

INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

ISSN 1991-2978



Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● ● NO. 27 (745) ● THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2018 ● WWW.SB.BY



Revived legend 'Our Grunwald'

The International Festival of Medieval Culture and Music — 'Our Grunwald' — for the tenth time gathers lovers of revived history, exciting spectacles and high-quality music in the Dudutki museum complex near Minsk, for two days. Reconstruction of the Battle of Grunwald, the largest battle of medieval Europe, which took place on July 15th, 1410, became the main event around which the entire festival was 'built'. The Battle of Grunwald changed the future of our country and the history of all Europe. It's one of the legendary pages of the Belarusian military history, worthy of pride and respect.



Customs officers at Kozlovichi checkpoint start fulfilling some functions of border guards

Contributions to budget, fighting corruption and optimisation

By Vladimir Khromov

The Head of State asked about the contribution of the State Customs Committee to budget revenues, commenting, “As far as I know, we’ve seen a substantial increase in budget revenue. It’s a number one priority.” Of the situation within customs agencies and optimisation of their structure, he asked, “Have we managed to achieve our goals? We planned some downsizing by means of merges and optimisation. However, to be frank, there isn’t much room for downsizing. It’s an effective agency that generates revenue and we’ve kept numbers small. Even when we’ve needed more personnel, we haven’t hired more people, relying on what we have.”

The State Customs Committee

transferred Br4.6 billion to the state budget in H1 2018: up by Br1.1 billion (or 33.6 percent) compared to the same period of 2017. Payments were equal to about \$2.3 billion: up by \$490.1 million (27 percent) over H1 2017. Budget revenues increased as international trade gained momentum and commodity flows intensified.

Yuri Senko explained, “There are two aspects to this situation. The customs service has optimised its operation by bringing in more automation; this has allowed us to handle greater numbers, taking a different approach, with less paperwork, as envisaged by the revised Customs Code. Meanwhile, we’ve raised commodity transit via Belarus.” The latter has risen by 3 million tonnes over the past year, through increased volume rather

than raised fees.

Efforts to counteract the import of embargoed products to Russia were also mentioned during the President’s meeting with Mr. Senko. Mr. Lukashenko asked, “Has the problem been resolved? If not, we should speak up about it since, according to the security agencies, all negative processes relating to banned imports and other matters are handled by Russian companies: sometimes major ones, with big entrepreneurs in positions of power behind them. We should speak about it, too. There’s no need to be reticent. We should talk to Russian customs services about this, while informing the Government and the President of the Russian Federation so that they can straighten things out. I say it to Mr. Putin often. However, facts should be presented.”

Alexander Lukashenko being reported on budget revenue, foreign trade promotion, law enforcement and optimisation of customs agencies by Chairman of State Customs Committee, Yuri Senko

According to the State Customs Committee, since Russia enforced trade restrictions against individual countries and commodity groups, the Belarusian customs service has carried out around 5,000 special raids, with labour costs exceeding 108,000 man-hours. Over 2,000 administrative violations have been detected and as many as thirty criminal cases have been opened, to investigate the illegal transportation of 25,000 tonnes of banned imports.

Chatting to journalists, Mr. Senko noted that the customs service and law-enforcement agencies continue monitoring the situation. “The result of their work speaks for itself. It’s absolutely incorrect to assert that Belarus is a transit state for sanctioned products. Statistics confirm this,” he stressed.

Mr. Senko also told reporters about measures being taken by the customs service ahead of the 2nd European Games and other forthcoming international sports events in Belarus. Construction works are being completed on the Urbany and Verkhny Terebezhov checkpoints, along the Latvian and Ukrainian borders, and the Head of State has recently passed a corresponding decree.

The State Customs Committee has the opportunity to take part in various international technical aid projects. “By 2021, we’ll have participated in eight international technical aid projects, with estimated funding of 15 million Euros, of which 3.5 million Euros will be Belarus’ contribution. The money will be spent on improving cross-border customs infrastructure,” noted Mr. Senko.

Status remains unchanged which pleases Ukraine maintains its observer status within Commonwealth agencies

By Oleg Bogomazov

Meeting journalists in Minsk, the Chairman of the CIS Executive Committee, Sergei Lebedev (also the CIS Executive Secretary) commented, “We really hope that Ukraine will step up its

integration-related activities.” He drew attention to the analytical materials of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, posted on the website of the CIS Executive Committee. “Clear evidence provided by scientists suggests that Ukraine’s withdrawal from the CIS

will be highly detrimental to the country’s economic interests,” he underlined.

Mr. Lebedev noted implications in the humanitarian field, saying, “Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are linked by millions of brotherly, kindred ties and friendly contacts. Therefore, Ukraine’s

withdrawal from the CIS will make travel within the CIS more difficult. We have no wish for this to happen.”

The CIS Executive Committee has received no official request from Ukraine to withdraw from the CIS, as yet, for which Mr. Lebedev emphasises he is glad.

Goals must be met

How can we achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals? How many women should be in power? How is work on the Decree on Employment Promotion coming along? The President recently discussed these matters with the Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly, Marianna Shchetkina. Last year, she was appointed as the National Co-ordinator for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

By Vasily Kharitonov

There is no alternative to the work aimed at achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, noted the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko. Speaking with Ms. Shchetkina, he stated, “Once the UN had adopted a relevant resolution, we participated in discussing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and agreed to follow the UN plan — especially as it’s in our interests. There’s no alternative in this regard; the goals are feasible.”

According to the President, each country strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. “This means that all nations around the world, including Belarus, should plan their development,” he added. Asked how work is progressing and what proposals are planned to increase effectiveness, Ms. Shchetkina replied that Belarus has been working towards this for several years. In 2020, the country’s achievements will be analysed in detail. “Belarus occupies a special place in the European region, among the CIS countries and the former Soviet Union, because it leads in organising sustainable development,” she asserted.

Ms. Shchetkina also heads the Belarusian Union of Women, which Mr. Lukashenko was eager to learn about. The President underlined, “We’ve clearly defined civil society in Belarus: it’s not that there are three oppositionists — two officials and some other organisations. Civil society is citizens. Meanwhile, the citizens of our country are mostly veterans and young people, which represent our, as I call them, Komsomol members: BRSM. These are trade unions and women’s organisations.” He noted that he has been observing the activities of the Belarusian Union of Women but wishes to learn more about its work first hand.

Discussing the Decree on Employment Promotion, which Mr. Lukashenko had previously requested the Council of the Republic supervise, he noted, “You, probably better than anyone else in the country, understand the concept behind this decree.”

The UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on September 25th, 2015. It includes a list of seventeen goals aimed at eliminating poverty, combating inequality and injustice, and addressing the challenges of climate change. Belarus has already taken a number of important steps to achieve the SDGs, approving its National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development for the period up to 2030. National architecture to achieve these goals includes the launch of the Council on Sustainable Development, the SDG Parliamentary Group and a partnership group for sustainable development.

Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals



- 1 No poverty
- 2 Zero hunger
- 3 Good health and well-being
- 4 Quality education
- 5 Gender equality
- 6 Clean water and sanitation
- 7 Affordable and clean energy
- 8 Decent work and economic growth
- 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 10 Reduced inequalities

In September 2015, the UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda-2030), including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 subordinate tasks, to be achieved by 2030

- 11 Sustainable cities and communities
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate action
- 14 Life below water
- 15 Life on land
- 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions
- 17 Partnerships to support these goals



Marianna SHCHETKINA, Deputy Chair of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly:

Belarus’ successes in achieving the SDGs
The Head of State has tasked us with acting in the interests of our state and in the interests of the whole world. The position of our country is good: we’ve created our national architecture, which should start operating in full force. Belarus is taking a leading position in organising measures to fulfil the SDGs in the European and CIS regions. We initiated and held the first International Forum of National Co-ordinators. Now, we’re supporting bilateral relations, which help the activities of parliaments and the economic sphere. The next stage will be the inclusion of governments in this work.

Improving legislation
Laws are written to serve the people. Therefore, we must allow public requests for change and be ready to respond promptly. In working to achieve the SDGs, we must analyse our legislation. If we want our country to develop and be attractive for investment, we should move forward: legislators and civil society. The Belarusian Union of Women, which I head, has joined this process, participating in projects alongside foreign partners. With the Italians, for example, we’ve bought medical equipment to allow women in territories affected by the Chernobyl ac-

cident to receive screening. We’re also looking at mobile ultrasound, to bring such screening to villages.

Agenda-2030
We have few of the problems facing other countries: inaccessibility of education and health care, and the problem of hunger. Therefore, our country can focus on food security, healthy food and the development of agriculture. We’re paying attention to the quality of products and the nutrition of children under the age of five, including use of complex vitamins. Children should be neither over nor underweight. We’re focused, too, on the nutrition of pregnant women and nursing mothers. We’re looking at how farms work and the effectiveness of the agro-industrial complex, assessing indicators adapted for our country.

Gender issues
This has to stay on the agenda. ‘Glass ceilings’ are not yet completely broken: a young woman seeking employment faces certain difficulties. These issues cannot be solved solely through administration; these are based on education, partnership within the family and personality formation. The main slogan of sustainable development is not to ignore anyone. Besides our ‘seeing’ everyone, it means that we all hold responsibility for achieving sustainable development. We must make decisions together. We want to hold a SDG national forum in January 2019 to discuss the concept, comparing goals and summing up the first results of our joint work.

Constructive proposals in open dialogue

Belarusian delegation headed by Permanent Representative of Belarus to the OSCE, Yelena Kupchina, takes part in OSCE annual security review conference

By Author

At the conference in Vienna, the head of the Belarusian delegation underlined the need for open, transparent and inclusive dialogue, as

well as constructive political will, to reduce tension and prevent armed confrontation on the European continent, while resolving conflict within the OSCE space, including in Ukraine. Mr. Kupchina



called on members to build partnership relations in the fight against transnational challenges and threats. As an example of Belarus’ contribution, the diplomat mentioned the forthcoming international high-level conference on preventing and fighting terrorism in the digital age, being hosted by Minsk on October 9th and 10th, organised jointly with the OSCE Secretariat.



Interesting experiences always bring benefit

By Alexey Fedosov

What success has Germany seen in implementing the *Industrie 4.0* strategy and how can this experience be useful to Belarusian entrepreneurs and state companies? Germany has been enjoying a fourth industrial revolution for just over a year, as the Head of the Representation of the German Economy in Belarus, Vladimir Avgustinsky, explains.

The *Industrie 4.0* strategy was declared by the German Government in 2011, at the Hannover Industrial Fair, envisaging enhanced competitiveness by integrating cyber-physical systems into factory processes (i.e. the connection of machines, machine tools and warehouses to the Internet).

Such integration promises not simply improved quality and functionality of goods but reduced prices and a significant breakthrough in management, logistics, marketing and other spheres, to raise competitiveness. Federal governments are supporting digital transformations, with Germany aiming to become the European leader in economic

Belarus has long been pursuing an innovative path, with the 'Digital Economy' being encouraged at legislative level. The successes of Belarusian IT workers are known far and wide, making a name in the world IT sphere. However, we're still keen to learn from others. The presentation of German *Industrie 4.0* some time ago at a session of the Working Party on Industrial Co-operation and Innovations (at the Representation of the German Economy in Belarus) aroused major interest.

digitisation. Using its sci-tech potential, the country is pursuing a more ambitious goal: to become a world leader in cyber-physical production systems. Its economic growth is forecast at 200-425 billion Euros by 2025, reaching 153 billion Euros by 2020.

Annual investment into German industrial digitisation is estimated at 40 billion Euros by 2020, with complete connection to the Internet by 2030. The digital agenda in Germany covers not only production and services but state management, education, culture and science.

As to whether these plans are feasible, Mr. Avgustinsky notes,

"Reality is more complex than it seems at first sight, but Germany has a clear vision for the *Industrie 4.0* project. It's not merely a machine tool with Internet access. Various tasks have been determined, with stable broadband Internet access for enterprises, including data transfer security. The Federal Government is providing preferences for investments connected with implementing the *Industrie 4.0* strategy, encouraging small and medium-sized businesses to launch cyber-physical systems, in the same way as industrial giants."

Several companies are already implementing IT systems.

Bosch has its telecommunications tracking system, in Stuttgart, allowing parts to be ordered directly, and service technicians directed, helping efficiency of production and expenditure. In Munich, software specialists are working to reproduce a full production cycle at BMW, aiming for self-organised production.

In which direction are Belarusian-German economic ties moving, in the light of *Industrie 4.0*? "Belarus can take the role of an efficient production and technological bridge between the EU and EAEU, between the West and the East," believes Mr. Avgustinsky, adding that Belarusian

enterprises can supply spare parts to famous companies wishing to localise their production in the EAEU. Moreover, as a 'long assembly line', Belarus could offer itself as a partner in the sphere of industrial co-operation, including supplying goods to the markets of Germany, EU states and other countries.

"Collaboration of well-developed sectors, using industrial and information technologies, can generate a synergetic effect," explains Mr. Avgustinsky. "The 'Made in Belarus' brand should find greater application domestically, aiding the national economy, as in Germany. Belarus is yet to enjoy a third industrial revolution so it's necessary to analyse the experience of industrially developed states, to shift towards *Industrie 4.0*. We need to avoid mistakes, to speed up the digital transformation of the industrial sector."

Belarus is keen to learn from the experience of Germany in digital transformation, seeing how most effectively to apply that knowledge within its own economy.

In context of digital economy

High-Tech Park's electronic communication system to be launched

The electronic communication system will help implement the decree 'On the Development of Digital Economy'. To ensure confidentiality of data and initial identification of a legal entity, the system

will require a username and password for residents of the Park.

"In using alternative modes of transmission of requested information in electronic form (i.e. via the Internet), each company-resident is fully responsible for confidentiality of information, its accuracy and

authenticity," HTP staff note.

One possibility for remote transmission of reporting data is provided by the system of interagency communication. This is supposed to be the key channel for data at the second stage of the electron interaction system, designed for residents of the High-Tech Park.



Key to entering financial market

Belarus to receive Chinese credit rating by summer's end

Belarus' Finance Ministry and China Chengxin International Credit Rating Co. Ltd. (CCXI) have signed an agreement to assign a credit rating to Belarus in June. Belarus will then be able to float its bonds on the financial market of China. "We hope that the rating will be assigned by summer's end," notes Belarus' Finance Minister, Vladimir

Amarin. In accordance with the agreement, CCXI will conduct an evaluation of Belarus. According to the Minister, representatives of the Chinese rating agency are set to visit Belarus in July. "The rating will be assigned afterwards, and the procedure for obtaining permission from the regulator will then be launched," explains Mr. Amarin. Belarus is set to float government bonds on the Chinese financial market at the end of the year, or in early 2019.

Nuclear power plant successfully passes stress test

Gosatomnadzor announces completion of stress tests at Belarusian nuclear power plant

By Aelita Sulzhina

Stress tests are an additional tool for ensuring nuclear and radiation safety, beyond those already laid down in mandatory IAEA technical standards. Belarus volunteered to conduct stress tests over a period of about two years and, at the end of last year, the national report was sent to the European Commission. In March, a group of experts from seventeen countries arrived, including those from non-nuclear states, and three observers from the IAEA, Russia and Iran. They questioned specialists at Gosatomnadzor and at the Belarusian NPP and visited facilities of their own choosing, before making their report. In early



View of Belarusian nuclear power plant at present

July, a joint report by the Belarusian regulator and a group of European colleagues from ENSREG was certified by the European Union.

Olga Lugovskaya, who heads the Department for Nuclear and Radiation Safety at the Emergency Ministry, comments, “After the accident at the Japanese nuclear power plant of Fukushima -- the primary cause

of which was the combination of extreme weather events (earthquakes and tsunamis) -- we had to reassess the safety of nuclear power plants, looking at their resistance to natural events and combinations thereof.” Ms. Lugovskaya notes that European safety standards formulated in 2014 were observed in launching construction of the Belarusian station. She comments that

the preparation of a national action plan for the implementation of recommendations is crucial to obtaining a license to operate the nuclear power plant.

According to Yulianna Kryuk, a departmental head at Gosatomnadzor, the Belarusian nuclear power plant has been assessed in three areas: seismic and weather safety; readiness to respond to extreme natural

challenges; and management of severe accidents. Experts have praised its melting traps, its four levels of deeply-guarded defence, and its full-scale simulator (used in training, to practise dealing with emergencies, including those handled by fire brigades).

“During the station’s construction, earthquakes of a level potentially impossible are taken into account. However, new approaches are common, now: we need to take into account events that have a very low probability,” Ms. Lugovskaya stresses. The nuclear power plant has been built to withstand a seven point earthquake, even though the maximum possible magnitude of oscillations of the Earth’s crust in the Oshmyany area is just 4.5. Floods and high water also appear in stress tests. From the point of view of flooding, the configuration of the station’s location is such that it can withstand water rising by up to 50 meters: an extremely unlikely scenario. It can also deal with fluctuations in air temperature from minus 50 to plus 50 degrees.

Truly unique cloud service

Belarus to launch data serving for Large Hadron Collider

By Alexey Fedosov

Belarus is preparing to launch the Exoscale hosting platform, which serves calculations for the Large Hadron Collider. Exoscale is one of the best European solutions for providing virtual computing facilities, belonging to A1 Telekom Austria Group (which includes the Belarusian Velcom telecom operator). The Exoscale service is a ‘cloud’ meeting European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) standards.

The Large Hadron Collider is located on the border of France and Switzerland and is served by over 3,500 virtual machines, processing about 100 terabytes of primary scientific data. About 10,000 virtual machines are to come into operation over the coming year, jointly serving a 1 petabyte ‘cloud’.

“The possibility of using Exoscale in Belarus is a new milestone in the development of cloud technologies. The



European Organisation for Nuclear Research has recognised the service as extremely reliable, with ultra-fast ability to scale capacities in 30 seconds, of any size,” comments the Head of Marketing and Sales of Cloud Services and Business at Velcom, Nikolay Melnikov.

Infrastructure at the Velcom data centre has been prepared to launch Exoscale under commercial operation. “This will be interesting to IT companies and to all who require rapid scaling of computing resources and secure data access. This cloud-based service is unrivalled yet simple, with intuitive use and easy accessibility,” concludes Mr. Melnikov.

Big but real plans for further development

Gomel’s Santex Plant plans to enter the markets of Europe, America and Canada

By Alexey Fedosov

The company implemented the investment project worth about \$3 million for making steel enamelware in 2013-2016. At present, the enterprise manufactures about 15,000 cooking pots per month. “The products — compliant with world standards and sanitary and hygienic requirements — are sold in Belarus. We intend to use the popular online retail platforms eBay and Amazon, as well as major conventional retail chains to penetrate the markets of Western Europe, America, and Canada,” said Santex’s Director Valery Malets.

In total, over \$5m has already been invested in modernising production facilities. The investor approached the company when the plant was not in a good shape. “Both



At Gomel’s Santex Plant

the building and the equipment were in need of repairs and retooling. We’ve managed to restore the unique presses, which are unique in Belarus. New equipment was bought. The enamelling technology was changed to improve the quality of products. A lot has been done to change the outlook of the merchandise,” noted Mr. Malets.

Moreover, in addition to conventional products — cookware and sanitary ware — Santex now produces new types of goods. For instance,

the plant makes devices designed to restrict vehicle access to specific locations for the Russian Interior Ministry. The enterprise has also started making enamelled decorations for walls, which can be used in tunnels or in metro. Sample batches have already been shipped to Moscow metro. The list of new products also includes containers for solid waste, enamelled reservoirs for storing animal farm waste. Santex is now developing impact attenuators for road repair services.

Pressing issues: visa-free travel, negotiations with the EU and losing your passport...

Questions to Belarusian Foreign Ministry on Facebook

By Alexander Pimenov

The Foreign Ministry recently arranged a consular day on Facebook, answering questions from Belarusian tourists and foreigners.

Simplifying the visa regime with the European Union

“Work continues but it’s not a one-way process. Will is required on both sides to ensure movement forward. Our approach is obvious, as expressed in the unilateral decision to introduce a five-day visa-free regime for EU citizens,” states the Foreign Ministry.

No details of talks have been disclosed but our European partners have put forward a number of conditions for Belarusian citizens, including the need to submit documents exclusively through visa centres. The Foreign Ministry is working jointly with EU partners to resolve these problematic issues, for which there seems no logical explanation.

When will a visa-free regime be introduced between Belarus and Thailand?

Work is underway. “The draft agree-



Foreign tourists at Minsk National Airport

ment proposed by us is under consideration in Bangkok, and we’re waiting for an answer,” states the Foreign Ministry. The visa-free regime between our countries currently only applies to holders of diplomatic and service passports.

On difficulties relating to consular issues in Jordan

The Foreign Ministry is striving to improve Belarusian citizens’ access to consular services and to provide them with consular assistance. “We’re in the final stages prior to launching an office of the new honorary consul of the Republic of Belarus in Jordan and hope that work with citizens of

Belarus will be conducted at a more competent level,” the department notes.

When does Belarus plan to extend its visa-free regime for foreigners to ten days?

“This issue is topical,” the Foreign Ministry states, explaining that a relevant draft decree is in its final stages, regarding extension of stay for foreign citizens arriving via Minsk National Airport. Over recent years, Belarus has been keen to liberalise the visa regime. “In the long term, we may operate visa-free entry through land checkpoints; it may depend on further conversion of ground checkpoints and in-

creasing their number.”

How will the visa-free regime operate in Belarus during the 2nd European Games?

As during the World Hockey Championship in 2014, those holding match tickets will be allowed entry to Belarus without a visa, assuming they hold valid documents for entry and insurance. “Visa-free entry will be introduced ten days before the start of the competition and will operate for ten days after its end. An available ticket will allow passing through the Russian Federation without visas,” the Foreign Ministry explains.

In combative atmosphere

By Oleg Bogomazov

Belarusian military to participate in International Army Games

The Belarusian military have already arrived in China to take part in the 2018 International Army Games, at a military camp built specifically for the event. Senior Colonel Shi Lei, the Chief Military Commissar of the Training Centre of the PLA Ground Forces, welcomed the Belarusian delegation, conveying greetings from the Chief of the International Army Games’ organising committee, Lieutenant-General Zhou Songhe. Shi Lei noted that such events offer an excellent chance for bolstering friendship and mutual understanding between countries.

The International Army Games 2018 includes 28 events. The Belarusian military plan to take part in 16 of them — including ‘Sniper Frontier’, ‘Community Warrior’, and ‘Tank Biathlon’. Colonel Alexander Pogulyailo noted that it will be



Participants of 2018 International Army Games

the first time the Belarusian team will take part in the ‘Suvorov Attack’ competition in China. “The Training Centre offers all the conditions for us to properly prepare for the competition, train and become stronger in anticipation of the event,” he said.

The International Army Games — 2018 are scheduled to take place in seven countries — Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, and Russia — from July 28th to August 11th. Eighteen events of the Games 2018 will be hosted by Russia, while Iran will host a competition for combat divers: ‘Depth’. In Azerbaijan, the ‘Sea Cup’ event — a competition of crews of naval surface ships — will be held. Kazakhstan will host competitions among artillery units, military communication specialists, and operators of unmanned aerial vehicles. Armenia will host the ‘Community Warrior’ event. Meanwhile, ‘Tank Biathlon’, ‘Aviadarts’, and ‘Suvorov Attack’

will be the most spectacular. The ‘Sniper Frontier’ event is scheduled to take place in the exercise area of the 38th Independent Airborne Brigade near Brest, Belarus from July 28th to August 11th.

Convenient logistics provided with hospitable subtext

By Svetlana Savelieva

Almost 33,000 fans travel through Belarus for 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia

Over 11,000 fans recently travelled via Minsk National Airport, explains Anton Bychkovsky, of the State Border Committee of Belarus. “This route was the most popular after railway transport, which carried almost 17,000 fans through Belarus; about 13,500 of these took advantage of the additional Moscow-Kaliningrad trains launched specifically for the championship.” Personal cars are thought to have carried another 5,000 people and fifty-eight people with Fan ID crossed the border on foot.

“As was expected, Russians were the most active football fans. Around 11,000 Russian citizens crossed the Belarusian border, followed by the Poles as the second largest group; approximately 5,300 citizens of Poland travelled to Russia through Belarus,” Mr. Bychkovsky adds. In addition, over 1,500 Argentines and more than 1,000 Americans crossed the Belarusian border. Mexicans were fourth, with 949 fans, and Brazil rounded the top five, with 942 travellers heading to the match. “We saw no serious problems from fans crossing the border during the FIFA World Cup,” Mr. Bychkovsky asserts.



Belarusians are smart, resourceful and cheerful



Exhibition of satirical drawings by Oleg Karpovich held at Minsk's House of Cinema

By Alexander Pimenov

The *Belarusians. Art-Positive* project unites thirty works previously printed in *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper. "The theme that runs through all the pictures is Belarus and the world. The idea is that Belarusians are smart, resourceful and cheerful," the artist explains. He adds that the



Oleg Karpovich has many works to demonstrate at the exhibition

exhibition is very easy to understand since pictures printed in the newspaper have a func-

tion and need to be unambiguous. "It shouldn't be necessary to have to ponder on what the

artist wanted to say. Satirical graphics aim is to ensure that a person understands everything

immediately. An entire topic is portrayed in one picture," Oleg notes.

The Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Artists, Rygor Sitnitsa, says that Mr. Karpovich's works are filled with an optimism sometimes lacking in daily life. The Editor-in-Chief of *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper, Dmitry Zhuk, states that the artist doesn't ridicule, rather highlighting positive aspects and good traits. Mr. Karpovich gives a glimpse of the inner mood of politicians, scientists and artists, conveyed fondly.

Oleg Karpovich is a famous Belarusian artist, a painter and a columnist for *SB. Belarus Segodnya* newspaper. In addition to cartoons and caricatures, he paints and sculpts. He has taken part in exhibitions of graphics and international poster shows in Germany, Poland, Russia and Ethiopia, also illustrating over a hundred volumes for Belarusian publishing houses.

Among top thirty repositories worldwide

By Svetlana Yemelyanovich

According to the **Transparent Ranking of Repositories**, the **Belarusian State University's electronic library** is ranked 27th globally, closing the top three leading university repositories, behind the **Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil)** and the **University of Kyoto (Japan)**

The Transparent Ranking of Repositories takes into account the number of documents in open access and the degree of their indexing by full-text scientific publications, such as Google Scholar. In this way, the level of openness of academic resources is assessed, as well as their integration into the world information space.

The Transparent Ranking



of Repositories covers a thousand digital repositories located at higher education institutions and research centres all over the world. China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Japan Science and Technology Infor-

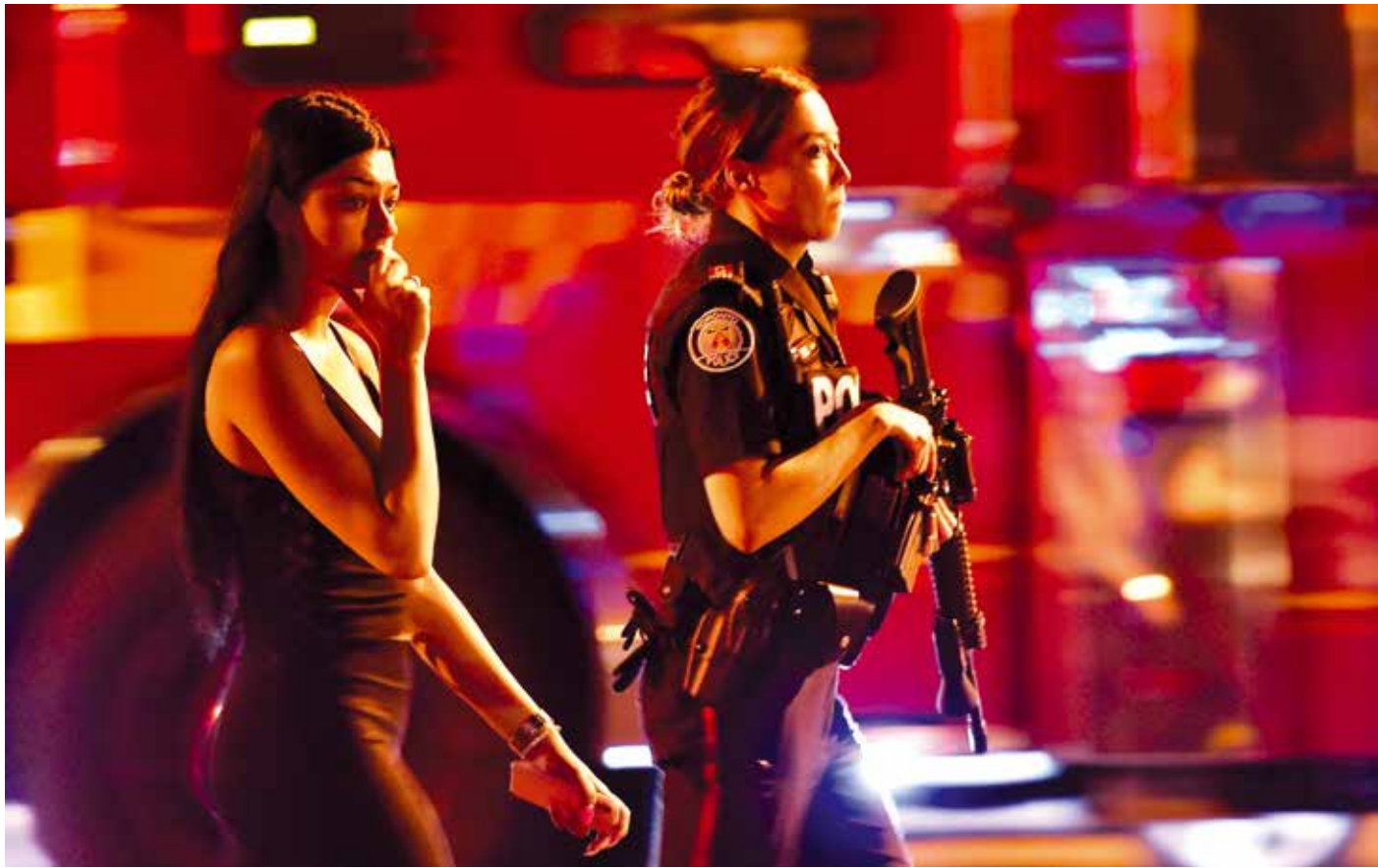
mation Aggregator Electronic J-STAGE, Europe PubMed Central, and Arxiv.org lead worldwide.

The rating of repositories' open access is the initiative of the cybermetrics lab of the

Spanish National Research Council (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas — CSIC). The aim of the rating is to maintain open access for scientific publications and educational materials in electronic

form. With the help of the rating, its creators hope to motivate researchers to publish the results of their scientific activity online, making it available to colleagues and interested people worldwide.

The BSU's fundamental library was the first in Belarus to launch an institutional repository, making publicly available full texts of scientific publications, as well as educational and methodical materials released by scientists and university lecturers. Moreover, the BSU library has launched the transformation of its documents into electronic format, enabling them to become available to the whole scientific community. At present, the BSU electronic library boasts more than 130,000 publications by scientists and university lecturers.



Gunman dead after shooting fourteen, killing one, in Toronto

Fourteen people, including a young girl, were shot near downtown Toronto, with one person killed and the gunman also dead

The young girl was in a critical condition, Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders said. “We are looking at all possible motives... and not closing any doors,” he noted at the site of the shooting.

Paramedics, fire-fighters and police converged on the

shooting in Toronto’s east end, which has many popular restaurants, cafes and shops. Police said the gunman had used a handgun.

Reports of gunfire in the city’s Greektown neighbourhood began at 10 pm local time on July 22nd. Witnesses said

they heard 25 gunshots.

Toronto is grappling with a sharp rise in gun violence this year. Deaths from gun violence in the city jumped 53 percent to 26 so far in 2018 from the same period last year, police data showed, with the number of shootings rising 13 percent.

Toronto deployed about 200 police officers from July 20th in response to the recent spate in shootings, which city officials have blamed on gang violence.

Toronto Mayor John Tory said that the city has a gun problem and guns were too readily available to too many people.

Tesla's battery maker suspends cobalt supplier amid sanctions concern

Panasonic said it was unable to determine how much of the cobalt used in batteries it makes for Tesla cars comes from Cuba, a country subject to US sanctions, and that it had suspended relations with a Canadian supplier as a result of its concerns

The Japanese electronics giant, the exclusive supplier of batteries to Tesla, made the comments about whether the batteries contained Cuban cobalt.

Two sources familiar with the matter said that some of the cobalt that Panasonic uses to make Tesla's batteries is mined in Cuba by Canadian supplier Sherritt International.

Panasonic said it was unable to tell how much cobalt sourced from Cuba via its Canadian supplier ended up in the batteries it provided to the US market 'due to co-mingling of sources by its suppliers in several phases of manufacturing processes'.

"Panasonic has chosen to suspend its relationship with its Canadian supplier," a spokeswoman said, without naming the supplier. She added that Panasonic had used cobalt from the Canadian supplier for batteries used in the Tesla Model S and Model X, but only after February this year.



Wildfires rage in Arctic Circle as Sweden calls EU for help

Forest fires are currently devastating Sweden and the risk of further forest fires is 'extremely high', the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) has confirmed

After requesting emergency help from the EU, Swedish authorities received firefighting planes and helicopters from Italy and Norway and were expecting two special aircraft from France to arrive.

Multiple villages across

Sweden were evacuated overnight, with others at risk of being engulfed by flames.

Residents in the counties of Gavleborg, Jamtland and Dalarna were asked to evacuate. Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) said that the fire in Jamtland was 'the largest and spreading the fastest'. The fires also affected Lapland, Sweden's northernmost region, which lies within the Arctic Circle.

Five wildfires are burning

in the forests outside the town of Jokkmokk, a popular tourist destination in the winter.

According to SOS Alarm, there are currently more than 60 fires across the country of different sizes. Rescue forces, the National Guard and helicopters are battling the fires.

“The drought has led to a large amount of simultaneous fires in the forests and land,” state emergency services operator SOS Alarm said in a statement.

Hundreds of migrants rescued off Spain recently

Spain's Maritime Rescue Service picked up more than 300 migrants in 15 boats last week in the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alboran Sea

The asylum seekers are from sub-Saharan and North Africa and were trying to reach the Spanish coast. About a third



of those rescued were taken to the port of Tarifa.

The Spanish coast guard said close to 800 migrants were rescued at sea. Spain is quickly becoming the main entry point for asylum seekers trying to reach Europe from the North Africa.

Since the start of the year, some 18,000 migrants have arrived in Spain by sea. Nearly 800 were picked up by rescue boats on June 29th alone. As

Italy works to bar humanitarian ships from docking at its ports, aid organisations are asking European authorities for a coordinated response to the ongoing migrant crisis.

On July 20th, Libya rejected an EU proposal to set up asylum processing centres in the country. The route from Libya to Italy continues to be the most deadly, with one in six migrants setting off from Libya dying or going missing at sea.

Faithful companions of man and most popular images in literature and art

An impressively large statue of a prince's horse, by famous Belarusian sculptor Sergey Bondarenko, greets visitors at the entrance to the National Art Museum. It's perhaps the largest exhibit of the joint Polish-Belarusian exhibition: *Equos. Koń. Horse*.

By Veniamin Mikheev

Minsk and guests of the capital have been flocking to view over two hundred paintings, sketches and sculptures from the collections of the Museum of Southern Podlasie (Biała Podlaska, Poland) and the Belarusian National Art Museum, which will be on show all through the summer. The joint initiative has been organised with the support of the Embassy of Poland to Belarus and the Polish Institute in Minsk.

Great Pushkin respectfully called this noble and beautiful animal a 'faithful, patient comrade'. Since ancient times, horses have been not only man's faithful companions but one of the most popular subjects of literature and art. Artists have always been attracted by their graceful form, intelligence and loyalty, speed, courage and endurance.

The role of the horse is well-known in the history of civilisation. Thanks to the domestication of the animal, people have settled vast territories and made use of wheeled transport. Horses have been essential to conquests and agriculture and have been the 'engine of trade'. It's no surprise that horses, which have occupied an important place in the mythology and fine arts of many ancient peoples, remain of interest today, in the hippical genre (from the Greek 'hippos'—horse).

The *Equos. Koń. Horse* exhibition presents works not only by



Polish and Belarusian artists but by other European masters from the 17th-21st century, exploring the theme through paintings, sculptures, sketches and printed graphics, as well as decorative-and-applied arts. The show demonstrates how masters of various periods and artistic schools interpreted the image of the horse, including in battle scenes and landscapes, through

a variety of media and styles.

There are several thematic sections, showing the many interpretations of the theme, and various artistic solutions, by masters of different styles and generations. Besides presenting works by artists united in their love for these noble animals, the exhibition celebrates the collection of the Museum of Southern Podlasie and continues the tradition of close and fruitful co-operation between the National Art Museum of Belarus, the Embassy of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Belarus and the Polish Institute in Minsk.

Over recent years, the museum has hosted various exhibitions with Polish partners. In 2013, there was the *18th-20th Century Polish Ceramics* exhibition, drawn from the collection of the Upper Silesian Museum in Bytom. This was followed by several in 2017, including *Masters of Polish Drawing*, organised with the Podlaskie Museum in Białystok and the Suwalki District Museum. In that same year, the National Museum in Krakow brought *Napoleon Orda. Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Country* to the National Art Museum of Belarus. In addition, *Polish Landscapes: Franciszek Rydzard Mazurek: Paintings and The Radziwills:*

Fate of the Country and Family were showcased. The latter was also exhibited at Gomel's Palace and Park Ensemble and at the Museum of Southern Podlasie.

The museum in Biała Podlaska was founded in 1924 but, unfortunately, didn't survive World War II. Only in 1966 did the

ince, the museum received the status of District Museum, with departments in ethnography, history, art, science and education. In 1995, it gained an archaeology department. After liquidation of the Biała Podlaska Province, in 1998, the museum was renamed the Museum of Southern Podlasie.



Regional Museum open in Biała Podlaska, dedicated to celebrations of the 1,000th anniversary of the Polish state. Ten years later, when Biała Podlaska became the centre of the Biała Podlaska Prov-

At present, the art department of the Museum of Southern Podlasie holds about three thousand exhibits, including one of largest and most valuable collections of iconography in Poland, dating from the 17th-early 20th century (mostly by Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian masters). The second largest, but no less significant, collection within the museum is its *Horses, Riders, Teams of 19th-20th Century Polish Art*, featuring paintings and sketches by famous Polish artists, all depicting horses.

Some of the museum's pieces are now on display in Minsk, in the *Quos. Koń. Horse* show, delighting visitors to the National Art Museum.



Salomé's first dance

More than a hundred years have passed since Richard Strauss wrote his *Salomé* opera, based on Oscar Wilde's tragedy of the same title. In 1905, the premiere in Dresden was hooted off the stage, and received a hostile reception in Russia. The Synod (the highest governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church between 1721 and 1918) banned the performance from being staged; only in 1924 did the situation change, when the title appeared in the repertoire of the Mariinsky Theatre.

By Victoria Popova

The dramatic story of a young girl's love for a prophet and its staggering outcome (John the Baptist's head on a silver dish) has inspired artists through the ages, but passions still run high around this biblical plot. Though the most powerful musical work of Strauss has gained a strong foothold on the world's theatrical stages, a delicate approach is still required. For example, a year ago, a new performance of *Salomé*, directed by Marat Gatsalov, was presented at the Mariinsky Theatre, but in a 'sensitive' interpretation, using installations to portray certain aspects.

The director of the forthcoming premiere in Minsk, Mikhail Pandzhavidze, asked for the blessing of the Patriarchal Exarch of all Belarus, Pavel, before his staging of *Salomé*, which he sees as a parallel for the decline of Europe.

Do you sympathise with Salomé?

I understand her tragedy. 'Salomé' tells of a pure and virginal woman who acts in a monstrous fashion.

Influenced by circumstances...

The circumstances are very strange: she was seduced by John's sermon. Salomé wasn't immoral. John was the first person she fell in love with; before him, she avoided men, saying she abhorred them. She understood the degree of sin surrounding her, including her own mother's questionable engagement to her husband's brother (like Hamlet). But, she fell in love with John! Why? Because he was different. I think that John also, initially, fell in love with Salomé, for being different. Strangled, ruined



Mikhail Pandzhavidze at his producer's desk

and beaten, she was the only pure person but had no idea of how to handle John's rejection of her.

How do you explain the 'puritan gloss' which has persecuted this opera for more

than a century?

There was a time when 'La Traviata' failed, for the same reason: the courtesan was presented as the major character. 'Carmen' was also hooted off the stage, because it followed the love of a smuggler and a woman of loose morals, making it the subject of art; the audience was outraged. People also said nothing good when Gorky wrote his 'On the Bottom'.

Anyone writing something topical was spurned but we now live in different times. However, political conflict makes people afraid of encroachment on social institutes, such as the Church, so we addressed the Patriarchal Exarch of all Belarus for his support in our staging of the performance. There's nothing surprising in this. Metropolitan Pavel asked me to present

my vision for this performance. I explained that there would be nothing bestial or anticlerical. Its neurasthenic context creates an atmosphere of emotional decadence but Wilde's play is deeply religious. It accurately reflects everything of which we speak. 'Salomé' represents the history of the Western and Christian civilisations, showing how all things perish.

Everything began when the Ten Commandments were rejected. What are these Ten Commandments? They prevent us from descending to the baser instincts of the animals. Moses chose the most abandoned of all nations: slaves sodden in evil habits, dirt, disease and debauchery. He took that nation into the desert, where they passed forty years, being transformed into free people learning the value of the Ten Commandments. They conquered the Mediterranean coast in God's name.

Look at modern life in Europe and you'll see that commandments are continually violated. We say 'thou shalt not kill' but permit euthanasia, and 'thou shalt not commit adultery'. We allow same-sex marriages and we advocate 'honour thy father and thy mother' but, often, on reaching adulthood, children feel that they owe nothing to anyone (admittedly parents sometimes behave in similar fashion). All Ten Commandments are rejected. Our theatre is attempting to educate, in a moral fashion.

Finally, let's speak about 20th century music. Sometimes, you're criticised for failing to tackle modern composers.

Undoubtedly, 'Salomé' expands the musical palette of our audience. The theatre is setting a high bar, as 'Salomé' includes incredibly beautiful music, while being a huge challenge for our artistes and orchestra. It's interesting for us to attempt it.



Salomé. Aubrey Beardsley's illustration for Oscar Wilde's play

Saving Beraginya

On this bright holiday of folk art, grandmothers wear clothes woven and sewn more than a century ago, while young people appear in costumes created in present days but inspired by ancient motifs. Meanwhile, musical instruments from peasant times provide the melodies accompanying the four-day festival.

By Natalia Vakulich

Folk groups from the CIS and abroad arrived for the celebration, which included over than thirty events, from the Rudobelie Ball and Rudobelie Kupala Night, to the Rudobelie Kirmash craft market. The festival ended with a parade

along central Sovetskaya Street.

"There's no other such festival in Europe as *Beraginya*," notes the organiser, scientific and art leader of the project, Nikolay Kozenko. "Modern performers tend to learn each song, and rely on arrangement by professional composers, while *Beraginya* uses a completely dif-

ferent approach: traditional folk culture is passed down from the older to the younger generation orally."

After twenty years, this colourful festival has become the pride of Oktyabrsky and the whole Gomel Region, impressing guests with its many features.



Young participants of the festival

Not simple home match for Minsk *Dynamo* footballers

Soligorsk *Shakhtyor* and Minsk *Dynamo* through to next round

Two Belarusian football clubs successfully reach second qualification round of Europa League

By Svetlana Suhorukova

Soligorsk *Shakhtyor* has played Welsh *Connah's Quay* at home, winning 2:0. In the 25th minute, Elis Bakaj realised a penalty and, 10 minutes before the final whistle, Maxim Bordachev scored the second goal.

Not long ago, the Soligorsk team won an away match with a score of 3:1. In the second round, Sergey Tashuev's trainees will face Polish *Lech* (Poznan).

Minsk *Dynamo* welcomed Irish *Derry City* at the revamped stadium, losing 1:2. Nevertheless, they are through to the sec-

ond round (owing to the away match which they won with the score of 2:0), where they'll meet the Slovak team of *Dunajska Streda*.

Another representative of Belarus in the Europa League is the holder of the Belarus Cup, Brest *Dynamo*, which is straight

through to the 2nd round, meeting Greek *Atromitos* at home on July 26th, before playing in Athens on August 2nd.

In the main club tournament of the Europa League, *BATE* Borisov also begins in the 2nd round, facing Finnish *HJK Helsinki*.

Maradona lands in Brest

By Sergey Kanashits

The best footballer of the 20th century, legendary and inimitable Diego Armando Maradona, arrived in Brest by private plane on Monday, July 16th. A joker and magician, instilling awe and fear among those he faced on the pitch, he was attending a press conference and was keen to watch a match between Brest *Dynamo* and Soligorsk *Shakhtyor* (within the 16th round of the national championship).

Mr. Maradona concluded a contract with *Dynamo* in mid-May, to chair the club. He'll be guiding strategic development and liaising with structural subdivisions, including the children's *Dynamo-Brest Academy*. Diego has a huge fan base so his involvement is a great coup for Belarusian football. It's sure to inspire many young people to show interest in the game. Meanwhile, a new stadium complex is planned for Brest, featur-



Autograph of Diego Maradona to young football fans

ing the Maradona Football Academy, a business centre, a hotel and several training pitches. Speaking at his press conference, which gathered over a hundred journalists, from Belarus and abroad, he declared his love for his new club, the city and fans.

The evening match was a sell-out. Everyone tried their best not to fall in

the dirt in front of the 'legend', especially as he's their new chief. The Brest football sphere is exciting, almost resembling a fairy tale!

P.S. Unfortunately, Brest *Dynamo* lost to Soligorsk *Shakhtyor* 1:3 in the home match (of the 16th round of the national championship).

Our fellow countryman in NHL

Belarusian forward Yegor Sharangovich signs three-year entry level contract with NHL's New Jersey Devils

The Belarusian will start the new season with the AHL *Binghamton Devils*, the NHL's *New Jersey Devils* farm club. Yegor Sharangovich was drafted 141st in the NHL Draft 2018 to the *New Jersey Devils*. Last season, the Belarusian forward played forty-seven games for *Dinamo* Minsk in the Continental Hockey League, tallying 12 (4+8) points.

Ahead of rivals by single point

Belarus' Olga Silkina and Irina Prosentsova claim gold at European Modern Pentathlon Championship, hosted by Hungary

The relay witnessed a tense struggle between the final six teams, performing in laser shooting and cross-country skiing. Everything was decided at the fourth shooting range, where Russian Yekaterina Khuraskina (who was leading) lost time, allowing Belarusian Olga Silkina and Irina Prosentsova to overtake. With 1,372 points, they were only one point ahead of Eilidh Prise and Kate Coleman Lenehan of Ireland (1,371) who took second place. Bronze went to Russian Svetlana Lebedeva and Yekaterina Khuraskina (1,371) who lost to the Irish at the finish line. Last year, the European Modern Pentathlon Championship was hosted by the Republican Centre for Olympic Training of Equestrian Sports and Horse Breeding, at Belarusian Ratomka. Gold then went to Belarusian Anastasia Prokopovich, while the relay bronze was captured by our Yekaterina Orel and Tatiana Khaldoba.

DIRECT SPEECH

Diego MARADONA:

I thank *Dynamo* football club for this proposal. I immediately saw that it was a serious project. I had no doubts. If I finish my career in Brest, I'll probably come to live there. Cold? Weather doesn't scare me. As a child, I had no footwear and walked through the snow bare footed. I'm not afraid of it.

It's a great honour for me to have been invited to Brest. Everyone lives where they can gain employment and where they can leave something for future generations. I'm happy to stay here. I can easily live in Belarus. I hope our project will be useful for Belarusian and world football, helping it move forward. I want to do this jointly with the Brest club. We'll try to make a team of which all Belarus is proud.

Festival of the week

A close-up portrait of a young woman with a bright smile, wearing traditional white and red embroidered clothing. She is holding two cherries in her hands, one near each eye. Her headpiece is white with red embroidery and features a large cherry motif. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

Anastasia Stotnik among participants of Cherry Festival in Glubokoe

The Minsk Times is taking orders for the publishing of advertisements and PR pieces for companies and representatives of organisations, as well as for their goods and services.