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INTERNATIONAL

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The Dvina Golden Ring of Vitebsk cultural and historical complex hosted Christmas festivities: *Vitebsk Kalyady*, or *Kalyady in Zadvinie*

## Holiday atmosphere

Orthodox believers celebrated one of the most important Christian holidays: Christmas. The festive mood gradually moved from churches to city streets where massed Christmas festivities were held: adults and children sang carols and danced in a circle.



# Significantly important forum



The 6th Belarusian People's Congress to be held on February 11th-12th

By Dmitry Kryat

These dates were announced by the President at the end of the last year, during a meeting on the preparation for the forum. At the same time, Aleksandr Lukashenko placed special emphasis on the key themes of the event, "All the innovations that we will offer must serve a single purpose: to benefit our people and their well-being. There should be no decisions to please foreign 'advisers' and their local adherents."

The Head of State drew attention to the importance of the upcoming meeting, "It's the pivotal forum of the next five years. However, since the impact can only be seen from a distance, after a while, maybe we will understand that this is the most important forum in the history of our country due to our current circumstances. It'll be a forum that will determine how we will all live for the next five years and along which path society will develop."

The Belarusian People's Congress is an established tradition in modern Belarus which defines the main milestones in the

## ON THE CONVOCATION OF THE 6TH BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S CONGRESS

On December 28th, 2020, the President signed Decree No. 492 on the convocation of the 6th Belarusian People's Congress, the Presidential press service has reported.

In accordance with Article 37 of the Constitution of Belarus and in order to implement the constitutional right of citizens to participate in the discussion of issues of state and public life of the country, the President decided to convene the 6th Belarusian People's Congress in Minsk on February 11th-12th, 2021. Its participants will discuss the main provisions of the programme of socio-economic development of Belarus for 2021-2025 and the directions of the country's socio-political development.

The total number of participants and invited persons to the Congress amounts to 2,700 attendees. Participants of the forum from the regions and Minsk are elected taking into account the norms of representation by district and city councils of deputies and the most numerous public associations. At the same time, no more than 310 people from each region will take part, and no more than 370 citizens from Minsk.

The list of those invited is formed by the Republican Organising Committee for the Preparation and Holding of the 6th Belarusian People's Congress from among the heads of state bodies and organisations, representatives of local councils of deputies, public associations, mass media, staff of diplomatic missions and consular offices of foreign states in Belarus, representatives of Belarusian diasporas and international and foreign organisations in the Republic.

will be able to ensure economic growth in the most difficult external conditions and maintain its model of a social state, need to be assessed. Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised, "We are well aware that the geopolitical and economic confrontation will increase, while the pandemic will not disappear any time in the near future."

The people and their immediate needs have always been and remain the focus of state policy. As the President noted, it's necessary to build both the concepts of the main report and its discussion around these ideas. "Our vision and proposals to the participants of the meeting should be specific and reflect the real problems and aspirations of the people. We do not need out-of-touch theories. We need an answer to the existing demands of our society. At the same time, we should study the widest range of opinions and judgments of our citizens," he added.

The President noted that a broad public dialogue was organised while preparing for the meeting. The main directions of the country's development are discussed regionally, and in labour collectives and higher educational establishments. Community liaison offices operate countrywide; here, anyone can express their opinion and even make suggestions on these issues. Everyone can speak out today.

"This is the pluralism of opinions necessary for making the right management decisions and building an effective balance between the interests of the state and society," the Head of State emphasised.



Viktor Liskovich, Natalia Kochanova, Archpriest Fyodor Povny at 5th Belarusian People's Congress in Minsk's Palace of the Republic

development of our country and society. The election of its delegates began on December 29th, 2020. On the eve of the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko once again voiced his intentions to the delegates, "These should be people representing all strata and groups of the population, and the whole Belarusian nation. This has always been the case with us, beginning with the first meeting in 1996 when we held our 1st Belarusian People's Congress."

It was the first congress that proved to be an effective tool for consolidating society. In this regard, obviously, continuity is especially important, as the President noted. He added, "It was not easy then either, you may remember it well:

the confrontations were escalating, but we managed to unite people and direct our productivity for the country's benefit. Generally speaking, the 1st Belarusian People's Congress aimed to save the situation then, to protect the country; this is its historical role and essence. This institutional body of direct people's rule played an important role."

*"Modern times are far from simple, perhaps they are even more ambiguous. Belarus has never experienced such external pressure. This is the peculiarity of the current era and the present Belarusian People's Congress."*

The President drew attention to the fact that one of the key tasks in the upcoming forum is to summarise the results of the past five years, speaking openly about what has been achieved, what failed and why. The programme of socio-economic development for the coming five years is to be discussed, while the mechanisms, through which Belarus



The website of the 6th Belarusian People's Congress has been launched: [vsebel.by](http://vsebel.by). It offers various informative materials from various sources concerning the preparations for the Congress and its holding, BelTA has announced. These include analytical articles and news articles from printed mass media, photo and video stories from TV channels, digital mass media and the Belarusian Telegraph Agency.

## ONLINE MEETING

The website is updated in real time. Its materials are organised into news, photos, videos, and history. The section dedicated to the history of the forum offers detailed descriptions of the previous congresses held in 1996-2016, and their results.

An interactive component is part of the website: in the 'Feedback' section, users can see complete information about opening hours and the addresses of community liaison offices in every region, and also submit their proposals on matters they are interested in. To do this, they need to choose their region and fill in the submission form.

## Serving a common goal

It is important to touch on all spheres of life, so delegates are chosen for the forum from a variety of places: managers and workers of enterprises, scientists, cultural figures and other representatives of the national economy. The best of the best are nominated for the Congress — those who are really able to realise the decisions important for the country, who are determined to work creatively for the sake of their future and the future of the city and the country.

310 representatives are expected to come from each region and 370 will represent Minsk. The delegates won't attend the Congress 'empty-handed': much work has been done to collect proposals that were voiced by Belarusians at dialogue platforms and community liaison offices. Initiatives have affected all areas of people's lives.

"In total, the organising committee has already received 17,000 proposals which are now being summarised. I believe that

A significant time for the future of the country is approaching: the People's Congress is held every five years, being one of the most important forms of people power. In February, 2,700 people will talk, discuss and seek solutions in areas that concern each of us.

following the election of delegates and their work in the regions, on places, we'll also receive an impressive list of proposals that will ultimately enable us to form the image of the Belarus of the future," said the Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Belarus, Andrei Kuntsevich, in an interview to the *Contours* programme of the ONT TV channel.

Andrei Kuntsevich believes that the Belarusian People's Congress should respond to modern requests of society.

"These are not only the requests of those who live in the capital. I wholeheartedly believe that only strong regions make our country truly strong. Therefore I consider that regional development should become a priority of the new five-year period. Of course, much is already being done in this direction but we need to move on — searching for new growth points," he added.

Based on materials of [sb.by](http://sb.by) and [belta.by](http://belta.by)



## Holy holiday

**The Orthodox church has celebrated one of the main Christian holidays: Christmas. On Christmas morning, the President lit a candle at Minsk's Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Aleksandr Lukashenko spoke about the past year and the new 2021, called for unity and asked the parishioners to take care of one another, as well as their families and friends.**

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that Belarus and its people do not need wars or disagreements, saying, "Life is difficult now, but I believe that people, living in Belarus at least, understand the policies that I have to implement. Truthfully, I'm a realist. I know that the situation is being examined from a distance and understanding comes through comparison. It's not been invented by me: it's a general principle."

The Head of State also stressed that there are constant information wars, and a fight to capture the minds of the people has arisen. "Any incident, even this pandemic, can be used to their advantage. However, I warned you at the beginning of last year: this pandemic will pass, but where will we be as a result? I warned you that the power players would try to take advantage of these times. The situation is not easy. We need to unite in order to not lose what belongs to us," he said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also acknowledged the events that took place the day before in the United States, "Who would have thought that tonight [our time zone] they would storm the Capitol, a place they believe to be the centre of world democracy. Who would have thought it? Nobody. Although there is some justice in this as regards Trump, it's never a good thing. It's tragic when people riot, and lives are lost."

The President stressed, "We must all come together and bring reason to those who don't understand this today. We don't need wars or disputes, but they will retaliate, you'll see. They will give us a hard time. No one will allow us free reign in the centre of Europe. It's a fight. God forbid it turns into a bloody war on our land, where our issues will not be resolved, where our interests will not be represented. We should not allow this. This is the key. I ask of you only one thing: to understand."

Aleksandr Lukashenko also noted that inter-religious and inter-ethnic peace has been preserved in Belarus. "There is enough space for everyone. That's how it should be. We must preserve this community. We set a global example, for all countries. There is nowhere with such peace and tranquillity as in Belarus. We have no inter-ethnic and inter-religious fights. This must be preserved," the Head of State concluded.

# Warm meeting

President of Belarus holds meeting with President of the International Ice Hockey Federation Rene Fasel

The meeting began with a discussion of the most pressing topic: the pandemic response. It's well-known that both Aleksandr Lukashenko and Rene Fasel have had the coronavirus.

"I want to assure you as the IIHF President and as a friend of Belarus that there will be no uncertain issues on any front in Belarus: neither coronavirus, nor in terms of political security or the physical security of the people who live here and those who come as guests," Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed. "Protesters and other dissatisfied people don't storm government offices and capitols here. We have a perfectly normal situation in terms of democratic processes. This is the main reason why some politicians in Europe are discontent with Belarus. They accuse me of defending my

country and people, but this is why the people elected me. I have an obligation to ensure public, internal and external security of people and the state."

*Aleksandr Lukashenko said that Belarus is ready to hold the championship at any time. All sports and tourism infrastructure was prepared for this a long time ago.*

"Answering the main question about my attitude to all the recent developments around the IIHF World Championship in Belarus, I will tell you frankly: I will be ok with any development of the situation. If the International Ice Hockey Federation succeeds in fending off unfair pressure, then we will host the championship. If Latvia refuses to co-host, then Belarus will hold the IIHF World Championship



Rene Fasel

on its own and it will be the best World Championship in history. I think you know this for sure. If the International Ice Hockey Federation cannot cope with the pressure from some political circles in individual countries, there will be no World Championship in Belarus. Everything depends on you today," the Head of State said.

"I agree with your recent statements: sport should unite nations rather than divide them. Sports and politics shouldn't intermix, as much as possible. We will act in this manner," the President of Belarus asserted.

## Unusual-format interview

Aleksandr Lukashenko interviewed by well-known Russian journalist Nailya Asker-Zade

**Interviews with the Belarusian Head of State are always interesting and resonate with the audience but the recent one has stood out for its unusual format: Aleksandr Lukashenko answered questions while driving a car, on an ice rink, in the Palace of Independence, while treating the journalist to hot pancakes in his home environment... The conversation consequently turned out to be not only emotional but also very wide-ranging. A bonus was an interview with Nikolai, Aleksandr Lukashenko's youngest son. In her social media account, the journalist described the young man as an unspoilt, humble and thoughtful person.**

**'Behind the wheel starting from 8th year at school'**

The conversation began in a car that Aleksandr Lukashenko was driving. "Shall we go? You are not afraid, are you?" the Head of State asked.

The President said that he drives a car regularly, including to his workout sessions. "I joke sometimes that I was born in a vehicle. My first driving experience was a tractor," he noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko admitted that he has been driving a vehicle from the 8th year at school. He drove a tractor first, then a GAZ-51. Accordingly, his driving experience is about twice as long as his Presidential period.

**'President's work schedule is a hamster wheel'**

"It really is like that, I'm not kidding. Sometimes you have to work round the clock in very intense periods (to be honest, there are not so many of them in Presidential life)," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

As for his working day, Aleksandr Lukashenko said he gets up very early. It's been a habit since childhood. The Head of State said that he works out mainly outdoors and prefers playing sports. Aleksandr Lukashenko invited Nailya Asker-Zade to a hockey practice. He added that he goes out on the ice about three times a week. Specially for the journalist, Aleksandr Lukashenko held a master class.

"Do Putin and you play in the same team or different teams?" the interviewer wondered.

"We don't play in different teams. Now we also take Kolya with us. The three of us — Kolya, he and I — play together. Kolya is more involved with the skating part, and we help him," Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

"Are you one team in politics?" the journalist continued asking.

"In politics, basically we are. We have been made to play in one team for good," the President responded.

**'Pick up the receiver and make a call. Try ruling the country'**

The journalist was given a unique opportunity — to visit Aleksandr Lukashenko's personal office and sit in the President's chair. Nailya Asker-Zade took an interest in the telephones the Head of State uses to talk to Belarusian officials and negotiate with foreign leaders. "Please, take a seat. Run the country. But the responsibility will also rest with you!" the Head of State noted.

"Do you use this phone to talk to Vladimir Putin, too?" the

journalist inquired.

"Yes, take the receiver, dial the number, and you'll get connected. Just pick up the receiver and make a call. Come on, don't be shy. Try ruling the country," Aleksandr Lukashenko joked.

"No-no-no, this is such a huge responsibility, no way," Nailya Asker-Zade answered.

"You want to talk to Putin — let's call Putin," the Belarusian President proposed but, in the end, they decided not to disturb the Russian leader.

**Hot pancakes from the oven and a conversation with the youngest son**

The interview was recorded in a cordial, homely New Year's atmosphere. A fired up oven, Belarusian food, a decorated New Year tree — all this prompted questions about family and children rather than current political topics.

Pancakes were the main treat. However, Aleksandr Lukashenko had pancakes in the evening only because he had a guest. Otherwise, he wouldn't eat them at this time, as he still tries to eat healthily.

Nikolai, the youngest son of Aleksandr Lukashenko, also joined the dinner. It was a good occasion to ask him in

more detail about his relationship with his father, whom he calls exclusively 'dad', provided that there are no people around.

"Do you have parent-child relationship problems in your family?" the interviewer asked.

"Probably, like all other families. One cannot call it a competition, but fathers and sons have a certain stance, a child grows up and starts developing certain ambitions, a different point of view; emotions can run very high," Aleksandr Lukashenko noted.

In turn, Nikolai stressed that conflict situations do arise, but they are effectively resolved. Politics is also discussed at home.

Nikolai has no desire to do politics professionally. "Not a single son. None of the three. Even the elder ones," Aleksandr Lukashenko added.

Nikolai has not yet decided what he would like to do because 'things change so quickly'. The young man speaks English well and began to learn Spanish. He has time to communicate with his peers. Naturally, the President's youngest son is also interested in the international political agenda.

Hockey and workout are among the hobbies of the young man. Nikolai is also into music: he's been taking piano lessons for seven years now.



Aleksandr Lukashenko invites Nailya Asker-Zade to a hockey practice

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

# New capital in our country

## 13 new companies last year alone: Great Stone's top managers sum up the results of their progress in 2020



By Ilya Kryzhevich

### Residents increased their revenue

Mr. Yaroshenko, as the National Statistical Committee's data shows, the resident-companies managed to increase revenues last year. What areas demonstrated growth?

Despite the difficult epidemiological situation, residents of the Great Stone Industrial Park continued without hesitation and started new financial and economic ventures in accordance with their plans. At present, 27 companies are involved in production, research and development, and are currently providing services.

Last year, Swiss company Hess launched the production of carriages for contactless electric trams while the FAST MAZ company was established with the involvement of two flagships from the Belarusian and Chinese industries, Shaanxi FAST GEAR Corporation and the Minsk Automobile Plant, now producing 6-, 9-, 12- and 16-speed transmissions for cargo and passenger transport vehicles.

Two more residents, whose activities are related to the production of medical products, promptly started manufacturing respiratory circuits, masks and personal protective equipment made of innovative melt blown materials. In addition, since 2020, innovative computers and unmanned aerial vehicles have been produced at the Park.

We hope Zumlion will start production in the near future; at the first stage, it will make truck cranes with a lifting capacity of 25 and 60 tonnes based on the MAZ chassis.

### How do you describe the work related to attracting new residents in 2020?

Sadly, not all plans to attract new enterprises were implemented. In 2020, 13 new companies joined the Great Stone Park and now 68 residents from 14 countries are registered here; the volume of their declared investments exceeds \$1.2bn. Among them, I'd like to mention two major projects. It is a subsidiary of the Chinese Sinomach Corporation with a beacon project to create a zone of sci-tech co-operations and innovative developments. Its construction was launched last May and, at the initial stage, scientific research relating to areas such as electronics and new materials is planned. In turn, the Eurasian Railway Gateway will implement a project for the construction of a multimodal railway terminal which will unite

In 2020, the work of the Great Stone Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park, as well as the entire global economy, was accompanied by challenges and the need to make many difficult decisions. The pandemic affected almost all areas of business: sales and production dropped in many sectors, while investment activity slowed down drastically. However, the 'pearl' of the Silk Road managed to adapt to a new global paradigm: it was developing and attracting new projects, while the Park's residents were manufacturing and selling their products. Time has come to look at the results and Aleksandr Yaroshenko, the Head of the Great Stone's Administration, described to us what the Park managed to achieve last year.

major players in the field of logistics from four countries: German Duisburger Hafen, China Merchants Group (a shareholder and a resident of the Park), the Belarusian Railway and Swiss Hupac Intermodal.

The activity of some of the new residents is related to new now popular sphere of medical production. It's developing more actively in



the Great Stone, and a cluster of such companies are already being formed. Last year, it was replenished with five residents from China, Belarus, and the Czech Republic. Projects from the two countries deal with the production of electric vehicles; this area is now witnessing new prospects with the commissioning of the Belarusian nuclear power plant.

### Contrary to the pandemic

Can we say that, during a difficult 2020, investment activity slowed down and it became more difficult to attract residents?

In my opinion, the pandemic primarily affected personal communication which is very important for us and our future investors. The number of delegations that we welcomed last year decreased by almost six times compared to 2019. The major events which were planned in the Park, such as the Forum

on Regional Co-operation and Development, were postponed. Of course, we actively used digital technologies and organised online presentations of the Park for various countries and regions. In total, representatives of the Park took part in more than 20 of these events, which brought together almost a thousand participants from 40 countries of the world.

### The second stage is ahead

What are the Great Stone's plans for 2021?

This year, we intend to focus on the second stage of the Park's development. One of the most important projects will be a multimodal railway terminal; construction will start next year. The terminal will cover about 800,000 square metres, and when it reaches its capacity, the volume of cargo transportation will be 180,000 20-foot equivalents. Currently, from the country's budget, a railway line is being built that will connect the future terminal with the Republican railway.

The number of working residents will increase. It is expected that, by late 2021, 40 companies will conduct their financial and economic activities at the Park. For example, residents from China will start production of innovative energy-efficient radiators made of cast aluminium and steel, as well as electric bicycles, while a Belarusian company will

### EXPERT VIEW

**Kirill Koroteev, First Deputy Director General of Industrial Park Development Company CJSC:**

In 2020, we completed the creation of the infrastructure of the first stage of the Park's construction. The coronavirus did not prevent this since Belarusian construction materials were primarily used, with minimal imported equipment. There were some delays in the process, but we generally met the deadlines.

As for commercial real estate, an innovation centre was put into operation here with a small delay. COVID-19 slowed construction as the facility was built with China's technical and economic assistance involving Chinese contractors, equipment and materials. Production real estate was commissioned in line with the schedule. We've started to actively develop the second quarter of our own ready-made real estate, 'B' quarter; and recently we've put another building into operation on its land. By now, four out of 13 of these buildings are ready. This area is in demand, and construction continues on schedule.

Speaking about the creation of the 5G infrastructure, I'd like to note that the companies responsible for this project, Beltelecom and Huawei, have already installed the necessary equipment and it is currently in testing mode. The process is progressing according to plan, and the promotion of certain services that are possible on the industrial Internet platform has begun.

launch the highly automated production of tempered glass for various types of land transport. Two companies will also launch medical production aimed at diagnosing diseases.

The opening of the Chinese-Belarusian Centre for Co-operation in the Field of Transformation of Sci-Tech Achievements is to promote the attraction of start-ups to the Industrial Park. It is expected that several projects will be accepted for initial preparations before the end of this year.

Also, after the epidemiological situation improves, we'll begin construction of another residential building for 173 apartments and the second electrical substation for 110kV.

# New testing strategy

CIS unique testing ground for transport vehicles launched in Minsk



By Igor Svetlov

The new testing ground, a radio-anechoic chamber for industrial equipment and vehicles, including large-scale ones, opened at the site of the Belarusian State Institute of Standardisation and Certification (BelGISS). It aims to run electromagnetic tests, determining the levels of radiated radio interference and resistance to radio interference.

The operation of this new radio-anechoic chamber will enable Belarus to conduct full testing and research into automotive and mechanical engineering products, starting from 2021. These tests are necessary

to confirm compliance with the mandatory requirements for access to the market of the EAEU and other countries, as well as to improve the technical level of domestic equipment with a significant reduction in time and financial costs.

*As the State Committee for Standardisation of the Republic of Belarus notes, the radio-anechoic chamber is unique in its possibilities not only for the country but also for the entire post-Soviet area. It was created in accordance with the 2020 state investment programme.*

At the testing ground, all the necessary equipment is prepared for testing vehicles of all categories with a total weight of up to 20 tonnes and overall dimensions of 20x4x4m. It is possible to carry out measurements at a distance of 1, 3 and 10m.

The new chamber will enable Belarusian manufacturers to quickly develop competitive equipment and open access to various markets. Its advantages will be especially appreciated by manufacturers of vehicles and large-scale industrial equipment, which until now had to take samples for testing abroad, which would be more expensive. Now it can be



Vladimir Shapak

done in Belarus, and the saved money and time can be spent on new developments and the mastering of modern models of competitive products. Also

among the most important advantages is the recognition of the tests carried out when delivering products to the European market.

## Supplies in due course

Spain accepts export of supplies from Belarusian Steel Works this year



A batch of rolled metal products for the automobile engineering industry has been sent to a customer in Biscay. This year's first export batch of BMZ products was made in section rolling mill No.2. The division also shipped a batch of rebars to Israel early in the new year. "As for Spain, BMZ began regular deliveries of rolled structurals in 2020 and the company intends to continue working on

this market in 2021," explains Aleksandr Olesik, the Belarusian Steel Works' spokesman.

According to the spokesman, in 2020, BMZ exported nearly 2m tonnes of metal products to 53 countries. The company exported over 180,000 tonnes of rolled structurals with diameters varying from 20mm to 160mm. The growth rate exceeded 125 percent compared to 2019.

The public joint-stock com-

pany BMZ, the Management Company of Belarusian Metallurgical Company (BMC) Holding, is a high-tech Belarusian metallurgical enterprise. It comprises a chain of shops and four manufacturing divisions connected by one technological chain. The divisions focus on steel smelting, mill products, pipe products and hardware items. BMZ exports over 80 percent of its output annually.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Aleksandr Lukashenko signed decree to declare 2021 the Year of People's Unity

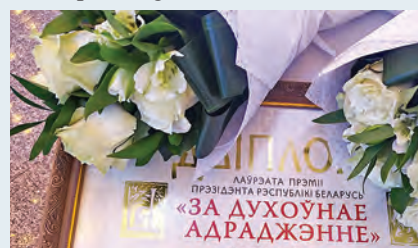


The decision was made to consolidate society and unite the Belarusian people on the basis of the values of the country's sovereignty and independence, the press service of the Head of State said.

"All of us, who see the world differently, should realise that what we have in common is our country in the centre of Europe. This is what we have. And in order to preserve this land for our children, let's turn a new page and start to write a new chapter for independent Belarus together. Let's make 2021 the Year of People's Unity," said the President during his New Year's address to the Belarusian people. "Let's live on our wits and create a legacy with our own hands. We are a smart, tolerant and forward-thinking nation. We can cherish, value and love like no one else! And if we want to be a success, we will be!"

### The President of Belarus bestows 'For Spiritual Revival' awards and special prizes to cultural and art workers

Aleksandr Lukashenko signed the corresponding decrees. At the end of



2020, five prizes 'For Spiritual Revival' were awarded to work and authors' collectives, as well as representatives of religious and educational organisations for their proactive work in the humanitarian sphere, which contributes to the preservation and augmentation of the national cultural heritage, instilling love for the Fatherland in young people and strengthening spiritual values.

Ten special prizes from the President were awarded to cultural and art workers for their outstanding achievements in the field of musical art, museum and library science, journalism, television, folk and amateur art, the training and education of creative youth.

### Belarusian Ilya Shimanovich named European Male Swimmer of 2020

According to the authoritative portal swimswam.com, Ilya Shimanovich overtook Adam Peaty, Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri and Russian Kliment Kolesnikov in the race for the title of best swimmer in Europe in 2020. The primary achievement of the 26-year-old



Belarusian swimmer last year was a new world record of 55.34 seconds in the 100m breaststroke. This happened on December 19th in Brest during Belarus' Open Swimming Championship, when Ilya Shimanovich surpassed the achievement of UK's Adam Peaty by 0.07 seconds, who was the leader in this record. Furthermore, last year, the Belarusian athlete set two European records in a 25m pool and updated more than a dozen national records in different swimming areas.

### Every Belarusian will have a personal electronic account

This becomes effective from January 1st, 2021. It will be the easiest and most effective way to receive government services and administrative procedures electronically.

The personal electronic account will be a web interface for the citizens' access to the NAIS (nationwide automated information system) and will be created on the basis of personal data from the population register for a unified portal



of electronic services (EPES). The electronic account will be activated from the moment the user first logs on to it with rigorous authentication measures across the unified portal of e-services.

Data synchronised in real time will be available to the user online.



By Valentina Kozlovich

Anna is not a designer, but an engineer at Brestenergo RUE's department of operation and repair of buildings and structures. "How many fir trees have been cut to make this dress?" I

ask her, and she replies, "None! Before selling trees in the nursery, their lower twigs are cut off; I use them for my work. Also, the photo of the snow-covered trees was made at our company's site. It was very cold but was great fun."

# Dresses for any season

Anna Volos, from Brest, makes 'living' dresses for every season: from fir twigs, maple leaves, lilac and chamomile

**A hand-made Christmas tree is definitely the best choice and Anna Volos' hand-sewn beauties would undoubtedly be the centre of attention at any Christmas or New Year party. Her dress, embroidered with fir twigs and decorated with traditional poinsettia, simply amazes the imagination! Unfortunately, she is reluctant to promote her original work.**

It took Anna about three hours to design her fir tree dress and she admits that the task was not easy: the pine needles are sharp, and each twig had to be sewn in several places. The base was a dress made of burlap sewn by Anna at school, for a young fashion designer contest. "The fir tree dress later inspired me to make more outfits for other seasons. Spring is lilac, summer is chamomile and autumn is maple," she says.

To collect the lilacs, Anna went to the forts of the Brest Fortress in May: where there are many lilac bushes. Together with her friends, she carefully cut off the flowers and put them in boxes. The lilacs were then attached to a skirt-frame with a glue gun.

Making a chamomile dress was more of a challenge as almost 2,500 flowers had to be glued to a special skirt. She found the vast quantities of chamomile not far from Brest, in the village of Kleiniki. "On social media, I saw photos of horses grazing in

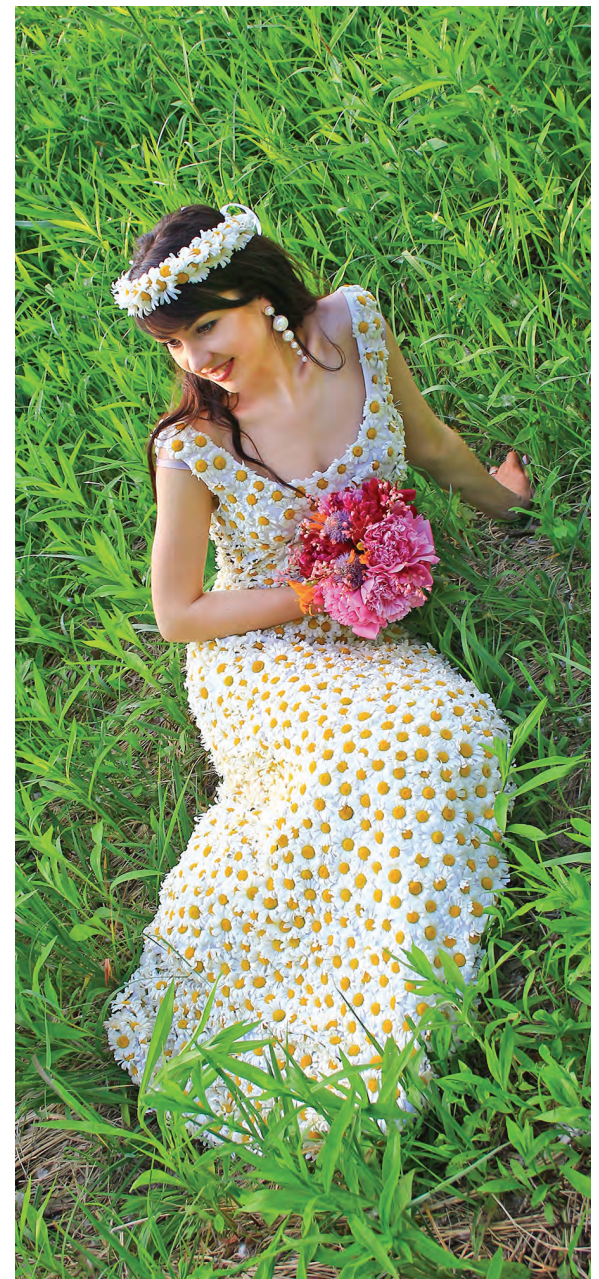
a chamomile meadow. According to the location tag, I identified the place and went there immediately with my friends since the meadow could be mowed at any time," Anna explains.

Also, as the artist admits, her autumn dress turned out to be the simplest. There are no problems with finding maple leaves in autumn as there are so many of them, all bright and beautiful. The leaves were sewn to the wedding dress of her friend.

A drawback of such natural dresses is that they don't live long — for a day, no more. During this time, a photo session needs to be organised in a suitable location. Anna wore her fir tree dress more than once however, as the needles, unlike chamomiles, last longer.

Anna's dream is to embroider a dress with roses and she has already planted a bush with unusual flowers at her parent's summer cottage. It will grow, bloom and the designer can start work.

Photo courtesy of Anna Volos





planetab Belarus.by

# Take the bull by the horns

By Irina Sergeeva

Those were, in fact, aurochs that determined the official birth of the reserve: 1409. The Polish King Jagiello owned the land around the forest at that time. He issued a decree according to which hunting for large animals was allowed only to him and the Lithuanian Duke Vytautas.

The right to kill the giants by only a narrow group of persons helped the aurochs survive for six centuries but, by the early 20th century, the European ‘king of animals’ was threatened with extinction. The last representative of wild bulls was killed in the forest a hundred years ago: in 1921.

It took much effort to restore the auroch population and settle free herds in the pushcha. After Belarus gained its independence, the ancient forest received the status of a national park. At present, the auroch is on the Red Book list and it’s depicted on the coats of arms of the Brest and Grodno regions.

In 2020, there were 604 aurochs in Belovezhskaya Pushcha — which is not bad but the figure actually exceeds the optimal one by 1.7 times. The ancient forest has not enough food for so many animals.

In total, 8,000 aurochs live in the world, with 80 percent of them registered in four countries: 2,200 — in Poland, 2,000 — in Belarus, some in Russia and Germany. About 20 percent live around the world in zoos and are kept by private owners.

A leading researcher at the National Park, Aleksei Bunevich, is the best auroch expert in the CIS. He says this overpopulation will not lead to anything good, while people will suffer. “Males have a disease related to the inability to reproduce. We thought genes or injuries were the reason but it turned out that not only the depleted gene pool is to blame, but also a high density of animals’ population and an imbalance of food,” explains the expert.

**2021 is the year of the Bull under the Eastern calendar and, in the Slavic folk tradition, the bull is a revered animal as it stands for strength, hard work, wisdom and good breeding. Our MT reporter visited the Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park to learn more about aurochs — the last representatives of wild bulls in Europe, to investigate the character of these giants and find out why they cannot live without man. Another goal was to find out what the year of the Bull will bring to us.**

Aurochs have been resettled throughout the forest — at greater distances. That was the correct procedure: at present, the disease doesn’t pose a threat to the population. The diet has also been balanced. Every year, hundreds of hectares are sown with grain and root crops in Belovezhskaya Pushcha and, in winter, salt, hay and beet are taken to the feeding grounds. Aurochs also like ‘visiting’ the neighbouring rapeseed fields. As residents of the villages bordering the pushcha in the Brest Region’s Kamenets and Pruzhany districts admit, they might bang on pots to scare them away but the animals are not afraid. “Only when journalists come in helicopters do they run away. However, the aurochs are not afraid of us or photographers,” the villagers note.

Speaking of whether people should be afraid of aurochs, Mr. Bunevich notes that it’s dangerous to approach animals when there are babies in the herd, “A female animal with a newly born calf should be passed by — though I have even managed to get them to feed from my hand. Before attacking, the auroch always gives warning of its intentions: it shakes its head, hits the ground with its hoof and twists its tail. If you see something like this, back it up fast.”

It is also necessary to avoid wounded aurochs. Several years ago, the scientist went to the Ivatsevichi District where an auroch had been hit by a car. “We arrived but the animal had already gone into the forest. We followed it by its tracks — to find it on the ground. I began to photograph it but suddenly the auroch stood up and rushed at me. I was running around the tree, and the animal was trying to catch me up,” the man recalls

that day in detail. “I fell down, and the auroch tried to gore me with its horns. I put my feet between the horns and pushed as hard as I could. When my companions, frozen in fear, began to shout, the animal went away.”

“If you wave a red rag in front of an auroch, will it react the same way as a bull?” I ask and Mr. Bunevich replies with a smile, “Nobody has ever tried to do such a stupid thing.”

As for how a wild bull differs from a domestic animal, the expert comments that the auroch is heavier and longer than the bull. Its hair on the front part of the body is long and there’s a hump in front on the back. A few years ago, an auroch from the forest joined a herd of cows near Brest. Aleksei recalls this situation with humour, “We received calls from farms and journalists. We were tracking

the animal’s movement online through the Kobrin District, also inventing a name for it: Misha. The auroch was young and friendly. There were cases when an adult male auroch — who joined a herd of livestock — fatally injured some cows but we happily managed to catch Misha and take it to an enclosure at the National Park.”

It’s impossible to avoid asking Aleksei Bunevich and his colleagues from the scientific department what they — as true auroch experts — think about the new year of the Bull. “Everyone will be able to do what they have long dreamed of in 2021,” they say. “Many people would certainly like to visit Belovezhskaya Pushcha. Let this wish come true. We are waiting for guests who will definitely see aurochs in the wild as part of the Photo-Safari ecotour.”

**A portrait of Belovezhskaya Pushcha’s auroch compiled by Aleksei Bunevich:**

*The auroch is the host of Belovezhskaya Pushcha. It is afraid of nobody, except the poacher. The animal is wily, strong and agile. Despite its large size and poor eyesight, it moves almost noiselessly and makes practically no noise. The auroch eats up to 50 kilograms of vegetation a day, loves acorns and drinks much water. Being ‘sociable’, the animal lives in herds and there are five such groups in the forest now. Female aurochs prevail in the herd and the most experienced and oldest of them is the leader. In turn, young and strong males act as defenders. In late summer and early autumn, aurochs have a mating season and males arrange fights for their ‘lady’. The latter’s pregnancy lasts nine months. No one has ever managed to domesticate aurochs. In Poland, there were attempts to hybridise aurochs with livestock but the hybrids turned out to be infertile. Aurochs live up to 25 years and have even reached 35 in captivity.*

## MONUMENTAL

### ‘Bychok’ Belarusian engine

It’s unusual to name machinery after living things but the ZIL-5301 car is still known as ‘Bychok’ [the bull]. The compact three-tonne truck was produced from 1995 to 2014 and it used a Belarusian engine made at the Minsk Motor Plant. People say the car received its name thanks to Moscow’s Mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, as it resembled the animal. In the most successful years, the plant produced more than 20,000 trucks annually. Sadly, ‘Bychok’ failed



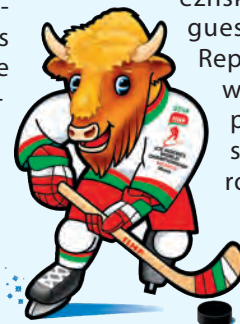
to match the competition, though some are still in operation throughout Russia.

### Welcome!

In Belarus, images of aurochs can be found everywhere. These horned animals adorn the coats of arms of the Grodno and Brest regions, while monuments to this symbol of the year are common country-wide. In 2014, the auroch — hockey player was even the official symbol of the World Championship held in the Republic. The attractive animal can also be seen near Minsk



Airport: the host of Belovezhskaya Pushcha greets guests to our blue-eyed Republic and offers farewells those who depart. An unusual ‘flat’ sculpture of the auroch can be found on the M1 highway, on the way to Brest. Meanwhile, in the centre of Minsk — on Dzerzhinsky Avenue — a huge LED composition in the form of an auroch was installed several years ago.





It was the last round of post-election litigation in the United States before the inauguration of the new president on January 6th. On that day, Congress planned to officially approve the results of the electoral vote, honouring the 46th head of state. However, the meeting did not progress calmly, as indignant supporters of Donald Trump burst into the building. A mini revolution began at the Capitol: the march was accompanied by fighting with police, the National Guard was called on and a curfew imposed.

The previous day, a rally in support of Trump began at the Congress building. After that, the incumbent president spoke to tens of thousands of his supporters, urging them not to give up and not admit defeat in the elections. He reiterated his belief in the electoral fraud, calling it 'the most corrupt in history, possibly in the world'.

From local curfews to alcohol bans and complete lockdowns, governments are trying to tackle a surge in cases. But experts fear the worst is yet to come, predicting a sharp rise in infections and deaths after weeks of holiday gatherings.

England has entered its toughest nationwide lockdown since March, with schools closed until mid-February, as Boris Johnson warned that the weeks ahead 'will be the hardest yet'.

As new figures put the UK on course to exceed 100,000 COVID-related deaths before the end of the month without urgent action, the Prime Minister said once again that people must stay at home, with exercise limited to once a day. All non-essential shops were closed.

The lockdown will last for at least seven weeks, with measures to be reviewed during half-term week. Any relaxation would not come into effect before February 22nd.

The UK was entering 'the last phase of the struggle', Mr. Johnson said, adding, "With every jab that goes into our arms, we are tilting the odds against COVID and in favour of the British people."

## Trump supporters broke into the Capitol building; resulting in 5 dead; Washington has imposed a curfew

A few hours after that, the joint meeting of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the US

Congress to approve the results of the presidential election was suspended. The reason given was objections by the Republicans. At the same time, the Capitol was stormed by participants at the pro-Trump rally. The protesters broke into the Congress building and fought with the police. Members of US Congress have been evacuated from Capitol Hill.

On Twitter, Trump urged his supporters to support law enforcement officials and 'stay peaceful', but this did not ease the tension.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser announced a curfew for the District of Columbia and requested the National Guard keep control of the Capitol. This decision was supported by Member of Congress, Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Trump later ordered the National Guard to

be sent to the Congress building.

Meanwhile, in the Capitol, protesters attempted to break the barricade to the hall of the House of Representatives and smashed windows and doors. An NBC correspondent spoke about the attack on reporters during the protests.

Tear gas was used outside Congress and there were several reported shootings. Many people were injured, including law enforcement officers. Later, the US Metropolitan Police said that during the protests at the Capitol, four people were killed. After midnight, special forces entered the Congress building and the protesters were pushed back. The situation gradually began to calm down. Soon the meeting of Congress resumed, and after several hours of debate, the latter confirmed the victory of Joseph Biden in the presidential election.

We have since become aware of the death of a policeman during the riots in the US Congress building.

Based on materials of sb.by

## Europe tightens restrictions

Countries across the world tightened restrictions on their populations to fight a resurgence in the coronavirus, as the European Union offered to help drug companies expand vaccine production to improve distribution 'bottlenecks'



The crackdown comes amid catastrophic figures for hospital admissions in England and warnings of a grim death toll by the end of the month.

Norway also imposed fresh restrictions to prevent a resurgence in the spread of the coronavirus, including a

nationwide ban on serving alcohol in restaurants and bars and not inviting guests home. "We see more signs of a new wave of infections," Prime Minister Erna Solberg said, citing Christmas

## 2021 tech trends

During this year, technology will help us emerge from the pandemic in ways big and small, obvious and surprising

### Electric innovation

Despite 2020 being a horrible year for the aerospace industry the companies say they are committed to research and development, in particular developing planes that have a much smaller impact on the environment. This year should see Airbus sign an important deal with Germany, France, Spain and Italy to develop a large drone: the so-called Euro-drone is due to start flight testing in 2025.

### Retail evolution

It's also been a disastrous year for many retailers. The trend towards online shopping went into overdrive, as customers were stranded at home during lockdowns. Retailers that survive may face a new technology in 2021. It's been reported that Amazon will expand its Go store chain. For customers it would speed up shopping as they can pick up the products they want and just leave the store. A clever combination of cameras and artificial intelligence tracks what they have taken and bills them when they leave.

### Working from home technology

It looks like working from home is here to stay. According to a survey, 60 percent of business leaders in Western Europe and North America expect at least 25 percent of their workforce, and in some cases all of their staff, to work at least partly from home — even when the pandemic is over. Many big firms have already committed to homeworking. In October, Dropbox said all of its staff could work from home and Twitter has the same policy. Microsoft and Facebook have also said a significant number of their staff can permanently work from home.



### Autonomous cars

On the streets of Phoenix, Arizona more than 300 cars are operating by themselves, collecting and dropping off passengers with no human driver at the wheel. It is part of the 'Waymo One' service. With the backing of Google's parent company Alphabet, Waymo is leading the way in autonomous cars in the US and, in 2021, it plans to extend its service.

and New Year's Eve celebrations and the emergence of the more contagious variant of the virus first identified in Britain among the reasons. Norwegians must put their social lives on hold for the next two weeks in order to keep the virus under control, she said.

All travel for private purposes, be it foreign or domestic, is now discouraged. Norway had already some of the toughest travel restrictions in Europe, requiring non-residents to have proof they are COVID-19 negative before entering the country. Moreover, Oslo imposed mandatory COVID-19 tests for all people entering Norway from abroad, either upon arrival or within 24 hours, to stop the spread of the coronavirus variant detected first in Britain.

Meanwhile, authorities in France enforced tightened curfew measures in 15 departments in the eastern part of the country due to higher coronavirus disease activity. The move comes as mayors in the various regions report that their local health infrastructure is being overwhelmed as new cases continue to be detected.



# The Christmas story

*The Christmas Creche* hosted by the Brest Regional Local Lore Museum branch, The Saved Art Valuables Museum



By Olga Korneeva

The show presents about a dozen three-dimensional Nativity scenes made from gingerbread, paper, plasticine, straw and other natural materials, by pupils of Sunday schools, art studios and creative associations. In this creative work, children were helped by enthusiastic adults: teachers and parents. The main focus of the exhibition is deservedly occu-

ried by a canonical Nativity scene from St. Simeon's Cathedral made from bread dough. In turn, an edible sculpture from the Holy Nativity of the Mother of God Convent is slightly smaller in size but with a strong aroma.

"The tradition of making Nativity scenes on Christmas Eve has existed for many years around

the world. Everyone can make a nativity at home, together with their family, from any material. However, the most delicious, of course, is made of gingerbread which was eaten after the holidays," said Natalia Petrova, a leading researcher

at the museum.

The exhibition also features other creative works on the theme of the New Year's holidays: there are about a hundred of them. These include 19th century icons venerated on the eve and during the

feast of the Nativity of Christ, as well as those from the funds of the regional Local Lore Museum, and festive icons of modern Brest icon painters. Private collections include Christmas toys from the mid-20th century and vintage dolls made in the 19th century style.

Participants of the show were delighted by the wooden relief panel by the Brest artist Yuri Chernev, *A Green Oak Near Lukomorye*; it was created about 50 years ago.

The exhibition is complemented by paintings by professional and amateur artists.

The exhibition of Christmas Nativity scenes at The Saved Art Valuables Museum will be open to the public throughout January.



# In the style of a French salon

New permanent exhibition, entitled *Interior in the Style of the Napoleon III Era*, opened at Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace, in the Gomel Palace and Park Estate

By Irina Sergeeva

The items on display give an idea of the decorations in rich residential apartments in the second half of the 19th century. The main part of this collection, furniture and interior items, entered the archives of the museum of the Gomel Palace and Park Estate in 2019, the year which marked its 100th anniversary. The scene is complemented by musical instruments, works of fine art, mantel clocks, and artistic porcelain and glass artefacts which were previously received by the museum, as well as belonging to the Gomel antiques collector, Sergei Putilin.

"In the era of Napoleon III, in court circles and aristocratic houses, it became the rule to turn to the old monarchical styles. This gave rise to a commitment to luxurious interiors, paintings in huge, gilded frames, flamboyant draperies, as well as intricately decorated furniture. The impression was created that the owners of the houses were afraid to leave empty space indoors and filled it with numerous things," said a spokesperson for the palace.



Carpenters of that time enjoyed making furniture that could be easily transformed, creating additional ease of use. An example of this is the displayed card table: it unfolds for a card game, but, when reassembled, it turns into a side table with an inlaid top.

The exhibition also includes various kinds of dressers, bureaus and an oval table. They are echoed by smaller interior items: a wall mirror, various clocks, a portable bar and a writing device in the form of a box.

The guests of the palace are also offered the chance to enjoy copies of several paintings from the Paskevich collection. These are *The Adoration of the Magi* by Rembrandt, *The Spoiled Child* by Jean-Baptiste Greuze and others. Visitors to the palace will also see engravings, alongside objects of decorative and applied art of that time.

"Time is inexorable and, in the museum, we are trying to pause it, fix our gaze on long-gone moments. Objects from the Napoleon III era create the atmosphere of a welcoming living room, which any visitor to the exhibition can enjoy," the spokesperson concluded.



Gomel's Palace and Park Estate

BELTA



# For the sake of art

## Main events of Belarusian culture in 2020

2020 was not very generous with events for domestic artists. Due to the pandemic, the number of cultural events dropped to a historic low; museums and theatres had to quickly change their plans, while the film industry also had to be put on hold. However, the global changes that broke the system established over the years actually highlighted the moments that were distinguished last season.

By Yuliana Leonovich

### UNOVIS' 100th anniversary celebrated

In February, Vitebsk celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the UNOVIS [Advocates of New Art] association. This bold and daring brainchild of Kazimir Malevich appeared to be ahead of its time: the efforts of *The Black Square* author are now continued by thousands of artists. To mark the UNOVIS jubilee, the History Museum of the Vitebsk National Art School has joined its partners to launch the #UNOVIS100 project, a large-scale programme of events related to the history of the formation and development of the world's first school of suprematism. Among the most profound activities are the exhibition of works by the avant-garde artist Lazar Khidekel, *They Will Understand Us In 100 Years*, at the National Art Museum, the award named after him given to the best young architects of Belarus and a scientific-practical conference which was first attended by Kazimir Malevich's great-nephews and Lazar Lisitsky's great-granddaughter.

### 1st Republican Local History Forum organised

In March 2020, the National Historical Museum brought together for the first time those who strive to preserve the traditions of local culture, the memory of outstanding countrymen and the history of their native land: 230 people of all ages, including schoolchildren and active public figures in retirement. These incredible people worked for several days at the museum and its branches. The forum revealed its potential not simply as a scientific conference but also as a powerful discussion platform. It turned out that the concerned public were in need of just this: a poignant discussion, a microphone and an audience in front of which they could voice their hopes and doubts, share experiences and talk about the most pressing issues. In reality, this was the main result of the forum: a resolution on the need for the widespread creation of associations of local amateur historians based around museums, clubs and libraries.

### Renovated building of V. Byalynitsky-Birulya Museum opened

In September, at the celebration of the Belarusian Writ-

ten Language Day in Belyniichi, high-ranking guests were welcomed at the renewed and the improved museum named after V. Byalynitsky-Birulya. By the time the holidays arrived, the museum not only significantly expanded its area but also presented almost three dozen works of the last Russian itinerant artist to the public.



Opening ceremony of the V. Byalynitsky-Birulya Art Museum in Belyniichi

For several decades, the artist's unique paintings were kept in his small homeland, in the gallery named after him. Over the years, the building of the cinema, which was once simply adapted for a museum exhibition, became dilapidated and suffered from a lack of space. A special commission came to Belyniichi two years ago to agree that it would be safer and cheaper to build a new building. As a result, only the foundations remain of the old one.



Republican Gymnasium-College at the Conservatory

### Reconstruction of Republican Gymnasium-College completed

In August, young musicians and teachers at the Republican Gymnasium-College at the Belarusian State Academy of Music could finally relax: the ten-year reconstruction of the historic building at 7 Svobody Square was completed. For many years, the training of talented young artists was conducted around the reconstruction: there was no concert hall, and nowhere near enough specially equipped rehearsal classes. That was due to the reconstruction of the historical part of the building where the educational institution is located; and the fact that the works were



Performance #SUPREMSTORM\_night during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the UNOVIS [Advocates of New Art] association

in this extreme situation, Maria Gulegina, a global star known for her incredibly dramatic soprano voice, managed to sing in Minsk. She returned to Belarus' Bolshoi Theatre after almost 30 years. The singer began her career in Minsk but, in the late 1980s, the situation in the theatre forced her to leave the Soviet Union. In reality she is not offended and even laughs about it, without her studying with the maestro, Yaroslav Voshchak, there would be no



Maria Gulegina

La Scala, Metropolitan Opera or the Vienna Opera. Maria closed her performance on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre brilliantly: she sang *Kupalinka* a cappella, as if once again reminding us that Belarus is still her home.

### Year of Ferdynand Ruszczyk held

Throughout 2020, artist Ferdynand Ruszczyk was remembered in Belarus and abroad. In November 2019, the UNESCO General Conference decided to include the 150th anniversary of this famous landscape painter's birth in the calendar of memorable dates for 2020. The Director of the National Art Museum, Vladimir Prokoptsov, made grand plans for the landmark anniversary: a scientific conference, an open-air exhibition, the release of a commemorative coin, a stamp and an envelope dedicated to the famous native of Bogdanovo, as well as a large-scale international exhibition, which was organised as a result. It was planned that the audience would enjoy viewing the painter's most famous works which the museums of Poland, Lithuania and Russia agreed to provide

for the exhibition. The coronavirus, alas, prevented all plans: the museum had to prepare the exhibition, which proved to be quite excellent, independently.

### Grand Prize of Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk goes to Belarusians

The 29th International Arts Festival will surely go down in the city's festival history as the most experimental, as it featured just four days of musical events instead of a week. Outdoor venues replaced the usual concert and theatre halls, and a charity donation scheme was launched instead of the flowers usually presented to artists. Furthermore, Belarus celebrated our victory twice. For the second year in a row, the Grand Prize in the children's music competition went to a representative of our country: 14-year-old Angelina Lomako brought Belarus the fifth victory. In turn, Roman Voloznev returned to Minsk with a diploma for the winner of the Grand Prize for the adult competition.

### Wild-hive beekeeping culture included on the UNESCO list

The culture of wild-hive beekeeping, still widespread in Polesie, is now under the protection of UNESCO. On December 17th, the ancient craft was included into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Third-generation forest beekeepers continue to promote the ancient skills and, thanks to them, the latter is still alive. Until the 19th century, wild-hive beekeeping was the most common type of beekeeping in the country but is now only preserved in Polesie. The culture of wild-hive beekeeping has become the fourth Belarusian element in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Prior to it, the rites of 'Kolyady Tsars' (in the village of Semezhevo, Minsk District) and 'Yurievsky Khorovod' [Yuriev Round Dance] (in the village of Pogost, Zhitkovichi District), as well as the Budslav Fest have received this honorary status.

### Maria Gulegina gives a concert at Belarus' Bolshoi Theatre

Even before the artistes and the management of the Bolshoi Theatre (as well as the rest of the cultural world) found themselves

# Under 21 and older

## Young Belarusian athletes for whom 2020 opened up new opportunities and prospects

By Sergei Kanashits

### A mermaid named Nastya

Anastasia Shkur dai made herself known a while ago, beginning to rewrite adult national records in swimming at the age of 15. However, it was the last year that was a real breakthrough in sport for the pupil of the Brest swimming school: the 18-year-old girl not only confidently entered the elite of world swimming, but literally burst onto the scene with a Belarusian jet torpedo. She did not confine herself to rewriting national records but won races in the International Swimming League in Budapest, setting a new world record among juniors at the 100m butterfly!

These victorious moments enable Anastasia Shkur dai to claim medals at the world and European championships today, while also making her one of the main contenders for the medals at the upcoming Olympics in Tokyo. With the result that Nastya achieved in Budapest, she would have been second at the 2016 Games in Rio and would have even won the World Championship last year!

### Marriageable girls

The Belarusian volleyball school has been well-known for a long time, for being a unique and recognisable sporting institution in our country. The past year brought another significant success: everyone was pleased with the girls from the youth team, who managed to win bronze medals at the European Championship in magnificent style. We can only regret that they didn't put pressure on the Turkish national team in the semi-finals, although they easily could have. But in the match for third place their luck returned, and the French team were beaten 3:1. The most efficient player of the Belarusian team was Ksenia Lebed-

kina (19 points), and Victoria Kostyuchik became the best receiver. Victoria is the sister of Vera Kostyuchik, who three years ago (as a member of the U18 Belarusian national squad) also claimed bronze at the European Championship. Vera Kostyuchik now plays for the famous Uralochka club. Other leaders of the team also found themselves playing at a high level: Anna Grishkevich (Davyskiba after her marriage) signed a contract with the Italian club Saugella from Monza while Alina Yegorova has been playing for the Krasnoyarsk Yenisei since the beginning of the season. Many others are also in sight for the national championships, although their average age is only around 20 years old.

### Dinamo sees young growth

This season has been unrecognisable for Dinamo hockey club. Never in its history has the team been so aggressive and cheeky (in a good way) on the ice. If someone are ready to argue with this statement, then there is another indisputable fact: this is the youngest squad of 'bisons' for the entire duration of their participation in

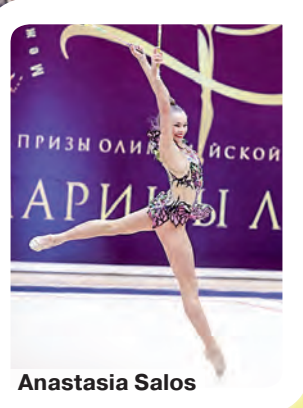
Having famously completed the set distance of 366 days, the leap year 2020 crossed the finish line and passed the baton to the next new year. Time has always been considered a tireless and very fast runner; whose reactive speed is sometimes simply impossible to keep track of. The past year gave us a severe pandemic laced with instability, but nevertheless, mostly happy events will remain in our memory. Furthermore, there were many memorable moments in Belarusian sport. We recall the main events of 2020, the heroes of which were our growing stars, young athletes (under 20 years old) whose careers are just beginning, but are likely to be surprisingly promising in high-profile events.



Aleksei Protas



Anastasia Shkur dai



Anastasia Salos



Belarus women's national under-19 volleyball team



Diana Minkova

the KHL Championship. Dinamo renewed their youth record several times, and at the end of October the guys came out to play against Lokomotiv Yaroslavl, whose average age was 22 years and 8 months! Vitaly Pinchuk (18 years 9 months) and Ilya Usov (19 years 2 months) became the youngest players in the squad. Vladislav Kolyachonok, Aleksei Protas and Vladimir Alistrov have not yet reached the 20-year mark either, though they are not at all on the sidelines, but play drums and lead in Craig Woodcroft's ensemble. These are surprisingly talented and promising hockey players, whose names many associate with a new era in Belarusian hockey.

### Graces with ribbons

Another generational change arrived smoothly for the Belarusian national rhythmic gymnastics team. Yekaterina Galkina, due to injuries, can hardly take the past year into account, and while their captain was on sick leave, Alina Gornosko and

Anastasia Salos came to the forefront. It was these two young gymnasts who shared the medals of the Belarusian Championship, having also successfully performed at the European Championship in Kiev. It is true that the athletes from Russia didn't visit Ukraine for obvious reasons, but this doesn't make Gornosko and Salos' second and third places in the overall rankings any less significant. Meanwhile, Dina Agisheva won gold in the rope exercise in the junior competitions at the European forum while Yelizaveta Zorkina earned both the silver and bronze medals.

### Weights with room to grow

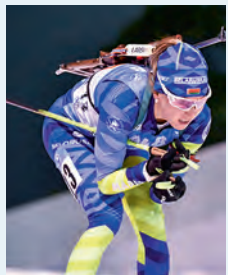
The 2020 Weightlifting Championship of Belarus brought 31 national records! Interestingly, most of the records were for youth and junior categories, indicating that an amazing generation of strong young people are growing up on the Belarusian platform. Given the fact that representation in some weight categories turned out to be the highest in the last few years, the transition from quantity to quality looks like only a matter of time.

For example, Rina Litoshik's victory in the under 71kg category already looks unbelievable. This 15-year-old athlete rewrote both the youth (under 17) and junior (under 20) records while also lifting a total of 211kg! With this result a year ago, she simply would not have had any rivals at the European Championship. And even amongst adults, Rina would be in the top five! Furthermore, we should also note the rise of 19-year-old Diana Minkova. These two young girls are quite capable of reaching the most significant Olympic achievements in the near future.

## ARENA

### Belarusian biathlete Dinara Alimbekova retained fifth place in the overall ranking of the Biathlon World Cup after five stages

In the first stage of this year, held in the German town of Oberhof, Dinara Alimbekova only managed to take 37th place in the 7.5km sprint race, finishing 16th in the pursuit. Now the current leader of the Belarusian women's team has 355 points. The general classification is headed by the Norwegian biathlete Marte Olsbu Røiseland, who has 509 points, followed by her compatriot Tiril Eckhoff and the Swede Hanna Oeberg, who have 466 points each; the youngest of the Oeberg sisters, Elvira, who scored 379 points, is in fourth



place. Three more representatives of Belarus earned points at each of the five Cup stages: Yelena Kruchinkina, 166 (21st in the overall ranking), Irina Krivko, 97 (34th) and Anna Sola, 81 (39th). In the International Cup ranking, the women's national team of Belarus took 6th place, with a total of 2,925 points. The Swedish team are in the lead, boasting a total of 3,554 points, followed by the national squad of Norway with 3,534 points and France with 3,478.

### Problems looming for 2028 Los Angeles Olympics

This could be due to the Olympic Reform Bill and possible US problems with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), said an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, Dick Pound.

The US Congress had previously passed the Olympic Reform Bill, enabling lawmakers to dissolve the USOK leadership. "The Congressional legislation focusing on the US Olympic Committee giving Congress the power to rule over the board of directors is on the statute books and is clearly a violation of the Olympic charter, similar to the situation we have in Italy at the moment. All these rules aren't going to disappear just because it is the



US. We'll have to wait and see, but at some point, if the US becomes a rogue state, I think we'll start looking at whether or not the Games in Los Angeles should proceed. They're not meeting their obligations under the convention and they're trying to destabilise not only the structure, but funding of WADA which is unacceptable behaviour, especially since they participated in all the decisions for continental funding right from the start," said the IOC member.



## Photo of the week

True snowy winter comes to Minsk

### DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



**On January 15th, 1936,** Yanka Sipakov (Ivan Danilovich) was born (in the village of Zubrevichi, Orsha District, Vitebsk Region) — a Belarusian writer and translator, Honoured Worker of Culture of Belarus (1997). He worked in the

magazines *Vozhyk*, *Maladosts* and *Belarus*, as well as in the Belarusian Encyclopaedia Publishing House. His poetry is characterised by lyricism, romanticism, expressive poetic imagery and genre variety. He is the author of the collections *Woman among Men*, *Five Strings*, *Tosca in Retro Style*, etc. He is also a laureate of the State Prize of Belarus (1976). He died in 2011.

**On January 15th, 1921,** the first issue of the newspaper *Belorusskaya Niva*, now *Selskaya Gazeta*, was published. It covers agricultural policy and economics, law and morality, science, ecology and cultural issues alongside international life, while also promoting advanced public farms and the achievements of science and technology in agriculture.



**On January 15th, 2016,** the Belarusian telecommunications satellite Belintersat-1 was launched from China's Xichang Satellite Launch Centre. The satellite is designed to



operate for 15 years and provides a wide range of telecommunication services such as satellite TV broadcasting, satellite broadcasting and broadband Internet access.

**On January 15th, 1976,** the Vileika-Minsk water system was put into operation, a system of reservoirs, canals, hydraulic structures, natural reservoirs and watercourses in the Vileika, Molodechno and Minsk districts, providing water transfer from the River Viliya (Neman basin) and River Svisloch (Dnieper basin).



**January 16th** is the World Beatles Day, celebrated since 2001 by UNESCO. On January 16th, 1957, The Cavern club opened in Liverpool, where then unknown young musicians John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison began their journey to fame. Ringo Starr joined them a few years later. *The Beatles* worked in the

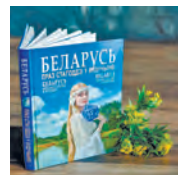


usual line-up for eight years. During this time, they released 13 official albums, each single of which became a real hit. The group gained worldwide recognition in 1963 with the release of the single *Please Please Me*. According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, *The Beatles* are ranked number one on the list of the greatest artists of all time.

**On January 17th, 1971,** the State Theatre of Musical Comedy of the BSSR (since 1999, the Belarusian State Musical Theatre) was opened in Minsk. The theatre opened its first theatrical season on January 17th, 1971 with the play *The Skylark Sings* by the Belarusian composer Yuri Semenyako.



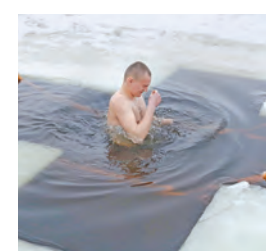
**On January 18th, 1921,** the Belarus Publishing House was founded. It releases about 100 titles a year, specialising in the publication of socio-political, popular science, artistic and journalistic, local history, medical, reference, educational, and musical literature.



**January 19th** is Rescuers Day in the Republic of Belarus, a professional holiday established by the Decree of the President of the Republic as of February 2nd, 2000. The Belarusian rescue service today has about a thousand combat units, which are armed with more than 6,000 pieces of equipment. The structure of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus includes firefighting and rescue services, alongside chemical and radiation safety, engineering, diving, medical, explosive, aviation, search and rescue, parachute, pontoon and dog training, etc.



**January 19th** is the Orthodox holiday of the Epiphany. On this day, the 30-year-old Jesus Christ was baptised in the waters of the Jordan River. The feast is also



called the Holy Manifestation of the Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Christ, since during the baptism of Jesus the God revealed himself to the world in the Holy Trinity.