

The journey will become smart, as Minsk is deciding how to improve public transport fares



Preserving artefacts of the past for future generations is a task for specialist-restorers



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Parliament 7.0: new impetus

The new Parliament has begun its work. On December 6th, the first session of the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic of the seventh convocation began. On the agenda were the elections of the leadership of both chambers, approval of the list of standing commissions and a number of other issues. Vladimir Andreichenko was elected Chairman of the House of Representatives, while Valery Mitskevich became his deputy. Natalia Kochanova was elected Chair of the Council of the Republic and Anatoly Isachenko is now her deputy. On the eve of the opening the deputies received a message from the President, with Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasising that political stability and the co-ordinated work of all branches of the Government are key to the successful development of the country. → **3**



Invitation to genuine dialogue

The President of Belarus has paid an official visit to Serbia, with many issues being set on the agenda during his meeting with Serbia's Head of State, Aleksandar Vucic. Of course, the economy was mainly the focus of attention at



the Palace of Serbia, in the Parliament and at the joint business forum. However, as in 1999, much was spoken about peace in Belgrade. Since then, much has changed but the Belarusian-Serbian friendship remains the same.

Pearl of Europe

At the talks in both closed and expanded formats, the main focus was on trade and economic co-operation. However, Aleksandr Lukashenko had previously said that, on the eve of the meeting, his informal dinner with the President of Serbia turned into a serious conversation about modern international relations — which are no better now than they were 20 years ago. “It is not us who create these problems,” the Belarusian President said, adding, “However, you see how major states point to each other and behave. I openly call them empires. Because of one of them there is a trade war, while others are fighting in Syria. You suffer from this as well since a huge flow, hundreds of thousands of refugees, have poured into here.”

However, despite all the cataclysms, the President of Belarus is convinced that Serbia has never been and will never be poor, noting, “Serbia is a pearl in the necklace of not only the Balkans and Europe but also of the whole world. It is a beautiful country, a wonderful land that can benefit many more people that live there today. It is a brilliant, heroic and patriotic nation. This is why Serbia will always be prosperous.”

With a determined attitude

The Serbian economy has been booming recently. Our country is ready to help the friendly state in every possible way. However, the President did not hide his dissatisfaction with the decline in bilateral trade. As he sees it, the reason for this is exclusively rooted in the governments' shortcomings.

Aleksandar Vucic, apparently, was no less determined when he set the bar in mutual trade at the level of \$500m, against the current \$150m. According to experts, last year was the best for Serbia in the previous decade: GDP increased by almost 4.5 percent. Construction and agriculture are growing at an enviable pace. It is not surprising that Belarusian agricultural machinery has found its consumer here. During his last visit five years ago, Mr. Lukashenko took part in the launch of an assembly plant for small-capacity tractors in Novi Sad. Today, this company provides equipment not only to Serbia but also to other states of the Balkan Region. During the business forum, the Minsk Tractor Works signed new contracts for the supply of its produce. Belarusian trolley-

buses and buses have become an integral part of the transport system of the Serbian capital. BELAZ dump trucks successfully operate at mining enterprises in Serbia and other countries of the region. Many Serbian businesses also feel comfortable in Belarus.

Without any preconditions

Such a mutually beneficial approach promises success in

interested in the Belarusian experience in the field of defence and security. Serbia plans to reform its army, making it faster and more mobile. In this regard Mr. Lukashenko commented, “Experience is the most valuable thing. However, our experience is also yours. The world data has recently been published stating that Belarus tops the list of the safest states. We can pass this experience on to you.”



co-operation in other sectors. Of course, a high level of trust at political level matters. However, Mr. Lukashenko drew attention to another important point while negotiating: Belarusians and Serbs earn the benefits with their own hands — by the sweat of their brow.

“Many small and medium-sized states always focus on large, rich countries since the latter own the resources that we lack. However, we must not forget that empires and large states will never co-operate with us without preconditions. They will ask for something in return, even if they haven't done anything for us yet. The peculiarity of our relations is that we have never set any preconditions for each other. We're friends and this is the greatest and honest basis of our co-operation,” the President of Belarus stated.

A true friend will always tell the truth and will not be hypocritical. Mr. Vucic frankly admitted that, in Serbia, there were times when people did not dare to say how much they appreciate and love Belarusians. “Today we talk about this with pride everywhere and we want you to come here as often as possible. I've learnt a lot from President Lukashenko. We are proud of our friendship and know that we can rely on the support and knowledge of our Belarusian friends,” he said.

In particular, the Serbian President said that he's very

Happiness not achieved in a hurry

The President of Belarus is well respected in Belgrade. That is why journalists did not hesitate to ask the opinion and advice of the Belarusian leader on the most complex issues. For example, they were interested in how he sees the future of Serbia: with the EU or the EAEU? The fact is that, at the end of October, Serbia and the EAEU signed a free trade agreement and the European Union said that Belgrade's decision contradicts its desire to become an EU member. Mr. Lukashenko has no doubt that Serbia will deal with such ultimatums on its own.

“Belarus is Serbia's sincere friend in the Eurasian Economic Union. At the same time, we respect your country's aspirations to join the European Union and wish you good luck. God grant that you get what you want. You're smart, talented people. If it is beneficial for you to co-operate with the European Union, you will do it. If it turns out to be more profitable to deal with the Eurasian Economic Union, you will co-operate with it. Alas, like us, your fate is to fly both ways,” he said.

The President of Belarus proceeds from a simple economic logic. Today, the EU accounts for 70 percent of Serbia's total trade and it's almost impossible to replace this market. “In this turbulent world, you have to be nimble, fast, navigate to survive

in the struggle between giants. Therefore, we normally see the situation as Serbia is currently working with the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union. Take your time, a little patience — and Serbia will be prosperous. Listen to everyone but follow your own mind — proceeding from your own interests,” he said.

At the end of their meeting, Mr. Lukashenko — as befits a good guest and a dear friend —

invited Mr. Vucic to visit Belarus at any convenient time.

Openly and sincerely

On the same day, Aleksandr Lukashenko delivered a speech at the National Assembly of Serbia. Serbian parliamentarians greeted the distinguished guest with loud applause.

The Head of State noted that he regards each of his visits to Serbia as a visit to his close friends. However, the recent visit was special: this year, the countries have celebrated the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations. During this time, Belarus and Serbia have followed a difficult historical path.

“Our main achievement is the opportunity to be masters on our land, to independently determine the direction of development corresponding to the spirit of the time and state interests. Secondly, exactly 20 years ago, I visited Belgrade to express Belarus' support for our brotherly Serbian people. In the course of NATO's brutal, inhuman aggression against sovereign Yugoslavia, thousands of innocent people died. In those moments, we were there and supported you in every possible way,” Mr. Lukashenko stressed. In this regard, the President noted that Belarus is constantly on the side of Serbia on issues related to its territorial integrity and sovereignty. During his speech, the Head of State noted the growing tension in relations between the

countries, the weakening of the foundations of global security and the increase in the number of regional conflicts. In his opinion, it is necessary to advocate the solution of disputes exclusively by peaceful means, on the basis of the norms of international law. “Belarus has put forward an initiative to renew a broad dialogue from the Atlantic to Vladivostok to strengthen confidence-building, security and co-operation measures. I believe that Serbia will be among the states interested in discussing these problems. After all, Yugoslavia was once a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement. This organisation enabled the countries of the so-called third world to express themselves in the international arena, to convey their voice to the great powers,” he noted.

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, the traditional friendship of the Belarusian and Serbian peoples and the positive history of bilateral relations contribute to the interaction of our countries in all spheres: in politics, trade, industry, agriculture, high technologies and innovations.

Minsk welcomes Serbia's recent signing of a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union. The President believes its advantages are obvious, “Your business has received the right to free trade on the vast continent. Belarus is the entrance to this multimillion market. The visa-free regime, clear logistics and direct flights create additional prerequisites for expanding business contacts. Undoubtedly, this will strengthen the Serbian economy and open up new opportunities for joint development.”

As a result of the business forum in Belgrade, Belarusian enterprises signed contracts worth \$120m. This is a good example for those who are still in doubt or just considering options for work in our country. Regarding this, Mr. Lukashenko said, “During my long political career, I have met many sceptics who, having once visited us, radically changed their attitude to Belarus. I invite each of you to discover your own Belarus: warm, hospitable, enterprising and responsible, rich in its cultural and historical heritage, truly Slavic, sincere and very close to Serbia. I assure you that each of you will feel at home in our country and will never be disappointed.”

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

Programme for the day ahead

Last week, an important event took place at the Palace of Independence. The President addressed the deputies of the House of Representatives and members of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of two convocations — the sixth (which has already resigned) and the seventh (recently elected). The talk was extensive as Aleksandr Lukashenko not only addressed the parliamentarians but also discussed many topical issues with them, in particular, important aspects of foreign policy.

Society's choice

"Today is an important yet solemn day in the political life of our country," said the President, opening his speech. "We welcome the deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus of the seventh convocation at the Palace of Independence... Today we are summing up the results of the Parliament and thanking the outgoing deputies for their work."

He considers it symbolic that the parliamentary elections coincided with a landmark year for the country. "In 2019, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Constitution — a document that plays an important role in strengthening Belarusian statehood," Mr. Lukashenko said. "With the adoption of this basic law, we have legally consolidated the centuries-old traditions of Belarusians who have always strived for justice, independence and peace in their land and participated in almost all forms of popular representation."

The President noted an important point: the recent parliamentary elections were held in open competition. The choices made by Belarusians have once again showed the stability of our society, its commitment to traditional values and the desire for peace. Mr. Lukashenko congratulated the newly elected parliamentarians on successfully passing one of the most important tests in their lives and noted the characteristics of the new Parliament, which includes experienced managers and those who know about both life and industry from the inside: employees of the agro-industrial complex and other industries, talented teachers, doctors, lawyers, judges, representatives of the security forces, creative intelligentsia, youth and the media.

Management system will be improved

The President also spoke about tasks for the new Parliament. In particular, the deputies will join the work on improving the Constitution. "Parliamentarians of the

seventh convocation will be involved in work on projects that refer to global political decisions. We have already accumulated a number of issues that need to be addressed together at the level of basic law. Therefore, you and me, the new composition of the Parliament, will have to organise and add to the work to improve our Constitution," he stressed.

The President is confident that the key to the successful development of the country is political stability and co-ordinated work by all branches of the authority: Parliament, Government and courts. If this is absent, then there will be no peace, no harmony, no economy, no welfare. He stressed that the new Parliament should become the centre of progressive law-making and, to achieve this goal, it's necessary to be guided by two rules.

"Firstly, the adopted amendments and laws must primarily reflect the real needs



of our citizens. Secondly, the consequences of any changes in legislation should be analysed and calculated for several years ahead, so that people understand where we are going and what we want," explained Mr. Lukashenko.

Family as reference point of social and economic policy

The President noted that the country would gradually change the nature of support for socially vulnerable sectors of the population, "At the time, we proclaimed Belarus a social state. Support for socially vulnerable categories is and will be one of the vectors of our policy. However, the level of development of our society and the civic responsibility of Belarusians enable us to change the nature of such support and to gradually move from a paternalistic model to a supportive one, when the state does not just take over the solution of all human problems but creates such conditions that people can solve their own issues. That is, not giving a fish, but putting

a fishing rod in their hands."

According to the President, special attention should be paid to demographic security. "Another sensitive issue is the threat of loss of our traditional values. In a rapidly developing world, the young generation comes to the fore with issues of personal self-realisation at the expense of the desire to create a family. The family should become a reference point of all social and economic policy," the President emphasised.

Only by taking these measures, he believes, it is possible to preserve Belarusian identity and the nation.

Four pillars of economic development

The new Belarusian Parliament, according to the President, is taking place in difficult times. Therefore, its task is to preserve the continuity of the economic

course, ensuring the sustainable development of the sovereign Belarusian state, the dynamics of economic growth and take care of the welfare of citizens.

"The period will be difficult," Aleksandr Lukashenko warned. "The struggle of the leading geopolitical forces for spheres of influence, tough lobbying by countries for their economic benefits (you can see this in relation to our neighbours), trade wars and barriers create a reality that objectively complicates our lives."

On the other hand, all these are an engine of progress, making us look for new reserves of economic growth. The President said, "It's necessary to create an economic system that is minimally dependent on the hydrocarbon raw materials market and other opportunistic goods. We have started to do this at the High-Tech Park amongst other areas, for example."

Mr. Lukashenko noted, "The medium-term economic development of our country will be based on four pillars: the creation of better conditions for attracting

investments to our economy (though I don't know what else could be done better); the increase of productivity by stimulating business activity; the expansion of foreign trade through the development of new export markets (here we do not demonstrate the best result; probably, like in the beginning of my presidency, I'll have to place exports in the basis of all policies: exports mean the country exists); serious changes in demographics," Mr. Lukashenko noted.

Despite the fact that these are mainly the tasks of the Government, they directly concern the deputies, noted the President.

External vector

During his speech, Mr. Lukashenko spoke a lot about co-operation with neighbouring countries, in particular, with the Russian Federation.

"I will say the main thing: the Russian Federation is our strategic partner, our brothers live there. It is a partner in the economic, political and military spheres. Belarusian-Russian good-neighbourliness has been tested by time," Mr. Lukashenko stressed, adding, "Yes, Russia is great. People are different even among the country's leaders. Some prefer one way and others insist on another. Some — by virtue of their personal and other interests — start 'twisting' a matter. I see it and am able to manage the process. We will make the final decision jointly — in line with both their own and our constitutions," the President said.

Placing emphasis on the foreign policy pursued by Belarus, Mr. Lukashenko stressed that the only condition to co-operation with our foreign partners is that our country is a sovereign and independent state. "Perhaps intuitively, proceeding from life experience, we've clearly defined our foreign policy. It's necessary to remain on friendly terms with our neighbours since they are not chosen: they are God given. We don't wish to cut our ties with our traditional close allies — the former Soviet republics," he said.

The President stressed that Belarus cannot but have good relations with the United States. "They are an empire," he noted, also stressing, "We cannot have a bad relationship with them — and we are lucky in this respect — with another new empire that has been revived: China. We have nothing to be reproached for. It's impossible to say that we've been inconsistent. We always honestly fulfil our obligations and meet all our agreements."

Mr. Lukashenko continued, "If we move forward patiently and calmly — while developing our economy, then no external threats will affect us."

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Presidential staff decisions

Aleksandr Lukashenko decided to appoint a new Head of the Presidential Administration and his deputy, as well as to send members for the Council of the Republic under the Presidential quota

The leadership of the Presidential Administration has changed in the country — the state body, which Mr. Lukashenko called 'the political headquarters of the Head of State, his face'. The new Head of the Belarusian Presidential Administration is Igor Sergeyenko, who previously held the post of First Deputy Chairman

of the State Security Committee, while Olga Chupris who worked as Vice-Rector of the Belarusian State University was appointed as his deputy.

Those previously employed in these positions will engage in parliamentary activities. Natalia Kochanova will work at the Council of the Republic on a Presidential quota, while Valery Mitskevich was elected to the House of Representatives of the seventh convocation.

In addition, a decision was also made to assign a Presidential quota in the Council of the Republic to Mikhail Rusy, Anatoly Isachenko and Sergei Rachkov.



Olga Chupris, Igor Sergeyenko, Anatoly Isachenko, Mikhail Rusy and Sergei Rachkov

On the principles of equality

A meeting of the presidents of Belarus and Russia, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin, took place in Sochi. Negotiations lasted more than five and a half hours, held in closed format at the Bocharov Ruchey Residence. The leaders of the countries talked one-to-one, as well as with the prime ministers and members of governments.



REUTERS

It was announced that the two parties have worked fruitfully in a number of areas, including agriculture, communications, customs and the regulation of the oil market. “We’ve made significant progress, even on the issue of oil and gas, our positions have been brought considerably closer,” said Russia’s Economic Development Minister, Maksim Oreshkin.

“We already had a small number of controversial issues before these two days. Now they are even fewer.

We understand how to move forward with most of them. We have been given instructions and now we will work them out and move forward,” he added.

Commenting on the results of the past meetings of the presidents and prime ministers of the two countries, the Ambassador of Belarus to Russia, Vladimir Semashko, noted that the Belarusian and Russian sides fully agreed on the draft integration roadmaps on electric power and customs co-operation issues during the talks in Sochi.

“It can be said that the negotiations were substantive, in a constructive and friendly spirit,” added the diplomat. “As a result, at the meeting of the presidents we’ve found a good outcome on the roadmap for co-operation between customs services. This was a difficult question. The task is to work out by June 1st, 2020 the regulatory framework — both Belarusian and Russian: there are hundreds of legislative acts and dozens of intergovernmental agreements required.”

Mr. Semashko also noted that, during the talks, approaches were found to settle the issue of compensating the Belarusian side for costs due to Russia’s recent tax policy in the oil sector.

It’s planned that the next meeting between Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin will take place on December 20th in St. Petersburg. An informal EAEU summit will also be held in St. Petersburg on December 20th.

It’s noteworthy that the meeting in Sochi was held on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Union State Treaty. “A lot has been done over these 20 years, and much remains to be done. We don’t hide it,” Mr. Lukashenko noted at the beginning of the negotiations.

The President stressed that the parties had gathered for a meeting to discuss progress on the analysis of the Union State agreement and related issues. “We are not asking for anything and we are not insisting on anything. We’ve agreed long ago to develop our agreement — people and business entities must have equal conditions for life and work. Equal conditions — nothing else is required,” asserted the Head of State.

Based on materials of belta.by

Landmark visit for bilateral relations

The November visit of the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, to Vienna aroused a great interest on the Austrian side and was a landmark for bilateral relations. Commenting to BelTA on the results of the visit at the highest level, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Austria to Belarus, Aloisia Worgetter, called the talks in the Austrian capital productive as they touched on a wide ranging agenda.



BELTA

Aloisia Worgetter

— Alexander Van der Bellen, the President of the National Council of Austria — Wolfgang Sobotka, and the Chairman of the Austrian People’s Party — Sebastian Kurz. The meetings made it possible to work out a wide range of issues of co-operation and conceptually identify new directions for Belarusian-Austrian relations.

Constructive development of the bilateral agenda will give

significant impetus to the further development of co-operation between Austria and Belarus. The topics discussed, as well as the documents signed in Vienna, cover a variety of areas of co-operation — including renewable energy sources and issues in the field of broadband development such as 5G. Apart from the documents that were signed, there were also many initiatives and ideas on which the parties will work to identify new, important areas for co-operation.

All aspects of bilateral relations touched upon during the visit are very important and valuable for both the Austrian and Belarusian sides in terms of further deepening mutually beneficial liaisons. The Ambassador expressed the confidence that,

after the visit of the President of Belarus, even more Austrian companies will invest in the Belarusian economy. “We have a great interest in developing long-term productive co-operation with Belarus. Aleksandr Lukashenko’s visit clearly confirms this. It has made it possible to expand the legal framework of co-operation and deepen the atmosphere of mutual understanding between the citizens of the two countries,” emphasised the diplomat.

She also drew attention to the sphere of culture, in which Belarus and Austria intend to expand ties, taking into account their mutual interests. The Ambassador also touched upon the issue of historical memory, which is important for Belarus and Austria. The theme of

Trostenets is important for the general memory of the victims of fascism during WWII. On behalf of the Austrians, the diplomat expressed gratitude for the artefacts provided to the Austrian House of History related to Trostenets and the tragedy of the Austrian people during the war. “This is very valuable to us,” the Ambassador said.

As expected, Belarusian-Austrian tourist co-operation will continue to develop and the tourist flow from both sides will increase.

“This year was a landmark in relations between Belarus and Austria, including through exchanges of visits at the highest levels,” said the Ambassador.

Based on materials of belta.by

“We noted great interest in this visit from our European partners, who greatly appreciated the information given, as they say, first-hand,” said the diplomat.

Aleksandr Lukashenko met with the Austrian Federal Presi-

NEWS IN BRIEF



Setting the date of Presidential elections scheduled for the spring session of Parliament

The Chair of the Central Election Commission, Lidia Yermoshina, explained, “I see no other optimal date [for elections] but the end of August. However, the final choice of date will depend on the political will of the leadership.” She explained that the setting of the election date will be considered at the spring session of Parliament. Ms. Yermoshina added that it would be convenient to hold campaigning and street hustings during the summer months.

Belarus joins the group of countries which intend to promote protection of the rights of terrorism victims

The initiative to join the group was made by Foreign Minister Vladimir



Makei at the UN headquarters in New York, as part of a briefing on the results of the high-level international conference — *Countering Terrorism Through Innovative Approaches and the Use of New and Emerging Technologies* — held in Minsk in September.

The group aims to promote protection of the rights of victims of terrorism, especially women and children. Currently, the group unites 33 states and associations.

Minsk to stage 2020 UEFA Futsal Champions League finals for the first time

The decision was made by the UEFA Executive Committee at its meeting in Nyon, Switzerland. In late April 2020, two Spanish clubs — Barcelona and Murcia — will join two representatives of Russia — Tyumen and Moscow’s KPRF — to compete for the prize of the main



continental mini-football tournament in the Belarusian capital which is scheduled to be held at the Minsk-Arena. Murcia, Moscow and Vilnius also bid to host the four-team finals but Minsk was chosen.

According to the tourist portal TourStat, Belarusian Father Frost tops the rating of the most popular Father Frosts in the CIS states

The rating is based on an analysis of the popularity of Father Frost residences. Belarusian Father Frost meets guests at his residence in Belovezhskaya Pushcha. The estate of the Belarusian Father Frost is the country’s most famous tourist brand, annually visited by about 150,000 people. The estate occupies almost 15 hectares and, in addition to Father Frost’s house, there is also the tower-chamber of the Snow Maiden, the Magic Mill and the meadow of twelve months.



Far-reaching projects



European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to earmark 259m Euros to rehabilitate 12 bridges and the M3 highway in Belarus. An appropriate credit agreement was signed following a meeting between Belarus' Prime Minister Sergei Rumas and EBRD First Vice President Jurgen Rigterink.

By Olga Korneeva

"It's a landmark event in our credit portfolio for unprecedented 259m Euros. It's our largest project realised with the participation of the international financial organisation," Sergei Rumas said.

As Belarus' Transport and Communications Minister, Aleksey Avramenko, announced, the first tranche of 126m Euros will be spent on the reconstruction and modernisation of 12 bridges. It is expected that the reconstruction could begin as early as 2020 after the necessary procedures are completed. The second tranche of 133m Euros is intended to modernise the M3 highway connecting Minsk and Vitebsk. These funds will be used to reconstruct a 47km section of the road, with works set to begin in 2021.

During the meeting, Sergei Rumas and Jurgen Rigterink also discussed promising investment projects in the areas of housing and communal services, energy and energy efficiency. In addition, the Prime Minister announced the beginning of preparation of an ambitious investment project for the launch of a high-speed passenger rail link connecting Minsk and the Great Stone Industrial Park.

"I'll tell you honestly: we are discussing this project with other financial institutions, looking for the best options



ADDITION

The EBRD is a multilateral bank fostering the development of the private sector and entrepreneurship initiatives. The bank's shareholders are 69 countries, as well as the European Union and the European Investment Bank. The EBRD is the largest institutional investor in the Belarusian economy. Since the start of its operations in Belarus in 1992, the EBRD has invested almost 2.7bn Euros in 119 projects in various sectors of the country's economy.

for structuring this transaction. However, in any case, we want to invite the EBRD to participate," Mr. Rumas said, adding that the Belarusian Government appreciates the co-operation with the bank and is

deeply grateful to the EBRD team for its high professionalism. "The Government will make every effort to consolidate the level of co-operation and expand it in the future," he concluded.

The Prime Minister also said that the Government is interested in bringing to a logical end to the deal with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on Belinvestbank. The deal with the EBRD to privatise Belinvestbank was discussed on November 22nd in London, at the meeting of the Prime Minister with Jurgen Rigterink. "We have clarified the methodology of assessing the value of the bank under the DCF method. I would like to discuss separately the approaches towards the Belinvestbank related issue and the matters which were in focus during the London meeting. I want to assure you once again that the Government of Belarus is interested in bringing this deal to its logical conclusion," Mr. Rumas said.

Jurgen Rigterink, in turn, positively assessed the bank's recent contacts with representatives of Belarus. Due to the volume of transactions in the EBRD's portfolio in recent years, Belarus has become one of the most important countries for the bank, he stressed.

According to Mr. Rumas, the number of joint projects will be a record, "We have an extensive agenda of work in both the public and private sectors. We have repeatedly said that, last year, we achieved a record number of projects with the bank of 360m Euros. The preliminary estimates for 2019 show that we can reach 400m Euros."

Investment climate in focus



National Agency of Investment and Privatisation (NAIP) presents Belarus' investment opportunities at *Going Global Live 2019* in London, an exhibition for businesses expanding internationally or setting up overseas operations

By Svetlana Savelieva

The agency presented the business environment in Belarus, preferences for businesses and the most promising investment projects in manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. The major interest in Belarus' stand came from businesses in the UK, Ireland, Poland and some other countries, as well as some international companies

collaborating with global corporations.

At the expo, NAIP highlighted success stories of Belarus' co-operation with international companies, as well as the advantages of investing in Belarus. In addition, a meeting with British Kutanius Ltd was organised: the company is interested in implementing an investment project to start cosmetics production in the Great Stone Industrial Park.

Additional impetus

In Geneva, Belarus and Australia signed a protocol on the completion of bilateral negotiations on market access for goods and services in the framework of Belarus' accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

On behalf of Belarus, the document was signed by the Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva, Yuri Ambrazevich, and, on behalf

of Australia — by the Permanent Representative to the WTO, Frances Lisson.

Belarus' Foreign Ministry announced that the signing of the protocol will contribute not only to the early completion of Belarus' accession to the WTO but will also serve as additional impetus to the development of trade, economic and trade co-operation between Belarus and Australia.

Based on materials of belta.by



High quality of services guaranteed

By Natalia Yemelyanova

Belarusian oil specialists to repair Arctic gas wells: Belorusneft-Siberia has won a tender to perform repair operations in the South Tambeiskoye gas condensate field

The gas condensate field is located on the eastern shore of the Yamal Peninsula, near to the Gulf of Ob by the Kara Sea. The proven reserves are estimated at 926bn cubic metres of natural gas. Yamal SPG takes care of natural gas extraction, liquefaction, and deliveries. It is a joint ven-

ture established by Novatek JSC, the French concern TOTAL, the China National Petroleum Corporation and the Silk Road Fund. The services that Belarusian specialists provide to Yamal SPG include routine repairs and major overhaul, well completion, preservation, de-preservation and shutdown. The set of services will take three years to complete.

Belorusneft-Siberia has already provided similar services to Yamal SPG between 2015 and September 2019. "The team's technological resources and tools allowed the Belarusian company

to win the tender and continue working in the South Tambeiskoye gas condensate field. The technological resources comply with all the requirements of the customer. The team also offers high-quality services," explained company staff. The Belarusian Arctic team includes a total of 48 people, who use a fly-in fly-out model.

Gomel-based Seismotekhnika JSC has made a hoisting unit specifically for this project. It was delivered to the port of Sabetta by sea, then moved to the South Tambeiskoye gas condensate field.

The journey will become smart

Minsk is deciding how to improve public transport fares. An idea is being worked on to introduce short-term tickets for half an hour and an hour, enabling passengers to make an unlimited number of transfers. They are also planning to replace kiosks with ticket machines and provide an opportunity to renew electronic travel tickets through the ERIP payment system. Belarusian Railways has already launched a new mobile application for convenient and quick processing of travel documents. Recently, at the Minsk Transport Forum, the developers have shown several simpler solutions that greatly facilitate the purchase of tickets.

By Dmitry Umpirovich

Card in hand

Metro passengers have long appreciated the convenience of paying for travel with a regular bank card. According to statistical data, 10 percent of payments (that is, about 80,000 daily) are now made using plastic. More than in Moscow! Minsk, by the way, is the third city in the world after London and Vancouver, where such an opportunity is available at every subway station.

The technology is now being mastered on the electric trains on city lines. Moreover, the developers — IBA Group — emphasise that they've updated the system and the number of failures has reduced. They are testing a similar system on Minsk trams where the demand is considerable. The next step is to launch the payment of tickets using a bank card in all land transport. Transport workers are expecting to do this next year.

However, there are also alternatives: a smartphone, smart watches and other devices that support NFC technology. The next possible step is a sort of virtual travel card recorded on a plastic 'credit card'. The developers believe that the proposed technology will allow passengers who often use public transport to pay less. Other cities can use the experience of Minsk.

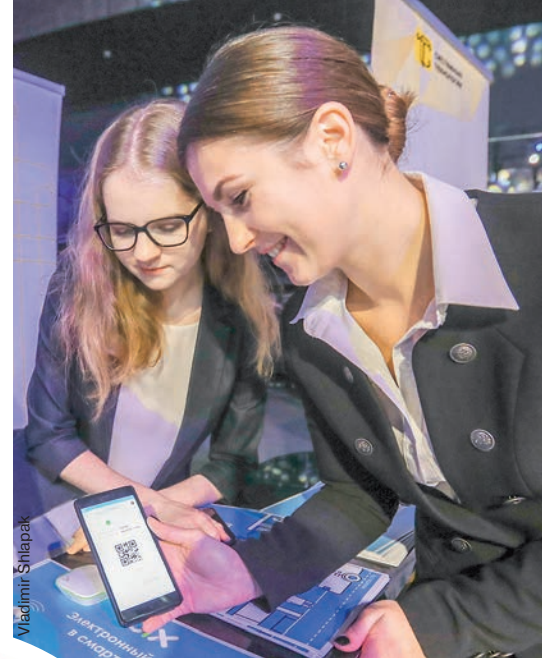
Without disconnecting the smartphone

Meanwhile, another technology enjoys popularity in Brest (and so far only there). Buses and trolleybuses can be paid for through the mobile application. It's necessary to download and install the TIX programme.

"We connect our bank card to the application," says Polina Pateenok, a marketing manager at System Technologies. "We find the necessary bus or trolleybus

on the map on the smartphone. So as not to be confused, the state number will be indicated near the corresponding label. Then you only need to click 'pay'. Done! The ticket is saved in the programme. It will be necessary to show it to the controller, who will 'sign it off' with the help of a special programme. If a passen-

It's very simple to place an order while all information about previously purchased documents is stored in the archive. If a person often travels along the same route, they will not have to enter their data each time.



ger gets off the transport and the bus has left, the system will see this. This means that a passenger will no longer be able to use this ticket. An electronic ticket can't be given to anyone."

Another advantage of the application is that virtual coupons can be purchased not only during the trip, but also in advance. Developers say that on the basis of this programme it's easy to implement another promising option of fare payment: in correspondence with the number of stops. The programme will accurately calculate what distance the passenger has travelled exactly.

Book a ticket

In early December, Belarusian Railway launched a new mobile application for buying tickets 'BC. My Train'. It's specially designed to conveniently, quickly and effortlessly draw up travel documents.

One of the innovations is the possibility of buying transfer tickets; such a service was not available before. In addition, it will be possible to buy tickets for unreserved seats. The application also has an online board that shows the train schedule at the stations Minsk-Passazhirsky and Brest-Tsentralny. The programme is available in three languages: Russian, Belarusian and English.

"The service for processing electronic travel documents is one of the most demanded services for passengers," said Denis Tonkonog, the Deputy Head of the Belarusian Railway's Passenger Service Department. "For 11

months of this year, 2.7 million tickets were issued on the Belarusian Railway website, and it is expected that, by the end of December, the figure will increase to approximately 3 million. This is about a quarter of all the tickets sold."

Tickets can be purchased in parallel both through the application and through the official website. From December 1st, an electronic ticket with electronic registration is cheaper for passengers than when buying at the ticket office, because in this case the fee is waived.

Scientific research begun

Belarusian polar explorers have begun their scientific research in Antarctica: the 12th Belarusian Antarctic expedition led by Aleksey Gaidashov started just over a month ago. Ten experts have already completed part of their job, in line with the scientific programmes.

By Irina Sergeeva

A meteorological station has begun operating under the scientific programme aimed at the study of changes in the natural environment and climate of the Enderby Area under the influence of anthropogenic and natural factors. Regular observations and transmission of weather reports to foreign Antarctic stations and the international Antarctic logistics centre in Cape Town (with the aim of providing intra-Ant-

arctic aviation flights) are in place already.

Work has begun to accumulate a bank of Antarctic biota samples for genetic research. A snow measuring post has been equipped and observations of the height of the snow cover are ensured.

An automatic scanning solar photometer CIMEL (developed by the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Physics) has been installed in line with the scientific programme to study atmospheric

physics in the interests of the national space programme.

A laboratory of atmospheric physics already runs an ozonometric observation point and regular measurements of ground-level ozone are provided. According to the biological programme, access to the ice of the Lazurnaya bay has taken place to catch ichthyofauna samples.

The Belarusian Antarctic station has the necessary reserves of fuel, food and medicines. Instruments for scien-



tific observations, life support systems, means of transport and communication work in normal mode.

Polar researchers will not only build up the infrastructure of the 1st stage of the station but are also to perform a large amount of work aimed at sampling the natural materials of Antarctica and conducting

complex research. Each expedition member is tasked in line with their major and related specialties. Co-operation in Antarctica has been expanded this season. One member of the expedition works as part of the Bulgarian Antarctic expedition, one is part of Turkish team and another represents Russia.



Going ahead with digits

The most famous Belarusian IT developments need no introduction: they are not simply well known worldwide but are already brands

By Olga Pasiyak

Viber: always in touch

Initially, Talmon Marko and Igor Magazinnik came up with the usual messenger as a platform for free Internet calls. When the time came to gather a group of programmers to write an application code, it was Belarusian specialists who were chosen. As a result, our developers joined the project and Viber was launched in 2010, its first office being located in Brest.

“Viber immediately began to gain popularity primarily due to its simplicity and convenience, as well as the ability to make free calls around the world. The app allows people to stay connected wherever they are. Our users around the world not only send each other free text messages and make video calls but also communicate in group chats, interact with their favourite brands and celebrities, and follow their updates,” say the company staff.

At the moment, Viber has offices in San Francisco, London, Luxembourg, Tel Aviv, Moscow, Sofia, Myanmar, Minsk, Brest, Paris, Berlin and even the Philippines. The statistics are impressive: more than a billion people are registered with the application and it's especially popular in Eastern and even Central Europe, the CIS and Asia. In addition, the application acts as an official communication channel of Barcelona FC and an official application for calls and instant messaging for the American Golden State Warriors basketball club.

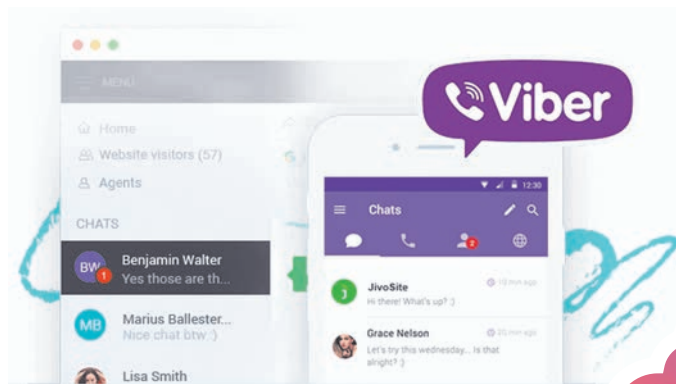
Flo: taking care of women

The Flo app has become a reliable assistant and advisor for millions of women. It helps carefully monitor health, be aware of useful information and get answers to difficult questions. The authors of the popular application are also Belarusians, the company's office is located in Minsk. According to Alena Kozub, Flo communications specialist, the project was founded in 2015 by brothers Yuri and Dmitry Gursky, along with Maksim Skrobov and Andrey Kovzel. “They already had experience with applications in the field of health. Flo is not the team's first attempt to create an app for women, there were two predecessors. On the second attempt, the project was taken up by the Ideanomix Digital team, headed by Dmitry Gursky. Initially, we planned to create a medical application with extensive functionality but it turned out to be too complicated for users and was soon abandoned. The team realised how important it is to keep the application as simple as possible, even if the goal is to create a very complex product,” she explained.

The Flo application is built on the iceberg principle: the user sees 20 percent of the functionality and the remaining 80 percent is hidden ‘under water’ but appears when needed. Everything complex is inside, but users are not overloaded with it, everything is simple, clear and easy for them.

World of Tanks: from game to online museum

Is it possible to find anyone who hasn't heard of this popular online game? Wargaming's World of Tanks is a vibrant representative of the genre of arcade tank simulator in the historical background of WWII. Its concept relies on command and



tank battles. August 12th, 2010 is seen as the game's birthday and, next year, it will celebrate its first significant anniversary. However, even before the official release at the conference of game developers in Moscow, World of Tanks received the title of best game of the year and the audience's award. Today, the online game has 160m registered users worldwide and boasts two Guinness World Records for the largest number of players at the same time on the game server. In addition, it has won four Golden Joystick awards at the 'game Oscars': 'Best Massive Multiplayer Online Game' (2012), 'Best Online Game' (2013), and 'Keep Playing' (2017, 2018).

Developers are constantly working to improve the game, which regularly launches technical innovations, has modern graphics and sound. One of the secrets of its success is its historical accuracy. As explained by the representatives of the company-developer, the game covers the history of tank building from the 1930s to 1960s and presents over 600 types of tanks and self-propelled guns which were used or developed in the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Germany, the USA, France, the UK, China, Sweden, Japan, Italy and Poland. Moreover, each tank must exactly match its real prototype, so the development involved historians specialising in military equipment and — while recreating the appearance of machines — modern 3D scanning technology was used.

Some tank models never went into mass production but have been recreated on the basis of drawings. This detailed study of the appearance of combat vehicles makes the game more than a game: it's the largest online museum

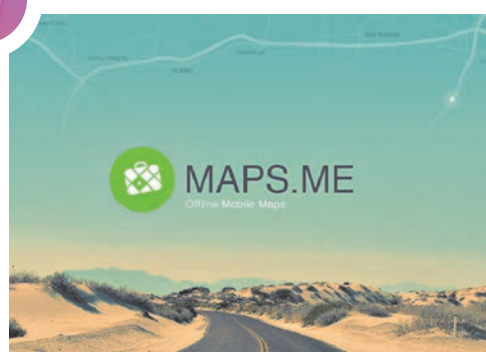
of military equipment where it's possible to find mass models and rare vehicles.

The World of Tanks authors are proud that an impressive community of fans rally round the game. For many, the latter has become a reason to find new friends with similar interests.

A popular mobile application — Maps.me — is an interactive map making it possible to navigate terrain, search for objects and build routes. It also has its roots in Belarus. In 2014, the company belonging to Yuri Melnichek — a Belarusian IT entrepreneur, investor and a programmer — was bought by Mail.ru Group.

MSQRD app — which in real time enables users to impose various masks and filters on a face — has brought fame to Yevgeny Nevgen, Sergey Gonchar and Yevgeny Zatepyakin. Three years ago, Belarusian developers became known to the whole world when the popular social network, Facebook, bought their company.

For virtual tank drivers to have a reason to meet in real life, the game's authors annually hold a large scale festival in Minsk: Tanker Day. Over time, it has evolved into a major family festival of interactive entertainment. This autumn, it was visited by more than 250,000 people from 28 countries; another 5m viewers watched the online broadcast of the event.



B&W Belarus & World

The Minsk Times
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2019



NATO has marked alliance's 70th anniversary in London

NATO leaders gather in London to mark the 70th anniversary of the alliance
Allied heads of state and government were gathering in London to commemorate the 70th anniversary of NATO. In 1949, the United Kingdom was one of NATO's twelve founding members and London was the home of NATO's first headquarters. Leaders have taken decisions to further strengthen the Alliance and continue its

adaptation. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has hosted a reception for NATO leaders at Buckingham Palace.
Also, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg discussed the main themes of the leaders' meeting at a major public diplomacy event in London: *NATO Engages: Innovating the Alliance*.
Then leaders met at the Grove Hotel to address current security issues and take

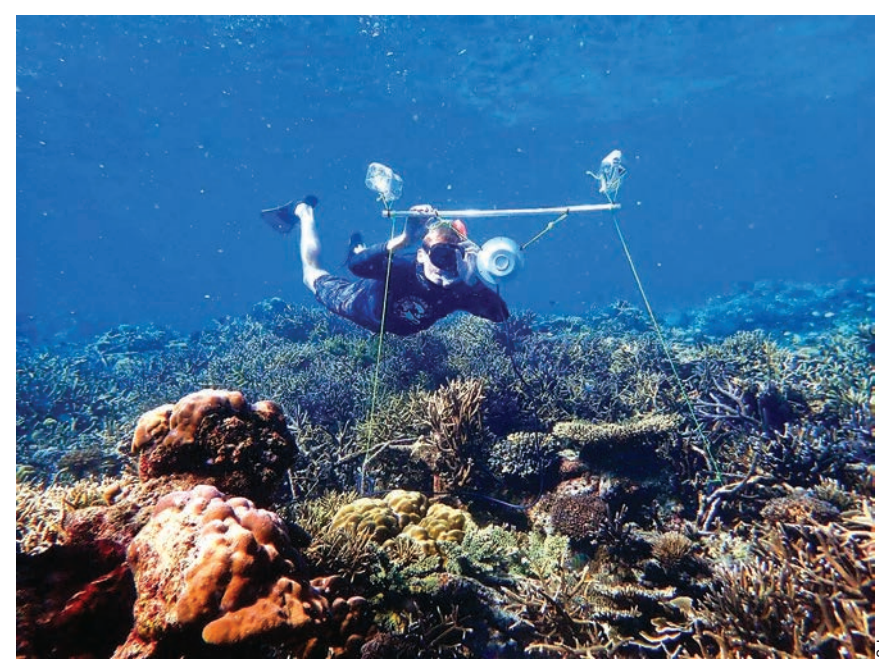
decisions to ensure that NATO remains fit for the future. They have agreed on a number of measures, including further improvements to the readiness of allied forces, recognising space as an operational domain, and updating NATO's action plan against terrorism.
The 29 leaders meeting outside London to mark the 70th anniversary of the Atlantic alliance agreed a joint statement despite divides over spending

and strategy and sharp exchanges between several of the heads of state.
The statement was the first from NATO to acknowledge the growing strategic challenge posed by China, and also stressed the need for a stronger co-ordinated response against terrorism.
Members also asked the Secretary General to consult experts to strengthen the alliance's 'political dimension'.

Damaged coral reefs could be restored using underwater loudspeakers

Coral reefs around the world have long suffered from the effects of climate change and overfishing. But scientists haven't given up on saving the natural wonders — and now, a new study shows loudspeakers could help.
Researchers set up underwater loudspeakers in Australia's northern Great Barrier Reef in late 2017, blasting recorded sounds of healthy reefs to encourage young fish to return to, and settle in, damaged ones. In a study published in the journal *Nature*, the researchers said this 'acoustic enrichment' can help revive coral reefs globally.

The researchers found that twice as many fish arrived at — and stayed near — the dead patches where the loudspeakers were operating than those where no sound was playing.
These speakers played recordings of the sounds of a healthy reef — including the noises made by shoals of fish, shrimps, and other reef dwellers.
Healthy coral reefs are remarkably noisy places — the crackle of snapping shrimp and the whoops and grunts of fish combine to form a dazzling biological soundscape," senior author and Professor Steve Simpson of the University of Exeter said in a press release.



This ultra-massive black hole just broke a record

Scientists have discovered a 'monster' black hole so massive that, in theory, it shouldn't exist
It's a stellar black hole — the type that forms after stars die, collapse and explode. Researchers had previously believed that the size limit was no more than 20 times the mass of our Sun because as these stars die, they lose most of their mass through explosions that expel matter and gas swept away by stellar winds.
This theory has now been toppled by LB-1, the newly-discovered black hole. Located about 15,000 light years away, it has a mass 70 times greater than our Sun, according to a press release from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.
"Black holes of such mass should not even exist in our galaxy, according to most of the current models of stellar

evolution," lead author Jifeng Liu, the Deputy Director-General of the National Astronomical Observatories of China at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said in a statement.
"We thought that very massive stars with the chemical composition typical of our galaxy must shed most of their gas in powerful stellar winds, as they approach the end of their life. Therefore, they should not leave behind such a massive remnant," Liu added. "Now, theorists will have to take up the challenge of explaining its formation."
Liu's team discovered the black hole using gravitational observations from China's Large Sky Area Multi-Object Fibre Spectroscopic Telescope.
Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

AI cameras to catch texting Australian drivers

Artificial intelligence (AI) cameras capable of detecting drivers who are using their mobiles illegally have been activated in Australia
The cameras were launched by New South Wales (NSW) Transport in December. Drivers spotted by the AI during its first three months of use will receive a warning letter but after that they could face a fine.
A trial of the tool in the first half of 2019 successfully detected 100,000 drivers using a mobile illegally.
"Some people have not got the message about using their phones legally and safely," said Andrew Constance, Minister for Roads. "If they think they can continue to put the safety of themselves, their passengers and the community at risk without consequence they are in for a rude shock."
The detection network will be expanded to 45 AI-equipped cameras by 2023, according to NSW Transport. The authority said it believed the detection system was a world first. It uses high-definition cameras to take photos of the front-row cabin space of vehicles, in 'all weather conditions'.
"Images that the automated system considers likely to contain a driver illegally using a mobile phone are verified by authorised personnel," NSW said on a web page about the cameras.

Returning story to canvas



The National Art Museum's collections contain archaeological fabrics, tapestries and wardrobe items from different eras. There are exhibits in which the fabric is an integral part of, for example, fans and furniture. Preserving artefacts of the past for future generations is a task for specialist-restorers. Representatives of this profession, specialising in working with fabric, can, in our country, literally be counted on the fingers of one hand.

By Inna Gorbatenko

Guardians of time

The museum quarter in Minsk is currently undergoing a large-scale reconstruction. It's planned to give the second and third floors of the building in 25 Kirov Street over to workshops. It is here that restorers will operate, and all the necessary equipment will be made available for their work. Based at the National Art Museum, there will be a Republican restoration centre established. In the meantime, artefacts from the past are being restored in buildings No. 20 and 22 in Lenin Street.

The National Art Museum has six collections that keep items containing fabric, lace, metallised threads and beads... The most diverse and amazing artefacts — from archaeological finds to costumes of the 20th century — are being restored. Among them are samples of Belarusian, Eastern, Western and Russian applied arts, as well as applied folk arts and crafts. In total, there are more than 2,500 units, with over 300 of them coming from the collection of cultural fabrics.

Yelena Chebotarevich is one of the few who has devoted her life to the rare profession of a restorer. She has plenty of work, because two-thirds of the museum exhibits need restoration of varying degrees of complexity.

"One needs to be a generalist. On the one hand, it's necessary to be able to accurately recreate the work of masters of the past, repeating their authentic style, while, on the other hand, it's important to know how to clean a work of art without damaging the exhibit. A restorer must have both an art education and practical skills."

Today, two universities are training specialists in this field: the Belarusian State Academy of Arts and the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts. Yelena Chebotarevich is a graduate of the latter. She has also finished Minsk's State Art College named after A.K. Glebov. She began work in the museum as a volunteer and, over time, became a restorer. Such dedicated young people, like Yelena, in the workshops are the exception rather than the rule. The work is very painstaking and time consuming, and not everyone has enough patience.

The work of restorers is directly related to the exhibition plan. They prepare museum objects from the storerooms for exhibiting, cleaning them free of dust and pollution, and restoring them.

All methods are good

The arsenal of the restorer makes you take a closer look at it. Almost all types of adhesives, paints, varnishes and compositions can be found in specialised stores. Even surgical instruments are used: scalpels, lancets and tweezers. There is a magnifying glass and a microscope for

a detailed study of objects. However, the major tool of the restorer is experience, which helps find the correct technique for each specific 'patient'. Yelena, like all novice specialists, was familiarising herself with the craft from the simplest operations to gradually working on more and more complex things.

The specialist admits that you need nerves of steel and movements must be incredibly accurate. The restorer, like a sapper, has no chance to make a

The working process

There are two wardrobe items from the end of the 19th century on Yelena's table: an 'andarak' (a homespun woollen skirt) and a linen shirt. Both things are patterns of weaving by an unknown master from the collection of the Folk Fabrics Museum. The restorer is working on them for the second month. Nearby are hair-thin needles and thin silk threads, which are used to strengthen the canvas in places where there are breaks.

"The exhibit was dirty, it had

the broken places, and strengthened the weft and warp threads. Now the item is almost like new and ready for display! The oldest principle of medical ethics 'first, do no



mistake. Removing a millimetre of dirt with a scalpel, a restorer must not harm the object, because it is impossible to replace a destroyed exhibit. Therefore, the process begins with a preliminary study that enables the experts to choose the optimal processing method.

"And how, for example, are tissues which are two hundred years old restored?" I ask curiously.

"First, the fabric needs to be cleaned. It's, of course, impossible to just wash it. Exhibits are cleaned in different ways, depending on the state of conservation. Most often, this happens in a restoration bath," explains Yelena, conducting a tour of the workshop. "Thanks to a special mesh at the bottom, the product is not immersed in water, but is only washed with water. Accordingly, there is less risk of tissue damage or sagging."

numerous tears, and the fabric was dilapidated in several places," Yelena picks up the shirt, and at the same time shows me the photographs of the

exhibit as it came into her hands. If you look at the photo of this item before restoration, the contrast between what it was and what it's become is simply enormous. The master has already cleared the exhibit. The fabric is further reinforced by duplicating it on a cotton backing. Now she evens and stacks the threads in a certain order. The work is akin to jewellery making!

"Restoration is now based on the principle of preservation and conservation, rather than adding and bringing back to its original form. That is, it is not necessary to achieve a result that makes the work of art look like new, it is important to keep it authentic," emphasises Ms. Chebotarevich.

She had plenty of trouble with the 'andarak', that is, the skirt. From the wrong side, Yelena made a substrate for

harm', attributed to Hippocrates, can also be attributed to the profession of a restorer. All restoration processes with the objects are reversible. The main requirement is that the museum exhibit should be accessible for repeated restoration, regardless of the technology used.

At the end of our meeting, the conversation tackled the latest (in chronology) items that have found their way into the hands of the department's specialists. This list includes Slutsk sashes, a coat and an ecclesiastical stole. Yelena also worked with an exhibit from the collection of cult fabrics.

Ms. Chebotarevich explains, "In church this aer is used in the liturgy during the sacramental rite and is used to cover the chalice. It's an exhibit from the 19th century, which is made using the weaving technique with silk, gold thread and seaming lace. When it came to me, there was dirt over the entire surface, thread fading, and numerous tears... The golden pattern was 90 percent gone! It took six months to return the aer to its original form."

Full house for premiere

Vitebsk hosting 31st Ivan Sollertinsky International Music Festival

By Irina Sergeeva

The first event was a concert by teachers and students of Vitebsk State College of Music, featuring Valeria Ivanova (in photo) — a violinist of the chamber orchestra at the educational establishment which bears the name of our famous countryman, Artistic Director of the Leningrad Philharmonic, as well as a prominent Soviet music and theatre critic. “I graduated from Vitebsk College of Music, and now I teach here. I really like the Sollertinsky Festival, popularising academic musical art, attended by virtuoso performers,” she says.

This festival was no exception. During the opening, the Russian string quartet Chamber Music Academy — which successfully tours the most prestigious concert venues in the world — performed for the first time on the stage of the regional philharmonic society.

The State Chamber Orchestra of Belarus and the Student Choir of the Belarusian State Academy of Music also

performed in the philharmonic hall. The concert was attended by guest from Argentina, Martín Palmeri. The evening’s

choir, orchestra and soloists. In the *Misa A Buenos Aires*, traditional Catholic worship was wonderfully intertwined

evening, for the first time in Vitebsk, a bandoneon could be heard, played by Belarusian Andrey Sivakov.

Valentin Silvestrov. On the closing day of the forum, Belarusian pianist Andrey Ponochevny, currently teaching at the University of Dallas, was accompanied by the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Republic of Belarus. The Artistic Director of the Vitebsk Regional Philharmonic Society, Vladimir Babariko, said that the place at the conductor’s lectern will be taken by the Artistic Director of the orchestra, Aleksandr Anisimov, “Concert No. 1 for piano and orchestra by Piotr Tchaikovsky and the last symphony by Dmitry Shostakovich, presented to the audience at the finale, was performed for the first time in Vitebsk.”

Mr. Babariko emphasised the importance of the festival and academic music in human life. “The festival’s goal is to show the best works to impress the public. This music might not be for everyone, but such a forum enables people to hear not just three chords, but more than a hundred, to feel them and feel like a resident of the cultural capital,” he added.



Anton Stepanishchev

programme included his pieces: a concert for the bandoneon with the orchestra *On the Four Seasons* and *Misa A Buenos Aires (Misatango)* for the

with the stylistic features of the new tango. Martín Palmeri performed this piece on piano with choir in 2013 in Rome in honour of Pope Francis. This

The *Classic-Avantgarde* ensemble of soloists has prepared a programme with works by Gia Kancheli, Arvo Pärt, Alfred Schnittke and

Immersed in virtual reality



BETA

By Arina Novikova

History Museum of Vitebsk People’s Art School joins Goethe Institute in Minsk to realise *Virtual Bauhaus* project in the regional centre

Guests of the Vitebsk museum will be able to visit the Bauhaus school building in Dessau (Germany) through a VR device. The project offers an unusual experience, transferring users to the architectural space of the school built in 1925-1926 by its first director — Walter Gropius. Through the virtual space, which

affects the senses, anyone can experience the main ideas of this cultural phenomenon.

“The theme of the Bauhaus school is very interesting, and it is especially pleasing that it goes in parallel with the history of the Vitebsk Art School,

UNOVIS,” said the Director of the History Museum of Vitebsk People’s Art School, Andrey Dukhovnikov.

The device will make it possible to visit students’ hostels, watch an experimental production in a stage workshop and walk up the famous stairs of the building. The *Virtual Bauhaus* spatial installation has been developed by the Goethe Institute in Boston in collaboration with the Cologne Game Lab.

According to the Head of the Information and Library Department of the Minsk Goethe Institute, Aleksandr Nazarchuk, the institution always tries to keep up with the times. The Institute has a special focus on or the development of digital technologies. “We pay a lot of attention to virtual and augmented reality in our projects. *Virtual Bauhaus* is a good example. We have been very keen to bring this project to the cultural capital of Belarus,” he added.



Aleksey Stolyarov

First issue of *Kupalauski* magazine released

By Olga Korneeva

The Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre has released the first issue of its *Kupalauski* magazine

According to the Director General of the theatre, Pavel Latushko, today’s viewer is a creative person who thinks, analyses and is not only an observer of the ‘performance machine’. “Modern viewers want to participate in the life of the theatre and know more about what is happening on the stage. We’re looking for different ways to communicate with our audience. One of these projects is this publication by the Kupala Theatre. This magazine is our first attempt at writing,” he said.

The magazine is an additional communication channel

where you can talk about the life of the theatre and get feedback from the audience.

The Director General also spoke about the institution’s other projects. A book is planned for the 100th anniversary of the Yanka Kupala Theatre, posters are being created, as well as ten videos. Mr. Latushko noted that the play *Paulinka* is planned for inclusion on the list of historical and cultural artefacts, “We hope for support from the Culture Ministry and the Government of our country. In addition, we are applying for the Guinness Book of Records. There is no such category yet, but if we’re able to change the rules or make additions, we hope to see our *Paulinka* in the book,” noted the Director General.

ACCENT

Bauhaus became a prominent phenomenon in 20th century design and architecture. The school operated in Germany from 1919 to 1933, until it was closed under Nazi pressure. Nevertheless, the principles of the Bauhaus school and style spread throughout the world. After emigration, teachers and students of the institution continued their work worldwide, greatly influencing architecture and design.

Belarusian athletes have earned three medals at the European Swimming Championship: one for each discipline. The achievement is not unique — there were others of no less significance. At least two of the three results can guarantee a medal at the upcoming Olympics in Tokyo.



Anastasia Shkur dai

By Dmitry Komashko

Shkur dai

For those who, even casually, monitor the situation in swimming, the victories by Anastasia Shkur dai were only a matter of time. The 16-year-old athlete from Brest has already won everything possible while also breaking several records, including those of Aleksandra Gerasimenya. Shkur dai already had a medal from the 'short water' European Championship. But two years ago, she won silver in the combined relay. Now she has her own, personal gold and 56.21 seconds is a new European record for juniors in the 100m butterfly. This is an even steeper career start than Gerasimenya had. Aleksandra won her first personal medal

(and at the same time the first adult award) in 2002, when she was 17. Shkur dai already boasts a gold from the European Championship and so the head coach of the national team, Mark Zakutnev, prefers to draw slightly different parallels, "It's no accident that the European Championship in short water is held in December. All athletes complete the first stage of preparation for the Olympics. The championship is a kind of verification of the results of their work, which swimmers then try to transfer to the 50m pool. If Nastya Shkur dai manages to repeat the current 56.21 on the longer course, it will be a medal at the Olympics. At the previous Games, Sarah Sjöström won with a world record of 55.48, while Penelope Oleksiak

Splashes of gold

from Canada claimed silver with a score of 56.46, being only 16 at the time. Dana Vollmer from the USA was third in Rio posting a time of 56.63. The current seconds by Shkur dai look very competitive against this background. It is, of course, difficult to make forecasts. Maggie MacNeil, Oleksiak's peer, won at the World Cup with a result of 55.83, but Sarah Sjöström, who finished second, swam 56.22, and overall, the results in the final remained the same. Nastya has successfully transferred her results from a 25m pool to a 50m one. And indeed, in the next few years, you can expect great progress from this athlete."

Shimanovich

Ilya Shimanovich's landmarks and rivals are also significant. The major one is a British swimmer, Adam Peaty, and the results of this confrontation mean the Belarusian's silver medal is hardly less significant than Anastasia Shkur dai's gold. After the finish of the final 100m breaststroke, Shimanovich, who finished second, was clearly upset. The Dutchman Arno Kamminga, who was the winner, rewrote the national record: 56.06. Ilya lost 0.36 seconds to him and, even harder to bear, 0.53 seconds to his own European record. The Belarusian had broken it in the semi-finals. These figures — 55.89 — would guarantee him gold, so from a strategic point of view, Shimanovich's semi-final result means even more than the silver won in the end. Our team managed to win European Championship medals even during the years of unconditional

dominance by Aleksandra Gerasimenya's team. But Belarusian men have not 'rewritten' European records, since the time of the double Olympic champion and seven-time European champion, Sergey Kopylov. In the 100m breaststroke, the achievement (renewed by Shimanovich) belonged for a long time to the British swimmer, Adam Peaty, who was considered to be the invincible Olympic champion and eight-time world champion. Shimanovich's coach, Yelena Malyusko, is convinced that Ilya's performance in Glasgow allows us to look forward to the Olympics with optimism, "I won't hide the fact that we were preparing just this distance. We wanted to surprise the world and, I think, we succeeded. Yes, there's a slight

but rather to get ahead of Peaty. This is a much more important and objective indicator. Moreover, the current seconds are already very close to Cameron van der Burgh's world record, set at a time when athletes performed in neoprene suits. Those records were long considered everlasting but now Ilya has got close to them. He boasts the second result in history in 50m pools, only behind Adam Peaty. He proved that the achievements of the Briton can be surpassed, and our goal for the Olympics is not a medal, but a result that is as good as these seconds. The rest will follow."

It's worth noting that alongside the 100m breaststroke silver claimed at the current tournament, Ilya Shimanovich managed to win another medal.



Ilya Shimanovich

margin left, as we wanted to get gold. But the fact is that Shimanovich simply did not have time to fully recover from the World Cup. It is important that the current European record for Ilya is a planned result. He is able to swim even faster, and it is very important that he understands this himself. The main goal for him was not even to win this or that medal,

His efforts earned a bronze at the second consecutive European Championship for our combined relay race, where Ilya's partners were Victor Staselovich, Yevgeny Tsurkin and Artem Macheikin. The event is not an Olympic one, but the Belarusian team seems to have picked up interesting results. We're looking forward to it continuing.

Persistent struggle crowned with success

By Arina Novikova

Belarus' national mini-football team wins international tournament in Mashhad, Iran

In the final match, Belarusians defeated the hosts of the competition, the Asian champions and the bronze medallists of the World Championship — Iranians — with the score of 3:2.

At the end of the first minute, the guests were playing catch-up but they were not going to give up. Before the break, Sergey Krykun and Anton Gusakov scored two goals and, at the start of the second half, the Iranians equalised. Vladimir Zhigalko then scored

the winning goal. At the start of the tournament, Aleksandr Savintsev's trainees beat Slovakia with the score of 4:1. The Iranian national team drew with Slovakia — 5:5 — in the first round.

According to the final standings, Belarus has 6 points (goal difference is 7-3), Iran has 1 point (7-8), Slovakia also has one point (6-9).

For the Belarusian national team, the event was a stage in the preparation for the elite round of the World Championship's qualifying tournament. In early 2020, the Belarusians will travel to Portugal to play against their opponents in Group A: the hosts of the tournament, Italy and Finland.



mini-football.by



France Football

Sixth Ballon d'Or

Argentine striker from Spanish team Barcelona — Lionel Messi — awarded Ballon d'Or as best footballer of the year according to France Football magazine

Second place was taken by the Dutch defender of English team, Liverpool — Virgil van Dijk, the third went to the Portuguese forward of Italian Juventus — Cristiano Ronaldo.

In the 2018-19 season, Lionel Messi won the Spanish Championship with Barcelona, becoming the top scorer of the tournament (36 goals) and the Champions League (12). He scored a total of 51 goals at club level that season, winning the Golden Shoe. Jointly with the Argentinean team, the

32-year-old striker finished third at the Copa America, scoring one goal.

The Argentine striker won the Ballon d'Or for a record sixth time, having previously won the award in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2015. His closest pursuer, Cristiano Ronaldo, has five of the awards (2008, 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017).

Ballon d'Or was established by the Editor-in-Chief of the *France Football* weekly, Gabriel Hanot, and was first presented in 1956.

Skateboarding to debut at Olympics

Skateboarding will enter the programme of the Olympic Games in Tokyo for the first time — stated on Belarus' National Olympic Committee site

Athletes can qualify for the Games at competitions in Peru, China, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom. The draw for ratings points will begin from March 16th, 2020. The first tournament in the 'Park' and 'Street' disciplines will be held in Lima, with the following event in Yancheng. Athletes will compete in the 'Street' discipline in Nanjing (China) and Samukawa (Japan). A further stage will be held in American Long Beach. Those competing for medals at the Olympics will be announced in London ('Street', May 19-24) and Nanjing ('Park', May 26-31).

In total, about 80 athletes will attend the 32nd Olympics in Tokyo to compete for medals in two disciplines: competitions will be held on July 26th-27th and August 5th-6th. The skateboarding tournament will be held at Ariake Sports Park.



Photo of the week

Minsk's GUM decorates its shop-windows for the New Year

EXHIBITIONS

NATIONAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 22nd December. *KHRONOTOP_2.1... Space/Time 2.1.*
Until 12th January. *East-West*
Until 20th January. *Museum of Fir Tree Toys*

NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street
Until 15th December. *Yazep Drozdovich's Universe*
Until 10th January. *Russian Impressionism*
Until 19th January. *Oman: Pearl of the East. Handicraft Legacy*
Until 1st February. *Always Ready and Brave*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 1st February. *Kalyady Calling*

MUSEUM OF GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY

8 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 31st December. *Returning Time*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN NATURE AND ECOLOGY

12 Karl Marks Street
Until 12th January. *Dangerous Beauty*
Until 1st February. *Magic of Wild Birds*

MAXIM BOGDANOVICH LITERARY MUSEUM

7A M.Bogdanovich Street
Until 1st January. *Melancholy Drugs*

MUSEUM OF BELARUSIAN CINEMA HISTORY

4 Sverdlov Street
Until 22nd December. *City over Free Neva*

MINSK GALLERY

9 Pobediteley Avenue
Until 9th January. *Museum of Leonardo da Vinci's Inventions*

TROITSKY SUBURB

7A Bogdanovich Street
Until 12th January. *Best Toys from USSR*
Until 12th March. *Robo Art*

LIBRA

37 Nezavisimosti Avenue
Until 26th January. *Pablo Picasso. Paragraphs*

MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square
Until 19th. January. *Lady's Articles*

ZAIR AZGUR MUSEUM-WORKSHOP

8 Zair Azgur Street
Until 21st December. 2x2

THEATRES

BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizhskoy Kommuny Square
12.12. Prince Igor
13.12. Viva la Mamma!
14.12. The Barber of Seville
15.12. Turandot
16.12. The Bat
17.12. Carmen
18.12. Gala-concert of world opera stars
19.12. Creation of the World

MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street
12.12. Husband Leaving Wife
13.12. How to Become Rich
15.12. Summer House Residents
17.12. Oscar and Pink Lady

YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street
12.12. Harvest / Evening
13.12. Pinsk Gentry
15.12. Paulinka / Prudok Radio / Inspector
17.12. Kalyady Night
18.12. Zavalnya Nobleman, or Belarus in Fantastic Stories / Elza's Land
19.12. Local Cabaret / Prudok Radio

MINSK CONCERT HALL

5 Oktyabrskaya Street
13.12. Sergey Bezrukov
14.12. Georgia's State Song and Dance Ensemble *Kutaisi*
18.12. This Relentless Art

BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street
14 and 15.12. Marriage with Wind

THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Mashеров Avenue
14.12. No. 13
15.12. In Search of Lost Self
18 and 19.12. Women Without Borders

CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street
12.12. Clinic
14, 17 and 18.12. Her New Year Wish
19.12. Corporate

MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street
12.12. Jane Eyre
14.12. A Thousand and One Night
15.12. The Nutcracker / Comedy
19.12. Secret Marriage

YOUTH THEATRE

17 Kozlov Street
12.12. Tectonics of Feelings
13.12. Love Until Unconsciousness
14.12. About Fedot-Archer
15.12. Sasha, Take Garbage Away
19.12. Happy New Year!

PUPPET THEATRE

20 Engels Street
12.12. Mann Ist Mann