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Parishioners of the St. Nicholas Garrison Church in Brest on Christmas Day

Christmas light

The bright holiday — Christmas — came to the families of Orthodox Belarusians on January 7th. This is one of the most important Christian and family holidays. It is traditionally considered a holiday of goodness, light, and faith in a happy future. On Christmas, festive services are held in churches; on this day, believers congratulate each other on this joyful event, wishing them well-being and happiness. On Christmas morning, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, arrived at the Orthodox Church of the Holy Prophet John the Baptist in the agro-town of Shershuny, Minsk District. According to tradition, the President lit a Christmas candle in the church and warmly congratulated the parishioners on the bright holiday of the Nativity of Christ. → 3



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Belarusian products will compete with the best world samples

2024 has been declared the Year of Quality in Belarus. It is symbolic that the President's first working meeting of the coming year was devoted to this very topic.

Before the start of the event, the Head of State got acquainted with the special exhibition *Quality Mark: Tradition of the Past and the Present*. Directly at the Palace of Independence, heads of Belarusian enterprises and production veterans presented domestic products, which in Soviet times were awarded the USSR Quality Mark, as well as goods applying for the State Quality Mark of Belarus in 2024. The range of exhibits is very wide — from the food industry to mechanical engineering.

For example, MAZ and MTZ vehicles were among the first to receive the quality mark in Soviet times — the MAZ-53352 truck and the Belarus tractor. Now these enterprises have also offered their products to be designated with the quality mark of modern Belarus. Among the contenders are engines from the Minsk Motor Plant, Horizont TV sets, Gomselmash combines, Kommunarka confectionery, and Kamvol fabrics.

Aleksandr Lukashenko carefully examined the exhibition, talked with the leadership of the government and the enterprises represented at the exhibition. As noted, the list of products that can qualify for the State Quality Mark is not closed, but both current and future applicants will first need to confirm that their products are truly worthy of such an assessment. The Head of State has repeatedly emphasised this requirement.



“BELAZ, MTZ, MAZ and so on — they have no choice but should have a quality mark for some of their products. But this product must be unique, it must be competitive in international markets. The technique must be impeccable. We will check. We will not simply stamp a quality mark on your cab, hood or glass, otherwise we will disgrace the country,” the President said.

During the meeting, Aleksandr Lukashenko warned officials about the inadmissibility of formalism and sloppiness.

“I have already said that this year will be special for us. It is clear that the tension will be incredible: everyone is preparing for the presidential elections in Belarus — both in the East and in the West. The goals are different. But we must surpass ourselves. To do this, there should be no formalism and sloppiness. With all the positive things that we have and that cannot be taken away from us, there should be no sloppiness and formalism [they did something for show, noted it]. And it won't, I promise you that. Therefore, from the first days of this year, prepare yourself for difficult, hard work,” the President warned.

The Head of State noted, “Our first working meeting this year at the Presidential level concerns the main topic — the Year of Quality.

We have set a very ambitious goal: to bring quality control of goods and services produced and the country's quality of life to a higher level. Belarus can be proud of its quality goods, but in order to be in trend, to compete with the best world standards, you need to add a little, you need to earn this quality mark.”

In this endeavour, Belarusians have something to build on, Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised. Firstly, from traditions — the republic has preserved the continuity of the Soviet era.

“This historical period gave rise to our national development. Now you understand why (as I was criticised) I ‘cling’ to that Soviet time: if there had not been that Soviet time, there would not have been the most modern and new samples. It's easier to ruin everything, but on what basis would we create new, progressive models? This base would not exist. Smart people preserve and develop everything that has been accumulated by

previous generations. We did it,” the Head of State noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that the economy of the BSSR was one of the most technologically advanced and developed among other union republics.

“Having survived the devastation of the 1990s, it was not easy for us to preserve the quality standards created by the labour of Soviet people, but we were able to do it. People were in such trouble that there was simply nowhere to go. We got out. Today we create the most modern models of technology. But I say frankly: the quality is still not enough. Our competitors are breathing in our backs. And everything that we produce in Belarus is manufactured in dozens of countries around the world,” the President said.

Secondly, Belarus has formed the image of a successor to the best Soviet achievements. And the way Belarusians cope with modern challenges demonstrates the reasonableness and foresight of the people's choice, the President noted.



Quality must become a way of life

Belarusians should strive to ensure that quality becomes the way of their work and life — as stated by Head of the Belarus President Administration Igor Sergeyenko during the meeting.

“A high quality of human life is achieved by solving his social problems. A number of measures are envisaged to improve the quality of medical care for the population, the level of education, create conditions for self-realisation of young people, and improve a comfortable living environment,” Head of the Belarus President Administration noted. He emphasised that the social sphere is, first of all, work with people, and based on its results, the population evaluates the effectiveness of government. Igor Sergeyenko added that every citizen should realise: the well-being of the country, on which personal satisfaction with the quality of life depends, is primarily ensured by the efficiency of his work.

“Thirdly, we see an increasing demand for the values of the welfare state. And not only in the post-Soviet space — all over the world. A return to these values is a matter of people's quality of life: the spiritual sphere, economic well-being, social justice. Everything here is interconnected. Therefore, when we talk about quality and what to do, we are waiting for something (there will, of course, be a program), there is no need to wait for anything. If someone doesn't know where to start, start with yourself: show up to your job on time and do your job very well. Everyone here knows how to do it,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The list of participants at the meeting is wide; there are two issues on the agenda. The government has prepared a republican action plan for the Year of Quality.

“There will be no run-of-the-mill events for show this year. And not just this year. We have come to a situation where we need to rise one step higher, or maybe two. Firstly, we are being pressed from all sides, it won't get any easier, this is objective. And secondly, you can't stop. If we stop, decay will begin, as has often happened in the history of our state (and not only ours). Therefore, there should be no events to ‘show off’, for show,” the President demanded.

The Head of State underlined that all planned events should lead to concrete results.

“The plan should reflect the main idea of the coming year. It contains a whole range of directions — from careful treatment of resources to personal responsibility for the results of one's work,” noted Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The second issue on the meeting agenda is the establishment of the State Quality Mark. Here they will rely on experience and traditions.

“I think today we will be able to discuss image options, the concept of assigning a mark and the procedure for confirming compliance with it on the part of manufacturers of goods and services,” the President added.

At the meeting, Prime Minister of Belarus Roman Golovchenko presented the republican action plan for the Year of Quality.

To whom and for what will the State Quality Mark be awarded in Belarus?

The Belarusian Head of Government, Roman Golovchenko, later told reporters that at the meeting, among other things, the issue of establishing a State Quality Mark was discussed, “As a result of the discussion, we agreed that there is no need to greatly modify the sign that existed in Soviet times. Naturally, the letters of the USSR will be replaced with the name of our country, but the stylisation itself, including the pentagon as a symbol of reliability, accessibility, safety, aesthetics and innovation and the inverted letter ‘K’, will be the simplest and most understandable option for perception.” The State Quality Mark will be approved by Presidential decree and should be the highest mark that the products have been thoroughly tested.

“It will be awarded not to the enterprise as a whole, or even to a group of products, but to a specific product from a specific manufacturer. Therefore, the decision-making procedure must be very precise,” Roman Golovchenko explained. It is planned that the decision on awarding the mark will be made by the republican certification commission. And its first owners will appear at the end of this year.

Without peace there can be no creation. To this it is important to add quality!

On the bright holiday of the Nativity of Christ, the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, visited the Church of the Holy Prophet John the Baptist, which is located in the agro-town of Shershuny, Minsk District. According to tradition, the Head of State lit a Christmas candle in the church and talked with representatives of the clergy and parishioners.



BELTA

The President of the Republic of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, congratulated Orthodox Christians of Belarus on Christmas

Dear compatriots! I cordially wish you a Merry Christmas!

This bright holiday gives believers hope for spiritual salvation, teaches boundless love and sacrifice in the name of fellowmen.

Christian compassion and care, simplicity and benevolence have long been the cultural heritage of the Belarusian people. We open our hearts to those who come in peace, and we are ready to share bread and shelter with those in need.

I am convinced that — by preserving the Orthodox traditions of mercy and moral purity — we will jointly create the best future for our native Belarus.

May Christmas Eve fill your homes with warmth, sincerity of feelings and mutual understanding, and the joy of these festive days inspire you for new creative achievements in the year that has begun.

I wish you all health, happiness and well-being.

This does not mean that we will forget the cities — this is the industry. Without it, the same village cannot develop. We will do everything to develop our economy. We have everything for this, despite difficult times,” Aleksandr Lukashenko assured.

The Head of State thanked the Primate of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Veniamin, and all the clergy for the acts they perform in the name of the Belarusian people, state, church, and in the name of the life of Belarusians.

Addressing parishioners and residents of all Belarus, the Head of State wished them, first of all, health, because everything else can be achieved with one’s own labour.

Aleksandr Lukashenko donated the *Our Lady Derzhavnaya* Icon of the Mother of God to the temple. The work was done in the traditional style of the Belarusian school of icon painting, using a unique wax tempera technique.

The President was presented with an icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. This is one of the most revered saints, who was nicknamed the Wonderworker during his lifetime.

Aleksandr Lukashenko recalled that in 2020, when he came to the opening of this church, local parishioners invited him to visit this temple again.

“I promised, that’s why I came to you today. I came from this bright, kind church to congratulate on my own behalf all of you and all our Belarusians, our guests, everyone who will hear me, on the kindest, bright holiday — Merry Christmas,” the President said.

The Head of State noted that the country has important secular holidays, such as Victory Day, Independence Day, as well as spiritual ones, such as Christmas or Easter.

“They have passed through the years, they are in our minds and hearts. And, as time has shown, it is impossible to eradicate them from us. That’s why they are great,” the Belarusian leader emphasised.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated that all the years of the current five-year plan, starting from 2020, have been difficult.

“But the Lord probably protects and has protected us. We managed to pass through these years peacefully. And then, when you and I opened this temple, you asked for only one thing, as if anticipating that these would be difficult years: that there be peace on our land. We are capable of creating everything else in our country with our minds and hands. And so it happened. God grant that it continues like this. We are moving from the Year of Peace and Creation (without peace there can be no creation) into the Year of Quality. We need to fill

this peaceful, calm Belarusian life on this small island where we live today with high quality. Make people happy. Waking up in the morning and going to bed, putting your kids to bed, so that people are happy, so that they are proud of their lives...

I’ll say it tritely, but you will agree with me: everything depends only on us. Only on us! As well as on me, of course, but quality life is impossible without you. Therefore, we need to add quality to this peaceful, calm, creative life. And then everything will be fine for us,” the Head of State said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that he often sets only one main task for the government: ‘give me the economy, the rest is up to me’. The same applies to development at the regional level.

We need to make every effort so that we can not only produce goods (and economics means producing and selling), but do it with high quality. So that our product can be bought even better than today.

The President added that we must live the coming year with dignity and show that the Belarusian people are the masters of their land.

“We are standing on the threshold of a generational change, when everything that has been done, not today or tomorrow, we will have to pass on to the younger generation — our children.

This year will be very difficult. They will train on us. And we need to persevere. They will train for future presidential elections. And we need to pay special

attention to young people who did not see difficult times both during the Soviet period and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They did not experience what the middle and older generations experienced. We need to tell them about this, we need to show them so that they value what we have acquired through our labour. We need to do everything so that we live this year with dignity and, approaching the main event, show ourselves with dignity. That we are the masters of this land, we, the Belarusian people, who have suffered and endured in our history, have the right to live according to our own laws,” the President explained.

In communication with parishioners of the temple, Aleksandr Lukashenko promised to do everything to preserve the village, without which there would be no state.

“Even in this rural church, I want to say two words about the village. You see that in these difficult times we are doing a lot to preserve the village,” the President noted.

Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasized that states that destroyed the village have no future.

“If we lose the village, we will lose the state. It simply won’t exist. Therefore, I promise you that as a person who grew up in a village, knowing the life of a rural person, the difficulties and difficulties, I will do everything to save our village. So that the village — today it is the breadwinner of our people, the foundation of our state — is strong, powerful and prosperous.

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, met with Belarusians who are preparing to fly into space

The main participant in the upcoming space flight, Marina Vasilevskaya, and the backup, Anastasia Lenkova, came to the Palace of Independence to meet with the Head of State. The girls are trained at the Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Centre. The space flight is expected to take place this year.

Aleksandr Lukashenko congratulated the space programme participants on the New Year and Merry Christmas, presenting flowers and wristwatches.

“Well, shall we fly? Or have you changed your mind?” the President asked.

The girls confidently answered that the plans remained the same and the flight into space would definitely take place.

“But we will wait for you here,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President clarified whether the main participant and the backup are being trained according to the same programme. And indeed it is.

“The most important thing is that there is no jealousy. You won’t be lost anyway. You were chosen out of millions of girls,” the Head of State admonished.

More than Br745,000 have been allocated from the Special Fund of the President of Belarus to encourage talented pupils and students, as well as to provide material support to intellectual and creative associations

The relevant decision of the Special Fund Council was approved by a decree signed by President Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The winners of the international Olympiads and competitions have been awarded 25 grand prizes and the Laureate of Belarus’ President Special Fund for Social Support of Talented Students badges. In addition, 278 special awards have been bestowed upon the winners of the republican Olympiads and competitions.

A scholarship of Belarus’ President has been awarded to 180 students and cadets of higher education institutions for their special achievements in studies, research and creative activities.

In addition, in order to strengthen the material, technical and methodological base, a financial support has been rendered to the Alye Pogony [Scarlet Shoulder Straps] search club of the Gomel Cadet School and the Sotsium [Society] student research laboratory of the Belarusian State University.



Dmitry Yumanov is only 30, but he is already a scholarship recipient of the President’s special fund for supporting young scientists. He lectures at the Belarusian-Russian University, heads its Council of Young Scientists and represents the university in the same council under the Education Ministry. There is still time for our own developments, the PhD in Technical Sciences smiles when we meet. Large industrial enterprises in the country are already interested in its programme control system for resistance relief welding.

Yumanov’s system

By Tatyana Sedunova

We set the coordinates

Senior teacher of the Equipment and Welding Technology Department Dmitry Yumanov meets us in the laboratory, which serves as a place not only for scientific experiments.

“Students study here. This is a unique opportunity for them to get acquainted with advanced equipment that is not found in every plant. The university has a great base. We purchase the most modern equipment — we don’t want to trail behind global trends. All devices for scientific research are used in laboratory work, and students understand: there will be something interesting,” Dmitry notes, presenting an arc welding robot with a control panel in the form of a tablet.

The young scientist began developing a programme control system for resistance relief welding while a graduate student at BRU. What is she?

“The welding equipment is equipped with a welding cycle regulator: with its help, the required mode parameters are set. Serial regulators do not always do this correctly. That’s why we developed a programme control system. We connect it to welding equipment, set high-precision welding mode parameters — we get consistently high quality connections. For clarity: when using a standard regulator, out of 100 welded joints, only 40 are of adequate quality. With the use of our system, the result is excellent in 98 percent of cases,” Yumanov reads an abbreviated course of lectures for us.

Yumanov’s system also reduces the cost of the product — almost twofold.

A young scientist from Mogilev has developed a software control for welding equipment that doubles the quality of products



The basic technology contains additional operations; thanks to the scientist’s development, they are eliminated. It’s simple: contact welding, Dmitry’s area of scientific interest, takes two seconds per connection versus the standard two minutes. Saving time, materials, energy costs — Belarusian enterprises are quite understandably interested in such a development. Dmitry shares, “Representatives of BKM HOLDING, formerly known as Belkommunmash, contacted the department: they had a problem with the type of welded joints that are found in almost all factories, and carried out consultations. Later, we introduced our technology at Mogilev Plant Strommashina. Consulting support was provided to the Cooling Systems Plant. Enterprises have not two or three units, but more than a hundred welded joints, so they are interested in stable quality. And, importantly, with our system the welding equipment remains the same, there is no need to buy new.”

Take the path of science

Yumanov recently returned from Moscow. The visit was with scientific interest: I attended the defence of a thesis of Aleksei Klimov, a well-known scientist from Togliatti in Russia.

“I was able to communicate with a scientist whose books I used to prepare lecture notes for students. Teachers from Russian universities come to give lectures at BRU every year. This is how we get acquainted with their educational programs and developments, and talk about ours,” Dmitry is pleased with the cooperation with Russian colleagues.

In Belarus, young scientists have every opportunity to realize their potential, the PhD in Technical Sciences is convinced, “Young people are supported at all stages of their scientific journey. In the BRU, for example, there is a Council of Young Scientists. Each faculty has its own chairman — the guys represent dif-

ferent directions and act as a link between students, undergraduates and graduate students. We involve young people in conferences and events where they can speak, get their research assessed, and publish results, which is important for any scientist. The university is holding a startup competition. Every year, three teams of young scientists, teachers and students receive serious grants for the development of their idea — about Br20,000. At the republican level there are also a lot of platforms where you can express yourself. The guys have the opportunity to become a scholarship recipient of the President’s special fund.”

In 2023, BRU students participated in the Science Festival in Minsk: they demonstrated the university’s developments in welding, construction and computer technologies, and acted as speakers at master classes. Now they are trying their hand at the 100 Ideas for Belarus competition.

“Quite a lot of young people want to do science. The templates that it is boring, not financially attractive, have not been relevant for a long time. Guys see what the teachers are working on and are drawn to them. Recently two students approached me: ‘we want to do science’. I talked about my topic; we’ll start preparing for a student conference in the spring. I myself remember with warmth my enthusiastic mentor, scientific supervisor Sergei Furmanov, whose ideas in the field of pressure welding I continue to develop.”

Belarus is the leader among the CIS countries in the ranking of achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Belarus has become a leader among the CIS countries in the ranking of achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is stated in the analytical report called NSDS-2035 in Numbers: Results of Implementation of Sustainable Development Priorities prepared by the Scientific Research Institute of the Economy Ministry.

The Economic department cited several facts from the Analytical Report.

It is reported that, despite the change in the geo-economic situation, Belarus managed to achieve GDP growth in 2023 (103.8 percent).

Gross external debt relative to GDP decreased from 68.7 percent in 2020 to 48.9 percent of GDP (as of July 1st, 2023).

GDP per capita at PPP increased from \$20.3 thousand in 2020 to \$25.2 thousand (estimated) in 2023.

According to the report, Belarus has one



of the lowest poverty rates among the CIS countries.

In 2022, its value was 3.9 percent. The target set in NSDS-2035 to reduce the level of poverty among the population (up to 4 percent in 2035) has already been achieved.

“Belarus is included in the group of countries with a high level of human development, ranking 60th among 191 countries in the ranking of countries according to the Human Development Index,” NSDS-2035 in Numbers report says.

Upward movement

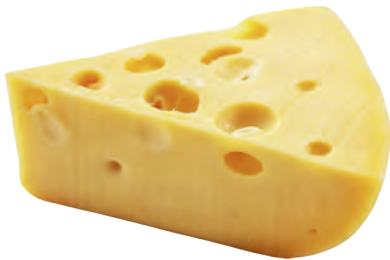
Belarus is among the world leaders in cheese production

Belarus has become a leader in the world ranking for cheese production per capita, ahead of Germany and France. Svetlana Kondratenko, Deputy Director for Scientific Work of the State Enterprise Institute of System Research in the Agro-Industrial Complex of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, spoke about this fact.

According to her, the modernised food industry and the availability of its own high-quality agricultural raw materials allow Belarus to expand its export potential and develop new markets.

“The global food market situation is favourable for domestic suppliers. There is an increase in demand and prices. Import demand for butter and milk powder from Asian countries is also growing,” she noted.

At the same time, the deputy director for scientific work emphasised that the reserves of Western European manufacturers were limited. This forced European suppliers to focus on the domestic market, freeing up many export niches. In particular, Belarus has already be-



come one of the world leaders in cheese production per capita, ahead of many European countries, including Germany and France.

It is expected that the growth of the global cheese market will be about 4.5 percent per year, and, for example, the Chinese segment will add 10 percent.

“Thus, Belarusian producers have every opportunity to increase the export of cheeses and other dairy products,” Svetlana Kondratenko added.

A cell can do everything

They thicken the endometrium, replace hormones, treat baldness — what other new products have been invented at the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering

Testing of interesting projects under the state programme Knowledge-Intensive Technologies and Engineering was completed at the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering of the National Academy of Sciences. We are talking about new biomedical cell products that have already helped the first patients. It's a matter of introducing it into widespread practice.

By Yelena Basikirskaya

Instead of parathyroid

Cell technologies are constantly being studied at the Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering. Director Andrei Goncharov is convinced that this promising direction is the present and the future. To recover, the immune system sometimes needs to be suppressed or, conversely, stimulated. Biomedical cell products can cope with each of the options; eleven types are being developed at the institute.

“Stem and differentiated cells help, for example, in the treatment of diseases of the joints, nervous system, pneumonia, miscarriage, and can restore youth to the skin. Their potential is practically unlimited. This additional treatment method helps restore the body,” explains Andrei Goncharov.

Let's take a closer look at the developments that have reached



(From left to right) Olga Tishuk, junior researcher, Anna Poleshko, head of the laboratory of molecular cell biology, Alla Misyukovich, researcher, Andrei Smirnov, junior researcher

Daria Titova

the finish line and have proven their effectiveness. Let's say a new product based on parathyroid cells for the treatment of postoperative hyperparathyroidism.

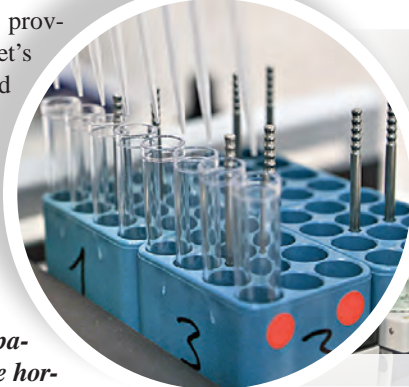
“The case when the parathyroid gland stops working or is removed.

As a result, the patient does not produce hormones that are responsible for the normal state of the musculoskeletal system and the functioning of the body in general. Together with colleagues from BSMU, we created a cellular product that replaces the deficiency of parathyroid hormone,” Anna Poleshko, head of the laboratory of molecular biology and biotechnology explains.

About 20 patients took part in the study. The inclusion criterion is a serious degree of pathology when conventional medications

do not work. In this case, the body will be supported by replacement therapy, which does not pose any health risks. The cells are obtained from donor material — also another step towards science.

“Previously, we mainly worked with material from a patient who was a donor and a recipient at the same time. But these cells were not always of high quality, so we decided to take them from people who, for medical reasons, needed to reduce the volume of the gland,” Anna Poleshko explains.



Sergei Pinchuk, research fellow

The biomaterial is treated in the laboratory with special enzymes to isolate individual cells from the tissue. They are cultivated to the required quantity. After this treatment, the patients' condition improved, and this is a serious breakthrough.

First aid for baldness

The institute, together with BSMU, also learned how to treat miscarriage. Due to the thin layer of the endometrium, the embryo cannot implant in the uterus, both

during natural fertilisation and in cases of IVF. A cellular product came to the rescue. And there are already successes. Almost a third of the patients who participated in the study managed to become pregnant. The thickness of their endometrium has returned to the physiological norm.

Another new product is for the treatment of baldness caused primarily by stress, Covid or other unfavourable factors.

“We extract stem cells from the hair follicle and multiply them in the required quantity. We administer them to patients. As a result, the effect is approximately 70 percent. Among the very first manifestations, an increase in hair thickness and growth of vellus hair was recorded,” says Anna Poleshko.

The Institute of Biophysics and Cell Engineering has come to another breakthrough — they have created a product that contains waste products of stem cells. The fact is that while they are growing, they produce various growth factors, hormones, vesicles with a bilayer membrane, which also contain nutrients and nucleic acids, into the environment.

“We enrich stem cells with this medium. Thus, we have obtained a universal product that can be used for any diagnosis. Its effectiveness in treating bone tissue defects has been confirmed. Thanks to this technology, it is possible to save time for obtaining the drug, and the effectiveness will remain the same,” Anna Poleshko points out.

It's about genetics

Our scientists test people for the most aggressive forms of cancer

The innovative project of the Belarusian State Medical University to study the syndrome of multiple endocrine tumours is nearing completion. Some conclusions can already be drawn. For example, in terms of prevalence in our population, the most aggressive and rapidly progressing is medullary thyroid cancer.

First, let's figure out what kind of syndrome this is — multiple endocrine tumours. In simple words, this is when malignant or benign formations grow on several endocrine glands. They are transmitted genetically, can be present in every second direct relative of the patient and appear mainly on the thyroid, parathyroid glands and adrenal glands. Moreover, their combination is not accidental; scientists began to think about it back in the 1960s.

“Our project is carried out under the auspices of BSMU together with the city oncology and republican oncology centres. We carry out molecular genetic testing in a unique laboratory specially designed for this purpose at the Alexandrov National Cancer Centre. We are trying to estimate how often multiple endocrine tumour syndrome occurs in Belarusians. This is the first such study in our population,” Professor of the Department of Endocrinology of BSMU

Alla Shepelkevich notes.

Why is the syndrome dangerous? Firstly, the high mortality rate from medullary cancer, including among children. Formations on the adrenal glands, in turn, greatly increase blood pressure and are fraught with vascular disasters — strokes and heart attacks. And tumours of the parathyroid gland lead to disturbances in phosphorus-calcium metabolism and fractures, for example, of the femoral neck or spine.



Interview with Alla Shepelkevich on the project for the treatment of endocrine diseases

Genetic testing carried out by scientists prevents deaths. At an early stage of the disease, the thyroid gland can be removed, and the consequences can be avoided. The study involves all patients with medullary cancer — their genetic mutations are checked. That is, can they pass on their syndrome to relatives?

“394 people were tested, risks were identified in 60 of them. There were 134 first-degree relatives who underwent

surgery for medullary cancer. Risks of genetic mutations were found in 88 of them. Every year we add 20–25 patients,” Alla Shepelkevich explains.

The five-year project will be completed in 2024. The final data will be known. In the meantime, scientists are preparing their Ph.D. dissertation. The research uses the most modern techniques, including molecular genetic testing. An algorithm for identifying multiple endocrine tumour syndrome in patients and their relatives has been proposed.



Tourism is on the rise

The export of tourist services amounted to \$175.4 million in ten months of 2023

Traveling in Belarus becomes fashionable both in our compatriots and guests from abroad. This is confirmed by the observations of the players of the tourists and preliminary statistics. At what pace our hospitality niche ended the year 2023 and what is listed in the plans for the 2024th, we learned from the Director of the Tourism Department of the Sport and Tourism Ministry Irina Voronovich.

By Maria Druk

The year turned out to be dynamic

— According to your observations, what was the year 2023 for tourists?

— Dynamic, bright and positive. Moreover, we see that the pace is growing in all directions. There is an increase in away tourism, but interest in the internal remains increased and adds — which means that we were able to interest our citizens more and more often travel in our country, this has become a habit. Thanks to the expansion of flight programmes with Russian regions, the organisation of railway and bus routes, more and more guests from the eastern neighbourly country go to us. We see that the concept of off-season is smoothed out. People try to relax at different times of the year, actively study options and an acceptable format. You just need to learn how to competently see the tourist potential and manage it. As, for example, this is done in agroecotourism: the demand for rest is year-round. Now, for example, there you can ride a sleigh, on horses, attend master classes, sign up for New Year and Christmas programmes. New services are constantly related to both outdoor activities and accommodation, food, etc., against the background of this, the number of tourist companies is growing — for the first time in the register of subjects of tourism, there are so many of them — over 1.9 thousand.

— The preferences of Belarusians on the issue of rest in their country changed?

— Our compatriots are not prone to a sharp change in their habits: in the trend-cultural, cognitive, wellness, ecological tourism, rest in agricultural units and near reservoirs. At the same time, the demand for visiting industrial enterprises is growing during excursions on them, the organisation of business events. I will note one curious fact: young people look more and more often in the sanatorium to take a breath in the fresh air, strengthen their health, get high-quality spa treatments.

As for statistics, we are waiting for official data for the year in March. Nevertheless, we expect that the number of or-

ganised — through travel agencies — trips around the country from compatriots will exceed 1.6 million. For comparison: in the pre-Covid 2019, this indicator amounted to 1.1 million people. In 2022, it was 1.53 million. But we see that the trend for the growth of domestic tourism is preserved.

Hospitality knows no boundaries

— What about incoming tourism?

— We see that a tourist flow from Russia is growing — on the loading of accommodation equipment, sanatoriums, according to the reviews of guides. Yes, and the numbers in the export of tourist services are confirmed by: for ten months of 2023 — \$175.4 million. This is almost 20 percent more compared to the same period of 2022. There are more and more options for convenient movement between our country and Russian regions, based on demand, more new tourist routes appear. In particular, we began to interact more closely with neighbouring regions — the Pskov, Sverdlovsk, Smolensk, Bryansk, Kaluga and others.

We expect the discovery of new flights with Russian regions, increasing the frequency of existing ones. In parallel, we work on the harmonisation of legislation, bring approaches to the regulation of spheres.

— Tourists from what regions of Russia are coming to us most often?

— Mostly from Western and Central, from the Urals. Simply put, of those with whom we have good logistics, there is a clear contractual base about co-operation. We, so to speak, are one of these regions among the priority for 2024. There are ten of them — these are Moscow and the Moscow Region, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, Murmansk, Tyumen, Nizhny Novgorod, Pskov, Smolensk, Bryansk Regions, Bashkortostan and Tatarstan.

— Russia is in the top of entry tourism leaders. But who else is near?

— Tourists from China are actively going to us. In January–November 2023, more than 11.4 thousand citizens of the Middle Kingdom visited our country. This is 1.5 times more than in 11 months of 2022. The most popular in Chinese citizens in our country are also such types of tourism as agroecotourism, environmental, historical, cultural, educational and business. For example, Mir, Nesvizh, Kossovo Castles, visiting national parks, reserves, natural areas — Belovezhskaya Pushcha and Na-libokskaya Pushcha, other natural objects are very popular. Historical and cultural 'red' tourism is also popular—we are talking about visiting tourist objects related to the history of the USSR. In this regard, the most interesting is the Brest Fortress, Stalin's Line, the House Museum of the 1st Congress of the RSDLP and others.

At the level of 2022, a tourist flow from Türkiye is held: for 11 months — more than 10.6 thousand people. At the same time, we see that interest in mutual trips of residents of the EAEU and CIS space will only grow. Co-operation plans for 2024 include Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan.

The visa-free entry for our Western neighbours is also in demand. According to the State Border Committee, from the beginning of the visa-free order of entry into Belarus, the total number of guests from Latvia, Lithuania and Poland exceeded 800 thousand people. This suggests that a steady interest in visiting our country, despite the obstacles from the leadership of neighbouring states, is preserved. It is gratifying that the Belarusian 'visa-free' regime is extended for 2024. Thus, Belarus once again demonstrates its openness to interaction, the desire to preserve the established connections between compatriots and their relatives, friends, his friendliness.

Following the sun and unknown atmosphere

— What was this season for tour operators?

— In the top of the on-site directions — the traditional marine resorts of Türkiye, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Traveling to Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan attract our citizens, and Uzbekistan was especially popular. Do not forget, of course, about Russia. At the same time, against the background of the fact that our compatriots are already accustomed to long flights, they are already easier to discover exotic directions, such as Cuba, Sri Lanka or the Maldives. They should squeeze them a flight to the Hainan tropical island in China — the launch of the air offense between Minsk and Sanya is waiting in mid-January.

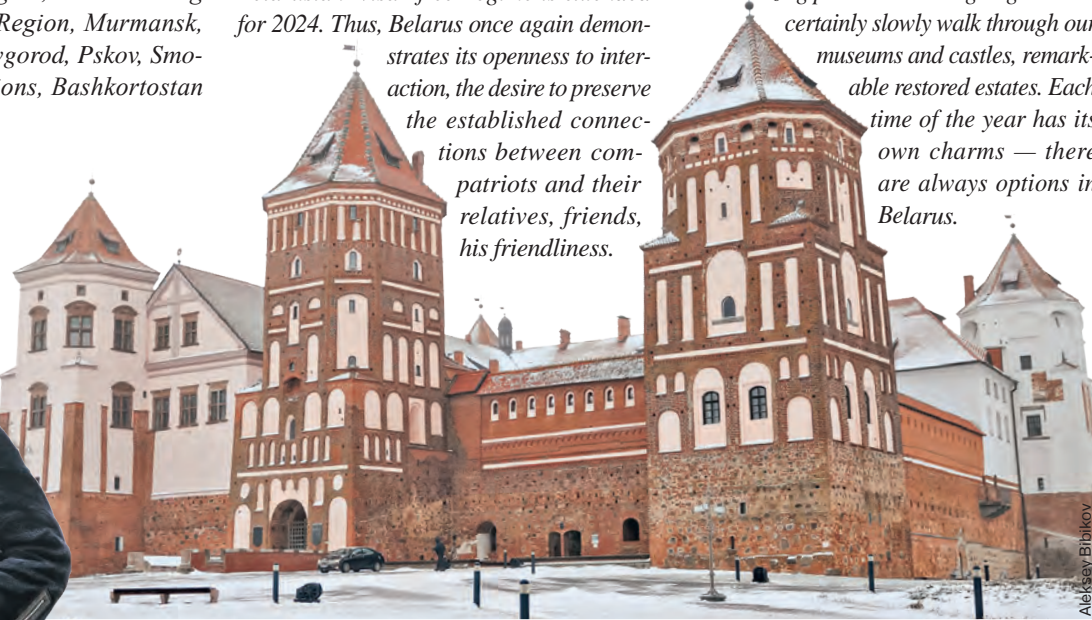
On zests of winter

— Finally, the advice from the pros in tourism: what objects should be visited in winter?

— The first option tells the time of the year: to Belovezhskaya Pushcha — to Father Frost. By the way, this year the 20th anniversary of his residence is celebrated. This is a great opportunity to change the situation, plunge into the atmosphere of magic, and enjoy the beauty of the winter forest. In addition, in snowy weather, it's time to get skiing or skates. In each city and the district centre, festivals and fair events in the main areas are held on weekends — we must go there! A huge number of street entertainment, animation programs and gastronomic surveys are offered. In the evening — a theatre or ballet: now amazing productions are going on. And certainly slowly walk through our museums and castles, remarkable restored estates. Each time of the year has its own charms — there are always options in Belarus.



Irina Voronovich



What tomorrow will bring...

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko,

“By saying goodbye to the Year of Peace and Creation, we wish that the coming one would be the same peaceful for all of us, for Belarus, that it would be peaceful for our neighbours, and for all people. Of course, we want everything the best to multiply... In the political field of our country, the ancient Slavic tradition of people’s rule will return to life in a new status. The Belarusian People’s Congress will begin its work for the first time as a constitutional body. In this way, we will create the foundation of the Belarusian national statehood. On the single voting day, our Parliament and the councils’ deputies will be elected.”

In a New Year’s address to the Belarusian people, on the night of January 1st, 2024

By Anton Popov

Time to choose

The coming year will be a record in recent history for the number of electoral events. Countries with a combined population of almost four billion people will determine their future. Our country is no exception.

The 2024 election campaign will be the largest in the history of independent Belarus. On a single voting day — February 25th — deputies of the House of Representatives and local Councils of Deputies will be elected. On April 4th, the composition of the Council of the Republic will be determined. And before April 18th, the results of the elections of delegates to the Belarusian People’s Congress will be announced.

Currently, the country continues to nominate candidates for deputies. On December 25th, registration of initiative groups to collect voter signatures was completed. In total, according to the Central Election Commission of Belarus, as of December 27th, 2023, 164 groups were registered in support of the nomination of candidates for deputies of the House of Representatives and 11,221 for deputies of local councils. The election commissions have already received documents on the nomination of 366 candidates for deputies of local councils. The process of accreditation of national observers at territorial and district election commissions is actively underway. More than 3.3 thousand are accredited.

The focus will be on the presidential elections in Russia, which will take place from March 15th to 17th, and in the United States, scheduled for November 5th. As for the forecasts regarding the start of the

On the main trends in the international arena in 2024

According to the Chinese calendar, the coming year 2024 is the year of the Green Wood Dragon. The mythical beast is a symbol of unification and success. Those who strive for peace and create new opportunities will benefit. But in anger, the dragon is terrible and can destroy what he himself has created... Let’s try to trace the most striking trends in the international arena.

electoral race of our closest ally, its result is unlikely to come as a surprise: the current head of state, Vladimir Putin, has every chance of being re-elected for a new term. According to a December poll by VTsIOM, 79.3 percent of Russians trust him.

But overseas the intrigue remains, and this time the struggle between Democrats and Republicans promises to be much hotter and dirtier than in 2020. The political landscape of the United States has remained virtually unchanged during this time, but tectonic shifts have occurred in the rest of the world that directly affect the state of affairs before the upcoming elections.

The past year has been a time of uncertainty for both donkeys and elephants. Trump began 2023 under the threat of criminal prosecution, and then it seemed that American justice was about to grab him with its tenacious claws. However, the ex-President managed not only to avoid going to jail, but also to use trials to increase his own rating. An attempt to challenge him within the party by Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley was unsuccessful: Trump’s lead by the end of the year became so impressive that it can be said that he will most likely represent the Republicans in the 2024 elections. And he has a chance to take revenge for his loss. In national polls measuring the popularity of a particular candidate, Trump overtook Biden for the first time at the end of December, which indicates a loss of authority by the current occupant of the White House amid an unsuccessful foreign policy and endless legal battles surrounding his son Hunter.

No one can predict how the situation will turn out this time. High election ratings in the United States mean little against the backdrop of a fierce battle between parties, during which the parties use the entire arsenal of legal and illegal ways to annoy their opponents.

The January 13th elections in Taiwan could potentially usher in a period of instability on the island and throughout the region that could escalate into a

crisis with unpredictable consequences, including Beijing’s intervention to protect the common people.

Also in 2024, there will be elections to the European Parliament, national elections in India, as well as general elections in South Africa, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All campaigns are of interest, since the future path of development will be determined in large, dynamically developing countries with rapidly growing economies.

The main front of the anti-colonial struggle

The third year of the Special Military Operation promises to be even more intense than the previous two. Kiev’s failure in the summer-autumn offensive led to a significant depletion of human and material resources of the Zelensky regime.

The failure is aggravated by the West’s fatigue from protracted hostilities, which is expressed in a significant weakening of aid flows to Ukraine and the exaggeration of the topic of peace negotiations at different levels.

Meanwhile, there is no prospect of peace or at least a truce in the near future. The Ukrainian Armed Forces, despite serious losses, did not suffer a strategic defeat, and the successes of the Russian army near Bakhmut, Marinka, Avdeevka and in the Zaporozhye direction are of a tactical nature.

By diluting with reinforcements the front-line units that were thoroughly thinned out during the ‘counter-offensive’

and planting this hodgepodge in prepared fortifications, the Ukrainian Armed Forces can create certain problems for the advance of Russian troops deeper into the country.

The red thread in the plans of the Kiev regime for the next year is the use of F-16 fighters. On the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, “If they [F-16 aircraft] are stationed at air bases outside Ukraine and used in combat, we will have to look at how we can hit and where we can hit those weapons which are used against us.” The latest Russian fifth-generation fighters, the Su-57, as reported by the Russian Ministry of Defence and the Rostec State Corporation, are already entering service with the troops.

Another trend of the coming year in the context of the Special Military Operation will be the intensification of Western attempts to attract third countries to supply weapons to Ukraine. NATO’s military-industrial complex did not show significant growth in 2023. Washington and Brussels are not yet ready to completely refuse assistance to Kiev, so countries such as Japan, South Korea and Pakistan will try to drag them into the adventure.

There is a high probability of activation of frozen conflicts, as happened in 2023 in the Gaza Strip, with the help of which the West will try to keep the neocolonial system from collapse. However, positive forecasts, in particular regarding the strengthening of the role of BRICS and the SCO, strengthening ties with the countries of the African continent, as well as accelerating the processes of de-dollarisation of the world economy, still prevail. The final collapse of the Western-centric system is still far away, but all the signs of a systemic crisis and the irreversibility of deconstruction are visible to the naked eye.



GLOBAL

The Minsk Times
Thursday
January 11
2024

7



Japan assesses damage from massive quake

The death toll from a devastating earthquake in central Japan has already passed 100, regional authorities said, with the number of missing exceeding 200

A magnitude-7.6 earthquake hit Ishikawa Prefecture on the country’s main island, Honshu, on January 1st. It was the strongest quake to occur in the prefecture in more than a century. “It’s probably one of the largest earthquakes on the west coast of Japan,” says Takuya Nishimura, an earthquake scientist at Kyoto University in Japan.

The massive earthquake prompted tsunami warnings, with ocean waves reaching more than 1m high in some areas along the coastline.

On the Noto peninsula, the destruction included buildings damaged by fire, houses flattened, fishing boats sunk or washed

ashore, and highways hit by landslides.

“I’m amazed the house is this broken and everyone in my family managed to come out of it unscathed,” said Akiko, standing outside her parents’ tilting home in the badly hit city of Wajima.

The way 2024 started ‘will be etched into my memory forever’, she said following the ‘long and violent’ earthquake.

“It was such a powerful jolt,” Tsugumasa Mihara, 73, said as he queued with hundreds of others for water in the nearby town of Shika.

In response to the disaster, the Japanese military has deployed 1,000 soldiers to the

affected regions, where over 3,000 first responders are already present. They are currently working together to assist with rescue and recovery efforts that are still ongoing in the Noto peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture, the epicentre of the earthquake. Continuing aftershocks, rubble on roadways and damaged roads were hampering rescue operations amid a race to find survivors.

“Very extensive damage has been confirmed, including numerous casualties, building collapses and fires,” Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said, after a disaster response meeting. “We have to race against time to search for and rescue victims of the disaster.”

Record number of deaths amid junior doctors’ strikes in UK

British health service faces its ‘hardest January ever’ as doctors walked out for six days

Hospital doctors in England on January 3rd this year began their longest consecutive strike in the seven-decade history of Britain’s NHS. Junior doctors — those below the consultant level — started a six-day walkout, in a major escalation of their long-running pay dispute with the UK government.

The industrial action comes at one of the busiest times of the year for the state-funded NHS, when it faces increased pressure from winter respiratory illnesses. It also quickly follows a three-day strike held by doctors just before Christmas. “This January could be one of the most difficult starts to the year the NHS has ever faced,” said its National Medical Director Stephen Powis.

Britain experienced a record number of excess deaths last year amid repeated NHS strikes and the continued cost of the COVID pandemic. Nearly 53,000 more people died in 2023 than normal — the highest figure recorded in a non-pandemic year since WWII, *Telegraph* analysis shows. Doctors went on strike for 38 days last year, and experts fear the disruption contributed to the high number of excess deaths.

Experts have also said that the impact of the pandemic, lockdowns, and the resulting long waiting lists have all contributed to excess deaths.



Teenager becomes first Tetris victor

A 13-year-old in Oklahoma is believed to be the first person ever to beat Tetris since the game’s release more than three decades ago

Previously, only bots powered by AI had forced the game, popularised by the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) and Game Boy consoles, to the end of its ‘kill screen’, where its signature blocks are falling so fast that the game itself can’t continue.

In a video documenting his feat and posted, the Oklahoma teenager, known as Blue Scuti online and by his legal name, Willis Gibson, plays for roughly 38 minutes and reaches level 157 before saying, ‘Oh, I missed it’, believing that a misplaced block scuttled his attempt.

But he recovers, and as blocks zip downward, he says, “Please crash,” and completes another line of blocks, the mech-

anism for scoring points in Tetris. The game freezes, the de facto victory, and he says, “Oh my God! Yes! I’m going to pass out. I can’t feel my hands.” His score read ‘999999’.

Vince Clemente, the President of the Classic Tetris World Championship, told the *New York Times*, “It’s never been done by a human before. It’s basically something that everyone thought was impossible until a couple of years ago.”

According to 404 Media, Willis had become one of the country’s top competitive Tetris players since he started playing just two years ago, employing a newly popular technique of manipulating the NES controller known as ‘rolling’.

Extreme cold start to the year

Thousands have been left without power in the Nordic countries as extreme cold hits the region and much of western Europe, causing floods in France, Germany and the Netherlands

Thousands in the Nordic countries were left without power as gusty winds and snow wreaked havoc in the region, leaving many drivers stuck in their cars on the hazardous, clogged highways.

In fact, on January 3rd, Sweden experienced the coldest January night in 25 years, registering a temperature of -43.6 degrees Celsius. This extreme cold spell affected both Sweden and neighbouring Finland. Denmark and Norway, both battered by wind and snow, were also similarly affected.

The extreme cold that hit the Scandinavian region is part of a storm that has also impacted Western Europe. Heavy rains have led to floods in France, Germany, and the Netherlands, adding to the ongoing flooding in these regions.

One death linked to the weather was reported in France. Several towns in northern France were underwater after several days of rain.

Mild but wet and windy conditions prevailed further south, where a storm wreaked havoc in parts of western Europe.

The storm, which has been named Henk by the official weather services of Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands, has caused power cuts, transport troubles, property damage and disruption across the UK.

In France, heavy rains have pummeled the northern Pas-de-Calais and Nord regions, forcing the evacuation of about 200 people and knocking out power to 10,000 households, according to local authorities.



Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

New Year's Eve in 'civilised Europe' was rocked by both festive fireworks and riots. "Unfortunately, this situation during the Christmas and New Year holidays on the streets of European cities has surprised few people in recent years," the *Voice of Europe* noted with sadness. "The systematic work of the European authorities with their citizens on the subject of universal liberalism and tolerance for traditions and habits that are alien to European citizens, which for law-abiding Europeans results in the celebration of their own holidays on their own territory, which is very unusual for them."

By Maksim Osipov

Germany: hundreds detained, 54 police officers injured

The irresponsible use of pyrotechnics was the main cause of unrest in the German capital. According to *Bild*, more than a thousand people gathered at Alexanderplatz, with some launching pyrotechnics directly into the crowd. In the Pankow borough, a pyrotechnic rocket completely hit an apartment in a residential building, causing a fire that killed a cat.

Berlin police reported that New Year's Eve resulted in 54 injured police officers and more than 390 detained. These figures could have been higher if police had not carried out a special raid on the eve of the holidays, during which a shipment of 30,000 large firecrackers and 80 ball bombs was confiscated in the Berlin district of Neukölln.

According to *Bild*, more than 20 more people were detained in Frankfurt am Main for launching pyrotechnics at police officers. The night was not calm in Leipzig either: there a crowd of almost three thousand people rioted, throwing stones and firecrackers at the police station. And on Leipzig's Augustusplatz Square, several people were injured from firecracker explosions, including three children.

France: 745 burned cars

French law enforcement officers detained 211 people on New Year's Eve, said Minister of the Interior and Overseas Territories Gerald Darmanin. "This night we again mobilised together with our law enforcement forces for our safety," he wrote on the Ministry of Internal Affairs account. "Major celebrations went off quietly, particularly in



Paris, where more than a million people gathered." *'Quietly' turned out to be quite relative. On New Year's Eve in France, vandals burned 745 cars (a year ago, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs reports for January 1st, 2023, 'only' 690 cars were burned in France).* During the suppression of the riots, about 40 law enforcement officers were injured, and 381 people were detained.

Netherlands: 'a night of unacceptable violence'

New Year's Eve in the Netherlands was 'a night of unacceptable violence', a law enforcement official told NOS television. As reported by Reuters, several dozen law enforcement officers were injured as a result of attacks on police with fireworks and stones. In Rotterdam, more than a hundred cars were set on fire, and in Amsterdam, The Hague and some other cities, riot squads were brought in to disperse aggressive crowds.

On New Year's Eve, Dutch police detained more than 200 hooligans. Special riot control units were required to pacify them.

As the ANP news agency explained, in several places, including Amsterdam, groups of people deliberately tried to provoke clashes with the police, threw firecrackers, and damaged buildings and cars. And in the port of Rotterdam, 110 cars and scooters were set on fire.

Belgium: barricades, water cannon and 206 detainees

In traditionally quiet Belgium, 206 people were taken into custody due to clashes with police and violations of the fireworks ban in Brussels alone.

In Antwerp, this figure slightly exceeded 60 people, but it was in this city that the police were forced to set up real barricades on the streets. Nevertheless, bloody clashes occurred on the streets of Antwerp between aggressive Arab youth and the police, as a result of which several police cars and one bus stop were burned to the ground, *Voice of Europe* reported.

"Overall, the Prime Minister's decision to ban the purchase and use of fireworks was not heard by society," the police said in a release on New Year's Eve. "In one of the districts of Antwerp called Kiel, the police even had to disperse the crowd. A water cannon was used there." As the *Voice of Europe* notes, 'puppet Belgium has not encountered such scale of urban unrest during the holidays for a very long time'.

New Year's decorations:
barricades, fights and guns

The beginning of 2024 was marked by mass unrest in the EU countries

SHOCK

White wings of Gavriil Vashchenko

In memory of the People's Artist of the BSSR

He, like no one else, knew how to draw flight: birds soaring up, feathers of clouds scattered across the sky — Gavriil Vashchenko had a special, keen sense of the sky and air. And today his paintings seem to blow over us with the wind. Next to them you can breathe deeply. It was Gavriil Vashchenko who made the stork spreading its wings a symbol first of his native Polesie, and then of the whole of Belarus — and he was never offended that other artists quickly picked up this image, without remembering the original authorship: the main thing is that the white wings spread over the Motherland, protecting its people.

By Irina Ovsepyan

He was born in 1928 in the Gomel Region: the village of Chikalovichi, Bragin District, a simple peasant family. He got the sense of beauty from his mother — genuine, unclouded, true: the Polesie peasant woman was a skilled embroiderer, who created elegant patterns. Since childhood, the future artist was fascinated by the nature of his native land — discreet and magically attractive, which in the spring was flooded with melt water so that there was a real sea all around. And then in 1941 war broke into this beautiful world...

All that was left of their native village was ashes; the Vashchenko family miraculously survived the raid: they were already being led to execution when a motorcyclist rushed up to the fascist detachment with orders and, apparently, ordered the occupants not to linger. And the people deprived of their homes were left alive — the enemies had no time to kill... The elder brother Nikolai was at the front, and Gavriil got to the partisans. Years later, these memories were echoed in the films *Breakthrough* and *Ballad of Courage*. However, then he did not even think about becoming an artist, he simply drew homemade playing cards and maps, which was much more serious, as the partisans used them to mark the location of Nazi troops. It was with these 'works' that after the war he went to enter art school — he went completely suddenly, without expecting anything from himself. He was going to be a railway worker, where students were given rations and their own corner in the dormitory, and suddenly he read in a newspaper thrown on the street: the Kyiv School of Applied Arts was announcing an intake of students. He got ready and went there — from torn Belarus to a destroyed city, where he had to sleep in the assembly hall of the school, where at night students even froze to death. And he survived. In cold and hunger, on a meagre bread ration. And



From Time Immemorial, 1981

he remained true to his calling. In his first year, he was taught by Tatyana Yablonskaya, the future famous and great artist. "Our teachers were educated in Paris and Vienna. We learned about all the trends and movements in painting first hand. During class, the teacher could pull out a folder with sheets of paper and say: this is how Misha Vrubel painted," recalled the artist. It was during his years of study that he discovered a craving for monumental art.

A year later he went to finish his studies in Lviv, then on assignment to Chisinau. They received him well, appreciating the talent of the young master, and gave him an apartment. At the age of 29 he became a member of the Union of Artists of the USSR. He could have lived in the lush, bright south, but... in his paintings there was still only Belarusian Polesie, discreet brown-ochre tones — the colours of his native land. And at the first opportunity in 1961, Vashchenko returned to Minsk with his wife and two children: the artist Vladimir Stelmashonok said that at the Belarusian Theatre and Art Institute (now the Academy of Arts), a competition was open for the vacancy of the head of the Department of Decorative and Applied Arts. It was in this institute that Vashchenko spent the next four decades, training a whole galaxy of masters.

Nevertheless, teaching, which he threw himself into, did not interfere with his own crea-



Mother's Wings, 1970

tive development. Being a realist, Vashchenko never confined himself to any narrowly defined boundaries. His still life *Cyclamens*, which he presented at a youth exhibition at the Palace of Arts in 1966, went to Moscow, to VDNKh, during the Days of Belarusian Culture. The still life returned from there with a bronze medal, which was truly fantastic.

"When I moved to Minsk, people immediately labelled me and often pressed me," the artist recalled. "I was greeted with hostility and assigned to formalism. And since I stood for the fact that culture is always national, I was declared a nationalist." Recognition in the capital of the Soviet Union was a salvation, as well as the help of the director of the National Art Museum Yelena Aladova, the good genius of Belarusian artists of the 20th century. It was she who 'pushed' through the works of Vashchenko, Savitsky, Shchemelev, which art functionaries did not want to allow into all-Union exhibitions — and the works returned

from there with awards. This is how *Ballad of Courage*, a painting depicting a partisan forest as a fortress from a bird's eye view, received a silver medal named after Mitrofan Grekov. Thus, the work of Gavriil Vashchenko *My Polesie*, in which the famous storks circle, was awarded a gold medal at VDNKh...

And it was Vashchenko who saved the capital's Red Church from demolition and alterations: in it, it was dilapidated, there was a warehouse for a film studio and it was assumed that there would be the Cinema House in this place. The artist was offered to design the interior and make stained glass windows. "I dedicated the stained glass windows to the theme of cinema," Vashchenko later said. "If you look closely, the three 'roses' in the church are a typical photographic lens. Moreover, the colour scheme was not chosen by chance — these are combinations of the colours of the flags of all the union republics. By the way, this building was going to be demolished. However, when Pyotr Masharov saw what an ensemble I managed to create there (the sun just illuminated the stained glass windows — they sparkled), he was amazed that people wanted to destroy such beauty!"

The day of the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant became a black day for Gavriil Vashchenko. His native village found itself in the exclu-

sion zone... Outwardly he was calm, but pain broke through in the pictures: swift horses trying to get away from trouble, while covered by a poisonous cloud — *Radiation*, *Chernobyl Requiem*, *Wormwood Star*, *Mother Martyr*, *Trouble*, *Chernobyl Apple Trees*... He only managed to visit there once after the disaster, when he ventured into the exclusion zone together with filmmakers who began filming in the 1990s documentary about the artist.

"Recognition gives only one advantage: it prohibits you from working worse than you can. And on the contrary: it forces you to work better than you can," said Gavriil Vashchenko. His works were scattered across dozens of countries and museums; in Gomel, he opened his own gallery, donating his works to his compatriots. In the studio he kept the most valuable things, things that could not be sold under any circumstances — portraits of relatives and friends.

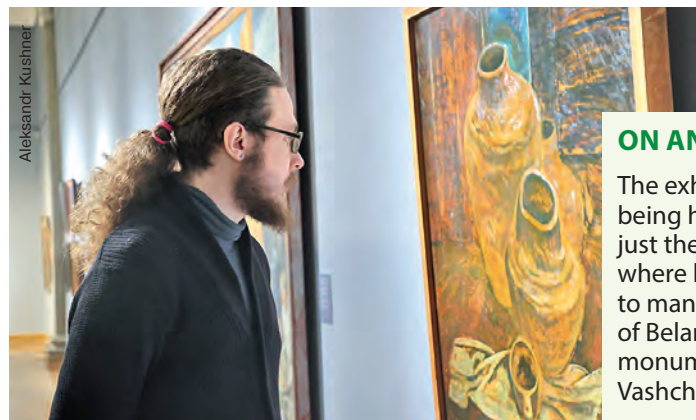
Either in British Cambridge or in the USA, Gavriil Vashchenko was recognized as the Man of the Epoch, Man of the 20th Century. At the same time, he did not listen to anyone's promises, did not wallow in flattery and remained faithful to his Motherland. Memory depicts the artist's grandmother: in a peasant's wimple, a dark face like from an ancient icon, framed by a white towel, a clay bowl with eggs in her hands. Her name was Sincleta, and she lived to be 118 years old... Gavriil Vashchenko himself was given less, but the field he cultivated is still sprouting golden ears of corn to this day. And already his students release their students into the world. The tree of life stretched its branches to the sky, and white storks circled above it, hugging Belarus with their wings...



Oleg Karpovich



Ballad of Courage, 1974



Aleksandr Kushniet

ON AN ANNIVERSARY SCALE

The exhibition of works by Gavriil Vashchenko *The Polesie Giant* is being held at the National Art Museum. For the artist, Polesie is not just the embodiment of the concept of 'small homeland' or the place where he spent his childhood. Vashchenko's works sound like a hymn to man and nature. The master's creative style combines the traditions of Belarusian icon painting and fresco painting with modern monumental art, the founder and pioneer of which was Gavriil Vashchenko. The exhibition will run until February 4th, 2024.

Winter’s fairy tale in Raubichi

Four golds and leadership in the overall standings — our biathletes had a great home stage of the Commonwealth Cup



The biathlon world is in turmoil. While at the next stage of the World Cup in Oberhof, Germany, the races were postponed due to heavy rain and fog, and all the participants were cursing, what was the point of the organizers and officials of the International Federation for the disgusting conditions of the competition and the track, which looked more like a rally road — truck raid (there were much more stones and snags on it than snow), the Commonwealth Cup was held in Raubichi with chic and splendor in the conditions of a real winter fairy tale. Thousands of fans and about a hundred athletes were completely delighted: the incredible atmosphere, amazing intrigue and exorbitant level of competition did not leave anyone indifferent.



BELTA



By Sergei Kanashits,
Tatiana Pastushenko

You had to see it: every day is like a separate life! Starting from Friday, Raubichi was noisy like an agitated beehive: Belarusian and Russian flags, cheerful noise of fans, friendliness in every look, a completely homely atmosphere on the sidelines and in the stands. The competitive part is a separate matter. I haven’t seen such a degree of intense struggle for a long time!

Anton Smolsky is simply handsome. Of course, his wife, Olympic champion Dzinara Alimbekava-Smolenskaya, will talk about this better than anyone else, but now we are talking exclusively about the athletic qualities of our main biathlon star. Anton didn’t start the winter season very well, a lot of things didn’t go well, he had certain health problems, but the home stage in his performance is aerobatics and Das Ist Fantastisch! Smolsky began his phenomenal victory march on Friday with a sprint, making a golden gift not only to his many fans, but also to his beloved wife on her birthday, and con-



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tinued on Saturday and Sunday, winning the pursuit and mass start in brilliant style. The unusually spectacular format of these competitions in itself implies an unpredictable plot, and when our unsurpassed biathlon Figaro is in the leading role, this is better than any blockbuster. The pursuit, despite three misses at the shooting range, Anton won with casual ease, finishing to a deafening ovation from the public with the state flag in his hand. But the most spectacular victory in this wonderful golden series was the victory in the mass start for our prime minister. The fight at the distance turned out to be such that the traffic jams burned out due to



forest, because Anton Smolsky did everything like a true maestro: clearly, quickly and most importantly accurately. For the Belarusian rocket, getting ahead of Russian Rustam Kayumov, who left the shooting range a little earlier, was a matter of technique, although he did not give up until the last meters of the distance.

However, our joy would not be complete if not for the magnificent Hanna Sola! We can all only hypothetically assume how difficult it is to return to professional sports after the birth of a child. But what you really have to go through and overcome — ask Sola. At the second stage of the Commonwealth Cup in Ufa, she managed to win silver in the sprint, but, alas, her shooting failed in the pursuit and mass start. Problems with accuracy continued to torment the athlete in Raubichi — they left her far behind the winners in the first two disciplines. The mass start was the last chance to re-

habilitate, and Hanna took full advantage of it, performing an amazing solo on the ski track to the delight of the fans. The last shooting was the icing on the cake. Hanna missed twice, and another cartridge went into the target area, shaking the plate in the shooting rig, like the scales of fate. Fortune favoured us — the hit was counted! Well, Sola’s speed on the track is a song: with three total penalty laps, she was ahead of the Russians Tamara Derbusheva and Elizaveta Kaplina at the finish (both had one inaccurate shot) by 5 and 15 seconds, respectively. Bravo! “I was really looking forward to all these races. Nothing worked, and I was very upset because I wanted to show the result, but there was none. Thoughts appeared: what am I doing here, it would be better to take care of the child... It’s good that people supported me. Thank them very much. Support is very important,” Hanna said after the finish. It turns out we won together!



Anton Stepanishchev

Photo of the week

The ancient ritual holiday of Kolyada begins on Christmas Eve and ends on Epiphany. Carolers (mummers) go around houses with songs, dances and good wishes. In the photo: caroling ritual in the agro-town of Kopti, Vitebsk District

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



January 7th is Day of Banking and Financial Workers in the Republic of Belarus. Bankers, economists, and financiers are involved in money management.

The banking system is considered a reliable support for the economy of any state, and the high professionalism, efficiency and competence of financial specialists is the key to the financial well-being of the country.

On January 7th, 1610, Galileo Galilei discovered the moons of Jupiter — through the 32x telescope he created, he saw not only the lunar landscape, mountain ranges and peaks, but also discovered the four largest satellites of Jupiter, which are now called Galilean — Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto. Now scientists know 95 satellites of Jupiter, among which the Galilean are the largest.



On January 8th, 1851, physicist Jean Bernard Leon Foucault, thanks to the apparatus he designed, received proof that the Earth rotates. The device consisted of a brass ball suspended on a steel wire. Having rocked the ball, Foucault observed a rotation of the swing

plane by several degrees and concluded that the rotation of the Earth was observed. There are now about 20 similar pendulums installed in the world. There is a Foucault pendulum in Belarus — at the Maxim Tank Pedagogical University.

On January 8th, 1935, Elvis Aaron Presley (1935-1977) was born — an American singer and actor, one of the most commercially successful performers of popular music of the 20th century. Also known as the 'King of Rock and Roll'. Presley is a winner of three Grammy Awards and one of the first musicians included in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The American magazine *Rolling Stone* placed Presley in third place on the list of the greatest singers of all time.



January 9th is International Choreographers Day. The term 'choreography', which came into use in the 18th century, is of Greek origin and literally translates as 'recording of a dance, hopping, round dance', is the art of composing and staging a dance. In a broad sense, choreography today generally refers to all dance art. A choreographer is involved in staging the dance of an individual performer or group. He or she acts as a coach for the dancer.



On January 9th, 1908, Maria Osipova (1908-1999) was born, a participant in the Minsk anti-fascist underground and partisan movement in the Minsk Region during the Great Patriotic War, Hero of the Soviet Union. During the war, she created an underground group in Minsk, was a liaison for the partisan detachments of N.M.Nikitin, 'Dima', 'Local', and the 'Uncle Kolya' brigade. She was one of the organisers of the destruction of the Nazi General Commissioner of Belarus Wilhelm Kube.



On January 9th, 1769, in Russia, by decree of Catherine II, the first paper money came into circulation under the name 'assignatia' — the predecessor of the modern rouble. The banknotes resembled the title page of a book: vertical format, elegant fonts, one-color printing, hand-made white paper with filigree — figured watermarks. The death penalty was introduced for counterfeiting money, as fraudsters quickly learned to convert 25-rouble banknotes into 75-rouble notes.



On January 9th, 1932, a 13th century treasure belonging to the Zapotec people was discovered in the ruins of Monte



Alban (Mexico). The Zapotecs knew how to build magnificent buildings and temples, knew how to process rock crystal, and make gold jewellery of amazing beauty. More than five hundred objects were found in the tomb, including a golden mask of the god Xipe Totec, gold chased bracelets, necklaces made of gold and pearls, clasps and buckles made of jade, turquoise, amber, obsidian, and coral. And the most mysterious discovery from Monte Alban is crystal human skulls.



On January 10th, 49 BC — Gaius Julius Caesar, returning from Gaul, which he had conquered, approached the border river of

Rome, the Rubicon. Crossing the Rubicon, Caesar deliberately cut off his path to retreat, deciding to become the sole ruler of Rome. Since then, the expression 'crossing the Rubicon' has become a catchphrase and means the point of no return.

January 10th is the birthday of the metro. On January 10th, 1863, the world's first subway line opened in London. There were seven stations on it. The new type of public transport immediately gained popularity, as it became the fastest in the city.

