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Marina Vasilevskaya — first cosmonaut of sovereign Belarus

Space is ours!

The flight into space of sovereign Belarus' first cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya was watched for two weeks by residents of many countries worldwide. Experts call the landing of the descent vehicle one of the riskiest parts of the space mission. The landing took place in the Kazakh steppe south-east of the Kazakh city of Zhezkazgan. On April 6th, the Russian Soyuz MS-24 manned spacecraft undocked from the ISS, descended from orbit and returned safely to Earth. Oleg Novitsky and Marina Vasilevskaya spent 12 days at the station.

Immediately after landing, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, congratulated the crew on their return to Earth. The Head of State invited the entire crew of the spacecraft and the people, who had taken care of preparations for the flight, to visit Belarus as guests. → 3



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‘We are committed to creation only’

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has paid a working visit to Grodno

The Head of State visited the construction site of a new city hospital, where he heard a report by Healthcare Minister Aleksandr Khodzhayev.

“We need to make our medicine people’s, as we used to say — so that it is accessible to everyone, on equal terms,” the President set the main task for the Minister.

Aleksandr Khodzhayev reported that the instructions of the Head of State, including on pricing and personnel, are being fulfilled. The President was also reported on the socio-economic development of Grodno Region. Governor Vladimir Karanik stressed that all social obligations had been fulfilled in the region — the growth of nominal wages amounted to 18 percent in 2023 and exceeded 19 percent in January – February 2024, while the growth of the gross regional product nearly reached 8 percent. “Further development of the region is impossible without investments, therefore 114 projects are being implemented in Grodno Region,” noted the Chairman of the Grodno Regional Executive Committee. According to him, as part of the President’s One District — One Project programme, 21 projects have been approved, which are currently at different stages of implementation. The construction and modernisation of many social facilities, including schools and an oncologic dispensary, continues.

At the construction site of a new healthcare facility, the Head of State was informed about the progress of the hospital construction. According to the plans, it will replace the bed capacity of two old hospitals in Grodno, and will include mainly therapeutic departments with endovascular surgery rooms as well as diagnostic departments. The hospital is designed for more than 500 beds.

The President asked about the timing for the completion of the new city hospital construction. It was planned that it should take about 50 months.



“It is a long time,” the Head of State responded. “We have to build it in two years.”

During the working trip, Aleksandr Lukashenko took part in the solemn ceremony of laying the capsule at the construction site of the new city hospital in Grodno.

The Head of State pointed out that not only the text placed inside the capsule is a message to descendants, but also all the numerous facilities that have been created, built and upgraded over the years of Belarus’ independence.

“This is a message to future generations,” the President stated. “We want Belarusians to live, make families, study, work, relax in beautiful, cosy and comfortable cities and villages. We are doing everything so that everyone has the opportunity to receive a decent education, first of all.”

It should be noted, though, that Belarusians sometimes have to create not thanks to life circumstances, but in spite of them.

Aleksandr Lukashenko explained why he once forbade the Government and officials to complain about the sanctions, “I proceeded from simple logic: if an executive, a civil servant, a director of an enterprise is given an opportunity to dodge work, they will grab the opportunity. This is why I told them right away that there are no sanctions. I told them to forget that sanctions exist. What difference does it make to our people whether the sanctions exist or not? They want to live. They want to work. The time has chosen us to solve this problem, and we must do everything for our people to be able to live, work and support their families. Taking care of children, grandchildren, everyone who will come after us — this is the essence of today’s moment and the idea of today’s event.”

The President is convinced that in 50-100 years, given the development of information technologies, the next generations will know everything and even more about the current ones. “But will this knowledge be true? Will Belarusians of the future see our true intentions amid these arrays of information? That is why we are leaving a message here. It contains our sincere hopes, and all of them are prompted by the desire for peace and creation,” the Head of State underlined. “In addition, the current solemn ceremony serves as a message to the neighbouring countries of Belarus.”



The Auls production site of the Grodno Glassworks is a fine example of how to resist sanctions

“After all, we are now also digging the ground, just like them, very close to the border. Our goals are completely different, though. They dig trenches, anti-tank trenches and other things, and increase the costs for shock weapons. And here, we direct two-thirds of the region’s budget to social sphere. We want to build our peaceful future. We are committed to creation only,” the President emphasised.

“Do not believe anyone who says that we want to fight. We are preparing in case of war — I am talking about this frankly. ‘If you want peace, prepare for war’ — it is not me who came up with this statement. This is very well said.” According to the Belarusian leader, the necessary training of the relevant units is being carried out in the country, with various types of weapons and equipment being supplied to the troops.

The Head of State stressed that Belarus does not threaten anyone in any way, “We do not need to threaten anyone. We do not want anyone else’s land. We need to cultivate the one we have, God willing. Belarus has big plans, and they will be implemented.” The President also added, “We will accomplish a lot more together with you, but the main thing for us to do is to make sure that our children achieve even more based on what we have done. We need to lay some groundwork for our children.”



Aleksandr Lukashenko called the healthcare facility in Grodno, which is now under construction, an object of strategic importance with flexible functionality. In other words, it is envisaged that the hospital building will have four wings, each of which can be isolated if required. Thus, the experience of medical institutions during the coronavirus pandemic has been taken into account.

The President drew attention to the fact that the Government has created opportunities in Belarus for people’s development as well as for earning money. Figuratively

ture generations, which was placed inside a capsule. Aleksandr Lukashenko laid it in a memorial stone installed at the hospital construction site. In the message to the descendants, the current time in the history of sovereign Belarus is characterised as interesting and challenging,

“We live a peaceful and happy life — we are building our beloved, independent Belarus together. However, our hearts ache. We are writing to you because the world around us is changing. We live in an era of unprecedented scientific and technological progress compared to past centuries, yet billions are being spent on weapons and regional conflicts. The planet is on fire. Entire nations are losing their homes and trying to find shelter thousands of kilometres away from their homeland. We help everyone who asks for help, and we do everything to preserve the fragile peace on this God-given land. We believe that we will succeed in preserving it. Therefore, we are building kindergartens, schools, polyclinics, hospitals, new production facilities, cultural, sports and shopping and entertainment centres.”

The text mentions the milestone date which is celebrated in 2024 — the 80th anniversary of Belarus’ liberation from Nazi invaders.

“We have a thousand-year history of the Belarusian people behind us, and we believe that it continues with your great deeds! We believe that sooner or later all the energy, mind and intellect of humanity will be focused solely on creation, that you will step further and go beyond the Solar System!” the message reads.

When communicating with the participants of the solemn ceremony of laying the capsule, Aleksandr Lukashenko made an emphasis on the fact that he does not have a hidden agenda in politics, and that all the actions taken are aimed at benefiting the Belarusian people living across the country, from Grodno to Orsha [cities in the western and northern regions, correspondingly].

The President urged people to value their land, above all, and do their best to ensure better people’s lives on it, “Stay together and live in peace with each other. We will have enough of everything as we have enough land. As long as we have our own land, we will live a normal life. But if you lose your anchor and forget your roots here, there will be trouble.”

speaking, people have been provided with a fishing rod, and they need to ‘go fishing’ themselves — be active, take initiative, and work in order to have a decent standard of living.

“If we do not work hard, we will be in trouble,” Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed. “The main thing is to have opportunities for work. The Government should provide such opportunities.”

The President’s words are especially relevant in relation to representatives of the younger generation. The Head of State highlighted the fact that all opportunities and conditions have been created in the country for schoolchildren from various families and regions of Belarus to enter universities and gain a higher education. A system of providing knowledge and its objective assessment has been developed in order to select capable students for universities.

Another example is the support of families with many children — a plot of land is allotted to them with an opportunity to build a house, including for running a personal subsidiary farm, and to instill work ethic in children. Unfortunately, however, it is not uncommon when the land is not cultivated and the areas around the houses remain neglected.

In a solemn ceremony, the President put his signature under the message to fu-

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, watched live coverage of the return of Belarusian cosmonaut Marina Vasilevskaya and other members of the Soyuz MS-24 crew from the International Space Station. The Head of State shared his emotions and worries in that regard with journalists of the Belarus 1 TV channel on April 6th while participating in the first game of the Republican Hockey League final series.



Space is ours!

that the crew had to return to Earth on board the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft, which docked at the ISS back in September 2023. Therefore, it was required to move individual seat liners of the cosmonauts and their space-suits from one ship to another, to do preventive maintenance on the mechanisms for sealing the hatches, to recharge the necessary devices from solar cells, to move the equipment to be returned to Earth, including samples obtained as a result of experiments conducted in orbit. In addition, the crew's composition changed — Marina Vasilevskaya and Oleg Novitsky were supposed to land on Earth together with NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara, who was at the ISS as part of a long-term expedition, instead of American Tracey Dyson.

A soft landing was ensured thanks to the main parachute with an area of 1,000 m², which opened at an altitude of several kilometres and significantly reduced the descent speed, as well as due to special engines that are fired a few metres above the ground. However, the landing can only be called soft conditionally. At this moment, cosmonauts never talk because the shock of landing is comparable in strength to a collision between a car and a truck, and there is a high probability of biting the tongue or even dislocating the jaw.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

When asked by a journalist if he was worried, Aleksandr Lukashenko replied as follows, "When your kids are in outer space, you will understand what it means when a Belarusian woman, a citizen of Belarus is in outer space. Certainly, I was responsible for anything that may have happened, God forbid. This is why I am certainly glad that everything went routinely. I rewatched the footage several times. I am very pleased that everything is over, and I thought to myself: well, I will not play this game anymore. The emotions are extremely intense, since the night was sleepless. I watched the undocking of the descent module live."

The hockey team of the President of Belarus won the first match of the Republican Hockey League final series. On the ice of the capital's Olympic Arena on April 6th, the squad of the Head of State defeated the hockey players of Minsk Region with a score 5:2 (2:1, 0:1, 3:0). Artyom Karkotsky and Vitaly Marchenko were recognised as the best players of this match. The prizes were presented to them by Olympic freestyle champion Alla Tsuper.



Marina Vasilevskaya and Oleg Novitsky in Zvyozdny Gorodok

Let us remind that the flight began on March 23rd on the Soyuz MS-25 spacecraft and took two days, as docking with the ISS took place on March 25th. During the stay on the ISS, Marina Vasilevskaya had to conduct a number of experiments. This includes learning how probiotic strains of lactic acid microorganisms and bifidobacteria behave in zero gravity.

"Belarus, thanks for support!" Marina Vasilevskaya said in the first interview after landing. "I wish all people on Earth to appreciate and cherish everything we have." Marina Vasilevskaya's 12-day stay on the ISS and the crew's return to Earth went without surprises. Preparations for landing began almost immediately after arrival at the station. This was partially due to the fact



ALEKSANDR LUKASHENKO AGREED TO SUBMIT CFE TREATY SUSPENSION BILL TO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, has agreed to submit a draft law On the Suspension of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, sb.by reports with reference to the Belarusian leader's press service

This document was ratified by Belarus and entered into force in 1992, envisaging limits on conventional weapons and equipment across five main categories (battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, artillery, combat aircraft and attack helicopters), as well as mechanisms for verifying compliance with obligations (information exchange and inspections).

The draft law envisages the suspension of the CFE Treaty, but does not mean Belarus' withdrawal from it and the cessation of internal procedures in the country's Armed Forces related to its implementation.

Belarus fully fulfils its obligations under the treaty, including strictly adhering to the established maximum levels of the availability of weapons, military equipment and personnel of the Armed Forces.

Nevertheless, in August 2022, the Czech Republic, and in March 2023, Poland decided not to implement the agreement in relation to Belarus.

In November 2023, NATO's North Atlantic Council announced the intention of the alliance members participating in the treaty to suspend its operation. Russian also withdrew from the CFE Treaty.

The suspension of the CFE by NATO members and their allies actually means the termination of its functioning.

BELARUS' DEFENCE MINISTRY ON CFE TREATY SUSPENSION



Under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the aggregate number of military personnel for Belarus shouldn't exceed 100,000 troops. In addition, our country can hold no more than 1,800 battle tanks, 2,600 armoured combat vehicles, 1,615 units of artillery, 294 combat aircraft and 80 attack helicopters.

"The suspension of the CFE Treaty primarily means for the Republic of Belarus the suspension of limits or allocated quota for personnel, weapons and military equipment, as well as the refusal

The Chief of the International Military Co-operation Department — Assistant to the Defence Minister for Foreign Military Policy, Major General Valery Revenko, explained that the CFE Treaty establishes certain quotas for the number of personnel, weapons and military equipment for each state, as well as measures to monitor the compliance with these limits

of control measures carried out in relation to a foreign state and directly in relation to the Republic Belarus from foreign countries. As for quotas and limits, the number of personnel in our Armed Forces has been 65,000 for a long time. As far as weapons and military equipment are concerned, no multiple increase or any changes are expected in the near future. Speaking about inspection activities, today, unfortunately, the situation has developed that Western countries are ignoring the implementation of the CFE Treaty. We also cannot inspect foreign states, since they have created such a situation that they do not accept our inspections," commented Valery Revenko.

Since April 8th, Türkiye has suspended its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

In the Soviet years, every third metre of fabric from Minsk Worsted Mill [Kamvol brand] was produced with an honorary pentagon as a quality mark. It was the cloth awarded the USSR Quality Mark that was demonstrated at the *Quality Mark: Tradition of the Past and Present* mini-exhibition organised at the Palace of Independence at the beginning of the year. The Head of State examined the product together with participants of the meeting on the main directions of work aimed at quality improvement in 2024 and on the Quality Mark of the Republic of Belarus. According to Yulia Grinchik, General Director of Kamvol JSC, the technologies of the 1970s-1980s have been preserved at the plant making it possible to create fabrics in accordance with all the requirements of GOST [the Soviet standard]. Belarusian Kamvol is one of the leading enterprises in the CIS and Europe for the production of a wide range of dress-and-suit pure wool, wool and half-woollen fabrics, which are known and appreciated not only in the native country, but also far beyond its borders.



Kamvol has incorporated all the best practices available in the global textile industry

‘Made in Belarus’ equals high quality

By Yulia Statkevich

Threads of co-operation

We arrived at Kamvol just on the day when the delegation from Uzbekistan was visiting the Belarusian fabric manufacturer. “We have a lot of projects with this country,” said Yulia Grinchik following the negotiations. “We have been co-operating with Uzbekistan for ten years already, and our relationship has reached new heights recently. The main project ongoing from year to year with increased volumes is the supply of special-purpose fabrics to the departmental structures of Uzbekistan. In 2024, there has been planned a volume that significantly exceeds the supplies of previous years. This is undoubtedly due to the work of the heads of states, who have established positive communication, which gives an impetus to business development of individual enterprises.

The second area of our collaboration is a project on the supply and use of Belarusian fabrics with low wool content in sewing school uniforms for Uzbekistan students.

Another project that was discussed with Uzbek counterparts at the enterprise is the creation of joint co-operation ties. “We are considering the possibility of sewing products from our fabric on the territory of Uzbekistan by local seamstresses. It will be a mutually beneficial co-operation. Our company will get the necessary volume of products with a reasonable price for the service. In turn, they will see our products, fabric, and raw materials base in Uzbekistan — it is a kind of popularisation on the local market,” stated Yulia Grinchik.

The above projects are only related to one partner country of Kamvol.

In total, the company supplies to 12 countries. Thus, 1,519.1 thousand linear metres of fabric were exported last year. In value terms, the export volume of Kamvol’s products amounted to \$10.8m.

Work efficiency

The tasks set by the Kamvol management team for this year are quite ambitious. Yet, Yulia Grinchik, who became the head of the open joint stock company at the beginning of 2024, is confident that the sky is the limit for the enterprise, “‘Made in Belarus’ is already a brand that helps boost sales in world markets. This has been largely facilitated by the policy carried out by our country’s leadership, as well as by all our manufacturers — Belarusians have their own, separate niche, and their own consumer.”

In fact, there are a lot of enterprises



in Belarus that have not only been preserved since Soviet times, but also have been brought to a completely new level with the help of state support. Kamvol is one of them.

“Our company is unique in the post-Soviet space. There are simply no analogues to such an enterprise as ours. Even European manufacturers of a similar level, when visiting our production, admire the level of technical equipment we have, as well as the level of cleanliness and comfort that we adhere to. It is very pleasant that our country has such an enterprise,” the company director emphasised.

“There is no such a technological chain as ours anywhere in the world. Kamvol has incorporated all the best that is available in the global textile industry at present,” stressed Yulia Grinchik.

A three-in-one approach

Kamvol currently has several production sections — carding and spinning, weaving and finishing, and woollen fabric manufacture. The latter is a new one.

provide such a large number of trained personnel; therefore, we have created a training system from scratch. We assign a specialist mentor to a person who wants to work here. The training lasts from one month to six months. After that, we set an apprentice exam. We can do it earlier if the apprentice has learnt the programme faster,” Artem Smuklavsky informed.

In addition, the competence centre plans to conduct corporate training for employees of the enterprise.

Control at all stages

All achievements of the company are inextricably linked with the high quality of its products. It is worth noting that Kamvol has received a lot of awards for them, including international ones. The quality system is regulated by 40 standards of the enterprise, five working instructions developed taking into account basic requirements for the quality management system. The product quality is strictly supervised there.

“We work ahead of the curve, controlling the raw materials, chemicals and dyes supplied to us. After all, the quality of raw materials affects greatly the quality of the final product. Everything must comply with the technical regulations requirements — in the same way as our released products comply with the requirements of GOST and the Technical Regulations of the Customs Union (TR CU),” underlined Evgenia Misuno, Head of Quality Department at Kamvol JSC.

Finished products are carefully checked before being released from production. Firstly, their visual control is carried out for compliance with GOST. Secondly, they are tested according to the physical and mechanical parameters in a chemical laboratory.

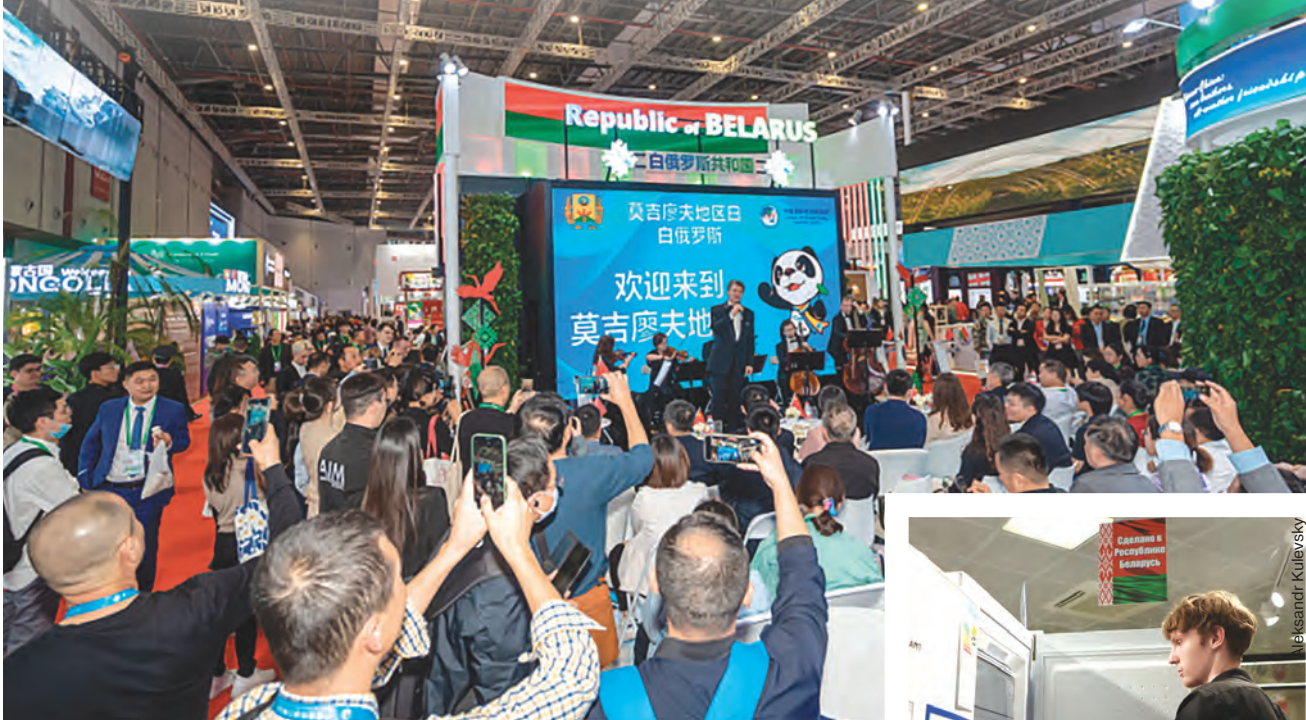
The quality of the finished product is monitored by the quality controller of the technical control department, while process engineers and laboratory specialists are responsible for the quality in manufacturing. In addition, each employee constantly evaluates the process, since everyone is personally interested in producing high-quality products.

Before leaving the company, we could not but ask the general director about the Kamvol product that will compete for the State Quality Mark.

“I think it is fabric because it is our main product. As for the fabric composition and density, this is yet to be decided. We are currently busy in development, and then we will choose one of the options with an expert opinion,” Yulia Grinchik shared the plans.

What is the benefit of participating in international exhibitions and why Belarusian products are highly appreciated in foreign markets

Products made to last



Our country is a regular participant in international trade fairs and exhibitions, demonstrating the potential of Belarusian companies. Domestic enterprises annually take part in more than 130 fairs and exhibitions in Belarus and abroad, including national exhibitions and expositions in over 50 countries on different continents. The Belinterexpo Exhibition Unitary Enterprise of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been promoting the interests of the country at international exhibition forums for 22 years, introducing high-quality products of our enterprises to foreign markets worldwide. Natalia Kurash, Director of BelCCI's Belinterexpo, revealed why Belarusian goods are so much appreciated around the world and what stands behind the Made in Belarus brand.

By Vladislav Sychevich

An effective tool

— What is the role of your company in promoting Belarusian products to foreign markets?

— The exhibition is a key marketing tool in the context of promoting national industry interests. Thanks to many years of experience in implementing projects, case studies and a well-established mechanism of interaction with foreign partners, Belinterexpo works at the world's best exhibition venues, has exclusive rights for Belarusian exhibitors to participate in a number of major international exhibition forums, develops national exhibition brands under its auspices, among which the most popular are Made in Belarus, Belarus. The Taste of Nature.

Belinterexpo has a wide optional range of practical and consulting services at its disposal in the field of support, provision and organisation of exhibition projects, congress events, business negotiations and business tourism.

The company's portfolio includes 300+ exhibitions in more than 50 countries around the world — from large-scale national events to industry expositions at specialised exhibition forums.

According to the results of the year 2023, it should be noted that Belinterexpo arranged and held 28 exhibitions and expositions of Belarusian enterprises. The events were hosted by 15 countries, including Azerbaijan, Algeria, Armenia, Georgia, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan, Qatar, China, Mongolia, the UAE, Serbia, Syria, Türkiye and Uzbekistan.

Up the export arc

— Under the conditions of sanctions pressure, Belarus has relied on diversification of external supplies and market development of far arc countries. What exhibition events are held in Asia and Africa, and how high is the interest in Belarusian products?

— The geography of exhibition projects co-ordinated by the national operator Belinterexpo is quite wide. Taking into account the increased interest in our products and services in a number of regions, our company forms a calendar grid of exhibition forums. Thus, domestic products will be

presented at exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa. It is also planned to participate in trade fairs in Angola, Namibia, Tanzania, Egypt, China, Korea and Malaysia.

In addition, Belinterexpo continues to interact with the organisers of exhibition forums in the European region.

— What are Belinterexpo's plans for this year?

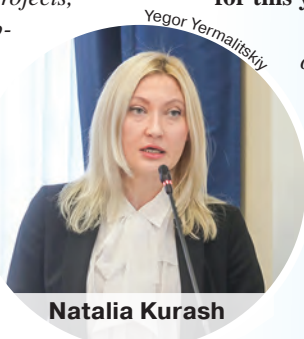
— The main calendar list of international exhibition projects is formed by specialists in advance. It is currently planned to organise about 30 exhibition forums aimed at showcasing collective locations of Belarusian enterprises and companies under the brands Made in Belarus, and Belarus. The Taste of Nature.

In the CIS countries, where our products are already well known, we envisage a wide presentation of products within the framework of collective expositions. The Russian Federation and its regions show a special interest in the event.

One of the priorities remains to be the organisation of domestic expositions at international exhibition venues in the People's Republic of China and the countries of the African region as the most open to effective bilateral interaction between business communities and enterprises.

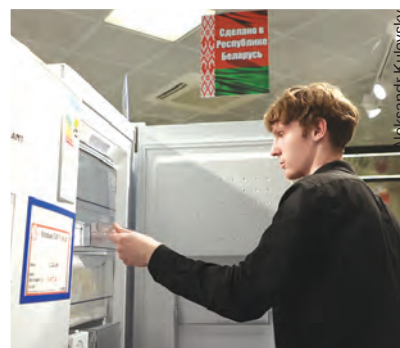
Thus, with the support of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, strategic sessions are currently being held to arrange a domestic exposition within the framework of the China International Import Expo 2024.

The calendar for 2024 includes the international exhibitions Africa's Big 7 and SAITEX, in which Belarusian enterprises have been participating with the support of Belinterexpo since 2005.



Natalia Kurash

Yegor Yermalitskiy



Aleksandr Kulevsky

For the first time, new regions have also been considered for the presentation of national expositions — at the diversified SWAiTEX trade expo in one of the most technologically advanced countries in South West Africa, the Republic of Namibia, and at the International Food and Technology Expo in Jordan.

Belarusian stands for high-quality

— Speaking in general, what economic benefit does participation in exhibitions give the company?

— The economic benefit of participation in exhibitions always means a prolonged effect that determines the subsequent activity and expansion of interaction geography of a particular enterprise with foreign partners.

The Made in Belarus logo, registered in March 2020 by Belinterexpo, has become recognisable, and attracts significantly more visitors to the Belarusian location nowadays.

As part of exhibition events, in addition to displaying products and goods, Belinterexpo organises and co-ordinates business events for Belarusian enterprises, including B2B meetings and dialogue platforms with representatives of foreign business and business circles, seminars and negotiation events.

The effectiveness of these events is evidenced by interaction geography of Belarusian enterprises in the international arena as well as by signed documents on co-operation. Thus, there were signed 435 co-operation documents in 2023, including commercial contracts, agreements,

memoranda, co-operation agreements totalling about Br1.5bn.

We also invite foreign partners to participate in well-known domestic international trade fairs, including those organised by Belinterexpo in the Republic of Belarus.

The examples of the results of the efficient bilateral communication include the participation of foreign companies in the exhibition Belagro, Prodexpo, the involvement of the Russian Federation regions, the African region and provinces of the People's Republic of China.

It is noteworthy that Belinterexpo is currently engaged in organising an exhibition for enterprises of Chinese provinces at the premises of the Great Stone Industrial Park. A roadmap for the event is being drafted and co-ordinated step by step with Chinese colleagues.

— How would you characterise the Made in Belarus brand?

— Belarusian goods and products of domestic enterprises have long been known for their quality on the world market. Within the framework of international exhibition forums, foreign partners are increasingly paying attention to the Made in Belarus logo, which symbolises high standards of goods and services.

The Made in Belarus brand forms comprehensive expositions of the non-food sector with presentations of achievements of domestic manufacturers. Based on the feedback of exhibition guests, we can confidently state that Made in Belarus is a style and high quality.

Our expositions evoke a positive response among visitors that has been formed over many years, 'Made in Belarus means made to last!'. The Made in Belarus brand represents the Republic of Belarus.



B&W Belarus & World

The Minsk Times
Thursday
April 11
2024

Welcome to reimagined castles!

Just brick fragments instead of stairs and ceilings, the sky instead of the roof... Today it is difficult to believe that Mir Castle — an architectural monument included in the UNESCO World Heritage List — once looked like that. How was the fate of Mir Castle decided? How long did it take to restore it? Which architectural monuments will be restored this year?

The difference that strikes the imagination — how Mir Castle has changed in the last 30 years



Tourists often ask for permission to touch the medieval walls

Yelizaveta Kobetskaya

By Victoria Krupenkova

In dribs and drabs

The medieval castle in Mir — a unique blend of Belarusian Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque — was taken under state protection in 1947. However, it came to restoration only in the late 1980s, when it became a branch of the State Art Museum of the BSSR, and the Government of the BSSR adopted a Decree On the Status of Mir Castle as a Historical and Cultural Value of National Significance.

In the 1980s, things finally got off the ground, but the restoration was going very slowly — not enough funds were allocated, there were not enough specialists. Nevertheless, the southwestern tower was opened to the public in 1992 and a flood of visitors poured into the castle, even despite the fact that excursions were held in the open air, in the courtyard, in any weather.

a restaurant, and two conference halls. Initially, it was envisaged that this would be not just a museum, but a multifunctional complex where visitors would be able to stay overnight, hold a business meeting.”

Aleksandr Hanko, Engineer for Repair of Equipment, Buildings and Structures of the Mir Castle Complex Museum, has been working here since the early 1990s and remembers all the stages of restoration well. According to him, “In the post-perestroika [a series of political and economic reforms that lasted from 1985 until 1991] years, the restoration work went very slowly, and sometimes stopped altogether. There was a general concept, but small details were not taken into account. In the 2000s, in contrast, we already had a detailed plan, which took into consideration absolutely everything — from the location of the walls to the pattern on the stove tiles. We managed to solve a lot of

the Cascade enterprise in the town of Lida. There is a stand near the ticket offices where all the organisations involved in the restoration of Mir Castle are listed — there are more than a hundred of them. It is safe to say that Mir [can be translated as ‘world’ or ‘peace’] was rebuilt by the whole world.”

Now Mir Castle is a multifunctional complex, where every detail is carefully thought out — from exhibition halls to a cloakroom. Although the restoration was officially completed back in 2010, the work is still ongoing. The plan for the near future is to recreate the Italian garden, as well as the Svyatopolk-Mirsky Palace located near the walls of Mir Castle, of which only a flank has been preserved.

WHAT PALACES AND CASTLES HAVE BEEN RESTORED?

- 2005 — the Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace and Park Complex in Gomel
- 2008 — the Potemkin Palace in Krichev
- 2010 — the Mir Castle Complex
- 2011 — the Palace and Park Ensemble in Nesvizh, the Ruzhany Palace Complex of Sapiega Family
- 2015 — the Drutsky-Lyubetsky Palace in Shchuchin
- 2020 — the Puslovsky Palace in Kossovo, Lida Castle



A former vault fragment



The castle looked like this in 1980

Culture, shared the details, “The protection of cultural heritage is an indispensable prerequisite for the sustainable development of the state, strengthening its prestige, including in the international community. In our country, the principles of preservation and use of historical and cultural heritage were enshrined in the Constitution of 1994.”

Currently, the State List of Historical and Cultural Values contains 5,683 objects, almost 2,000 of them are architectural monuments. Tatyana Boksha emphasised that the tasks of restoring them, and subsequently including them in the tourist and cultural turnover are being solved thanks to state programmes, as well as local investment projects. “The Castles of Belarus state programme, which operated from 2012 to 2016 and subsequently became part of the larger state programme Culture of Belarus for 2016-2020, 2021-2025, proved to be effective in attracting comprehensive attention to all castles preserved in the country. In addition, many repair and restoration works on historical and cultural values are financed by aid of the Culture and Art Support Fund of the President of the Republic of Belarus. In recent years, with the assistance of the Presidential Fund, the Puslovsky Palace and Park Ensemble in Kossovo was restored. Also, conservation with fragmentary

restoration of Krevo Castle and the former Sapiega Castle in the agricultural town of Golshany was carried out. Thanks to the support of the Head of State, the chapel-tomb of the Paskevich family in Gomel has been reconstructed, and the stable building as part of the ensemble of former Mikhail Oginsky’s Palace-Estate in the agricultural town of Zalesye has been restored.”

Although dozens of architectural heritage sites have already been commissioned and receive tourists, the volume of design and repair and restoration work is not shrinking, and even increasing. In 2022-2023, about Br189m were allocated for the implementation of these goals. What sites — palaces and castles — will be reimagined in 2024? Tatyana Boksha provided the information, “Among the most iconic sites is the Palace and Park Ensemble in the village of Zhilichi, Kirov District: this year, it is planned to complete the development of project documentation for the restoration of the park and water system, the reconstruction of the carriage house. The restoration work will also continue in the Palace Complex in the urban settlement of Ruzhany, Pruzhany District, as well as in Krevo, Golshany and Novogrudok Castles. We hope that over time they will become no less famous and in demand than renowned Mir Castle.”



Yelizaveta Kobetskaya



Castle transformation

When Belarus became an independent state, a completely different stage of restoration work began. Olga Novitskaya, Deputy Director for Scientific and Educational Work of the Mir Castle Complex Museum, restored the chronicle of events, “The most active phase of restoration took place in 2006-2010. Much more was done over those years than in all previous decades. Moreover, money was spent not only on the renovation of the building and the creation of museum exhibitions, but also on refurbishing of a hotel,

MIR CASTLE IN NUMBERS

- 39 exposition and exhibition halls
- More than 5,000 exhibits
- More than 130 full-time employees
- Over 340,000 guests visited the castle last year

complex engineering tasks, for example, to save the northeast tower, strengthen it and prevent it from collapsing. Dozens of enterprises contributed to the reconstruction of the architectural monument.”

Aleksandr Hanko noticed, “Part of the floor tiles for Mir Castle were made at Keramin, forged chandeliers were manufactured at

Non-stop restoration

In recent decades, our country has been actively restoring the architectural heritage, investing considerable resources for its preservation and maintenance. Tatyana Boksha, Head of Department for the Arrangement of Protection and Accounting of Historical and Cultural Values of the Ministry of

It is unlikely that he could seriously imagine that the time would come when the world would begin to distort the past to such an extent. Yet, the first exhibition created by the young teacher, Vasily Chaika, had a clear goal — to preserve our historical memory. Military helmets, a radiation ‘gas mask’ sewn by an old woman, scales from a general store, Soviet toys — in his museums the exhibits can be touched, and they should be. This is a good way to have an emotional impact, evoke a feeling of belonging to the past of your native land, and encourage to study it. This is the only way children will learn to respect and take care of their own, the local historian is convinced.

Vasily Chaika with 4th grade students Konstantin Konoplyanik and Kirill Belyak



This is how the history gets closer

Local history enthusiast from Narovlya Vasily Chaika opened five unique school museums

By Olga Valchenko

‘Everyone started talking about Narovlya in Kamchatka’

Once upon a time, I came to Narovlya as a young specialist. On the very first day, my colleagues advised: ‘if you want to know the Narovlya District, go to Vasily Chaika’. Everyone was brought to him: new employees, guests and relatives, representatives of official delegations. The exhibitions of local historians, opened in different schools in the district, have become a source of admiration for the Narovlya District for many.

There have always been children here. Local schoolchildren listen to the teacher’s stories in excitement and climb into the recreated dugout with burning eyes. These school museums contain the entire complex history of the district — from fragments of ceramics found near the village of Demidov, to an accordion that was in the battles of the Great Patriotic War, from a wooden ‘kalyska’ to a photograph of Ivan Shavrei, a firefighter who was on duty on the night of April 26th, 1986. Of the 28 heroes who then fought the fire at the epicentre of the Chernobyl explosion, he was the only one to survive. He recovered from the tragedy and devoted many more years to service.

Today, secondary school No. 2, where we are going, bears the name of the hero. Here is located part of the museum wealth collected by Vasily Chaika. The situation has not changed over the years — schoolchildren cluster around their mentor in admiration. Except that there are much more exhibits, and the stories of the local historian are even more interesting. First, we ask Vasily, who habitually takes his place near his favourite three-dimensional map of the Narovlya District, to tell his own story, “My home village of Teshkov no longer exists. It was evicted in 1986. I was in the army at that time — in the naval units of the border troops at the other end of a large country. And suddenly everyone in Kamchatka started talking

about Narovlya, it was so unusual that people around me were discussing my native place. I did not even have time to really get scared. I contacted the family and found out that everyone was alive. But it turned out that it was impossible to return home — there was nowhere to go back...”

Philologist with a passion for history

He left the village, but could not leave the Narovlya District for a long time. He remembered how, as a child, he voraciously read war books, especially partisan memoirs. How could you get away from these forests when you know for sure that a detachment was based behind those pine trees, and that the partisans were lying in ambush in that ravine?! He wanted to study, remember and be inspired. Then Vasily Chaika went for an education to the philological department — the nearest Mozyr Pedagogical University did not teach history separately.

After studies, Vasily was placed to his native land. He worked in the countryside and in city schools, and then devoted himself to the main passion of his life — local history. “The process used to be much simpler. There was no need for route maps or large approvals. We gathered with our students, travelled to villages, recorded the stories of local residents, and found a variety of artefacts in forests and fields. Now the processes have been regulated, and this is good from a safety point of view. Children often have no restrictions, but not everything may be climbed and not everything may be touched,” Vasily Chaika recalls.

Vasily Chaika walked around a countless number of abandoned huts people had left, sometimes leaving behind real historical relics. Someone brought the enthusiast a stack of ancient coins, someone a dug up fragment of a grenade — and the process was launched. Together with the students, they filled exposition after exposition, looked for new information, and studied archival docu-

ments. The local historian is sure, one can endlessly discover one’s native places. Vasily bends over the map,

“The Narovlya District is a partisan zone, underestimated by researchers. Starting from here, from Slovechno. The Germans were afraid to interfere: there were numerous detachments there, and famous ones at that. For some time, the formations of Kovpak, Saburov, Medvedev, Karasev, and many future Heroes of the Soviet Union were based. Our geography is like this — a forested and swampy district. To take a breath between operations and plan new ones, this is an excellent place. And the partisans played a significant role in the liberation of Narovlya.”

‘First — your native shore, then the whole country’

Here is the chest of a participant in the storming of the Winter Palace. There are fragments of a plane that crashed near Narovlya. And the note from 1986, “I think they won’t bring us back here” is like an inscription from the Brest Fortress, only about a different misfortune that then came to the Belarusian lands. Near the window, there is a whole collection of bricks. Here are the products of the factory of local landowners Gorvat, and yellow Ukrainian brick, created specifically for flooded Polesie, and fingerlings of the 16th-17th centuries. And once, at the junction of the Narovlya, Elsk and Mozyr Districts, students of a local historian found a stone with field signs, consecrated with both pagan and Christian crosses.

Chaika organised a museum of the history of the Narovlya District, a museum of folk arts and crafts, and then wanted to create something so soulful that it would resonate in the hearts of both adults and schoolchildren. This is how museums dedicated to mail, general stores and childhood appeared. For some, scales and weights, Soviet sandals and the ‘Toys for Mischief’ stand with slingshots and wooden machine guns are a reason for nostalgia, while for young people it is an ‘encyclopaedia’ of the youth of their parents and grandparents.

Vasily sees the fact that the exhibits can be touched with your hands as a good educational tool,

“It is difficult to make a child understand the importance of even the rarest artefact hidden behind thick glass and a lock. It is another thing when they can leaf through a school notebook made from a newspaper, because immediately after the war there was simply nothing to write on, sit at the desk where grandmother studied, twist the bolt of a rifle or touch the dent from German bullets on the flask of a Soviet soldier. It hits home. This is how the story gets closer. Then the child understands — all this is not just lines from a textbook, but what our ancestors had to endure.”

Vasily Chaika is keeping his plans for new exhibitions secret for now. But he confidently declares that he will not stop studying the history of his small homeland and charging his students with enthusiasm, “I have one goal — to preserve history, to make sure that our children and grandchildren do not forget it. And it all starts with such local interest. You learn what your city or village had to experience, and you become imbued with respect for everything native. First you love your native shore, then the whole country.”



Ivan Yarivanovich

Student of class 2A Raisa Rusakova





A&E Department, Royal Free Hospital, London



A long queue of patients line a corridor at Aintree Hospital in Liverpool

Future of cocoa under threat

Cocoa prices have reached record highs as a drop in the global supply leaves chocolatiers scrambling to secure the essential raw ingredient

GlobalData — a London-based data analytics and consulting company — predicts a fall in supplies of around 8 percent in the 2023-2024 season compared to the previous twelve months, with the losses primarily attributable to problems plaguing the two biggest suppliers — Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana.

The limited availability has translated into an uncertain market with rapidly increasing prices. "Over the last twelve months to the third week of March, cocoa bean prices have increased by 166 percent and 189 percent, respectively, in the New York and London cocoa bean futures markets," GlobalData agribusiness analyst Gerard Stapleton says. "Over the last eighteen months (since October 2022) the respective price increases were 221 percent and 223 percent. Before then, prices had remained relatively flat over the preceding three-and-a-half years."

Unfavourable growing conditions and crop disease on West African farms over the past year have curbed cocoa production and fuelled a parabolic rally in cocoa prices. A global cocoa deficit is expected to extend into 2023/24 since current production is insufficient to meet demand. Also, cocoa prices are seeing support from the current El Nino weather event after an El Nino event in 2016 caused a drought and a rally in cocoa prices to a 12-year high.



Over 250 deaths a week

British media report soaring waits in A&E for hospital beds have led to 268 needless deaths a week in England in 2023 — almost 14,000 a year

Almost 14,000 people died needlessly last year in England while waiting in A&E for up to 12 hours a new estimate suggests. Calculations by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) based on a large study of excess deaths and waiting times show that 268 people are likely to have died each week in 2023 because of excessive waits in emergency departments.

The estimate used a study of more than 5 million NHS patients published in the Emergency Medicine Journal in 2021, which found one excess death for every 72 patients who spent 8 to 12 hours in an A&E department. The risk of death

started to increase after five hours and got worse with longer waiting times, the study found.

NHS data for England shows more than 1.5 million patients waited 12 hours or more in major emergency departments in 2023, meaning more than a million of those were waiting for a bed.

The RCEM calculated that when looking only at patients awaiting admission, an average of 268 excess deaths are likely to have occurred each week in 2023, or 13,919. It said this was 17 fewer each week than in 2022, when a severe flu outbreak and COVID cases overwhelmed the NHS.

The RCEM said its 2023 estimates were likely to be conservative. It said patients delayed in the back of ambulances, 'of which there are thousands', were not included in the figures but were also at risk of harm.

RCEM President Dr. Adrian Boyle blamed insufficient funding and lack of hospital capacity for the deaths, "Excessively long waits continue to put patients at risk of serious harm. Small improvements in four-hour access standard performance are not meaningful when there are so many people staying more than 12 hours. Effort and money should go where the harm is greatest."



Collapse in Baltimore

Ship collisions with bridges in US

Large barge strikes road bridge in Oklahoma, forcing corps to shut down traffic — days after container ship destroyed Key Bridge in Baltimore and killed six

A barge reportedly struck a bridge over the Arkansas River, closing a highway south of Sallisaw, the Oklahoma State Patrol has said. There were no reports of injuries on the highway or the barge, and the cause of the collision remains unknown.

This comes in the aftermath of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge tragedy. Federal investigators have now recovered the black box of the ship. The 2.6km-long, four-lane Francis Scott Key Bridge over the Patapsco River in Baltimore was destroyed after Dali, a 984-foot cargo ship bound for Sri Lanka, collided against a bridge column in the early hours of March

26th. Six people died as a result of the tragedy. The Baltimore Port is the busiest in the US for car shipments, handling more than 750,000 vehicles in 2023, according to data from the Maryland Port Administration. It is also the largest US port by volume for handling farm and construction machinery, as well as agricultural products. The collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, will do significant economic damage not only to the region but the entire country, industry experts and Governor Wes Moore warn. The total damage, according to preliminary data, could exceed \$80bn.

Taiwan earthquake halts chip factories that power the global economy

The powerful earthquake that struck Taiwan temporarily paused chipmaking at factories along the island's west coast, briefly putting the tech industry on edge. And that's because of just how dependent the global economy is on semiconductor chips produced in Taiwan.

An estimated 92 percent of the world's most sophisticated chips are manufactured by one company: the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co.

A 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck the island's east coast on April 3rd — the strongest in 25 years — killing twelve and causing landslides and collapsed structures. TSMC's factories, known as chip fabs, are arrayed along the western coast of the Taiwan Strait. TSMC said initial inspections show that there are no

major issues at any of the chip sites.

Smartphones, laptops and generative AI tools like ChatGPT are powered by TSMC chips. Thus, companies like Apple, Huawei, Nvidia, Tesla, OpenAI and others depend on the chipmaker.

Analysts said even though the disruption was minimal, even a short disturbance to chip production in Taiwan could delay shipments and cost many millions of US Dollars. The exact financial toll of the quake is still being assessed.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Legally doped up

As announced on the website of Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, the law 'On regulating the circulation of hemp genus plants (cannabis) for medical, industrial purposes, scientific and scientific-technical activities to create conditions for expanding patients' access to the necessary treatment of cancer and post-traumatic stress disorders resulting from the war' was signed by President Zelenskyy. This means that it will be quite legal to 'roll a blunt' in Ukraine in six months' time.

Medical cannabis has been legalised in Ukraine. Why have they done this and what is it fraught with?

By Alena Krasovskaya

A very protracted discussion

The legalisation of marijuana for medical purposes had been debated in Ukraine for more than 10 years. The first serious document on the subject was prepared back in 2016 by former Ukrainian Minister of Health Oleh Musiy. However, the draft law did not reach the consideration stage as Musiy withdrew it at the last moment.

The current president of Ukraine promised during his election campaign to support the legalisation of medical cannabis. But what of his promise... In 2020, Zelenskyy shifted the responsibility for the solution to this issue to the people. And the people did not disappoint — the legalisation of cannabis for medical purposes was approved by 65 percent of Ukrainians surveyed in the poll.

The bill had been put up for discussion several times since then but it repeatedly failed to get the necessary number of votes in its support in the Rada, despite the fact that Mr. Zelenskyy changed his mind again and began declaring that Ukraine needed to create the strongest mental and physical rehabilitation industry in Europe, which was allegedly impossible to do without legal cannabis in this matter.

In the autumn of 2022, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, which is an active lobbyist for the adoption of the law, presented the results

of a study on the psychological state of the population. According to the government agency's estimates, 57 percent of Ukrainians surveyed are at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If you add to this number people with cancer, HIV/AIDS, epilepsy, psoriasis, multiple sclerosis and other diseases, who, according to Kiev, cannot do without a 'joint', it is likely that after the new law has entered into force, Ukraine will hide in the clouds of peculiar weed smell...

The Ministry of Health of Ukraine is confident that cannabis legalisation will bring the country closer to the European healthcare system. As if, it is only the lack of opportunity to smoke weed that distinguishes Ukrainian medicine from European one....

Currently, about 30 countries worldwide, including the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, and Rwanda, have given the green light to medical marijuana. As a rule, medical cannabis legalisation is the first step towards soft drug legalisation. That is because the weed lobby is like that — first it is argued to be absolutely necessary for those who are ill, and then — for everyone else. After all, everyone can find a reason for using drugs, including a medical one — where there is a will, there is a way.

Marijuana, heroin and others

Ukraine's long path to legalising medical cannabis cannot but surprise, though. The country has long been not only producing but also actively consuming drugs. In 2019, according to the UN, 17 clandestine drug production laboratories were dismantled in Ukraine and 79 labs — in 2020, 67 of which produced amphetamines, as contrasted with five labs in 2019. This is the highest number of disassembled labs reported in any given country.

This refers only to the number of liquidated laboratories, about which Ukraine bothered to report to the UN. One can only wonder how many of them actually were and still are in the country.

According to the State Service of Ukraine on Medicines and Drugs Control, the volume of cannabis seized from illicit trafficking in 2020 exceeded the figures of 2019 by almost 143 percent. In 2019, a total of 8.7 tonnes of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances were seized in Ukraine. Of these — 2.2 tonnes of cannabis (25 percent of the total) and 443 grammes of hashish (cannabis resin). In 2020, 6.15 tonnes of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances were seized. Of these — 5.34 tonnes of cannabis (86 percent) and 3 kilogrammes of hashish. The cannabis growth for the year is 242 percent, and hashish — more than 600 percent. And these are only drug seizure statistics.

The annual turnover of the Ukrainian cannabis market and its derivatives in 2021, according to the most conservative estimates, exceeded \$50m. It should be noted that cannabis with derivatives is the cheapest and most affordable in the drug market, while the turnover of other types of drugs — cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, mephedrone, alpha-PVP, ecstasy, spice, LSD, hallucinogenic mushrooms and others — collectively exceeded the cost of selling marijuana in Ukraine by four times. The total annual volume of the Ukrainian drug market in 2021 was about \$250m. Once again, this is according to very modest estimates.

On April 1st, Germany became the biggest EU country to legalise recreational cannabis, despite fierce objections from opposition politicians and medical associations.

Under the first step in the much-debated new law, adults over 18 are now allowed to carry 25 grammes of dried cannabis and cultivate up to three marijuana plants at home.

The changes leave Germany with some of the most liberal cannabis laws in Europe, alongside Malta and Luxembourg, which legalised recreational use in 2021 and 2023, respectively.

The widespread use of dope was also facilitated by the anti-drug legislation of Ukraine. After all, in order for a criminal case to go to court, it is required to catch the drug dealers red-handed and to prove that they wanted to make money on banned substances. It is clear that law enforcement officers did not always succeed in doing that.

It goes without saying that those who cover this dirty business have played a significant role in drug distribution in Ukraine. Among them are deputies of the Verkhovna Rada, SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] officers, policemen with ranks and shoulder straps, as well as ordinary police officers.

As a result, the annual increase in the number of drug addicts in Ukraine reached about 10 percent, and this was the highest rate in the world. Along with that, about a thousand Ukrainians die from an overdose every year, and another 120,000 die from diseases associated with the use of narcotic drugs and substances. In addition, according to experts, 260,000 HIV-infected people lived in Ukraine in 2021.

On the way to legalisation

The beginning of the special military operation (SMO) in February 2022 shook up and reformatted the Ukrainian drug market. The existing transit routes of illicit heroin trafficking from Afghanistan through the Balkans and the Caucasus to Europe, and cocaine from Latin America via the Black Sea were disrupted. Yet, the production and turnover of synthetic drugs in the country skyrocketed.

The manufacture of synthetic drugs is a simple, fast and relatively inexpensive process. It uses precursors that are quite easy to buy in Ukraine and abroad, as well as basic necessary laboratory equipment.

Therefore, after the beginning of the SMO, it turned out to be much easier to produce 'synthetics' than to grow cannabis plants, creating special conditions for them and spending time. The number of synthetic drug consumers is also increasing. Reportedly, half of the military personnel in the Ukrainian army use drugs on a regular basis. Thus, smoking marijuana is not perceived as drug abuse any more.

It is worth noting that in Europe, almost half of those who are undergoing drug addiction treatment are on... cannabis. Yet, opioids are still in the lead. In Ukraine, by the way, even people with a proven diagnosis of drug addiction are subject to conscription.

The legalisation of medical cannabis against the backdrop of the growing mayhem in Ukraine looks like an attempt by the state to snatch its piece from the billion-dollar turnover of the drug market — after all, human life has ceased to be appreciated there. Those who care solely about money are not bothered in the least whether a person dies in another meaningless military attack or from a synthetic drug overdose. The main thing is to earn money from either activity. Thus, the state might as well benefit from this. And Ukraine has already taken the first step in this direction.



Belarusians conquer the vast expanse of the Universe — our country boasts fresh ideas, modern technologies and, of course, cosmonauts

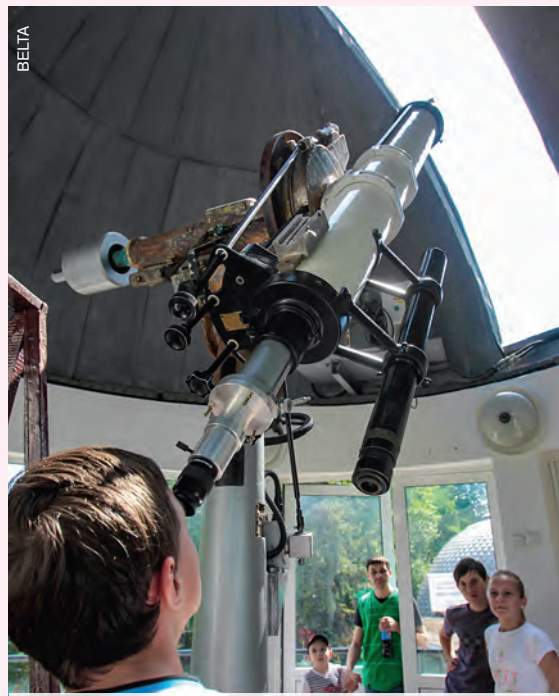
The National Library

The Belarusian ‘diamond of knowledge’ is perhaps the most alien building in Minsk. At sunset, its facets glitter with sixteen thousand colour shades. It is impressive not only in appearance but also in substance — books from the collections are delivered to readers by a robotic system. The National Library is often shown in films about the future. Thus, we can see the characters of *The Other Side of the Moon* series in the space interiors of Minsk library.

Anyone who wishes to get inside can do so by taking a guided tour or using a guest entrance ticket. The library is famous not only for its book collections, but also for its exhibition projects — several art galleries work here at the same time. The rooftop observation deck is particularly popular with visitors, offering spectacular views of the Belarusian capital.



Space places in Belarus



Visitors can watch the ISS flights in the Minsk Planetarium observatory

The Minsk Planetarium

In the very centre of the capital — Gorky Park — you can watch the dark spots on the Sun, scrutinise the craters, mountains and seas of the Moon and even cast an eye on the nearest galaxies. The observatory at the Minsk Planetarium is equipped with a refractor telescope, which visitors can use under the guidance of specialists.

If you do not want to wait for good weather to admire celestial bodies, take a ticket to a full-dome movie session — the charm of our Universe will not leave anyone indifferent. There are also workshops for children, space-themed exhibitions and lecture sessions with the participation of astronomers.

The idea for an unusual date is to give your soulmate a whole sky of stars!



The Museum of Cosmonautics

The small village of Tomashovka near Brest has Yuri Gagarin Street, where the first and so far the only country’s space-themed exposition is located. The ceilings are the colour of the sky, with models of the first Earth satellite and a smaller copy of the Mir Space Station attached to them.

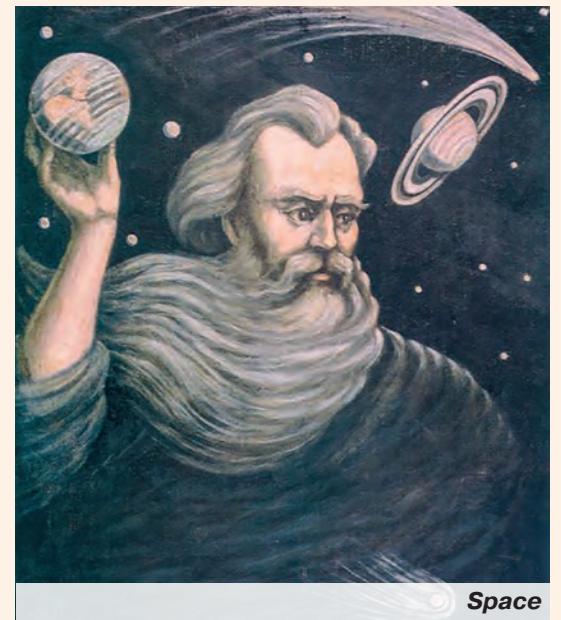
The museum features a mock-up of the first multi-person Voskhod spacecraft. Among the most valuable exhibits are a spacesuit and a shock-absorbing seat from the spacecraft. These are the personal belongings of twice Hero of the USSR cosmonaut Pyotr Klimuk, a native of this land. By the way, he headed the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre from 1991 to 2003.



Dzerzhinsk District

Why not escape to Jupiter, dropping in on Mars along the way? The villages with space names are located near Minsk, in Dzerzhinsk District. They actually border each other. Although there are only a few houses left in these settlements, tourists often come here.

Where did such unusual names come from? Initially, villages were designated simply by numbers. Already in Soviet times, according to old-timers, the only literate Red Army soldier that lived there came up with the names for the villages. Whether it is true or not is no longer important. The main thing is that funny Martian and Jupiter selfies are guaranteed!



Space

The National Art Museum

Belarus had a Leonardo da Vinci of its own — remarkable artist Yazep Drozdovich. Contemporaries perceived him as an eccentric, and only after a while his paintings could be appreciated at their true value. Drozdovich lived and worked in the first half of the 20th century. He was not limited to just contemplating the world around him, he also enjoyed studying history and astronomy. In other words, he actively travelled in the past and future through his creative work. The result is amazing portraits of famous Belarusian princes and a cycle of space canvases that marked the beginning of fantastic space theme in Belarusian art.



An Evening in the Desert on Mars

The artist did not just imagine that there might be life on Mars; instead, he boldly depicted nature, cities and even inhabitants of the distant Venus, Moon and Saturn. Big-eyed and barefoot creatures in white Belarusian style shirts greet spring and rejoice in the sun — this is how the master saw aliens in his dreams, and then embodied them in paintings. You can go on a trip to the stars at the exposition in Germanovichi (Vitebsk Region) and the National Art Museum.

Olympic sports

Belarusian athletes gained 17 more licences for the Paris 2024 Olympics

They fought and found it, they took it and did not let it go — this is how the last weekend can be described in short from the perspective of Belarusian wrestlers and weightlifters. Our athletes won seven licences at the qualification tournaments for the Paris Olympics held in Baku and Phuket. Now our athletes have 17 licences in total, but the dispute over permits for the main competition of the four-year period has not finished yet.



Iryna Kurachkina (left)

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Called to the carpet

The European Wrestling Olympic Qualification Tournament was held in Baku and became the penultimate opportunity for wrestlers to get a pass to the Games in Paris. The conditions for winning licences were simple — it was necessary to reach the competition final. The classic Greco-Roman fighters from Belarus were the first to join the battle but, alas, they were left with nothing. Having won two victories each, Hleb Makaranka and Kiryl Maskevich reached the semifinals, yet they could not get the better of their competitors at this stage. Makaranka (weight category — up to 60 kg) lost to the experienced Moldovan wrestler, Victor Ciobanu — 1:7, while Maskevich (weight category — up to 87 kg) lost to

Russian Milad Alirzaev in a stubborn fight — 1:2.

The next day, Belarusian girls came out on the carpet. The highest class was demonstrated again by one of the leaders of our national team, silver medalist of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Iryna Kurachkina, competing in the weight category up to 57 kg. She defeated Russian Olga Khoroshavtseva in the quarterfinals, and in the semifinals she celebrated the victory over Ukrainian Alina Hrushyna-Akobiiia. Four more licences were won by our freestyle wrestlers. Aryan Tsiutryn (up to 57 kg) beat Georgi Vangelov from Bulgaria in the semifinals. Silver medalist of the Tokyo Olympics Magomedkhabib Kadimagomedov (up to 74 kg) defeated a Slovakian freestyle wrestler, Taimuraz Salkazanov. Dzianis Khramiankou (up to 125



Magomedkhabib Kadimagomedov (right)



Aliaksandr Hushtyn

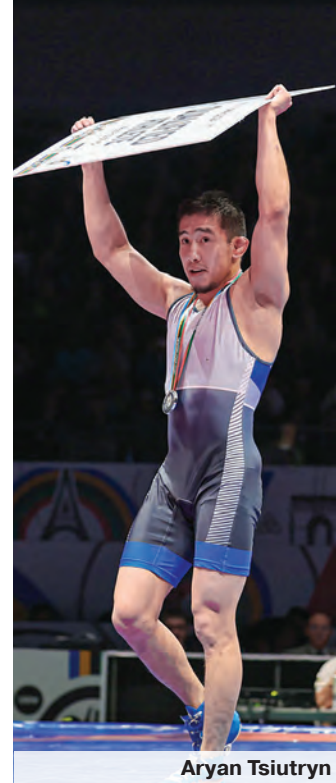
kg) secured a victory over Poland's Kamil Kociołek in a fight for an Olympic licence. Aliaksandr Hushtyn (up to 97 kg) was supposed to meet Radosław Baran but the Polish wrestler could not continue competing due to injury.

Before the European Qualification Tournament, our wrestlers had already received two licences for the Paris Olympics — Vana Kaladzinskaya and Abubakar Khaslakhanau won them at the World

Championships. Belarusians still have one more opportunity to gain passes for the Olympics — the World Olympic Qualification Tournament kicks off in May in Istanbul.

Licence weight

Belarusian weightlifters also opened the score for Olympic licences. The first pass to the Paris Olympics was won by Suzanna Volodko. Before the World Cup start in Thailand, the Belarusian athlete, competing in the weight class up to 71 kg, occupied the ninth place in the qualification ranking. At the final tournament of the Olympic selection, Suzanna lifted the total of 237 kg (108+129) in the double event. This result allowed Volodko to take the tenth place



Aryan Tsiutryn

in the competition and retain her place in the top 10 of the world ranking based on the results of five qualifying starts, which was one of the prerequisites for winning a licence. Petr Asayonak, competing in the weight up to 89 kg, performed unsuccessfully in Phuket. In three snatch attempts, he failed to fix the barbell with an initial weight of 163 kg and remained with zero in the results column. The main competitors of the Belarusian for a place in the top 10 of the qualification rating also failed to cope with snatch attempts, however Korean Yu Dong-Ju moved Petr from this position. Now Asayonak is the first reserve in his weight category.

Yauheni Tsikhantsou won an Olympic licence in the category up to 102 kg, becoming the bronze winner with the total result of 400 kg (183+217) in double event. The World Cup will end on April 11th, and on this day Eduard Ziaziulin will compete for an Olympic licence in the weight class over 109 kg.

Not like everyone else

The National Olympic Committee has recently honoured the winners and medalists of the International Sports Games Children of Primorye. At the competitions held in Vladivostok, Belarusian young athletes won 13 awards, including 5 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze medals. Figure skaters brought 3 medals to the team's piggy bank — Valeria Yezhova became the winner in women's single skating, and Elizaveta Kostyuk claimed a bronze medal. Vasil Barakhouski had no equal among young men.



Andrey Golovanov

By Tatiana Pastushenko

This is not the first success for Vasil Barakhouski at major international competitions — last year, the Belarusian figure skater became third at the Children of Asia Games.

“I am pleased with my performance at the Children of Primorye Games. I am glad I could win. Success like this adds motivation. It is very pleasant when the national anthem is played in my honour in the arena, and I want to continue in the same spirit, so that it happens again and again,” Vasil shared his emotions.

Yet, dwelling on achievements is not in the nature of the young Belarusian figure skater.

Vasil Barakhouski is 16 years old. The Minsk resident has been training under the guidance of Sergei Voronov since last year. Interestingly, his sports path began quite far from figure skating — in the legendary gym of the Rings of Glory Gymnastics Youth Sports School.

“Artistic gymnastics was the first sport I did. I practised it for seven years. There was a period, probably about six months, when I tried my hand at hockey. But, as my mother says, my character does not suit this sport. You need a rough temper to play hockey, and that is not really my thing,” told the figure skater.

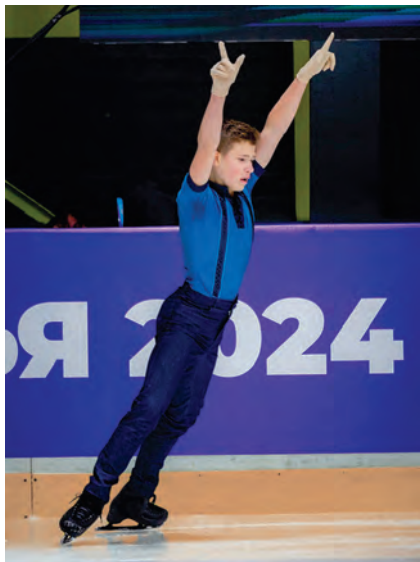
Figure skating appeared in Vasil's life at about the same time as artistic gymnastics. The athlete combined two sports over the years. “At that time, the training workload was not so heavy, so I managed to keep up with both sports. I went to gymnastics in the morning, and to figure skating in the evening,” the athlete recalled. “I did not even notice that I had already made a choice in favour of figure skating. I went on to train with Aleksandr Kazakov and finished with gymnastics — everything happened by itself.”

Vasya admitted that things began to turn out quite slowly in figure skating. He mastered triple jumps by the age

of 12, and before he had only double jumps. Despite that, the guy refused to think about switching to pair skating or ice dancing. Now the skater is practising higher complexity elements and is trying to include a quadruple toe loop in his free skating programme. According to coach Sergei Voronov, “After the Children of Primorye competition, Vasil performed in the Belarusian Cup final, then in Perm at the competition for the prizes of Russia's Honoured coach Tatiana Anatolyevna Tarasova, where he already tried ultra C elements. I think this work should continue.”

Speaking about his trainee, Sergei Voronov noted that Barakhouski is endowed with all the qualities necessary for an athlete — he is hard-working, resilient and stubborn in a good sense. Vasil has been competing in the Belarusian Figure Skating Championship for three years now. He became the silver medalist of the tournament twice, and won bronze this year.

Sergei Voronov is sure that the more competitions are available in the current situation, the better it is for athletes. “This will ensure that the guys will have more competitive experience, especially at the international level. I would like to thank the leadership of Belarus' National Olympic Committee and Ministry of Sports and Tourism for supporting the idea of such tournaments because the growth and victories of young athletes begin with them.”





Anton Stepanishchey

Photo of the week

Zasevki-2024 folk rite marked the beginning of the sowing campaign in the fields of Vitebsk Region's Lipovtsy agricultural enterprise

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



April 13th is World Rock and Roll Day. A new musical direction, which originated in the mid-50s of the 20th century, quickly

crossed the borders of the United States and spread across countries and continents. Legendary Elvis Presley, who became an idol of teenagers and young people, was among the founders of Rock-n-Roll. Today, rock music has a lot of directions — from light dance rock-n-roll to brutal aggressive grindcore.

April 14th, 1754 marks the birthday of Nikolai Rumyantsev (1754-1826), a Russian statesman, diplomat, historian, bibliophile, philanthropist. His cultural heritage belongs to both the Russian and Belarusian peoples. Count Rumyantsev was the owner of Gomel for almost 30 years and made a huge contribution to the development of the city. While living in Gomel, where he owned Gomel Palace, Rumyantsev collected handwritten and old printed books.



April 14th is Air Defence Forces Day in the Republic of Belarus, which is celebrated annually on the second Sunday of April. The history of the Belarusian Air Defence Forces as an independent branch of the armed forces goes back to the autumn of 1941. Nowadays, Belarus' Air Force and Air Defence



Forces occupy their rightful place in the Homeland security system, demonstrating a high level of coherence, professionalism, and ability to act in difficult conditions.

On April 15th, 1912, the biggest maritime disaster of the 20th century occurred — the largest passenger liner *Titanic* sank in the Atlantic Ocean after colliding with an iceberg. According to various sources, from 1,495 to 1,635 people out of 2,200 on board lost their lives as a result of the shipwreck. Dozens of books, hundreds of articles have been written and several films have been shot about the infamous British steamer.



April 15th, 1684 is the date of birth of Russian Empress Catherine I (1684-1727). She came from a Belarusian Catholic family of peasant serf Skavronsky. In 1712, she entered into a church marriage with Peter the Great. After his death, she was enthroned. During her reign, the Supreme Privy Council was established, and the Academy of Sciences was opened in St. Petersburg.



On April 15th, 1452, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) was born, an Italian artist, scientist, inventor, the universal genius of the Renaissance. An endless stream of visitors still goes to the Louvre,

where the portrait of *La Gioconda* is kept, to look at the immortal creation of the master. His *Vitruvian Man* still serves as an ideal of proportions not only of the human body, but of the Universe as a whole. He owns the inventions of a parachute, a bicycle, a prototype tank, a searchlight, a catapult.

April 16th, 1934 is the date when the USSR established the highest degree of distinction for services to the state — the honorary title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The title holder was presented with the highest civilian decoration of the USSR — the Order of Lenin, and the badge of special distinction — the Gold Star medal. For the first time, the Hero of the Soviet Union title was bestowed on Soviet pilots on April 20th, 1934 for rescuing the Chelyuskin steamer crew.



April 16th is World Voice Day. It was first held in Brazil in 1999 and acquired international status in 2002. The purpose

of the holiday is to attract the attention of medical specialists, as well as all people on Earth to the phenomenon of the human voice — a unique gift that allows people to communicate, express their emotions and feelings, and delight with the beauty of sound.



On April 16th, 1945, the Berlin Strategic Offensive Operation by the Soviet Union began, one of the last major offensives

by Soviet troops in the European Theatre of the Great Patriotic War. It lasted for 23 days — from April 16th to May 8th, 1945, and was conducted under the leadership of three Marshals of the Soviet Union — Georgy Zhukov, Konstantin Rokossovsky and Ivan Konev. On May 8th, 1945, the German Instrument of Surrender was signed, which marked the end of the Great Patriotic War.

April 17th, 1875 is the date when snooker [a type of billiards game] was invented. The victory in snooker is achieved



not so much by the skill of using a cue as by the strategy and tactics of scoring by potting multicoloured balls that have different point values. Today, this game is popular all over the world. The World Snooker Championship is held once a year.