs — from minimal (a sensations like a soft touch) to more noticeable (serious massage). Moreover, if the values are increased, it's possible even to control the movements of the person in the suit. Alternatively, it is possible to protect a person from a damaging action by 'disconnecting' their hands or feet. Curiously, sensitivity, studies have shown, can vary depending on mood, what the person has had for breakfast, and many other factors. Even if you suddenly fell in love on the way to training! Where you live is also a factor, with representatives of Northern Europe, whose body is accustomed to the cold, turning out to be much less sensitive.

Edge-of-the-seat match

Belarusian tennis players reach Federation Cup final round

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Belarusian tennis hasn't seen such dramatic battles since the heroic deeds of Max Mirnyi and Vladimir Voltchkov in the Davis Cup. Their victories were talked about even on buses on the way to work. Today, people are also talking. The meeting of the women's national teams of Belarus and the Netherlands in the Federation Cup turned into a thriller. There was a place in The Hague for heroism, tragedy, and incredible comebacks... Now Belarusians will play in the final tournament in April.

"I wanted to 'let loose' in the locker room with a racket, but the union would send us a huge bill," joked the Dutch team captain, Paul Haarhuis, sadly, after the Fed Cup qualification. His players were devastated, while the Belarusian tennis players arranged a disco in the locker room and rejoiced. The occasion was cause for celebration. They had reached the finals of the team World Championship, defeating rivals in the decisive doubles match-thriller.

The match was tense. In the opening singles round, Aleksandra Sasnovich lost to the world 8th seed, Kiki Bertens, but Arina Sobolenko, who replaced her on the court, equalised, having beaten Arantxa Rus. On the second day of the event, the first player from Belarus couldn't match the leader of the Dutch team, and at the beginning of the second singles match between Sasnovich and Rus, it seemed that the Belarusians had missed their chance to reach the finals: in the first set, Sasnovich lost — 0:6 — cried out



Aleksandra Sasnovich and Arina Sobolenko

and asked for a doctor. Afterwards she explained: the point was psychological. "The doctor talked to me and it helped a lot. It was a difficult match from that point of view. I keep everything inside, I don't scream, I don't release my emotions, but I managed to 'reboot' and it was easier to play afterwards," she said.

Aleksandra finally won — 0:6, 7:5, 6:2. The result of the match between the national squads was decided in a doubles match in which Tatiana Puchek decided not to use Lidia Morozova and Olga Govortsova, betting on the

duo of Arina Sobolenko and Aleksandra Sasnovich. The fight against Kiki Bertens and Demi Schuurs was a true representation of the whole match: the girls spent nearly two and a half hours on court, and the Belarusians celebrated victory — 4 6, 6:3, 7:6 (10:8). Arina Sobolenko didn't hide her joy,

"It's cool for our country and very important. Why not play in the Federation Cup finals again? This is a great and prestigious title. I'm tired of explaining to people where Belarus is, I just want them to know."

Eduard Dubrov, who previously headed the Belarusian women's national tennis team, admitted that for him the victory by our team was expected, because our tennis players have shown fighting qualities more than once. Now Belarusians will have to play in the final round, which will be held in April in a new format: in six days, the twelve best teams in the world will decide who lifts the trophy: the national squads will be divided into four groups, and the winners will reach the semi-finals. According to Mr. Dubrov, the format can't really be called good, "It will be a game in the others' court. There won't be much support: our fans, of course, can go to the finals, but there won't be the 6-7,000 people who came to the home match at the Chizhovka-Arena. But the timing for the final stage was chosen well: previously it was held in November, when the season was ending and the tennis players were thinking about preparing for a new one; now it will be in April, when the season is just beginning and the athletes won't have to sacrifice performances at tournaments. In general, the format isn't easy as it's hard to play so many days in a row. The players' psychological state and preparation will decide a lot. I know our girls well: they always had a desire to win, despite the ranks and ratings of their rivals."

In the final, our tennis players will face difficult rivals. The draw placed the Belarusian tennis players into Group B, where they will be playing against Australia and Belgium. The remaining trio of finalists are as follows: Group A — France, Russia, Hungary; Group C — USA, Spain, Slovakia; Group D — the Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland. The Fed Cup finals will be held on April 14th-19th in Budapest.

Supreme responsibility

By Arina Novikova

263 Belarusian athletes in 27 sports gearing up for Tokyo 2020

So far, the Olympic qualifying requirements have been met by 69 Belarusian athletes in 15 sports. Qualifying tournaments will last through to the end of June. Belarusian athletes are able to win over 100 places for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"The selection requirements for the Games have become tougher. We are on schedule, however. Apart from the 69 athletes who have already met the Olympic requirements, 30 more could reach Tokyo 2020. Someone will do it with the help of rating points, others through booking an Olympic place at qualifying tournaments. The more athletes Belarus will field at the Olympics, the better," said the Sports and Tourism Minister, Sergei Kovalchuk, during a recent session at the Ministry.

Meanwhile, Belarus' Deputy Prime Minister — Igor Petrishenko — stated that doping by Belarusian athletes, even if unintentional, must be ruled out. According to him, the country has set up all the conditions for athletes to train for the Games and everything depends on the Olympians now. The task of psychologists and coaches is to convey the following message to the athletes: they go to the Olympics not to confirm their best result but to show a super-result, to win.

"This is not a matter of doping. Anyone involved in the training of athletes should understand that doping is not only



their personal responsibility. Each case is a blow to the image of the state on the international sports arena, which is very difficult to restore," the official noted.

According to Mr. Kovalchuk, the National Anti-Doping Agency has planned to increase by 70 percent the number of

doping samples taken from Belarusian athletes. The Minister reminded that, in order to combat doping in Belarus, a new procedure for purchasing pharmacological drugs for national teams has been established: centrally through the Republican Scientific-Practical Centre of Sports. Some legislative changes have also been adopted that provide for measures of responsibility for doping in sports, ranging from compensation through monetary rewards and scholarships from the President for sports results achieved without the use of doping, to the withdrawal of state awards, and the removal of state support for federations who fall foul of the rules.

The 32nd Summer Olympic Games will take place in Tokyo on July 24th-August 9th, 2020. The Games will feature 339 medal events in 33 sports. These Games will see baseball/softball, karate, surfing, sport climbing and skateboarding make their Olympic debuts. Competing for the 2020 Tokyo medals will be 11,090 athletes from 206 countries, with the highest-ever representation of female athletes (49 percent). The 2020 Games will be the most gender-balanced in Olympic history.



Raubichi always ready

By Irina Sergeeva

Raubichi National Olympic Sports Training Centre ready to host the IBU European Open Biathlon Championships instead of Estonian Otepaa

The IBU European Open Biathlon Championships 2020 have been moved from Otepaa (Estonia) to Raubichi. The sports complex near Minsk will also host the IBU Cup stage. Belarus' Sports and Tourism Ministry and representatives of the Raubichi National Olympic Sports Training Centre have announced their readiness to host the forum. "We are ready to host the European Open Biathlon Championships. IBU representatives, who inspected the state of affairs in Raubichi the day before, were satisfied with what they saw and are ready to give us the right to conduct this event," commented Aleksandr Gagiev, the Centre's Director.

"We mainly need just to keep the snow. In terms of everything else that is necessary for holding the European Cham-

pionships at a high organisational level, we have everything," the official adds.

The IBU Sports Director, Felix Bitterling, commented on the decision of the Belarusian side to accept the European Championships, "The IBU would like to thank Raubichi for organising the European Championships in such a short time. Since the IBU Cup final will soon be held in Belarus, this decision is the most correct and cost-effective for athletes, organisers and national federations." He also noted that the event will be good preparation for Belarus, since Raubichi will host the World Cup in March 2022.

The IBU European Open Biathlon Championships 2020 were planned to start in Estonia's Otepaa on February 26th but, in Estonia, the situation with snow is extremely poor, so the International Biathlon Union decided to move the continental forum to Raubichi.

Belarusian Raubichi will host the European Championships for the second year in a row. The competitions will start on February 26th, to finish on March 1st.



Photo of the week

Vitebsk hosts #SUPREMLITOPM_night performance

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 15th March. *Enchanted with Homeland*
Until 15th March. *Classics and Ethno-Modern of Victor Markovets*
Until 15th April. *We'll Be Understood in 100 Years: Lazar Khidekel*

NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 1st March. *Yan Komar: a Photographer from Nyankovo*
Until 15th March. *From an Idea to Theatrical Stage*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 15th March. *Space of Estonian Book*
Until 23rd March. *Return*

MUSEUM OF GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 27th March. *Heirs of Great Victory*

BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM

13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street
Until 29th February. *1692-1696 Biblia for the Nation of Vasily Koren*
Until 14th March. *Valentin Taras and Rygor Baradulin: On Height of Memories*
Until 25th March. *Wisdom of Centuries*

NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street
Until 1st March. *Horizons*
Until 8th March. *Tangency of Light and Shadow*

YANKA KUPALA LITERARY MUSEUM

4 Yanka Kupala Street
Until 28th March. *Valeriana Zholtok: Passion for Life*

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 12th March. *Robo Art*
Until 26th July. *Live Exotics*

GALLERY ARTEL

58 / 1-6 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 30th March. *Unknown Van Gogh*

VILNIUS

55 Kalinovsky Street
Until 23rd February. Exhibition of Yelena Doroshenko's batik printing

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 27th February. *Zdravnevo in Faces and Fates*
Until 8th March. *Women's Tricks*
Until 8th March. *Patsinka*

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommunny Square
20.02. Carmen
21.02. Don Quixote / On Two Chairs Pub
22.02. Cavalleria Rusticana
23.02. Swan Lake
25.02. Rigoletto
26.02. Chopeniana. Bolero. Carmen-Suite / A Night of Old Romance
27.02. The Bat

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
20.02. Kalyady Night
21.02. Prudok Radio / Black Lady of Nesvizh
22.02. School of Taxpayers
23.02. Harvest / Jeweller's Jubilee
25.02. King Lear
26.02. Prudok Radio / Inspector
27.02. ART / Paulinka

MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
22.02. Edip

NEW DRAMA THEATRE

16 Liza Chaikina Street
20.02. I Will Live!
21.02. Important To Be Serious
22.02. From Life of Minerals
25.02. A Bonus Session of Psychoanalysis
26.02. Zhanna
27.02. I'm an Object...

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
20.02. This Is All She
21.02. Adam's Jokes
22.02. Suffering from Common Sense
23.02. Concrete
25.02. Everything is OK
26.02. Hunting for Self
27.02. Portrait

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Mashеров Avenue
20.02. Mixed Feelings
22.02. Jubilee / Continuation
23, 25 and 26.02. Women Without Borders
27.02. Wolves and Sheep

CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street
21.02. Featherhead
22.02. Corporate
26.02. Clinic

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
20.02. Double-Double
21.02. Hotel of Two Worlds / Jubilee
22.02. A Man from Podolsk / Sanya, Vanya and Rimas
23.02. Happy New Year
25.02. Playing Happy Family
26.02. Zhmurik / Rich Brides
27.02. Family Weekend