



1st Belarusian
Media
Community
Forum held
in Minsk

6



The national flag
of our country
is raised on
the summit of
Mount Everest

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INTERNATIONAL

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You can enjoy the aroma and appreciate the beauty of lilac in the Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences

In full bloom

‘Minsk Beauty’, ‘Mulatto’ and ‘Alenushka’: these young ladies will captivate and bewitch you at first sight. Take a look at the Central Botanical Garden in Minsk where the lilac is in full bloom. At the same time, don’t miss the chance to find a flower with five or more petals: as the saying goes, such a find can make a wish come true. → 7



Our power is in truth

The recent meeting of the President with deputies of the House of Representatives, members of the Council of the Republic and representatives of state administration bodies was held at the suggestion of parliamentarians and members of the Constitutional Commission who appealed to the Head of State with a request to organise a meeting to discuss urgent topical issues. Among the invited guests were not only deputies, senators and members of the Constitutional Commission, but also members of the Government, representatives of state structures, governors, political scientists, sociologists, journalists, scientists and bloggers. This is what was discussed during a large and frank conversation.

From riots to strangle tactics

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated, “As we have expected, our ill-wishers from the outside and from within have changed their methods of attacking the state.

They have crossed many red lines and also crossed the boundaries of common sense and human morals. This is not just the information war, this is a modern hybrid war. It is essential to do everything to prevent it from turning into a full-on war.”

He continued, “Everything that they, including those recently apprehended, have testified about will soon be made public. This is why they have moved from organising riots to strangle tactics. They are looking for new vulnerable spots, and they are targeting not only us. We are a testing site for them before they move to the East. They will test everything here and then will go there.”

We should preserve our country

In his address to the world community, Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that there’s no sense in destabilising the country,

control here — it will be another world war,” he said.

The Head of State noted that Belarus does not expect to win this war. However, even if the country stands alone, which will not happen, Aleksandr Lukashenko believes, it will inflict unacceptable damage to the enemy.

Acting in line with law, to protect people

The President announced that, in the case of the Athens-Vilnius flight, a bomb threat came from abroad — from Switzerland. The message was sent to the airports of Athens, Vilnius and Minsk simultaneously. Belarus promptly communicated the information to the crew of the plane in accordance with international rules. “The crew had time to make a decision. We had 123 passengers from various countries and six crew members in danger. The Belarusian nuclear power plant is located close to the flight route. The plane made a U-turn near this area. What if something went wrong? Do we need another Chernobyl here? How would the United States respond in such a situation, given its sad experience?” the Head of the State asked rhetorically.

protecting my people. And I will continue to do so,” he stressed.

On expulsion of Latvian Embassy

Recently, the Mayor of Riga and the Latvian Foreign Minister have replaced the Belarusian state flag with the white-red-white flag at the construction — with the flags of the participating countries — installed in the centre of Riga on occasion of the city’s hosting the IIHF World Championships.

The further expulsion of the employees of the Latvian diplomatic mission from Belarus was commented upon by the President,

“In the situation with the Latvian Embassy and the expulsion of the diplomatic mission, Belarus has done what a sovereign nation-state having the right to act like that does.”

The Head of State also spoke about the incident with our flag in the course of answering questions from parliamentarians. “Such moments arouse in us a sense of patriotism and loyalty. We are becoming statesmen, the nation,” he stressed, underlying the importance of active promotion of state symbols on a regu-

the world is just beginning to reap the consequences of the economic downturn of everything: production, education, trade, “There is a saying that you need to see further than the end of your nose, look forward when everyone sees only as far as their feet. While almost the whole world was closed, we ensured the operation of all the most important systems and did not keep people locked down.”

The times have shown that

At the same time, the Head of State stressed that the \$3bn that Belarus has long been promised for reforms are only, for example, a third of the cost of the Belarusian nuclear power plant. In return, they demand ‘reforms’, the essence of which is the destruction of the Belarusian economy.

“As a result, we will get the looting of the country, which will become impoverished in a day,” said the Head of State. “We must unite and stand



the actions of the Belarusian authorities proved right. Large-scale work to protect people continues today. Aleksandr Lukashenko commented, “It is obvious that, at the post-pandemic recovery stage, Western society is unhappy with the way it’s evolving, how they have been protected, how funds have been distributed, and how vaccination campaigns are going on. In short, they are unhappy with how people are being saved and treated. Today it is important for the West to show that there can be no better examples of dealing with the situation than theirs. Their goal is to distract their people from what is going on in there. Our position on the pandemic is an undesirable experience for them. After all, they will have to answer to their people for all the lockdowns they imposed on them. Belarus, with its recovering economy, is too much for them. That is why they keep attacking us.”

We must unite and stand together

Aleksandr Lukashenko stated that difficult times lie ahead,

“We will react harshly to any sanctions, attacks and provocations — not because we want to have a fight in the middle of the continent. We don’t want it; we’ve had enough of it. It’s because you — there, in the West — leave us no other choice.”

We will cope with any sanctions and temporary difficulties — as it has been before,” the President believes.

together — moving along the path to where we are expected, where our sales markets are, where we will be comfortable, where the doors are open for us. We have outlined measures and they will be related to development. Everything is quite good, even unexpectedly good today on the foreign economic vector. If the West doesn’t want to be our neighbour, that’s their decision. We compensate for the sanctions with our actions in other areas, in other markets. We will replace an inexorably aging Europe with a rapidly growing Asia. Psychologically, our society is ready to become a part of the new Eurasia, its outpost.”

Constitutional referendum: open and democratic

As part of the meeting, the President tackled the work of the Constitutional Commission which is taking into account all constructive proposals of dialogue platforms, NGOs, teams of workers and students.

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed, “The referendum on the new Constitution should be held at the highest level, in an open, democratic and impeccable way. This is the pillar of legitimacy of the new Constitution which will be used by the future generation or even several generations.”

The President emphasised that it is essential to revise the election system in a way to benefit our people and country.

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“We should preserve our country and pass it on to our children in a sound condition. The time has chosen us. We have found ourselves on the front line of a new cold, even freezing cold war. Only countries that will be able to resist this hybrid pressure will hold out.”

The President also noted that the whole world understands that a multi-dimensional, multi-level hybrid war is being waged against Belarus. “The goal is clear. We also know who would benefit from demonising Belarus. We are a small country, but we will respond appropriately. The world knows examples of similar situations. Before making any rushed moves, remember, that Belarus is in the centre of Europe, and if things spin out of

The President added that it’s not just and not so much about the fighter jet which was scrambled according to all the rules. “On my order, all the nuclear plant protection systems, including the air defence, were instantly put on full alert.

My post requires me to protect people. I was thinking about the safety of the country. I ask you to understand one simple thing: if the plane had a bomb and the terrorists intended to blow it up, we would not have been able to do anything about it. However, I could not allow the plane to fall on our people’s heads.”

We remember well the recent plane crash when two pilots died steering the plane away from residential areas. Do not blame me. I acted in line with the law,

lar basis. “We must be ready for this if we want to be a nation, a sovereign and independent state. We need to be more proactive,” added the President.

Power is in people’s interests

Throughout 2020, Belarus was subjected to the unprecedented pressure, reminded the Head of State. He said,

“No country in the world has faced such multifaceted, multi-level terror. Why did they turn against Belarus? Because we did not toe the line, did not bend down and did not succumb to the herd instinct, acted primarily in the interests of people, not someone’s global financial ambitions.”

The President noted that

Talks between the Presidents of Belarus and Russia

Sochi has hosted a meeting of Aleksandr Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin and its agenda focused on the economy, implementation of joint projects in various fields, integration issues, response to external pressure and sanctions policy. The heads of state agreed that Belarusian-Russian co-operation is developing quite dynamically from the economic point of view, though detractors are clearly not happy about this. On addressing Vladimir Putin, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted, “Do you know they went as far as to predict some stagnation in Belarus. The Russian economy is growing. Naturally, our economy moves well because it’s tied to Russia. However, there are always those who want to make problems for us. You know about them.”

Economy inspires optimism

Vladimir Putin greeted his Belarusian colleague, “Thank you for coming. Just like we agreed. We agreed about it even before another loop...”

“Another surge of emotions,” Aleksandr Lukashenko continued the line of thought.

“Yes, a surge of emotions. We have things to discuss without these events. I mean Russia remained Belarus’ key trade and economic partner in Q1 2021. We saw a considerable increase in trade — 18.4 percent. It’s a good trend. It’s important to preserve it and keep the governments working actively,” added the President of Russia. He said that, in June, the first unit of the Belarusian nuclear power plant will be commissioned, “It is also another good example of our co-operation. There are positive trends in other areas. All of it will surely be at the centre of our attention.”

Vladimir Putin noted that work on matters concerning the development of the Union State of Belarus and Russia continued as well. “We do it bearing in mind the need to secure interests of both Belarus and Russia. We just have to take persistent steps, without hurrying it, without rushing ahead. We should act stage by stage while securing our interests. Each side determines what its interests are,” he stressed.

The President of Belarus noted,

“The key thing is that we move forward. You’ve correctly mentioned trade growth. We now calculate virtually every percent. We see that, this year, Belarus-Russia trade will exceed the pre-COVID level. We have set a good pace in this regard.”

Unfair games

The President of Belarus informed his Russian counterpart about the situation with the Ryanair plane that landed at the Minsk airport due to a signal about a bomb threat, “I’ve brought some documents with me since I enjoy such trustful relations with you. I will show them to you so that you could understand what is going on.” Aleksandr Lukashenko reminded that, last year, many countries had to evacuate their citizens from other countries amid the restrictions caused by the pandemic. “Nobody saved their own people more than Russia did by bringing them home from resorts. You even helped us bring about 200 Belarusians from India. We helped bring home some Russians, [the Belarusian air carrier] Belavia helped with it. Everything was closed back then. One airport in Minsk kept working and we were bringing our people home. They [a number of other countries, including in the European Union and the USA] shut down everything,” he said. “They asked Belavia

and our company brought home thousands, thousands of people: Swedes, Germans, Poles, Lithuanians (absolutely everything was closed over there), Americans. Thousands were brought to Minsk because it was the only airport that was still open. And then they took Americans from us or we moved them to the USA. You can’t imagine how grateful they were to us, to Belavia — for the people we’d helped move, for the people we’d saved.”

Continuing the line of thought, the President of Belarus drew attention to the response of the same countries to the incident with the Ryanair aircraft, which landed in Minsk due to the tip about a bomb, “This case with the aircraft has nothing to do with Belavia. There were no Belavia planes there [in the Ryanair flight incident]. The company is based in



the airport. Russian aircraft and aircraft of other countries use the airport. It was someone else’s aircraft. They berate the military because we had to land it there. What does Belavia have to do with it? They’ve pulled out all the stops to punish it. If it wasn’t for you... I see that Moscow refuses to welcome aircraft that want to fly around Belarus [instead of via Belarus’ airspace]. They felt it right away.

But why did they have to punish Belavia workers? Because Belavia brought home thousands during the pandemic. That’s their stance... I will show you some documents. You will understand what was going on and is going on over there. An attempt is in progress to unsettle the situation up to the level of August 2020.”

Dmitry Peskov, the Russian President’s Press Secretary, told reporters about the details of the Sochi talks, “There were mainly two major topics on the agenda: the issues of further development of trade and economic co-operation between Russia and Belarus, as well as the fight against the pandemic.”

The hasty conclusions of European countries on the incident with the Ryanair plane are based solely on emotions, and not on an attempt to clarify the circumstances. From Moscow’s point of view, the situation requires a thoughtful and constructive investigation, Dmitry Peskov noted. According to him, the cascade of hasty conclusions that were made by European capitals, Brussels, rather suggests that this approach is not based on an attempt to really clarify the circumstances, but is based solely on emotions. “The transport ministries of the two countries — Russia and Belarus — have been instructed to organise all aspects of air traffic, including taking into account the upcoming holiday period and a large number of Belarusian citizens who want to come to the Black Sea coast of Russia, and also, importantly, taking into account the fact that a large number of Belarusian citizens will need to somehow return to their homeland,” the Kremlin representative said.

The second tranche of the state loan of Russia in the amount of \$500m has been agreed. The money will be transferred in the near future.

In general, according to Dmitry Peskov, the meeting of the presidents in Sochi was constructive and rich. At the same time, he stressed that this is only one of a number of permanent Russian-Belarusian contacts at the highest level.

Unite the Commonwealth force



Minsk has hosted the CIS Heads of Government Council summit. The event is traditionally held in the country that chairs the organisation. At the recent meeting, its participants communicated live — which was also noted by the President who met with the heads of the delegations at the Palace of Independence, “We cannot sit locked up in our countries all the time. We need to open up, to engage in a live dialogue, go meet each other. I think you will agree that no technical means of communication, even the most advanced ones which we sometimes have to use, can replace live trustful communication. Moreover, there have always been many issues for discussion. There are no fewer of them now.”

According to the Head of State, the summit delegations demonstrate an extremely important example of the value of live communication by the fact of their arrival. He stressed that we can now assert for sure that the project named the Commonwealth of Independent States has proved to be a success and has again showed its viability in this difficult time.

To confirm his words, the President paid attention of those present to the evident matters, “Even the collapse of the Soviet Union could not completely disrupt the strong integration ties between the fraternal Soviet republics.”

According to the President, one of the arguments in favour of integration is the purposeful work carried out by external forces against the Commonwealth, “Today, there is an obvious disregard

for the principles of international law, an increase in the number of cases of the use of the so-called right of the strong. To be honest, I’ve been wondering more and more lately if they’re as strong as they can show.”

Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the most important tasks for the Commonwealth have been outlined in the programme documents of the Belarusian chairmanship and the country is promoting them in the EAEU format. Many of them have already been implemented within the framework of the Belarus-Russia Union State. The President stressed, “It is obvious that the governments of the CIS countries and the CIS bodies should focus on the development of the common economic space. Let me say it straight: unless we deal with this matter

in the near future, the Commonwealth of Independent States can hardly be efficient. More so, the EAEU cannot be efficient either.”

Speaking with the heads of the delegations, Aleksandr Lukashenko did not ignore the topic of the world-changing pandemic. According to him, no one could have guessed what the consequences would be, “However, having united, we have shown that we can [successfully overcome challenges]. We’ve always said: ‘Russia is a leader’. So Russia has shown that it is a leader.”

The Head of State expressed gratitude to the Russian side and to Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, who was present at the meeting, for helping Belarus and other countries with the COVID-19 vaccine.

The President recalled that Belarus now

successfully produces half a million doses of vaccines per month; this will enable us to solve all the problems in a year. Moreover, a Belarusian vaccine has already been obtained in laboratory conditions.

The coronavirus pandemic has closed borders and disrupted communications around the world. The President believes that it is time to actively restore transport links and open borders in the CIS, we need solidarity and unity more than ever, “It’s very difficult to break us up since our economies are tied up. Let’s calmly work and create this foundation — so that people can feel that it’s not pointless — regarding not only from the Union State and the EAEU but also the whole of the CIS. Let’s not lose each other.”

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Emergency landing

Let's leave emotion aside and just trace the chronology of what happened. On May 23rd, information was received about the bomb threat to an Irish Ryanair airline plane flying on the Athens-Vilnius route. The message went simultaneously to the Greek capital and Minsk. The pilots acted in line with instructions: since they were in the airspace of Belarus, they requested a landing at Minsk airport.

By Lyudmila Gladkaya

According to international treaties, permission to land was given. Naturally, the President of Belarus was promptly reported to regarding the situation and an order was given to accept, check and do everything necessary.

A fighter jet was raised for help and control. After all, no one knew what exactly might be inside that passenger plane...

Immediately after that — again strictly in compliance with the regulations — all the necessary services were sent to the site: doctors, rescuers, bomb disposal experts, investigative-operational groups, etc.

The search began. All passengers passed border and customs control. The extremist Protasevich, who was on board, also passed them; initially there were no questions to him. (The border guards, for example, have lists of citizens who are prohibited from entering or leaving the country; Protasevich was not on these lists).

Then his photo appeared on Anton Motolko's Telegram channel. The police reacted to this information, since Protasevich was recognised as a defendant in the case of mass riots.

There is an interesting aspect here. Protasevich flew with a friend, a citizen of Russia and — as some sources write — an employee of the Polish Belsat TV channel. She took the photo and sent it to Motolko. It turns out that the latter actually handed over the extremist Protasevich to the Belarusian security forces.

The result: on our part, international norms and Belarusian legislation were observed, the safety of passengers was ensured, they safely continued the flight, and the one accused of illegal actions was detained.

Let me remind you that Protasevich, a citizen of Belarus, the creator and editor-in-chief of extremist Telegram channels, is charged under a number of articles of the Criminal Code. These include the organisation of riots and group actions that grossly violate public order. Moreover, he appears in a criminal case on incitement of racial, national, religious or other social hostility or discord. Previously, the Investigative Committee through



May 23rd, 2021. Minsk Airport.

ANTI-FAKE

ACTIONS — CLEARLY ACCORDING TO ICAO STANDARDS

Artem Sikorsky, the Director of the Aviation Department of the Transport and Communications Ministry, and Igor Golub, the Commander of the Air Force and Air Defence, told about what was happening on Sunday afternoon in the sky over Belarus almost minute by minute. Thus, they debunked the fake news that was produced and continue to be produced by the 'incredibles' and their foreign 'curators' in the so-called 'oppositional' media and Telegram channels. The loudest of them is that the plane, they say, was forced to land in Minsk by the crew of the MiG-29 fighter or a dispatcher. But, first come the comments. "According to the transcript of the negotiations between the dispatcher and the crew, there was no pressure from the Belarusian dispatchers. In line with the ICAO standard, the pilot-in-command decides either to go to an alternate airfield, or to a specialised airport, or continues the flight to the destination airport. He had to cover 70 kilometres to the destination airport Vilnius and 175 kilometres — to reach the National Airport Minsk. At the same time, I think that the commander made the right decision. He flew to a more equipped airfield with a longer runway, which is not located within the city,"



assured Artem Sikorsky. "We've all seen the photos. Someone photographed against the background of the airport, others — somewhere else, but we did not see a single picture of the crew on alert that accompanies this plane. In order to force the plane to land, the crew on alert needs to approach within the visual range and come into close contact with the aircraft crew commander, so that the pilot-in-command can see it with his own eyes," added Igor Golub.

NOW THE FACTS PROVIDED

● On May 23rd, 2021, the following written message was sent to the email of the Minsk National Airport in English: 'We, the Hamas soldiers, demand that Israel cease fire in the Gaza Strip. We demand that the European Union renounce its support for Israel in this war. It is known that the participants in the Delphi Economic Forum are returning home on flight

FR4978. A bomb is planted in this plane. If you do not fulfil our demands, the bomb will explode on May 23rd over Vilnius'. Taking into account the seriousness of the threat received, information from the Minsk National Airport was forwarded to the appropriate authorities.

● Entry into the airspace of Belarus took place at 12:30. After establishing communication between the Belarusian dispatcher and the crew of the aircraft, information about the incoming threat was immediately distributed. At that moment, the crew could take the opportunity and decide to return to Lvov, Kiev, land in Warsaw, continue the flight to Vilnius, and so on.

● After receiving and clarifying the information, the crew of flight FR4978, in accordance with the established international requirements, set the transponder code 7700 on the aircraft board at 12:47, indicating the presence of an emergency and requested

assistance with the phrase 'MayDay' in the radiotelephone mode. After that, the crew announced that they had decided to land at the National Airport Minsk.

● The duty officer of the Central Command Post of the Air Force and Air Defence received a command from the dispatcher of the Minsk National Airport at 12:48.

● After the appropriate procedures and approvals, Igor Golub made a decision to give the crew on alert the command 'Air' at 12:58.

● The crew on alert, in accordance with the requirements of the guidelines and standards for the time in readiness number one, took off at 13:04. At this time, the aircraft was already in the area of Stolbtsy.

● A corresponding emergency plan was put into effect at Minsk National Airport and the relevant airport services and other government bodies were involved and alerted in the prescribed manner. The FR4978 aircraft landed safely at the National Airport at 13:15.

● At 13:18 the command of the Air Force and Air Defence received information from the Minsk-2 dispatcher that the Irish airline's Boeing-737 had safely landed. After that, the crew on alert — which was at that time in the watch zone over the Machulishchi airfield — was sent to the Baranovichi airfield.

the Prosecutor General had sent documents to Poland for the extradition of Belarusians Stepan Putilo and Roman Protasevich. Both were put on the interstate wanted list; in our country, both are included in the list of those involved in terrorism.

An engineer-pyrotechnic group of Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs examined the luggage of passengers, the aircraft and the adjacent territory. No explosive devices were found. The message about the bombing of the plane in Minsk turned out to be false. A criminal case was initiated on this fact.

DIRECT SPEECH

Vladimir Makei, Minister of Foreign Affairs:

We are ready to provide any data related to this incident with the Ryanair aircraft. We are ready to conduct a transparent investigation of this incident involving relevant international specialists. But no country of the European Union, not a single Western country has requested information about the incident from Belarus as far as I know at the moment. Meanwhile, they have managed to make probably hundreds of political statements containing not only accusations, but open threats aimed at Belarus. It is absolutely unacceptable. This is what is called the 'new geopolitical order in action'. These are not specialists, I emphasise, but politicians in the West, who have power and leverage, literally within 10-15 minutes after receiving information about this incident with the plane, they already began to make relevant political statements, naturally, with accusations against Belarus. This cannot but be alarming, and we see it as a planned, co-ordinated action and a planned provocation.



The Belneftekhim Concern and its subordinate enterprises — Belshina, Mogilevkhimvolokno, Mozyr Oil Refinery, SvetlogorskKhimvolokno, Seismotekhnika and BMZ — presented their novelties and latest developments in petrochemical industry.

Belshina brought samples of passenger and truck tubeless tyres to the exhibition. Seamless pipes for oil and gas pipelines, for the production of drill pipes, tubing and casing and for the production of couplings were on display by the Belarusian Steel Works. Mogilevkhimvolokno presented its innovations at the exhibition: primary polyester fibre of the ‘conjugate’ type, which is a raw material for the production of synthetic fibres to pad pillows, blankets, clothes, furniture and toys. The company is one of the few producers of this fibre in the CIS and Europe.

Mozyr Oil Refinery showcased its unleaded AI-92-K5-Euro and AI-100-

K5-Euro gasoline, diesel fuel that meets the requirements of the technical regulations of the Customs Union and the European standard EN590, road, roofing and construction bitumens and also hydrocarbon fuel liquefied gases.

“SvetlogorskKhimvolokno presented its non-woven melt-blown material at the expo. The material is used to make medical products — disposable clothes for healthcare workers and disposable medical masks. The company has also displayed samples of polyester yarn, knitted fabrics, nonwoven materials such as Spanbel, polypropylene bags for packaging, twine and packaging fabric,” Belinterexpo said.

In turn, Seismotekhnika brought to the exhibition its mobile complexes for drilling and workover of wells with diesel and frequency-controlled drive, as well as vibrating sources of seismic signals used in seismic surveys. Equipment produced by the company is used in more than 20 countries.

Made in Belarus

The exposition *Made in Belarus* was presented at the *Gas. Oil. Technologies* exhibition in Ufa to demonstrate the petrochemical products of seven Belarusian companies

Bellegprom companies take part in *UzTextile Expo-2021* international fair in Tashkent



The Belarusian delegation led by Bellegprom’s Chair, Tatyana Lugina, included representatives of Belarus’ leading enterprises, such as the Baranovich-based cotton yarn manufacturer Blakit, Minsk Leather Production Association, Pinsk-based Polesie and members of the Belarusian Light Industry Association.

Ms. Lugina delivered a speech at the Uzbekistan Textile Conference and took part in the opening of the *Uz-Textile Expo* International Exhibition of Textile and Fashion Industry. “I am happy that we can meet here face to face with dozens of representatives of the light industry of various countries, strengthen business ties that were weakened due to the pandemic, find new partners and establish new ties. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a lot of changes to the industry: from markets to consumers’ behaviour,

which is why it’s important for us to discuss how we are going to operate taking into account the new realities,” she said.

The Belarusian delegation also held negotiations with the associations Uztextileprom and Uzcharmsanoat, several textile companies and tanneries.

This year, the exhibition gathered around 100 companies and brands from various countries, including Belarus, South Korea, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. It showcased the entire range of products from the textile and light industries: raw materials, cotton yarn, untreated and finished fabrics, knitted fabrics, fittings and materials for the production of textile goods and finished textile products: clothing, knitwear, legwear, home textiles, floor coatings and so on.

Wind to help

The project aims to improve the state registry of renewable energy sources and submit proposals on amending the legislation. The project’s supervisor, Marina Belous, said, “In particular, we’ve worked out proposals on calculating the tariff for renewable energy installations, including wind energy ones, on the basis of the invested capital method. Documents have been drafted on implementing the Paris Climate Agreement. We’ve also prepared a package of proposals on introducing a system of green certificates in our country. They confirm every kilowatt of the green energy that has already been generated.”

Reducing the risks involved in investing in wind energy in Belarus is another important goal of the project.

Realisation of the *Removing Barriers to Wind Power Development in Belarus* international technical assistance project is close to completion in the country

“This component is aimed at implementing various educational programmes and building up the potential of local engineering companies,” the expert commented.

The international technical aid project designed to remove barriers standing in the way of development of wind energy in Belarus has been going on since 2015. Its donors are the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme, while the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Min-



istry is the national performing organisation. The main purpose of the project is to provide assistance with the development of the wind energy industry in Belarus and raise direct investments.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus elected to the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation



HHealthcare Minister Dmitry Pinevich has been appointed a member of the Board.

According to the Minister, this is a significant event for the country. Belarus will perform its function in this capacity for three years. “The elections were held in several stages and were the result of assessing the overall contribution to the public healthcare system. As it is now fashionable to say, Belarus is a leader in the region in applying good practices in managing the healthcare system,” he said.

The Healthcare Minister named faster information acquisition among the advantages of being elected to the WHO Executive Board. Moreover, the country will be able to convey its point of view on specific issues in a shorter time, without additional links.

Belarus was on the WHO Executive Board in 1948-1950.

BSU and Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia have opened a joint Master’s programme

The corresponding document was signed by the heads of the two universities, Andrei Korol and Oleg Yastrebov.

The document envisages the training of students at the second stage



of the programme ‘Civil Law, Family Law, Private International Law’ and the issuance of diplomas from two universities. The training of specialists will take place with the participation of Belarusian and Russian teachers. Education, practice and internships are also organised at the sites of both universities.

Undergraduates will study at an advanced level corporate, copyright, contractual, private, patent law, as well as conflict regulation in international business, legal regulation of international trade, and private law regulation of investment activity.

Belarusian cartoon *The Best Place in the World* wins the Animatricks Animation Festival

This is the 21st time this largest animation festival in Finland has been held under the patronage of ASIFA — the International Animated Films Association. Over 200 cartoons from all over the world took part in the competition programme. In the category of animation for children, thirty works were fighting for victory and the Bela-



rusian cartoon was recognised as the best of them.

“The animation film, entitled *The Best Place in the World*, directed by Irina Tarasova and produced by the Belarusfilm National Film Studio, tells us about a young mouse who — having heard a ballad about a wonderful barn full of grain, where mice live without worries — leaves its native burrow and goes in search of this wonderful place,” noted the press service.

Jubilee *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk* Festival of Arts will delight with rich programme, according to its Directorate

The jubilee 30th *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk* International Festival of Arts will take place from July 15th-18th.

The main events of the festival will be the opening ceremony and gala concert, alongside *The Union State Invites...* concert.

The first concert in the Summer Amphitheatre — a symphonic rock extravaganza *Overture to the Festival*. Fire and Ice — will be a surprise for the audience. On the main stage there will be a



10x15m ice rink, which will show a real show from the winners and prize-winners of the world sports championships in figure skating — the St. Petersburg State Ballet on Ice. The entire performance will be accompanied by the Concord Orchestra conducted by the Italian conductor, Fabio Pirola.



Igor Lutsky

Digital face of modern news

Minsk hosts 1st Belarusian Media Community Forum

The development of domestic media, the role and place of state media in the country's information security and other topics were high on the agenda at the 1st Belarusian Media Community Forum: *Mass Media in the Age of Digitalisation*. The event gathered more than 200 participants, including representatives of the Republican and regional mass media, media experts and participants of the School of Young Journalists.

By Yulia Demeshko,
Alina Danilovich

Jointly defend the state position

The Deputy Head of the President Administration, Igor Lutsky, read the President's greeting to the participants, guests and organisers of the forum: 'We see how fast innovative technologies are changing the life of society, what opportunities they offer for the creation and distribution of media content, and what risks they pose to the information security of the state. We understand that the inviolability of our sovereignty, the preservation of the unity and harmony of the Belarusian people largely depend on the professionalism and civic position of Belarusian journalists'.

The Head of State is convinced that the desire of the journalist community to develop and improve, the ability to unite, defending the national interests of the country, is the key to the well-being and peace of independent Belarus.

Mr. Lutsky drew attention to a new format of the media forum,

"We are used to holding a traditional exhibition. However, journalists are strong with their words and their texts. The time has come to talk about what's happening in the media field of the country — of how we can jointly defend the position of the state and the position of sovereignty, which is immutable and cannot be in question, not only in Minsk but also in the regions."

On the information battlefield

In recent times, the media space has changed dramatically. However, whatever the new challenges and threats are, our journalistic community is coping with them — believes Information Minister Vladimir Pertsov. However, this does not mean that we can relax and rest on our laurels.

The Minister explained, *"Today, there is no longer an information war against Belarus but a hybrid war. It's necessary to do everything so that it does not turn into a real one. We are on the front line, and a lot depends on us — journalists."*

The forum participants agreed that the role of honest, responsible journalism — which brings people together and effectively resists attempts to sow hostility — has increased more than ever. In this sense, Belarusian journalism, regardless of its ideological positions and forms of ownership, should be state-owned.

At the forum, its participants were introduced to the successful practices of Belarusian and Russian editorial offices in the context of digitalisation. The emphasis was placed on practical and theoretical training. Specialists talked, for example, about how to transform the printed word and how to transform broadcast materials for distribution in social networks and messengers. Does this mean that traditional print

At the same time, it's unlikely that anyone will argue that global digitalisation brings both new opportunities and new threats. The mass media can either enrich a person with knowledge or misinform, plant distrust and fear. Therefore, the future of the country will largely depend on the position taken by the media.

Barriers to fakes

The media forum aimed to record the changes that have taken place in the journalistic community since last August's events. Among the burning points is the exposure of fakes. According to the Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Journalists, Andrei Krivosheev, this has already become a separate, important genre of journalism. At the same time, there

incident with the plane, when absolutely fake theses were planted, including with the help of statistics," he said.

The discussion of topical issues of the development of domestic media, as well as the role of state media in ensuring the information security

explained, "Journalists began preparing special content for the Internet. We have removed restrictions on TV formats, the subject of news and their number in one programme, as well as the timing. The key is to ensure that the information is prompt and truthful. In ac-



Aleksandr Kulevsky



The media forum gathered more than 200 participants



journalism has come to an end? Mr. Pertsov commented on the issue with a definite position,

"Readers and viewers are really moving into the digital environment. However, there's no need to think that the word of a journalist is not in demand or will become so. It will simply move from one environment to another: from the classic print version to electronic forms — websites, social networks, messengers."

are plenty of people who create these fakes.

As Mr. Krivosheev noted, our colleagues need tools for competent exposure of fake information. "Take, for example, such a fairly new direction as data journalism. This is important, because it is in this area that a person believes in figures. These are not simply figures in the sense of a new digital media reality, but also figures that are shown — such as graphics or diagrams. We've seen this even in the

of the country continued on the second day of the forum — focusing on the use of Internet resources in shaping public opinion.

The Chairman of the Belarusian TV and Radio Company, Ivan Eismont, noted that, last year, Belarus appeared at the epicentre of a full-scale information war, "It was based on disinformation, lies, fakes and propaganda. Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, NGOs, false human rights defenders, so-called civil activists but in fact agents of foreign influence, bloggers, so-called independent media of Belarus, with the support of foreign media and foundations, have launched a real attack on the state through information influence on citizens." To counter this attack, Belarusian television has changed the principles of its work. Mr. Eismont

tual fact, news releases have begun working in the mode of Telegram channels and social networks."

Vladimir Mamontov, the General Director of Moscow Says Radio Station, stressed that the agenda is changing very quickly today, "Events are falling on us and — proceeding from this — we should build up a conversation. The main thing is to ensure that this talk is completely frank, with understandable terms and clear goals. This is very important for those who are worried about the fate of their country. We need to talk about our present and future media, about the forms that our work should take in connection with the changing international and domestic situation — especially against the background of acute political events taking place today."

Belarusian Sakura

‘Minsk Beauty’, ‘Mulatto’ and ‘Alenushka’: these young ladies will captivate and bewitch you at first sight

The Japanese have a beautiful national tradition in spring — admiring cherry blossoms or hanami. This contemplation hides a deep meaning: while watching the falling petals, to reflect on the transience of life. If right now you want to experience such emotions, take a look at the Central Botanical Garden in Minsk where the lilac is in full bloom. At the same time, don’t miss the chance to find a flower with five or more petals: as the saying goes, such a find can make a wish come true.

By Victoria Derzhanovich

These days, the lilac pavilion of the Botanical Garden is full of people: the fleeting beauty of flowering bushes attracts those who want to admire them, enjoy the fragrance of lilac and take spectacular photos for Instagram in purple clouds. Artists come here for inspiration, mothers with strollers walk here and lovers meet. Newlyweds choose this location for wedding photography.

Natalia Makedonskaya, a leading researcher of the Central Botanical Garden, oversees the collection. She explains that it unites more than 200 varieties and ‘presents those of breeders from Russia, Ukraine, Germany, Holland, the USA and Canada’, “There are also 23 varieties of selection from the Central Botanical Garden, but the collection is primarily based on classic varieties of French selection. Among them, for example, is ‘Madame Lemoine’ — a snow-white double-flowering lilac bred by Victor Lemoine and named after his wife. New varieties of lilac in France were usually given the names of political figures of the time or their spouses: ‘President Grevy’, ‘Marshal Bassompierre’, ‘Charles X’ and ‘Madame Casimir Perier’. In this way, breeders sought to pay tribute to the people who contributed to the country’s history and pay respects to the ladies.”

Over 2,500 varieties of lilac are known in the world. While walking amidst the bushes, Ms. Makedonskaya continues, “There are double and non-double varieties of lilac of seven colour groups: one white and six purple. They also differ in the timing of flowering: there are early-flowering,

medium-flowering and late-flowering. Thus, by planting several shrubs close to each other, you can achieve a stunning effect of continuous flowering, which will make your garden truly rich and in general you will be able to extend the total flowering period of lilacs on your site to one month. This year, almost all the varieties are blooming with some delay: as soon as the temperatures improve, the plants seem to turn on a red button and the signal ‘It’s time!’ comes.”

Natalia shows us one of her favourite varieties: ‘Moscow Beauty’; it was bred by a Soviet self-taught breeder, Leonid Kolesnikov. The lady continues, “It’s peculiar since an anthocyanin pigment — responsible for the purple colour of petals — is contained in flowers in very small quantities. This gives the blossoms a marvellous pearly pink hue.”

The Belarusian lilac was bred mainly in the post-war period — which resulted in certain names: ‘Defenders of Brest’, ‘Konstantin Zaslonov’ or ‘Vera Khoruzhaya’. The researcher was lucky enough to author seven varieties. Among them is ‘Minsk Beauty’ — distinguished by lush light pink inflorescences, unpretentiousness and stability. “The variety is named after all Minsk ladies: even if fate doesn’t smile on the local beauties, they don’t despair and still believe that they’ll have a bright future. This is the appearance of the variety,” says Ms. Makedonskaya.

‘Mulatto’ and ‘Alenushka’ are no less beautiful. These two varieties start blooming among the first. ‘Mulatto’ can easily turn the head of a casual passer-by with its stunning aroma and thick pink inflorescences, while ‘Alenushka’ is distinguished by a weak and unobtrusive fragrance and lilac-pink buds.



Aleksandr Kulevsky



Three interesting facts about lilac that will definitely surprise:

1. Lilac not only has a unique aroma but can also act as a steriliser: within a radius of 20 metres, it cleanses the air.
2. Lilac got its generic name in honour of one of the characters of ancient Greek mythology: Naiad Siringa. According to another version, the name comes from the Greek word ‘syrinx’ (tube), which indicates the structure of the flower.
3. The registered centenarian among lilacs has reached the age of 130 years: the bush was planted in 1801 and died in 1931.



By Anastasia Guzeeva

“The festival of Nikola Veshny is not as spectacular as, for example, Kupala Night or Maslenitsa. It’s more sacred and family-like, because it is primarily an appeal to inner faith, to one’s family traditions,” said Nina Gerasimenok, who heads the Mezhisetki rural house of culture.

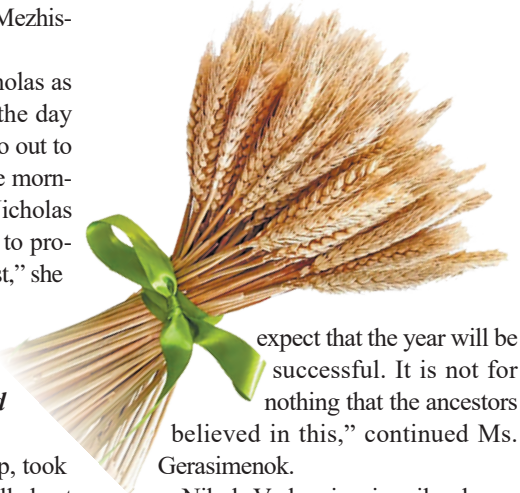
Our ancestors revered St. Nicholas as the guardian of agriculture. “On the day of the festival, the owners had to go out to their gardens and fields early in the morning, face the sun and pray to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. He was asked to protect the crops and send a rich harvest,” she explained.

Send us a warm summer and strong ears, so that the corn-field yields an abundant crop and so that our health does not fail...

On this day, women dressed up, took rushniks and ears of corn; they usually kept a small amount from last year. They made an improvised gate, where a woman with bread would go first. This was a symbol of

the start of a new growing season.

“There were a number of signs by which people judged the future harvest. So, rain on St. Nicholas Day was considered a great gift from God, meaning that the harvest would be rich. This year we were lucky: it was raining. Therefore, we



expect that the year will be successful. It is not for nothing that the ancestors believed in this,” continued Ms. Gerasimenok.

Nikola Veshny is primarily a home event. The hostess prepares a delicious and rich table. On this day, it was believed that if you do not feed the hungry, then you

Folk traditions

Folk holiday of Nikola Veshny is a rite aimed to protect the harvest and domestic animals

This festival was celebrated on the day of Nicholas the Wonderworker. Our ancestors believed that he protected the farmers and their crops. This holiday was considered one of the most important in the national calendar, because if it rains on St. Nicholas Day, the harvest will be good, meaning that the year will pass in abundance.

yourself will starve all year. “Therefore, the host and his wife took bread and ears of wheat from last year’s harvest and went to the field. The woman laid out the ears in the shape of the sun and put a loaf of bread in the centre. It was gratitude to Mother-Earth. After that, the host took the food, went out into the village and handed it out to passers-by. Those, in turn, wished their house peace, goodness, health and well-being,” noted the head of the rural house of culture.

We treat mice and birds, and all kinds of animals with bread, And the shepherds, and the poor, and the owners. So that the hot sun does not scorch, So that the heavy rain does not pour, So that strong winds do not blow And do not break our crops...

A special ceremony was carried out on Nikola, which was supposed to protect livestock from the attacks of wild animals and the inhabitants of Mezhisetki had their own special tradition.

“Anastasia Pishcheva, a resident of our

agricultural town, told me about it. The woman lived for almost a hundred years. The residents of our settlement took a rushnik, bread, a knife and a pot on Nikola and went to the field. There they put bread on the rushnik on the ground and stuck a knife into it. They put a stone nearby, which they covered with a pot, and said: ‘My cow, sit under the pot so that the wolves do not find you. And let the wolf gnaw its side now’. We didn’t even know about such a ritual, but our resident said that they did this in every yard,” said Nina Gerasimenok.

“Every year there are fewer and fewer living witnesses of those rituals and holidays that our distant ancestors revered. Many things have come down to us, but we know little about what particular symbols mean or where this or that custom came from. Therefore, we try to collect the memories our old-timers, keep them and revive traditions. This enables us not to lose touch with one’s own roots, know and honour the culture of the Belarusian people. After all, this is where our spiritual wealth is collected,” summed up Nina Gerasimenok.



Riot erupts on anniversary of George Floyd’s murder

Police declared a riot in Oregon’s largest city as a demonstration to commemorate the one year anniversary of George Floyd’s death spiralled into chaos

Hundreds of people gathered outside the Multnomah County Justice Centre in downtown Portland. Some individuals were wearing helmets and carrying gas masks, umbrellas and backpacks. As the crowd chanted ‘burn the building down’, some people lit a dumpster on fire and pushed it up against the justice centre while others vandalised the building with graffiti, according to the Portland Police Bureau.

Police officers warned the crowd that the gathering was now considered an unlawful assembly and that those who continued engaging in criminal activity would be subject to arrest and use of force. Some individuals in the crowd

threw frozen water bottles, glass bottles, eggs, metal spikes and mortar-style fireworks at the officers.

The crowd then marched to the nearby Portland City Hall, where some individuals smashed windows. Police declared the unlawful assembly a riot at around 10pm local time and ordered the crowd to disperse. But the crowd continued wandering through the downtown area, blocking traffic in the streets, breaking windows of various businesses and damaging other property.

“Slowly, as the number of people in the crowd became smaller and smaller, they began to spread out, fight among themselves and light occasional trash

can fires,” the Portland Police Bureau said in a statement. “People within the crowd were overheard saying the night was a success.”

Officers made several ‘targeted arrests’, and by midnight, the crowd had dwindled down to a few dozen people, according to police. Five people, ranging in age from 21 to 30, were booked into jail on various charges, including criminal mischief, riot and arson.

People protested in Portland for more than 100 days last year after Floyd’s death sparked national rallies against racial injustice and police brutality. Other cities around the country also held demonstrations to mark the anniversary.

WHO Head predicts the emergence of a new dangerous virus

This virus will potentially be even more infectious and more deadly than the current coronavirus, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted

Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus predicted the emergence of a new deadly virus in the world. He made such a statement at the 74th World Health Assembly that opened in Geneva.

“This will not be the last time the world faces the threat of a pandemic. It is an evolutionary certainty that there will be another virus with the potential to be more transmissible and more deadly than this one,” he stressed.

Mr. Ghebreyesus recalled that the ‘main driver of the pandemic’ is the lack of international solidarity and the desire to share data, provide resources and technology. According to him, ‘if we go on the same old way, we will get the same old result: a world that is unprepared, unsafe and unfair’. “Keeping the world secure requires leadership as well as the involvement of all member states,” underlined Mr. Ghebreyesus.

“This is not the time for incremental improvements or tinkering at the edges. This is the moment for bold ideas, bold commitment and bold leadership; for doing things that have never been done before,” he added.

The 74th World Health Assembly focused on tackling the pandemic and preventing new emergencies. The main annual WHO forum was held online with the participation of 194 countries, including Russia.

Sounding alarm about mercury accumulation

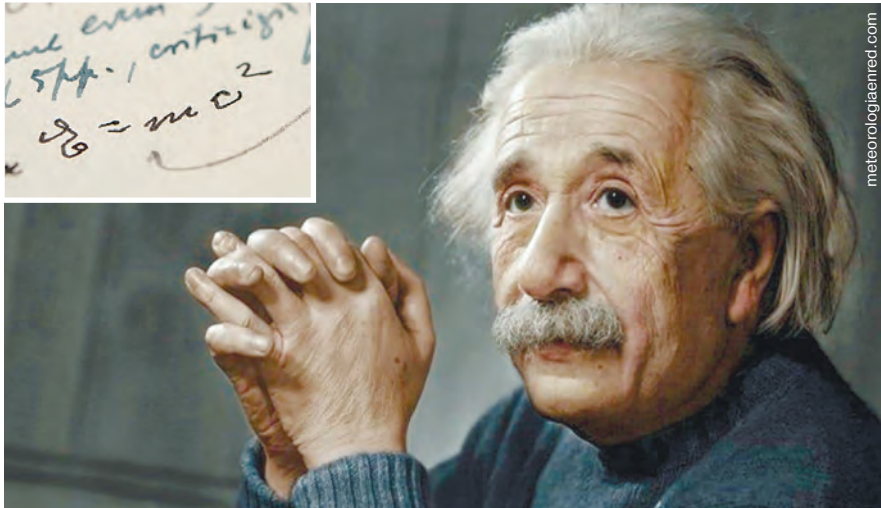
Multi-national team of scientists discover amounts of mercury in the deepest trenches of the Pacific Ocean that exceed any value ever recorded in remote marine sediments — even higher than many areas directly contaminated by industrial releases

A newly released scientific paper in Nature Publishing’s *Scientific Reports Journal* has revealed unprecedented amounts of highly toxic mercury are deposited in the deepest trenches of the Pacific Ocean.

The study, a multi-national effort involving scientists from Denmark, Canada, Germany and Japan, reports the first-ever direct measurements of mercury deposition into one of the logistically most challenging environments to sample on Earth, and the deepest at eight to 10km under the sea.

Lead author Professor Hamed Sanei, Director of the Lithospheric Organic Carbon Laboratory (LOC) at the Department of Geoscience, Aarhus University, stated the amount of mercury discovered in this area exceeds any value ever recorded in remote marine sediments, and is even higher than many areas directly contaminated by industrial releases.

“The bad news is that these high mercury levels may be representative of the collective increase in anthropogenic emissions of Hg into our oceans,” he said. “But the good news is that ocean trenches act as a permanent dump, and so we can expect the mercury that does end up there will be buried for many millions of years.”



Einstein handwritten letter fetches \$1.2m

A handwritten letter by Albert Einstein that contains his famous $E=mc^2$ equation has sold at auction for more than \$1.2m, about three times more than it was expected to get

Archivists at the Einstein Papers Project at the California Institute of Technology and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem say there are only three other known examples of Einstein writing the world-changing equation in his own hand.

RR Auction, which sold the most recent letter, says this fourth example is the only one in a private collection and only became public recently. The auction house had expected it to sell for about \$400,000.

“It’s an important letter from both a holographic and a physics point of view,” Bobby Livingston, the Executive

Vice-President at RR Auction said, calling the equation the most famous in the world.

The equation — energy equals mass times the speed of light squared — changed physics by demonstrating that time was not absolute and that mass and energy were equivalent.

The one-page handwritten letter in German to the Polish American physicist Ludwik Silberstein is dated 26 October 1946.

The buyer was identified by RR only as an anonymous document collector.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies

Pride for Belarus

The national flag of our country is raised on the summit of Mount Everest



Speaking on May 9th at the solemn ceremony of honouring state symbols, the President called the state flag a symbol of the greatness and independence of the Belarusian people, which embodies the fateful achievements of Belarusians, as well as the spiritual and moral traits of the nation and the peculiarities of our culture and worldview. Belarusians sacredly honour their flag and every day prove their love with deeds. There are countless examples of this and recently another example flew in from the 'roof of the world': the state flag of Belarus was raised on Everest!

By Inessa Pleskachevskaya

Every climber dreams of Everest: because, as they themselves say, 'there are all the other mountains, and there is Everest'. Belarusian Vadim Frolov has been enthused by this idea for a long time — ever since he started walking in the mountains. Last year, he realised that he was ready: he has already reached the highest peaks of South America, Antarctica and Oceania. He already boasts experience and confidence, so it's high time! Last year, Vadim wanted to devote his ascent to the 75th anniversary of Victory: both his grandfathers fought during the war, one was a scout, the second was a pilot who died.

However, in 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic, access to Everest was closed by both countries from where climbing is possible: Nepal, where most climbers come from, and China. Vadim Frolov was upset, put the cap prepared for the expedition with the inscription '75 years of Victory' on the shelf and began to wait. However, among the conquerors of the peaks, waiting is not synonymous with the concept of 'sitting still'. Vadim continued to train and climb mountains in different regions of the world. Anyway, he was preparing to conquer Everest not only physically: together with friends from the Iron Birds biker club, he travelled around the hero cities of the former USSR and in each they took a handful of soil. Then these were sealed in a capsule and placed at the foot of Minsk's Mound of Glory. There, at the Mound of Glory, Vadim received a copy of the Victory Banner to climb to the highest point of the planet. This is how the joint project of the Belarusian Mountaineering Federation and the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus began.

This climbing season was unusual from the very beginning. Actually, they usually climb Everest in May and then in autumn. "A record number of permits have been issued for climbing from the Nepalese side. China allowed only its own people to climb, no foreigners. As a result, a huge number of people have

accumulated in the base camp in Nepal in a small area," explains Vladislav Kagan, who climbed to the summit in 2006. This year, 408 permits for climbing have been issued. Everest is a huge industry for Nepal, bringing to the country's economy almost \$300m annually (and whole tourism industry brings in \$2bn, with most of this coming from climb-



ers reaching peaks in the Himalayas). The trouble came unexpectedly, although it could have been predicted: a coronavirus epidemic began in the camp. Although Vadim Frolov said that — unlike in previous years — the expeditions reduced contact with each other to a minimum and didn't visit each other.

Most likely, the virus was brought by the Nepalese Sherpas, without whom no expedition can go ahead: they're the first to climb the route (this year, the first to climb Everest were also Sherpas who hung the ropes along the route), deliver goods, set up camps and prepare food. The base camp has its own first-aid post, where foreign doctors work, and they could conduct PCR tests, but the Ministry of Health of Nepal has forbidden them to do this. Without these tests, it isn't easy to distinguish a mountain cough from one that develops as a result of COVID pneumonia. Nevertheless, doctors still sounded the alarm and began to evacuate people: on Everest, pneumonia can very quickly lead to pulmonary oedema and death. "When coronavirus came to



The Victory Banner and a bag of earth from the Mound of Glory on Everest

the camp, an epidemic began. Nepal was reluctant to talk about it because it would jeopardise the entire climbing season. But in any case, the season turned out to be extraordinary," says Vladislav Kagan, who, according to a long-standing habit, closely follows each season on Everest. Because the ascents were threatened not only by the coronavirus, but also by the weather. "Usually, from May 15th, the weather is sunny and clear for two weeks, during which the ascents are made," says Viktor Lutov, who climbed the mountain together with Kagan. They walked from the Chinese side and fit well into the weather window. "But it hasn't happened this time. There was a small window in early May, which is unusual. The number of good days to climb has dropped sharply, so the number of people who managed to climb is less this year."

In the expedition of the Seven Summits club, of which Vadim Frolov was a member, almost all the Sherpas fell ill and seven out of twelve climbers were infected. Unfortunately, Vadim was among the sick and he was evacuated by helicopter to the Kathmandu hospital, where he was diagnosed with coronavirus pneumonia and lung damage. At that moment, he still hoped that he would recover and would be able to continue climbing; after all, acclimatisation had been already passed, but the doctors categorically forbade him as the illness could be fatal. This is the most upsetting circumstance for every

Photos from Everest provided by Vadim Frolov



Vadim Frolov with a capsule containing earth on the Mound of Glory

climber: you feel ready but the situation gets out of control and you retreat. However, the greatest pain was caused by the thought that his mission — to raise the Victory Banner and the earth from the Mound of Glory to the top of the world — had failed. Nevertheless, remember what Vladimir Vysotsky sang about mountain friendship:

*If he didn't complain and didn't lament,
Even though he was gloomy and angry,
but he walked,
And when you fell off the rocks
He moaned, but he held you,
If he walked with you, as if into battle,
And stood steady at the top
So trust him
As yourself.*

Vadim's friends — Georgy Shulepov and Eduard Kubatov — literally picked up the banner that fell out of the hands of a comrade (if you would like to say 'comrade in arms', you would be right) and carried the banner to the top.

Shulepov of Russia and Kubatov of Kyrgyzstan unfurled the national flag of the Republic of Belarus, the Victory Banner, at the highest point of the planet and left the earth taken from our Mound of Glory, thus Everest received this handful. When Vadim talks about this, he does not hide his pride, "All the same, the mission is completed! Mountaineering is a team sport." Then he adds, "I'll try to come back in a couple of years and still climb Everest."

To save themselves, 26 people from the Minsk ghetto voluntarily imprisoned themselves in a basement for nine months: in summer, the *263 Nights* animation film will be premiered globally

By Natalia Tychko

Entrance through the oven

The narration is on behalf of the smallest participant in the events. When the war began, Efim Gimelstein was six years old. “The husband of my mother’s sister — Pinkhus Dobin — was a very good stove-maker. During the summer of 1943, he prepared everything: he built a manhole in the basement and settled his family there. Several other families also asked to join them since, in September 1943, it was clear that the ghetto would be liquidated,” Efim Gimelstein recalled the horrific events of those years many times in his interviews.

The 26-minute film tells us about those tragic days: the death of the inhabitants of the dungeon, their burial there, the blockage of the only entrance to the basement. The latter was opened with great effort, with the help of a shovel, spoons and forks. Water was running out but, fortunately, the people managed to escape to the surface. The boy who brought a bucket of snow was greeted as a saviour. However, in March, water came into the basement as the snow was melting. It got flooded and the only way to escape was from the upper level of bunks.

In the film, the most tragic moments are coloured black. “I still can’t believe it was real,” Irina Tarasova, who directed *263 Nights*, shares her emotions. “However, this story is true — though it’s told in an artistic genre. Animation enables us to think about some of the images and our emotions, viewing them slightly differently. The documentary genre is not quite appropriate here: at the beginning of our work on the film (a year and a half ago), only four people out of 13 were alive and their stories differed at some points: after all, so many years had passed, and they were children then. We know the exact place where the events took place, with an error of several metres. This is a historical workshop on the territory of the former Minsk ghetto. To connect that story with reality, we inserted video elements into our film. At the beginning, chil-



The story, which is hard to believe, happened on the territory of the Minsk ghetto during the Great Patriotic War. To save their lives, 26 people voluntarily imprisoned themselves in a basement for 263 days. They stayed there until the arrival of the Red Army. A stove maker, Pinkhus Dobin, made a hideout — taking a risk because of the horrors that were happening in the ghetto. In a small house, he built a basement with an entrance through the oven compartment. That’s where the frightened people entombed themselves. The memory of that terrible story has been immortalised on the screen; in summer, the world premiere of the *263 Nights* animated film will take place.

A ray of light in the dark realm



In September 1943, it was clear that the ghetto would be liquidated



dren play in the background of the workshop and, at the end of the film, they hold a memorial event in honour of the terrible events of the Minsk ghetto.”

The memory comes alive on the screen

This animation is the result of joint efforts of Belarus, Russia and Israel. Therefore, the world premiere in these countries is scheduled for one day in summer. There will also be another opportunity for the audience: the film is to be screened at the 30th jubilee *Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk* International Festival of Arts.

The script was written by Konstantin Andryushechkin based on the literary work of Boris Gersten. He collected the stories of the basement’s residents into a single work. The film’s production designer is Anna Yemelyanova, the composer is Yuri Povolotsky, and the sound engineer is Victor Mors.

“In fact, the work is truly in-



Of the 26 people who imprisoned themselves in the basement, only 13 survived. They spent nine months under the floor.

ternational,” notes Ms. Tarasova. “For example, Galina Bogdanovich and her husband Mikhail Brusilovsky presented a gorgeous song — *Jewish Lullaby* — to us; it’s in Yiddish. The song has enriched the film immensely. In the role of the narrator behind the scenes is a People’s Artist of Russia, Aristarkh Livanov. We were very lucky with him. Our work on the film began about a year and a half ago and, at that time, Mr. Livanov was in Minsk. He then was working on his own project and had only one or two days off. However, he devoted them to voicing our film.”

The non-commercial screening of *263 Nights* was timed to coincide with the Victory Day celebration. It took place on May 7th at the Belarusian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War History.

“It’s a very unique and interesting work and, importantly, the film will be shown in Israel, Belarus and Russia. We are constantly engaged in preserving the memory of the Holocaust, its victims, the

Red Army liberation fighters who fought against the Nazis and led to victory,” Alex Goldman-Shaiman, Israel’s Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Belarus, said during the screening.

The terrible war affected many nations and its events are our common pain. The memory of it is a common duty.



Aleksandr Vyazmitinov

Winners in everything

The national stage of the World Children's Winners Games for young cancer survivors is taking place near Minsk

The Winners Games have started in the Staiki Sports Complex near Minsk. The composition of the participants in these competitions may not seem the most representative: only 49 children from all regions of the country: from Minsk, Grodno, Molodechno, Kobrin, Baranovichi, Orsha, Brest, Vitebsk and other cities. They are from seven to sixteen years old, but they all have one thing in common: they have already achieved their main victory — they have defeated cancer.

By Tatiana Pastushenko

Running, swimming, chess, tennis, mini-football and shooting — the national stage of the world sports competitions for young cancer survivors is being held in Belarus for the third time. The first two tournaments were held in Raubichi but last year the organisers were forced to cancel it due to the coronavirus pandemic. This time, the long-awaited meeting took place: before the opening ceremony, the youngsters talked with each other and were happy to have the opportunity to spend time together. Nearby are their parents: those who accompanied them in the most difficult moments of their life.

Oksana Krot gently strokes her son's head. For five or six years, Miroslav has been in complete remission, but even now — recalling the events of past years — the mother of the 12-year-old boy can't hold back tears.

"The disease is terrible, but its symptoms are very mild," says Oksana. "It was summer and in September Miroslav was supposed to go into first grade. He felt some discomfort: he would either eat a little less than usual or be very fatigued. I thought it was all about the heat... My son had blood cancer and soon secondary symptoms appeared: for example, nosebleeds that couldn't be stopped. They lasted not 10-15 minutes, but half an hour, an hour, or even several hours. Such diseases develop very quickly. I was scared. I saw such diagnoses only in American films and couldn't believe that one day this would affect us..."

The treatment lasted for about a year. Oksana recalls

that the first chemotherapy procedures were the most terrible.

"Do you know which words were the best of all that I heard at that time? Doctors, after all, talk about the chances of life and recovery. We were told about 80 percent. At first I wondered why not a hundred percent? But some are only given a one percent chance..."

Miroslav went to school a year later than planned. Now, outwardly, nothing shows of the serious illness he's had in the past, but, according to his mother, the consequences make themselves felt even after so many years. There are other health problems, as there are some restrictions on his activities. Therefore, at the Winners Games, Miroslav decided to take part in shooting and running competitions.

Oksana doesn't hide the fact that, after his illness, life has changed a lot for her son and for herself. She examines every bruise, she worries if the child, for example, turns pale. She didn't attach much importance to all this at the beginning of the disease but she now pays special attention to it, "We are in a hurry to live, I also understood that. Previously, in the morning I got dressed and ran to work... After my son recovered, I often went for a walk with him. I enjoyed everything: every blade of grass, flower, every smell. The hustle and bustle is a thing of the past. I've learnt to appreciate everything that surrounds me and to rejoice at what I hadn't always paid attention to before."

While the junior participants of the first races of the Winners Games were preparing for the start, 16-year-old Vanya Zalevsky from Minsk and Bogdan Lynev from

Mogilev watched the competition from the sidelines. These guys, one might say, were lucky: they can hardly remember their illness. Vanya was diagnosed with cancer when he was 3-4 years old while Bogdan was eight months old. It's not the first time that the boys have participated in the national stage of the world sports competition for children who have survived cancer. They have even performed at the similar tournament in Moscow. Despite the illness, both are



Oksana Krot and her son Miroslav



Vanya Zanevsky and Bogdan Lynev are happy to meet again

athletic: Vanya played football and enjoyed boxing and now he plays hockey in the Presidential Sports Club tournament while Bogdan was fond of swimming and tried wrestling until the doctors put an end to it. Now, the two boys are preparing to become students: one is thinking about studying at an economic university while the other is dreaming about how to connect life with computer technology.

"For us, this is, first of all, an opportunity to meet and communicate. Competitions are already secondary..." they say about the Winners Games.

Veronika Funt might argue with them. She's a volunteer for the project, but before that, she herself was a participant in the



Veronika Funt 'completed' the Winners Games to become a volunteer

Winners Games more than once.

"We learnt that I had adrenal neuroblastoma when I was 6-7 years old," recalls Veronika. "I felt bad, but the hardest thing was to watch my mom crying. I tried to believe in the best outcome, but I was very worried about her... The treatment lasted for about a year and a half. I'm not the only child

in the family, I have four brothers and two sisters. We've always been very close-knit, so I felt like I had a team..."

In the World Children's Winners Games, Veronika tried out many sports: table tennis, mini-football, swimming, shooting. She performed both in Belarus and at the event in Moscow and collected a large number of awards. In addition, she was seriously involved in sports outside the project: despite the prohibitions of doctors, she played volleyball for eight years. Now Veronika is studying at the Mechanical Engineering College, so there's no time for training. However, the girl still couldn't miss the Winners Games, "I wanted to support the guys. In general, I really like helping others, amusing them and encouraging them, so I came as a volunteer. I've made a lot of friends at the Games. These competitions are, of course, an opportunity to meet up. Nevertheless, they do have a spirit of competition: everyone wants to win a prize. Anyway, even if someone loses, you shouldn't be upset. Each of the youngsters taking part in these competitions is already a winner."

ARENA

Meshkov Brest wins the Belarus Handball Cup for 13th time

In the final match, held in Gomel, the champions of the country defeated the handball players of the Minsk SKA in a stubborn struggle — 34:33 (18:18). This match was the last for the head coach of the Brest club, Raul Alonso. Next season, he will be replaced by another Spanish specialist, Daniel Gordo.

In the semi-finals, the Brest handballers defeated those from the Gomel squad while the Minskers claimed victory over Mogilev's Masheka club.

In the match for 3rd place in the Cup



tournament, Gomel was ahead of Masheka with a difference of three goals.

Brest handball players have won the Cup 13 times while SKA Minsk boasts seven trophies, Minsk Arkatron has three, and Dinamo Minsk — two.

Aleksandra Dmitrieva earns shooting bronze at the European Championship

The Belarusian athlete distinguished herself in shooting from a small-bore rifle from 50m, opening the medal count in the events for adult athletes. Until that day, only



juniors had climbed onto the medals podium for Belarus.

Aleksandra Dmitrieva performed in the open category, in which 124 athletes competed on equal terms: both men and women. Only the Norwegian Henrik Larsen and the Austrian athlete Rebecca Koek were able to get ahead of the Belarusian.

Competitions in this discipline were held in an open shooting range, so the result was also influenced by weather conditions.

Belarusian sambo wrestlers claim 11 awards at the European Sambo Championships in Limassol

In the sports sambo section among women, Maria Kondratieva achieved the greatest success, winning gold in

the over 80kg weight category. Alena Kupava (54kg) and Yana Began-skaya (59kg) won silver medals while Anfisa Kopaeva (50kg), Daniela Zhdan (65kg) and Karina Shut (80kg) finished third.

Thanks to these results, the women's national team of Belarus took third place in the overall team classification, behind only the squads of Russia and Ukraine.

Pavel Gladkikh (64kg) won gold in men's sports sambo. The men's team also finished third in the medal standings. Only the national squads of Russia and Georgia were able to get ahead of the Belarusians.



Aleksey Bibikov



Photo of the week

Sonya Kravchenko and Ulyana Yurchenya after horseback riding at Volkovysk District Youth Sports School

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



June 3rd is World Bicycle Day, which was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in April 2018. Fifty-six states became co-authors of the document. Bicycles are the most environmentally friendly

form of transport, and their use contributes to environmental friendliness, health and sports development, which complies with the SDGs adopted by the UN in 2015. Moreover, the bicycle — as a form of transport — has been used for over 200 years. In many countries, bicycles are now at the peak of their popularity, and in some countries they are the national means of transportation.

June 5th is World Environment Day. It is one of the main ways for all ecologists and environmental organisations to draw the attention of the world community to environmental problems, as well as to stimulate political interest and relevant actions — aimed at protecting the environment. The holiday was proclaimed in 1972 at the 27th session of the UN General Assembly. June 5th was chosen as the date of the event: the day of the start of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, which was followed by the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



On June 6th, Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841-1910) was born (nee Elżbieta Pawłowska) in the Milkovshchina estate near Grodno — an outstanding Polish-speaking writer and public figure. The novel *Meir Ezołowicz* (translated into 13 languages), stories from the collection *From Different Spheres*, stories from the life of Belarusian peasants *Niziny*, *Dziurdziowie*, and *Cham (The Boor)* brought her wide recognition. The novel *Nad Niemnem (Over the Niemen)* is regarded as the pinnacle of the writer's achievements. The novel *The Argonauts* and the collection of stories *Gloria Victis* stand out from later works. In 1905, she was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

June 6th is Russian Language Day. It appeared on the international calendar in 2010, when the UN Department of Public Relations proposed to establish holidays dedicated to the six official languages of the organisation, as part of a programme to support and develop multilingualism and cultural diversity. To celebrate the Day of the Russian Language, the date was set for June 6th — the birthday of Aleksandr Pushkin, the great Russian writer, poet and playwright.



Moreover, Pushkin is considered to be the creator of the modern literary Russian language. Russian is one of the largest languages in the world, it is the most widespread of the Slavic languages and the most widespread European language in a geographical sense. In addition, it ranks in the top-10 world languages in terms of the total number of speakers. According to the latest data, there are more than 150 million Russian speakers in the world and more than 100 million speak Russian as a second language.



June 6th is Ameliorator's Day. It's a professional holiday for workers of the land: it is thanks to their work that major improvement and revival of lands is carried out. Improvement of landscapes and measures aimed at improving the hydrological, soil and agroclimatic conditions of lands are carried out under the strict guidance of ameliorators — people who are dedicated to the secrets and peculiarities of the state of soil, water and forest resources, erosion processes, etc. The holiday was established by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on May 24th, 1976, and after the collapse of the USSR, it was restored by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus in 2000 and is marked on the first Sunday of June.

June 7th is World Food Safety Day — proclaimed in December 2018 by a resolution of the UN General Assembly.



The goals facing the international community in achieving the process of sustainable development of mankind are inextricably linked with the issues of healthy nutrition, overcoming not only the problem of hunger in certain regions of the Earth, but also achieving the principles of a healthy lifestyle, including through ensuring food safety. Food safety must be ensured all the way from the place of growth and production to the table.



June 8th is World Oceans Day. The idea to establish this date was voiced at the Earth Summit held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Since 2009, the holiday has been officially celebrated by a resolution of the UN General Assembly. Ecologists, ichthyologists and employees of many zoos, aquariums and dolphinariums are co-ordinating their efforts in order to protect the rights of the inhabitants of the deep sea and promote a stable ecological environment. The oceans are the lungs of our planet, which provide most of the oxygen needed for humans to breathe. They are also the world's largest source of protein.