



**Lida has  
officially become  
the cultural  
capital  
of Belarus**



**How the mosaic  
design of the altar  
in the Memorial  
Church of All  
Saints was created**



INTERNATIONAL

# The Minsk Times

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## Fabulous victory for Arina Sobolenko

Belarusian tennis player Arina Sobolenko has won the Premier WTA tournament in Qatar's Doha, confidently defeating Czech Petra Kvitová in the finals. For the Minsk-born athlete, this is her sixth singles title win at a WTA tournament. The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, congratulated the tennis player on her superb victory.

'I congratulate you on winning the first trophy of the new season at the WTA event. Your striking success in Doha is the result of an unbending sporting character and fortitude. With your beautiful game, you gave a real feast to all Belarusian fans', reads the message of congratulation. "We're looking forward to new confident victories. We believe in you!" said the Head of State.



# Integration: without coercion or barriers

## Outcome for complex issues

The key message of the President is that Belarus is ready for real, equal integration based on the classic principles known all over the world,

*“We are, as always, committed to real integration, not coercion to integration. A new term has emerged in the Union: ‘coercion to integration’. Strangely, it began with the coercion of Belarus to integration.”*

He recalled that, together with Russia’s first president Boris Yeltsin, the Belarusian side had always initiated real integration of our states, economies, people’s lives — preserving sovereignty and independence.

“In spite of any complications, back then we managed to find solutions for difficult issues. When we became richer, especially Russia, an inexplicable hustle and bustle emerged,” Mr. Lukashenko said.

The President referred to the topic again for a reason. This is especially true in the context of recent events in relations with Russia. Mr. Lukashenko believes that as a leading country Russia should generate ideas and bring them to life, should be in the vanguard of efforts. A different situation is observed in reality. As the President noted, this relates not only to Belarus. “What’s happening with Belarus is more obvious. There is gossip, speculation and propaganda,” he said.

## Real integration programme

Aleksandr Lukashenko said that the strategic direction for the development of Eurasian economic integration until 2025 should become a significant document without doubt.

*“We are set to sign the 2025 integration strategy in Minsk in May this year. Naturally, we should offer a meaningful version of this strategy, without any exemptions and so on. If we want our Union to be based on real integration principles (we should reiterate them in this strategy for those who have forgotten) we should offer a meaningful integration programme,” the Head of State emphasised.*

Aleksandr Lukashenko believes that work to establish common markets in the EAEU should be done step by step without waiting for 2025. “As far as the common oil and gas market is concerned (this market is important for us, therefore I use it as an example), in 2021-2024 we should gradually switch to common pricing principles,” Aleksandr Lukashenko believes.

The President also noted that the EAEU lacks the declared freedoms, “The freedoms that we once declared are almost non-existent today. Or they have not been implemented to the full, to put it mildly. We once declared the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital. This is the foundation of our Union. We still don’t have that. You know why? Because of a couldn’t-care-less attitude based on the indifference of individual states.”

*Aleksandr Lukashenko said that currently the EAEU has 14 exemptions, 37 restrictions and 15 barriers. “They should have been removed a long time ago. Otherwise, there will be no point in this Union. Why do we need to be part of the Union when there are obstacles, barriers and exemptions around us,” the Head of State noted.*

## Equal conditions

The Belarusian leader stressed that the Union is being built in order to create equal conditions for companies, enterprises and people. “However, since we started building the Union, we have been



moving further and further away from these equal conditions. Moreover, incomprehensible demands and compulsions, monopolism begin,” he said.

Aleksandr Lukashenko, in particular, touched on the topic of pricing for natural gas supplied from Russia. “They say \$127 per 1,000m3 is a good price. Do you know how much Poland now pays for American gas that needs to be liquefied, transported all the way here, re-gasified, and pumped by pipeline? \$90! We ask the Russians to sell us gas on last year’s terms just as they suggested. Last year, taking into account the oil ‘re-customs’ procedure [the practice was stopped in 2020, which is why Belarus’ budget loses considerable amounts of money] the price was \$110-111. They say no, pay us \$127. Natural gas is already traded below \$100 on the commodity exchange. Is it normal? Are they forcing us to get integrated?” said the Head of State.

Aleksandr Lukashenko also reminded those present that, for no good reason, Russian companies had insisted on getting paid an additional premium in the course of oil supplies to Belarus. “They wanted to sell us oil at the global price but wanted us to pay them a premium for every tonne. But premiums are usually paid to buyers. If we buy your product, motivate us, give us the premium. No. Why? Because there are no normal rules. There is only the rule of force, the rule of forcing someone to do their bidding. It is not normal. And then there are attacks in the mass media every day: Mr. Lukashenko wants

Aleksandr Lukashenko met the Chairman of the EEC Board, Mikhail Myasnikov. Belarus is chairing the EAEU this year, and the Belarusian representative has headed the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC). Minsk’s initiatives, removal of barriers in the Union, common markets, as well as Belarusian-Russian relations were on the agenda of the detailed talk with the new Head of the EEC Board.

something else. But I don’t want anything except for what we’ve already agreed on,” the Belarusian leader stressed, adding, “We’ve just come to an agreement with Mr. Putin that they will compensate us for the reduced export duty at the expense of premiums or something else. It is up to them to decide. For instance, if we received \$1bn thanks to export duty last year and receive only \$700m today, then Russia will compensate us \$300m. But in the evening, the ministers present their own take on our agreements — agreements between the two heads of state. I took the record of the conversation and it clearly states that an agreement has been reached that we will be compensated for the difference. In other words, we will be at last year’s level in terms of finance. But it doesn’t happen. What kind of a union is that?”

## Grounds for the Union

The President stressed that the EAEU should embark on meaningful integration.

“We do not have a common manufacturing and agricultural policy. It is non-existent. We started dilly-dallying, stopping just short of knocking heads together instead of coming to terms and embarking on the work and thus becoming united and an example to follow

for those who have not yet joined our Union. Who will want to be part of this union if even we cannot come to grips with it — the three states that founded it and Kyrgyzstan and Armenia that joined later,” Aleksandr Lukashenko said.

The President emphasised that all issues should be open, “During our presidency we should be consistent and candid while putting forward our proposals. Everyone has the right of veto. It is up to every participating state to agree or to disagree.”

The Head of State noted that Belarusian-Russian relations are the backbone of this Union. “This is an indicator, a beacon. We were supposed to be an example to follow. After all, we do not ask anything from our main ally, just like from anyone else. We are able to earn more and give more like it was back in the Soviet Union. Belarus always gave more to the budget than it received from it. Today we are ready to work in the same way, but everything should be fair, consistent and appropriate,” he said.

## Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by

### ON THE TOPIC

The session of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council with the participation of the heads of the EAEU states will be held in Minsk on May 19th. At the same time, the first Eurasian Economic Forum will be held.

## PRACTICAL ACTIONS NEEDED

In his talk to journalists, Mikhail Myasnikov commented on the topics discussed at the meeting with the Head of State. In particular, he spoke about the development strategy of the EAEU until 2025, noting, “The strategy has a very large block of specific issues. This is the difference from all previous documents adopted in the EAEU. The strategy involves removing barriers and obstacles in internal trade, namely, how best to arrange and eliminate ‘holes’ along the external circuit

(they are still there), so that the right of four degrees of freedom is realised: the movement of goods, services, labour and finance.”

According to the official, there is practically no common financial market in the EAEU. “In the trade of goods, we have a lot of barriers and exemptions. The President supported my proposal in order to make a decision at once: all countries remove barriers and restrictions and give instructions to governments not to create new ones. This can only be a decision of the heads of state. These barriers,

in fact, are not decisive in trade, but create a lot of obstacles for businesses and for people. A negative social opinion is formed that the Union does not give anything,” he said.

According to Mikhail Myasnikov, about two-thirds of all obstacles were created by the five states themselves. For example, trade in excisable goods (alcohol, tobacco), issues related to transit, infrastructure platforms (pipeline, air, road transport). “There are various kinds of regulators that pursue not so much state as corporate goals and thus create prob-

lems. If there are different tariffs, for example, for gas pumping, this is not a common market. This irritates businesses and the state,” he noted.

At the same time, he stressed that even elements aimed at disintegration should not be allowed in the Eurasian Economic Union, “We need to strengthen the Eurasian Economic Union at all levels. Belarus has always demonstrated and, as the President said, will continue to demonstrate a concrete contribution to the development of the integration of states.”

# The important things are people and fair treatment



Important issues for each working person were discussed in Minsk, at the 8th Congress of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus. The President of Belarus also took part in the forum of one of the most mainstream public organisations in the country. Salaries, the pension system, employment, and working conditions were on its agenda, apart from other acute issues.

## Work to be done

Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed that, in Belarus, the goals of state development and the interests of people coincide. He noted that, thanks to this unity, the history of sovereign Belarus has not faced strong protracted confrontations and ‘demonstrational’ performances of public organisations, examples of which so often appear in the international news.

“The Belarusian nation has chosen the path of a social dialogue, and we have repeatedly been convinced of its reasonableness and prospects,” the President said. He noted that all — including local councils of deputies, associations of youth, women and veterans, trade unions — work to create and ensure civil consolidation. Mr. Lukashenko believes it’s one of our main achievements, “As well as the fact that the protection of workers’ rights is a priority for state development. In Belarus, workers are protected as in no other country; this is envisaged by the Constitution and the recently adopted decree on early professional pensions.”

## Main topics

The President stressed that, among the issues that fall within the competence of trade unions, are the growth and timely payment of wages, ensuring full and productive employment, supporting the most vulnerable categories of workers, improving working conditions, monitoring performance and labour discipline, improving labour productivity and product quality.

“However, there are issues that can be discussed today: this is macroeconomic stability and reduced inflation. The task to keep inflation at a level of no higher than 5 percent is being fulfilled, despite the strongest

external pressure. You can see how relations with our main partners are developing. At the same time, there are areas where we have, to put it mildly, underperformed,” Mr. Lukashenko said. The latter include the efficiency of the agricultural sector, some projects dealing with industry modernisation and the development of education and science. “These are the areas that we will have to analyse in detail together with the country’s economic bloc. It is necessary to preserve production and staffing at all costs. We have always done this, even in the most difficult times. People were not thrown out on the street. The salary, even if not the highest, was paid,” the President added.



511 delegates from all over the country gather at the 8th Congress of the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus

## Important priorities

The Head of State paid special attention to the need to protect working women, “The demographic welfare of the state is in their hands. The family and the mother are sacred. The rights of mothers in terms of employment must be strictly protected!”

It’s not in every country that women who have given birth to three or four children can safely return to work. In Belarus, they have this opportunity. “Our parents with many children do not lose their job during maternity leave. Moreover, all the years

spent on raising children are included in the employment record,” the President said.

He assessed favourably the role of the Federation of Trade Unions in working on the draft law on changing the Labour Code. The Federation acts as a developer of the document along with parliamentarians, which is a unique example in world practice. “In most cases, organisations of the kind are only allowed to express their view on the already prepared proposals and bills, but it’s not given that their opinion is taken into account,” Mr. Lukashenko commented.

The Federation of Trade Unions also supports changes to the pension legislation. According to the President, the

initiative deserves special attention, “The pension system in the form in which we observe and use it now, has outlived its usefulness. We will still have to deal with this after the Presidential election (irrespective of who is chosen). If we continue working with the same people, we will start this later this year. We need to make sure that people who work understand: if they work and earn more, then they will be in a better situation after retirement. There should be no wage-levelling!”

According to the Head of State, it will not be difficult



to solve this issue for Belarus as the country is studying the experience of other countries, including Russia. “Taking into account their experience and the world systems, we will create the best pension system in Belarus — considering our capabilities. When saying ‘the best’, this does not mean that we will ‘flood’ everyone with large pensions; however, ours will be a fair and good system,” he said.

## In equal conditions

The President stressed that trade unions are primarily a guarantor and defender of employees’ rights in all areas, including in private sector enterprises. In his opinion, primary trade union organisations are relevant there as well. The creation of trade unions is underway, but there are objective difficulties.

“It is not always convenient for a businessman to have a trade union that will monitor compliance with the rights of employees, sometimes forcing them to sacrifice their financial interests. However, the state decided to liberalise conditions for running a business. So show your maturity and ability to bear social responsibility to people,” Mr. Lukashenko noted.

## Special role

The President thanked the trade unions for their support and participation in important state initiatives, including the events held as part of the Year of Small Homeland and the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory.

In his speech, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted the importance of the fact that trade unions work subtly, without hype or attracting special attention, “All this is not for the sake of PR, but for a noble purpose.”

The Head of State stressed that the activity of trade unions reflects the evolutionary path of the trade union movement. More than a century ago, it was born as the only support for workers in protecting their rights. “The Federation now is a powerful structure that not only takes care of people in the workplace, but also solves global problems — including political ones. It contributes to restoring the historical memory of our ancestors, educating the younger generations in the spirit of continuity of traditional values, caring for culture, leisure and health of the nation and ending with the formation of the civil position of the people,” Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed.

Based on materials of sb.by and belta.by



Sergei Terebov and Gennady Kazakevich

## Safety will be assured

The President made staff changes in the structure of the State Security Committee and the Interior Ministry, appointing new first deputies to positions in these departments

Sergei Terebov, formerly the Head of the Gomel Region Department of the State Security Committee Department, was appointed as First Deputy Chairman of the State Security Committee. In turn, the Gomel Region Department is now headed by Aleksandr Mel-

nikov. Gennady Kazakevich was appointed as First Deputy Interior Minister and Head of the Criminal Police. He previously worked as the Head of the Central Office for Drug Control and Counteraction of Human Trafficking of the Criminal Police Branch of the Interior Ministry.

As far as the tasks set during the assignment are concerned, all pursue the main thing: to protect people and prevent a destructive influence on Belarus from outside. The Interior Ministry will have to strengthen its work in the fight against corruption. Aleksandr Lukashenko emphasised that it should be systemic.



Aleksandr Yaroshenko, Sergei Nesterovich and Yan Gang

By Olga Korneeva

An agreement on co-operation with the Belarusian Communications and Informatisation Ministry was signed envisaging the development of 5G technology on the Park, as well as other areas of interaction in the field of electro- and postal communication. The document — signed by Belarusian Communications and Informatisation First Deputy Minister, Sergei Nesterovich, General Director of Industrial Park Development Company, Yan Gang, and Head of the Industrial Park Administration, Aleksandr Yaroshenko — will enable the Great Stone to be-

come a platform for implementing and testing the new generation technology.

Mr. Nesterovich said, “The agreement represents the initial stage for tapping into the potential 5G technology offers. Our telecommunications flagship Beltelecom will provide all kinds of assistance in association with the Huawei Company to develop 5G technologies in the Great Stone.”

Mr. Yaroshenko noted that the future belongs to 5G. “We are very proud that 5G technology will be deployed in the Park for the first time in Belarus. As we sign today’s agreement, we make an important step on the road to developing the Industrial Park as a smart city

# Launch ground

## A pilot project to develop 5G technology to be implemented in the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park

with an innovative manufacturing sector and high quality of life,” he stressed, mentioning driverless transportation as one of the most promising directions for developing 5G technology. “Some of our resident companies do R&D work in this field. The new technology also plays an important role for developing the Park as a logistics hub as part of the Silk Road,” the official added.

In turn, Yan Gang also underlined the importance of the agreement for the Park. “In line with the agreement, the Park will become Belarus’ first reference testbed for introducing 5G technologies,” he said.

Moreover, the Great Stone Industrial Park and the Development Bank of the Republic of Belarus have signed a co-operation agreement to work together to bring strategic investors into the Park, finance individual investment projects and export operations, and provide information support.

During the signing ceremony, Mr.

Yaroshenko stressed that plans for the Great Stone’s development include construction of some infrastructure projects. “This year, we intend to start building an international terminal to link transport flows between China and Europe via Belarus. A decision has been made to build a high-speed railroad between Minsk and the airport with the assistance of the Industrial Park,” he added.

As of early January 2020, the China-Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park was home to 60 resident companies from 15 countries, including 33 companies from China, 15 companies with a share of capital from Austria, Germany, Israel, Canada, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, the USA, Switzerland and Estonia, as well as 12 firms initiated by Belarusian companies. By the end of the year, the Park is expected to have at least 80 resident companies, with a declared volume of investments at \$1.5bn.



## Belarusian furniture presented in Poland

By Irina Sergeeva

### Products of Bellesbumprom Concern presented at Meble Polska 2020 international furniture exhibition in Poznan

The Concern’s enterprises demonstrated a wide range of chipboard-based furniture as well as solid wood cabinet furniture and kitchen sets. They presented their technical production potential to fulfil orders for the production of furniture for European retail chains.

Participation in the exhibition was an important step for the businesses in promoting their products in foreign markets. The furniture exhibition in Poland is traditionally visited by numerous target-customer representatives of major European retail chains, so their presence is important both to establish new contacts and to gain a foothold in the market.

*Meble Polska 2020* is the largest international exhibition of the furniture industry not only in Poland, but also in Central and Eastern Europe. The exhibition is traditionally attended by the largest manufacturers and exporters of furniture interested in contacts with new trading partners. Every year, the exhibition is visited by wholesale furniture distributors from more than 50 countries.

Apart from a large number of representatives of Polish retail chains, Poznan was visited by large purchasing chains and furniture stores from Europe, the United States, China, India and the UAE.

## Innovations and trends for agribusiness



### 1<sup>st</sup> Belarusian-Uzbek Agrarian Forum held in Tashkent

By Svetlana Savelieva

The forum gathered representatives of key ministries, agencies and state bodies of the two countries, in addition to major agricultural holdings, manufacturers and processors, scientific circles and trade. Over 700 participants came and the Belarusian delegation was headed by Vladimir Dvornik, the Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus and co-Chairman of the joint intergovernmental commission on bilateral co-operation between the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Uzbekistan. It included the heads of the Agriculture and Food Ministry and the Industry Ministry, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Belgospishcheprom Concern, Belkoopsoyuz and regional executive committees. The business part of the Belarusian delegation featured about 150 exporters of agricultural and food products and scientific and educational institutions of the agro-industrial complex of Belarus.

The main purpose of the event was to promote the diversification of Belarusian exports and the implementation of the action plan for the development of co-operation between Belarus and Uzbekistan. The forum helped bring together interested producers and processors of agricultural products, as well as representatives of industry universities, design and research institutes, retail, suppliers of equipment and technologies, and investors.

Belarusian food and processing companies presented their products at a professional tasting. The presentation of the best developments in the field of breeding cattle, design and construction of dairy farms, vegetable stores and processing plants was organised. The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus alone presented more than 60 innovative developments and technologies for agriculture at the exhibition in Uzbekistan. The forum participants also shared

Central Asia. Last year, the volume of bilateral trade amounted to almost \$240m (an increase of more than 1.5 times). This is the highest indicator for our countries in the history of economic relations.

One of the most important positions in mutual trade is in agricultural and food products. Last year, \$35m of them were delivered from Belarus to Uzbekistan. The volume of deliveries of Uzbek agricultural products to Belarus exceeded \$15m last year.



their experience on energy efficiency and resource saving in the production of meat and dairy products. There were thematic sections on the sale of finished products, crop production, animal husbandry and veterinary medicine, processing of agricultural products and direct negotiations with representatives of local businesses, farms and production companies.

Uzbekistan is a promising trade and economic partner of Belarus in

Apart from mutual supplies of products, promising areas of co-operation in the agricultural sector embrace Belarus’ participation in the construction of dairy complexes, organisation of milk processing facilities, creation of a joint venture to produce veterinary drugs, co-operation in the field of selection, training and retraining of Uzbek specialists on the basis of Belarusian agricultural educational institutions.

# Unique technology from our scientists

The Belarusian State University's Faculty of Geography and Geoinformatics has joined the National Academy of Sciences to develop a unique technology enabling them to identify promising oil-bearing areas using space information along with traditional geological and geophysical data. The programme's supervisor, Professor of the Regional Geology Department, at the BSU's Faculty of Geography and Geoinformatics, Valery Gubin, shares details about the new technology.

By Ilya Krasovskiy

## From the known to the potential

"How does technology reveal potential oil areas?" asks Valery Gubin. "Space images are processed with special filters," says the Professor, showing one of these: the wetland at Lake Chervonoye in Polesie contrasted on a green background.

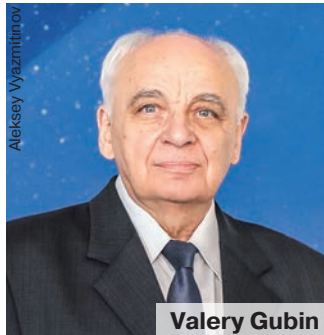
Oil is contained in structural traps and it's there that you need to drill. Space information together with geological and geophysical data makes it possible to identify prospective oil structures. In their research, scientists went from well-known to promising sites. Open oil fields are located within the oil and gas zones, controlled by faults. Scientists observe how active faults appear on satellite images. In the last stage the characteristic features, indicators and structures are compared with

geological data. As a result, they are able to detect future wells with minimal error.

"We see linear and ring structures, study them and compare them with geological data," continues the researcher. "Firstly, using this technology, we've studied the well-known developed fields and identified certain peculiar features in order to use them in other areas that are of interest to us in the south of Belarus, and more specifically — in the west of the Pripyat flexure and at the junction with the Mikashevichi-Zhitkovichi horst."

## Optimistic hypothesis

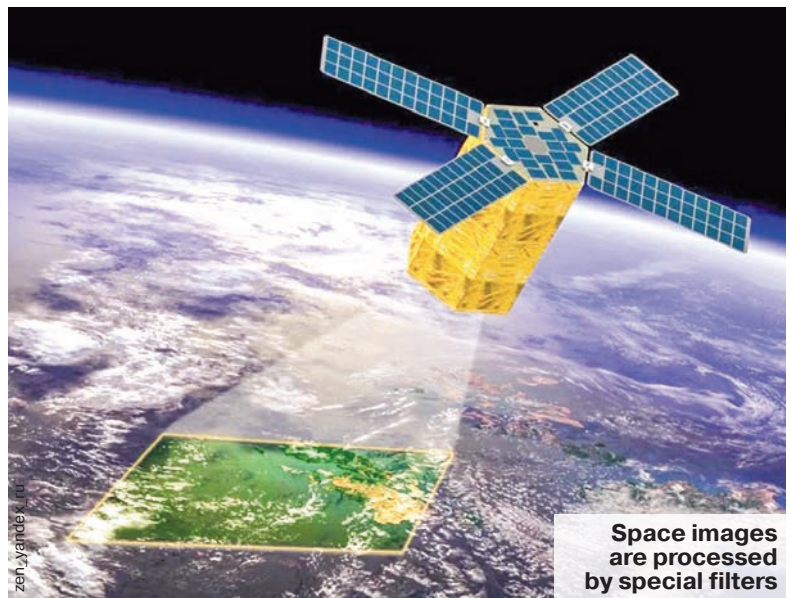
The technology for identifying oil prospective areas will be completed by the end of this year. A cosmo-structural forecasting scheme for a potentially rich oil deposit area in the western part of the Pripyat flexure will be compiled. Then, the next stage



Valery Gubin

of planning a network of seismic exploration, in other words, geological exploration will be conducted. The scheme localises the position of oil-prospective sites, with profiles for future works being outlined. It will save a lot of time and effort for geologists. This year, field studies have already been carried out in some parts of the cosmo-structural scheme and they were a success.

"We currently extract little more than a million tonnes of oil per year, and half a century ago, when the Rechnitz oil field was just discovered, in the mid-



Space images are processed by special filters



belchemoil.by

1960s, we extracted five million tonnes per year," Valery Gubin recalls with a smile the events of the past. "Today we must return to the previous levels of oil production and for this we're actively engaged in the search for new oil fields."

In addition, Prof. Gubin shares the optimistic hypothesis in the scientific community that deep formations do not arise from sedimentary basins but come directly from the Earth's mantle. This means the renewability of oil fields.

## Flight track



Aleksey Vyazmitinov

Belavia has become one of the first airlines in Eastern Europe and the CIS to own a new generation of Embraer aircraft. A lease agreement for the supply of three Embraer E195-E2 was signed recently in Minsk. Thanks to the replenishment of the fleet with high-quality and economical equipment, our carrier will reduce operating costs and announce a possible reduction in air ticket prices.

By Aleksandr Nesterov

The E195-E2 aircraft is designed for 125 passengers: 9 seats in business class and 116 in economy. Fuel consumption is a quarter lower than that of the first-generation Embraer 195. The new planes are expected to service flights to London, Barcelona, Astana, Munich, Paris, Sochi and Amsterdam.

"We plan to receive the first of the three aircraft this December and the remaining two will come in early 2021," informed Belavia's General Director, Anatoly Gusarov.

Speaking of whether the acquisition of the E195-E2 planes is a forced replacement for the long-awaited Boeing 737 MAX, as global deliveries stopped last year after two crashes involving these planes, Mr. Gusarov explains, "No, these are two parallel developing areas. The Embraer is not an alternative to the 737 MAX in terms of distance or capacity. E195-E2 planes are midrange, while MAX aircraft is needed to service long charter routes, i.e. to Tashkent, you need MAX. We have not yet developed a plan 'B' for the absence of these aircraft because we believe in Boeing. We hope that, by the end of the year, its aircraft will start arriving."

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Yelena Kupchina relieved of her post as Belarus' Ambassador to Austria but to continue working in Vienna

The Head of State, Aleksandr Lukashenko, relieved Yelena Kupchina of the position of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Austria with concurrent accreditation to Slovenia and permanent representative of Belarus to international organisations in Vienna with concurrent accreditation to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). A corresponding decree was signed by the President on February 25th.

Yelena Kupchina will continue working in Vienna as co-ordinator of activities to address transnational threats — Director of the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department.

### VAL to present Belarus at 2020 Eurovision Song Contest

The decision has been made as a result of the finals of the national selection round for this creative forum — broadcast live. The VAL project is a duo of Valeria Gribusova and Vladislav Pashkevich who managed



to conquer the hearts of the professional jury members and audience to score 20 points (out of 24 possible). In the finals, they performed the 'Da Vidna' Belarusian-language song. The second place was shared by CHAKRAS and Yan Yarosh — scoring 18 points each.

The 65th Eurovision Song Contest will be held in Rotterdam (Netherlands). The first semi-final — featuring Belarus' representative — is scheduled for May 12th, and the second semi-final is to take place on May 14th. The finals are planned for May 16th.

### Nigeria keen on Belarusian experience in training specialists for rescue departments

A delegation of the Interior Ministry and the Security and Civil Defence Corps of Nigeria, led by Interior Minister Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola, has visited Belarus. A memorandum of understanding in preventing emergencies and alleviating their consequences was signed by the Belarusian Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Security and Civil Defence Corps of Nigeria as a result of the visit.



The delegation visited the Civil Protection University, with guests familiarising themselves with the experience of training specialists for rescue departments of the CIS and non-CIS states while also studying fire-fighting rescue equipment of domestic production, combat clothing and equipment.

### Young Belarusian wins prestigious choreography competition in Germany

An eight year old pupil of the Vezhnovets ballet school, Maya Sivets, became the winner of the major *Tanzolymp* International Choreographic Contest in Berlin.

Maya Sivets received a gold medal in the 'Classical Dance' category among children aged 8-12, enabling Belarus to enter the top-10 for the first time and be ranked eighth. The young girl was the only Belarusian participant in the gala concert in which the best dancers of the world this year performed. She also proved herself in the 'Modern Dance' category (solo, 8-12 years old), where she was awarded bronze. More than a thousand participants aged 8-21 from different countries competed to win the competition.





The filming process is led by cameraman Aleksandr Smolyak

Aleksandr Kushner

# Looking for an angel

## Belarusfilm shooting a picture, with a plot suggested by life itself

By Yuliana Leonovich

2020 promises to be the year of great film premieres. Belarusfilm National Film Studio is planning to release three new domestic films in spring: the historical and adventure film *Adventures of Prantish Vyrvich*, directed by Aleksandr Anisimov and based on Lyudmila Rublevskaya's novel; the *Traces of the Apostles-2* series by Sergey Talybov; and the *Destiny of the Saboteur* military drama, directed by our favourite, Dmitry Astrakhan. A little later, in summer, there are plans to release another work — the 4-episode action detective film *Looking for an Angel*. The author of the script for the new picture is Valentin Zaluzhny, while the director's chair is occupied by Igor Chetverikov. If everything goes well at the studio, they hope the film will be ready by mid-July.

### Cinema for two

Valentin Zaluzhny and Igor Chetverikov came into each other's orbit almost a decade ago, when they began working on the detective series, entitled the *Shadow*

of the *Samurai*. There was a joint 4-episode film about the adventures of rural lieutenant Kachura and the *State Border* series — these are perhaps the most famous works of the director and screenwriter. In 2018, their professional relations reached a new level when cinema houses screened the *Gamer Rules* — a children's adventure movie about mutual assistance, the treasures of the Radziwill dukes and the test of friendship. And here is a new story, the plot of which was inspired by life itself, as Valentin Zaluzhny freely admits.

"The basis of all my scenarios has always been the pressing problems and questions for our country. Remember, almost 3 years ago, in the area of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, 10 year old Maksim Markhalyuk disappeared? At that time, almost everyone took part in the search: police officers, military, rescuers, border guards, foresters, volunteers, members of search and rescue teams... This story affected me greatly. It turned out that behind the disappearance of one particular child there can be a lot of nuances: from

the difficulties in the family to the social responsibility of each of us for his fate. That episode three years ago clearly showed and proved this. This will be also discussed in the new film, as well as the consequences of the tragic mistakes of adults that affect children and generate dislike, loneliness, violence," Mr. Zaluzhny says.

### Major characters

So, what is the movie about? In the story, captain Sergei Odinets, an operational officer of the Internal Ministry's district department (in this role we'll see the ex-actor of the Yanka Kupala Theatre, Artyom Borodich) and child psychologist Oksana Polisevich (a Youth Theatre actress Valeria Melnik) are trying to solve the case of the disappearance and death of adolescents, which shocked a small provincial town.

The investigation brings Sergei and Oksana to the orphanage, whose closed doors hide many secrets... Valentin Zaluzhny states the film's genre is an action-packed detective story, but with an indispensable

happy ending, "This is not an edifying story. I'd rather have a good movie. Yes, viewers will see crime, blood, and chases on the screen... But where there is evil, there will always be punishment. Therefore, in our film, good (as in life!) will surely defeat evil."

The Director General of Belarusfilm National Film Studio, Vladimir Karachevsky, cautiously comments on the distribution of the picture, "Let's not guess. Let's see what happens. But in any case, the story itself is interesting. This is a psychological thriller based on a detective story. We hope that it will inspire interest among Belarusian and Russian channels."



City Clinical Hospital No. 2, Minsk

clinicsbel.by

## Belarusian medical institutions to undergo accreditation

Hospitals, clinics and other medical institutions in Belarus will be accredited to meet the basic standards of the level of care — as announced by Health Minister Vladimir Karanik

By Svetlana Yevgenieva

All medical institutions will be accredited to meet the basic standards. These requirements will characterise the security and level of assistance. "If it is not possible to provide specialised assistance safely at this level, the institution will not be accredited to provide this type of help. Accordingly, specialised assistance will be consolidated in the centres with the necessary equipment and personnel enabling them to ensure a modern safe level of care," Vladimir Karanik explained.

For example, neurological care should be provided where there is a possibility of neuroimaging, CT and MRI. Their absence provides no possibil-

ity to use modern treatment methods that reduce the risk of disability and allow patients to recover more fully. Such assistance will be concentrated in hourly availability in those institutions that meet the necessary level of equipment.

There will be two types of accreditation of medical institutions in Belarus: basic for state institutions and voluntary. Private medical centres will also be able to pass the latter. If a medical institution fails to pass accreditation for certain types of assistance, it will not be funded from the state budget.

The accreditation system will start being created this year. It is planned that it will be fully operational from January 1st, 2023.

## From idea to production

By Olga Korneeva

The Unitehprom BSU company of the Belarusian State University (BSU) has become the world's single producer of an original cancer drug — 'Temodex', with a registration certificate issued by Belarus' Health Ministry

The idea, its implementation, production technology, quality and efficiency of the medicine were done by scientists from the Research Institute for Physical and Chemical Problems at the Belarusian State University. Clinical studies and research have been conducted jointly with doctors of the Minsk City Emergency Hospital, the National Research Centre for Oncology and Medical Radiology and the Belarusian State Medical University. Accordingly, BSU has become Belarus' first university to implement a cancer drug development project from scratch — from project idea to drug production.

'Temodex' is used in brain cancer treatment. It is a powder that turns into biodegradable hydrogel. 'Temodex' is implanted in the space where the tumour was and on all the tissues that made contact with it. The gel gradually dissolves, releasing the molecules of the chemotherapeutic agent and maintains its adequate concentration in order to destroy all the remaining tumour cells and to prevent regrowth.

The Belarusian medication is unique. The well-known 'Gliadel' drug has a similar application but using a different composition and it is produced in the form of wafers. Another advantage of the Belarusian drug is its low price. Belarusian nationals can get 'Temodex' free of charge.

'Temodex' has been included in Belarus' clinical protocol to treat tumours. Work is underway to get it registered abroad. The drug has been patented in Eurasia and Russia. An international patent application under the PCT was submitted. The PCT international patent system offers protection for an invention in 56 countries. 'Temodex' also has an orphan drug status in Europe (orphan drugs are used to treat rare diseases).

It's expected that 'Temodex' will be supplied to Belarusian hospitals within a month.

# Lida Castle waiting for guests

Lida has officially become the cultural capital of Belarus since Pinsk has recently officially handed over the cultural baton. This year, the city is preparing to unite the country's musical and cultural life, surprising visitors with knights' tournaments, fire shows, hunts for the fern flower and theatrical experiments.

By Yuliana Leonovich

All year round, the cultural programme will be focused on the city's major attraction: Lida Castle, which is the pride of the city and a symbol of the locality. Its long history and eventful past attract many tourists. Three years ago, the castle was restored and renovated and, thanks to the *Castles of Belarus* state programme, the Vitovt Tower was opened to visitors. This year, the reconstruction of another tower — Gedimin — is to be completed and the city administration hopes the castle will amaze visitors in all its glory.

Lida Castle has gone a long way towards its revival. History was not kind to the city and its main defensive object, the castle, was repeatedly attacked by crusaders, Swedes and by the Moscow Principality... As a result, only fragments of walls and towers have been preserved and the state took them under protection in the early 1950s. Three decades later, the site was preserved but it was only in the 2000s when builders finally arrived at the complex. Since then, the castle's restoration has continued.

The Director of the Lida Historical and Art Museum, Olga Pilipchuk, tells us, "When the issue of reconstruction emerged, the castle was included in the *Culture of Belarus* state programme and, thanks to budget funding, communications and structures on the site of the castle yard were worked on. In 2017, the Vitovt Tower was ready and it now houses an exhibition. A little later, some of the artefacts moved to the Gedimin Tower to be displayed there."

Olga Pilipchuk is still cautious about the deadlines for the south-eastern tower as reconstruction is not a quick process. However, there are already plans on how to arrange the halls. "Visitors will start their journey with objects from the Gedimin Tower. We'll tell them

of 'castels' [castles of regular shape with defensive walls, elements of which can be parts of flanking towers and residential buildings around the perimeter of the walls]. Lida Castle is among the four 'castels' preserved on the site of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. We'll tell our guests why they were built and why they appeared at this place and then smoothly turn to our character: Prince Gediminas," the expert adds.

However, these are two different issues: to restore and renovate the historical citadel and to launch an advertising campaign and create the necessary infrastructure for tourists. Last year, over 54,000 people visited the castle.

"Previously, tourists came to us as organised groups, on buses from travel agencies. However, an increasing number of independent travellers are now being seen. They've read widely and understand where they are going and what they will see. Mostly, these are, of course, guests from the neighbouring countries of Lithuania, Poland and Russia. In summer, many people arrive on bicycles, so we are thinking about how to arrange bike parking near the castle. In addition, we have suggestions for street signs: to indicate old and present names of streets on special plates and the distance to the castle and other important cultural sites of the city," said Ms. Pilipchuk.

The castle administration has already outlined plans for 2020, the year when Lida is the cultural capital of the country. Among them is the start of the *Zamkavy Gastinets* festival in late April-early May. In late July, the *Stary Castel* archery tournament will be held here, as well as the *Fire Phoenix Fest*, which is a favourite of the townspeople. These are definitely great reasons to investigate urban legends and take a selfie in the cultural capital of 2020!



Lida Castle is the city's major attraction



At the exhibition of Lida's cultural trends and achievements



Knights' tournament during Sword of Lida Castle Medieval Festival

## FACT

In 2010, Polotsk was the first to receive the title of the cultural capital of Belarus. This was taken in turn by Gomel, Nesvizh, Mogilev, Grodno, Brest, Molodechno, Bobruisk, Novopolotsk and Pinsk.



By Arina Novikova

This year, participants from Belarus, Poland, Ukraine and Russia came for the event. The trading centred on Grodno's Lenin Square from morning until evening.

The major products were handmade items made from clay, leather, wood, metal and straw. These included souvenirs and jewellery, as well as practical items useful for everyday life. The craftsmen didn't only offer the chance to purchase goods, but also held master classes and shared the secrets of their craft. Of course, the festival also offered food and drink tasting.

The fair has many traditions. One of them dictates that, on this day, more ex-

perienced craftsmen accept young colleagues into their ranks. The ceremony is a type of exam. Experienced craftsmen, armed with wooden spoons, meticulously examine the works of the candidates. If an artisan has reached guild level, then they bang a wooden spoon on his palms. But if he gets a spoon on his forehead, then he should continue to learn. Another tradition was also revived this year. Previously, at the fair, to ensure good bargaining, it was necessary to go under a stylised gate in the form of a horseshoe. After the opening of the festival, everyone could pass through it and attract their own good luck.

As always, the *Kazyuki* fair had a rich cultural programme. There was a theatrical opening to the event and a thematic

## Dedication to artisans, the gates of luck and secrets of craftsmanship

Traditional *Kazyuki* fair in Grodno brings together over 200 craftsmen and artists from Belarus and neighbouring countries on the first day of spring

concert programme, with groups from different countries performing.

The fair has long been one of the most significant events in the cultural

life of the city, being organised by the Grodno City Executive Committee and the Grodno City Department of the Union of Poles in Belarus.

## THE MT REFERENCE

*Kazyuki* fair is held in Grodno annually in memory of St. Casimir — the patron saint of youth, artists and craftsmen. Saint Casimir was the grandson of Jagiello and the son of the ruler of Lithuania and Poland — Casimir IV. The young prince from the Jagiellonian family lived a short life and died on March 4th, 1484, and his remains were transported from Grodno to Vilno. In 1604, Casimir was canonised

and he began to be revered as the patron saint of artisans. The relics of St. Casimir are kept in Vilnius Cathedral. *Kaziukas* are also widely celebrated in Lithuania and numerous artisan fairs are held in Lithuanian cities as well as the capital. The main attributes of the festival are gingerbread cookies decorated with passages from the Gospel and specially designed willow branches — 'kazimirki'.



# Rio Carnival kicked off in Rio de Janeiro

Rio Carnival bursts with colour in Brazil

The supercharged, lively celebrations consist of samba competitions between rival dance schools, parades and block parties, with revellers dressing in vibrant costumes as they take to the streets.

Carnival is both rooted in European pagan traditions and Catholicism. It was originally a food festival, when people would take their last opportunity to gorge before the beginning of Lent, traditionally a time of abstinence and fasting in the Catholic Church.

But the unique feel of the Carnival comes from the culture clash between the Portuguese colonisers and the indigenous people. The settlers bought over the tradition of Entrudo (Carnival) from Europe, where it met with the local population's passion for music and dance. It gradually evolved into an annual city-wide party, culminating in the invention of samba in the early 20th century. The first samba schools were established in the 1920s, with the first samba parade competitions held in 1933.

Events take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's most cosmopolitan

city. All the main samba competitions between rival dance schools and parades take place in the Sambadrome — a purpose-built parade area created for the Carnival. After the official events, the party spills out onto the streets in every corner of the city.

Rio Carnival traditionally commences with a series of block parties, including one in the neighbourhood of Santa Theresa called 'Bloco das Carmelitas'. It's said that the block party, which takes its name from the Carmelite Convent in the area, was inspired by the story of a Catholic nun, who one day left her convent to partake in a carnival street party.

The costumes, floats and choreography of Rio's samba school may change, but they are always sparkling and spectacular, often taking all year and over \$2 million to put together.

Each year the top 13 samba schools parade through the Sambadrome in front of up to 90,000 locals, tourists and VIPs partying in the steep, concrete stands and hospitality suites that line the 700-metre venue.

Visitors to Rome have long enjoyed visiting a host of ancient architectural sites, from the fascinating Coliseum to the grandeur of the Pantheon

Now, a newly unearthed archaeological discovery offers further insight into the Italian capital's cultural history.

It's long been believed that there could be a heroon, an ancient Roman shrine, dedicated to Romulus, Rome's legendary founder, underneath the site of the Roman Forum, which was the political hub of Rome in days gone by.

Now, an underground chamber has indeed been unearthed, next to the Curia-Comitium complex — the public meeting space for the senators of ancient Rome. And yes, it is believed to be dedicated to Rome's mythical father.

Romulus is a figure from Roman mythology, one of two twin brothers raised by a wolf,

he is said to have killed his brother Remus during a fight to found the city of Rome.

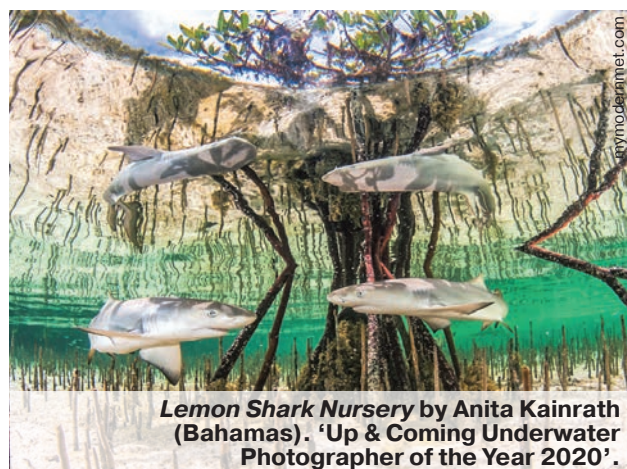
In an official press conference held in Rome, Alfonsina Russo, Director of the Colosseum Archaeological Park, described the chamber as Romulus' tomb, not his actual burial place. "This place is highly symbolic," she said.

Inside are intriguing treasures including a tuff (a volcanic ash rock) sarcophagus that's about 1.4 metres in length, and what's believed to be an altar.

Rome's Mayor Virginia Raggi Tweeted about the findings, writing: 'Rome always amazes with its treasures' — and thanking the archaeological team. Head archaeologist Patrizia Fortini said more research needed to take place, "Let us keep digging."

Alfonsina Russo said excavation would resume at the end of April, and to expect 'further surprises'.

# Ancient Roman shrine devoted to Romulus discovered



Lemon Shark Nursery by Anita Kainrath (Bahamas). 'Up & Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2020'.

# Underwater photographer of the year named

The competition celebrates photography beneath the surface of the ocean, lakes and rivers

The winners of this year's *Underwater Photographer of the Year* contest were just announced, and photographer Greg Lecoeur was named 'Underwater Photographer of the Year 2020' for his image of crabeater seals in Antarctica. More than 5,500 underwater pictures were entered in 13 categories by underwater photographers from 70 countries around the world. Prizes and commendations were handed out in categories including 'Wide Angle', 'Macro', 'Wrecks', 'Behaviour', 'Portrait', 'Black and White', 'Compact', 'Up and Coming', 'Marine Conservation', 'British Waters Wide Angle', 'British Waters Living Together', 'British Waters Compact', and 'Macro'.

The *Underwater Photographer of the Year* competition recognises the best pictures revealing the world we, land-dwellers, rarely get to see.

A stunning photo of a group of crabeater seals exploring an iceberg has won the prize of *Underwater Photographer of the Year 2020*. Massive and mysterious habitats, icebergs are dynamic kingdoms that support marine life. As they swing and rotate slowly through polar currents, icebergs fertilise the oceans by carrying nutrients from land that spark blooms of phytoplankton, fundamental to the carbon cycle.



Rabbit Fish Zoom Blur by Nicholas More (United Kingdom). 'British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2020'.



Frozen Mobil Home by Greg Lecoeur (France). 'Underwater Photographer of the Year 2020'.

Materials prepared with aid of information agencies



# Project for the soul

The art of mosaics is already many thousands of years old, but it only spread in our country with the adoption of Christianity. The church then was the main customer for these master craftsmen. In total, little has changed over the past centuries: today's mosaics are still in demand mainly in spiritual centres.

The President's special prizes were recently awarded to figures of culture and the arts. Among them is a team of artists who have worked for almost five years on the mosaic design of the altar in the Memorial Church of All Saints in memory of the victims of the war who saved our Fatherland. Denis Chubukov, Alevtina Bashkatova, Kirill Orsik are among almost a hundred people working on the project: last October, their laborious large-scale work was highly praised by the elders of the Orthodox Church who participated in the consecration of the main throne at the Memorial Church.

By Yuliana Leonovich

Where is the line between creativity and religious canon, why do craftsmen need a stucco grid and is there a demand for mosaics outside church walls? Kirill Orsik, a master of vocational training at the Monumental and Decorative Art Chair at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, talks about how the work went and what it taught them.

## Colour does matter

The Memorial Church of All Saints in Minsk is a unique shrine. It's not only the largest spiritual centre, but also the cultural one: the museum premises and a convenient archive all attract cultural figures and pilgrims from all over the world. In October 2018, the place of worship opened permanently. Four years earlier, the Artel-art workshop,

under the direction of Denis Chubukov, had received a large order: to decorate its altar area. The workshop had already liaised with Archpriest Fiodor Povny, senior priest of the Memorial Church of All Saints, who became the curator of the project: previously the workshop had made mosaic facades.

"Is it necessary for an artist working in a church to be a believer, a church member?" Kirill Orsik asks. "It's desirable. At least, one cannot be an opponent of the faith."

According to the artist, all the sketches were done in line with previously agreed designs. The decoration of the altar area was no exception. The compositional structure is classical: the symbolic image of the Eucharist at the entrance, the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos, 'Reigning' above it, the images of the saints, the Golgotha composition



The Memorial Church of All Saints in memory of the victims of the war who saved our Fatherland



Mosaic decoration of the altar

## THE MT REFERENCE

The architect of the project of the Memorial Church of All Saints is Lev Pogorelov, in collaboration with Archpriest Fiodor Povny. The Palekhski Ikonostas workshop worked on the painting of the main church space and aisles while the Artel-art work-

shop performed the mosaics of the altar. The Republican Art and Expert Council on Monumental and Monumental-Decorative Art, which was chaired by the Academy of Arts Rector — Mikhail Borozna, worked on the interior sketches.

located in the dome and on the western wall are scenes from the Old Testament. In the alcove above the diaconicon is the image of John the Baptist while near to the altar is the composition 'Weep Not For Me, O Mother'.

After discussing the designs, they began work on the sketches. The next step is the acceptance of these and their approval by the artistic expert advisors.

"All stages of the work were also supervised by Fiodor Povny, who expressed his wishes and made comments. He is a designer by education, having graduated from the Academy of Arts and he really understands the many nuances and technologies involved: this dialogue raises mutual understanding."

The main works were carried out in the workshop, not in the church. Having approved the sketches, the masters began to create cardboard models: these are life-size images created with paints on paper. Then these were hung in the interior of the church, so that the artists could try them for size and eliminate any inaccuracies: discrepancies in colour, size, or scale. Only after that can the actual work began. Kirill Orsik explains, "The method is as follows: we put the large sketches on wide boards. Then they are cut into pieces and covered with film. All this is then covered with a plaster grid and a weak mounting glue (also called 'liquid nails') and pieces of tile are glued on. The whole composition is laid out in this manner."

"Some technological aspects had to be mastered already in the process of the work. It's one thing to create small mosaic inserts but bringing to life objects of such a scale is completely different. The

total area of the mosaic was more than 400sq.m!" he noted.

Every member of the team had their own task. Kirill Orsik was mainly responsible for the creation of the cardboard models. Alevtina Bashkatova laid out the crucial sections — the faces and hands of saints — while Denis Chubukov did not only control the general course of work, but also actively worked on the design of the altar. The process of laying out the mosaic took almost a year and the work was completed in summer of 2018.

"Of course, it's a great privilege for us to be awarded the President's special prize. Personally, the award gave me even more strength and confidence," said Kirill Orsik, summarising many years of work.

## From Minsk to Diveyevo

The Artel-art workshop continues to work on another order: the design of the Saint Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery in the Nizhny Novgorod Region of Russia. There are no master craftsmen at such a level there. It's interesting that the workshop received this order almost at the same time as the offer from Archpriest Fiodor Povny. Kirill Orsik explains, "The order in Diveyevo is very large, encompassing thousands of square metres. Our work there is not for one year. Today, only large church orders can 'feed' the mosaic workshop. Alas, there are not so many private tasks, and the volumes there are completely different... I have been working on Diveyevo mosaics for six years. And of course, I continue to teach at the Chair of Monumental Decorative Art at the Academy of Arts, which I once graduated."



Kirill Orsik in the Memorial Church of All Saints



The craftsmen assure us that modern tiles will definitely last more than a hundred years

The team of artists engaged in the mosaic decoration of the altar of the Memorial Church of All Saints also included a member of the Belarusian Union of Artists, Alevtina Bashkatova, and Associate Professor of the Monumental and Decorative Art Chair at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, Denis Chubukov

# Place where music lives

## The fame of the Symphony Orchestra goes beyond Molodechno

Composers from all around the CIS gather here and operatic stars eagerly agree to perform: Molodechno occupies a special place on the musical map of Belarus. The city's quiet fame has long gone beyond the country's borders and the Symphony Orchestra of the Michal Kleofas Oginski Molodechno State Music College plays an important role in this.



By Irina Ovsepyan

Composer Igor Luchenok also called the orchestra a notable phenomenon in the country's culture: as far as the number and level of projects implemented by the team under the direction of Grigory Soroko go, it can easily compete with some of the Minsk 'greats'. With this in mind, the President's special award to figures of culture and art is not surprising; it arouses a feeling of great satisfaction since the troupe deserves the award.

Another surprising thing is how the team of a regional educational institution has managed to join the top most attractive Belarusian musicians. Actually, the stake placed by the educational institution's purposeful and bright Director — maestro Soroko — in his students and graduates is not the only reason for success. “Our orchestra has brought up several generations of listeners in Molodechno, starting from a young age,” he explains. “They bring their own children to our concerts now and this work continues for years. We've transformed the city into a centre of opera art: our orchestra has staged such operas as *Iolanthe*, *La Traviata*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Carmen*, *Michal Kleofas Oginski: An Unknown Portrait*. Leading singers have joined our musicians at different — including foreign — venues: a soloist of the Mariinsky Theatre — Vladislav Sulimsky, a soloist of La Scala — Denia Mazzola-Gavazzeni, a finalist of the popular Bolshoi Opera TV show — Vladimir Dmitruk, soloists of the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus, the Swedish Royal Opera House, the Metropolitan Opera and others.”

toire that we perform with the orchestra. We play music of various styles and never get bored.”

The Forum of Young CIS Composers — organised upon Mr. Soroko's initiative, with support of young members of the Russian Union of Composers — allows no-one to be bored either. On April 20th, it will be held in Molodechno for the fifth

“My College teachers noticed me at school age at music competitions and I was offered the chance to join them. Since the fame of the Symphony Orchestra was already striking at that time, I definitely wanted to go to Molodechno as I wished to join the well-known team as soon as possible. For College students, the orchestra is a huge professional experience, an opportunity to perform at the best concert venues in Belarus and Europe, to collaborate with outstanding soloists, to grow creatively in excellent conditions on the material base that was created for us here. For example, the College provided me with a \$8,000 violin. It's great honour and good luck to play such instruments,” the lady says.

The Music College is provided with instruments better than most similar institutions in the country and this is the result of Mr. Soroko's tireless efforts and the constant support of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee which ‘always responds positively to all my requests’, the maestro admits. “The institution now has



**Each conductor has their own unique style that distinguishes them from their colleagues. Some appear as quivering lyricists and some are persistent ‘tin soldiers’, maestro Grigory Soroko is a sorcerer, a spellcaster — armed with a magic wand. The College orchestra has recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, while he has led it for almost 40 years and has never lost his good humour.**

Sophomores already have the chance to get into the orchestra if talented students perform well. Flautist Timofey Melnikov is a fourth year student in the Wind Instrument Department. He also shows promise as a conductor. “I come from Orsha but — when choosing what institution to enter — I turned to the Molodechno College. It seems to be a great choice now. What you heard at the rehearsal is a small part of the huge reper-

time, and the College orchestra will become a creative laboratory, the first and only symphony workshop in the former USSR for budding music composers.

“Young composers stay in Molodechno for ten days, attend master classes of leading composers, create pieces and we then perform them,” Mr. Soroko says. “It's an additional point of growth for the orchestra: my musicians master the most complex material — the 21st century, engineering, somewhere technologically difficult music — along the way.”

The key positions of concertmasters in the team are occupied by teachers: in any orchestra, these jobs involve professionals. Many of them are College graduates who returned to their alma mater after graduating from the Academy of Music. Among them is violinist Valeria Malinovskaya, from Vileika. She is now a third year student of the University of Culture and also works at the Oginski College.

world-class instruments which others might lack: 520 musical instruments, including 30 grand pianos. Among the latter there is even a large concert Steinway, in addition to a Yamaha,” he says with gratitude.

Unsurprisingly, the orchestra pleases audiences with its beautiful sound: the quality of an instrument plays a huge role in the formation of a musician and the growth of their skills. The Symphony Orchestra of the Molodechno State Music College is always welcome in Vitebsk and Brest, Bobruisk and Borisov, European venues and Belarusian agricultural towns: Grigory Soroko never refuses listeners. If a hall cannot accommodate all those wishing to come, then the maestro organises open air performances in summer. It sometimes seems that inspired Mikhal Kleofas Oginski — whose sculpture adorns the platform in front of the College — is about to step down from the pedestal and join the musicians.



Sergei Bocharnikov

By Tatiana Pastushenko

### Four victorious ranges

Our team was the strongest at the home tournament. The main part of the squad returned to Belarus from the World Championship in Antholz, where the performance of the Belarusian biathletes was not a success. This time our athletes expected to achieve much more than getting into the top-20, their best result in the world forum. They thankfully managed to do this.

In the very first race — super sprint — Sergei Bocharnikov became the European champion. Later, the biathlete replenished his collection of awards with another gold earned in the pursuit. For the first time in her career, Yelena Kruchinkina climbed onto the highest step of the medals podium of international tournaments, winning the final competition programme: pursuit. The leader of the women's national team, Irina Krivko, did not go without, claiming bronze in the sprint.

Our team could have earned one more medal — bronze in the mixed relay. Throughout almost the entire race, Dinara Alimbekova, Irina Krivko, Anton Smolksy and Sergei Bocharnikov were the leaders. At the final firing line, Bocharnikov earned a penalty loop, but did not lose the chance to reach the medals podium. And he would have done it if it hadn't been for Norwegian Aleksander Anderson, who, according to the Belarusian, showed most unsportsmanlike behaviour on the track.

"Of course, anything happens in biathlon," said Bocharnikov. "But I do not remember rivals pushing onto the asphalt with their hands from the track..."

The Belarusian national team filed a protest, which the jury of the International Biathlon Union satisfied. But afterwards the jury of appeal returned the Scandinavians bronze, leaving the Belarusians in fourth position in the final protocol.

Even this did not overshadow the impressions of the championship. Bocharnikov proved that he is a fighter who knows how to hold a blow. Yelena Kruchinkina made sure that she can shoot quickly and

# Spirited up!

## Belarusian biathletes win medal standings at home European Championship

The roar of the stands is over and the sounds of gunfire at the shooting range are no longer audible in Raubichi. The European Championship, held for the second time in a row at the complex near Minsk, is already history. Our team won the medal standings of the continental forum for the first time, having won three gold and one bronze medals at the home stadium. But this is far from the only Belarusian victory in the tournament, which ended in Raubichi last weekend.

accurately — with 'zero' misses, the biathlete finished the race for the second time in her career, and the first time was in the sprint, where it's necessary to shoot only twice. Both Bocharnikov and Kruchinkina in the pursuit races finished to thunderous applause and with flags in their hands. After the finish, Yelena noted, "I did not have any idea I could win. When we were going to the pursuit race, the Belarusian anthem was played at the stadium in honour of Sergei Bocharnikov. I was thinking how cool it is! I didn't imagine that this would happen to me: finishing with a flag, an anthem... For me, Belarus has become very dear, and I'm glad to play for this country. It's important to me that my sister and I were invited to the team, and we are grateful that dreams have come true here."

head coach of the men's national squad. "At the same time, I'd like to underline that it wasn't ordinary athletes competing in Raubichi. Perhaps, this year's European Championship was not saturated with world stars as brightly as it was last season. Nevertheless, the event saw the participants of the recent World Cup, leading biathletes of Russia and Ukraine, and quite strong Norwegians."

### Stadium: a sight for sore eyes

In Raubichi, the Belarusian team has also achieved another victory: but not dealing with sport. Before the start of the European Championship, the biggest concern was caused by how the organisers would cope with the preparation of the complex for the competition. Despite the spring weather, everything was held at the highest level.

"Immediately after the end of the competitions, a meeting was held at which IBU representatives thanked us for providing them with an opportunity to hold the championship," says Leonid Karas, the Deputy Director of the Raubichi National Olympic Centre. "The situation, indeed, is such that in Europe there is now a lack of snow, on the one hand, and, on the other, the epidemic of coronavirus. The question is being currently discussed whether the next World Cup stage in Czech Nove Mesto will be held without spectators. We've managed to hold races at a fairly good level, and the spectator interest was high."

According to Leonid Karas,

summing up the results of the European Championship, IBU leaders confirmed that the Biathlon World Cup will be held in Raubichi in 2022 and, in 2025, our sports complex will most likely host the Biathlon World Championship. These events are in the future, while the final stage of the IBU Cup has already started in Raubichi.



Yelena Kruchinkina

### Too early to draw conclusions

After Raubichi, our biathletes went to the Czech Nove Mesto, since they have three more World Cup stages ahead of them. The success of the national team at the home European Championship added optimism to both athletes and coaches.

"Three gold medals, a victory in the team event — there has never been such a performance in the history of the Belarusian biathlon," said Oleg Ryzhenkov, the

# Fabulous victory

By Irina Sergeeva

## Belarusian tennis player Arina Sobolenko won the top level tournament with a prize fund of \$2.9m in Qatar Doha

The first set of the decisive match against the former world number one, Petra Kvitová of the Czech Republic, was held by the Belarusian athlete confidently; she served powerfully and won with a score of 6:3. In the second set, the Czech tennis player was more proactive, but then Arina Sobolenko again took the initiative in her hands and won with the same result — 6:3. The Belarusian tennis player served an ace seven times while the Czech athlete had only 2. The meeting lasted 1 hour 14 minutes.

In her champions interview, Arina thanked Kvitová for the game and congratulated her on her excellent performance at the tournament. Words of gratitude, of course, were also said to her team. "Guys, thanks for everything! You are crazy, but I love you for this," said the Belarusian athlete.

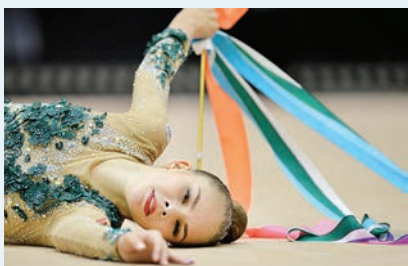
On the way to the final, Arina Sobolenko (ranked 13th in the world ranking) alternately defeated Estonian Anett Kontaveit (placed 22nd) — 7:5, 2:6, 7:5, Greek Maria Sakkari (positioned 20th) — 6:3, 6:0, Chinese Zheng Saisai (37) — 3:6, 7:6, 6:3 and Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova (ranked 46th) — 6:4, 6:3.

Having won in Doha, Arina Sobolenko earned \$605,000, as well as 900 points, enabling her to climb several positions and take 11th place in the world rankings.



For 21 year old Arina, this is the sixth championship title in WTA tournaments in her career, with three of these won in the Premier tournaments in Doha (2020) and twice in Wuhan (2018, 2019). In addition, Sobolenko has also won the Premier event in the US New Haven, winning her debut title in the WTA Tour (2018), the Shenzhen Open Championship (2019) and the WTA Elite Trophy Small Final Tournament in Zhuhai (2019).

## ARENA



● **Belarusian Anastasia Salos clinches five gold medals at Gracia Cup 2020 International Rhythmic Gymnastics Tournament in Budapest**

A Belarusian team leader topped the all-around, with 90,100 points. Silver was won by Ukraine's Yeva Meleshchuk (87,100 points) and bronze went to Belarus' Alina Gornosko (86,600).

Anastasia Salos also secured gold medals in the hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon events.

Belarus' Dina Agisheva won the junior all-around event and Yelizaveta

Zorkina claimed gold with the clubs, silver with the rope and the ball and bronze with the ribbon.

Competing for medals at the 20th Gracia Cup 2020 tournament were 478 athletes from nearly 30 countries.

● **Belarusian athletes placed second at International Indoor Athletic Match U-20 in Minsk**



The hosts secured 220 points, following Italy (241). Bronze went to Poland, with 218 points.

The Belarusian State University of Physical Culture hosted the event,

bringing together U-20 athlete from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Israel, Spain, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine and Estonia.

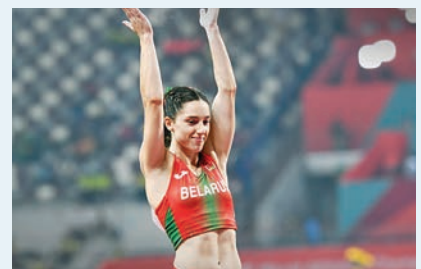
● **Belarus' Yevgeny Korolek secures scratch gold at 2020 UCI Track Cycling World Championships**

The Belarusian clocked 16.59 to finish first. Silver went to Italy's Simone Consonni, with Sebastian Mora Vedri of Spain collecting bronze.

The UCI Track Cycling World Championships in Berlin included 19 medal events which gathered over 600 athletes from 45 countries.



● **Irina Zhuk of Belarus placed third in the women's pole vault at the international athletics meeting in Szczecin, Poland**



At first, the Belarusian cleared 4.37m. She was then successful with her 4.52m vault and later 4,60m attempt to place third. The event was won by Venezuela's Robeilys Peinado (4,60m). Second was Sweden's Angelica Bengtsson (4,60m).

Previously, Irina Zhuk was placed second at the 2020 Meeting Elite en Salle Feminin du Val d'Oise in Eaubonne (France) and fifth at the international athletics meeting in Clermont-Ferrand (France).

## Photo of the week



On the first day of spring, Tonezh villagers — in Polesie — call in spring as part of the *Chyrachka* rite, following their ancestors' tradition

### EXHIBITIONS

#### NATIONAL ART MUSEUM

20 Lenin Street  
 Until 15<sup>th</sup> March. *Enchanted with Homeland*  
 Until 15<sup>th</sup> March. *Classics and Ethno-Modern of Victor Markovets*  
 Until 16<sup>th</sup> March. *Wind Shadow: pictorial and graphical art of Yuri Khilko*  
 Until 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Olga Sazykina's project: *About Glass*  
 Until 15<sup>th</sup> April. *We'll Be Understood in 100 Years: Lazar Khidekel*

#### NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

12 Karl Marks Street  
 Until 15<sup>th</sup> March. *From an Idea to Theatrical Stage*  
 Until 31<sup>st</sup> March. *Young Talents of the Capital*

#### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF BELARUS

116 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
 Until 15<sup>th</sup> March. *Space of Estonian Book*  
 Until 23<sup>rd</sup> March. *Return*

#### GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR HISTORY MUSEUM

8 Pobediteley Avenue  
 Until 27<sup>th</sup> March. *Heirs of Great Victory*

#### GALLERY ARTEL

58 / 1-6 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
 Until 30<sup>th</sup> March. *Unknown Van Gogh*

#### BELARUSIAN LITERATURE HISTORY MUSEUM

13 Maksim Bogdanovich Street  
 Until 14<sup>h</sup> March. *Valentin Taras and Rygor Baradulin: On Height of Memories*  
 Until 25<sup>th</sup> March. *Wisdom of Centuries*

#### NATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS

3 Nekrasov Street  
 Until 8<sup>th</sup> March. *Tangency of Light and Shadow*

#### YANKA KUPALA LITERARY MUSEUM

4 Yanka Kupala Street  
 Until 28<sup>th</sup> March. *Valeriana Zholtok: Passion for Life*

#### MIKHAIL SAVITSKY ART GALLERY

15 Svobody Square  
 Until 8<sup>th</sup> March. *Women's Tricks*  
 Until 8<sup>th</sup> March. *Patsinka*

#### TROITSKY SUBURB

7A Bogdanovich Street  
 Until 12<sup>th</sup> March. *Robo Art*  
 Until 26<sup>th</sup> July. *Live Exotics*

#### LIBRA

37 Nezavisimosti Avenue  
 Until 7<sup>th</sup> April. *Sand and Blood: Francisco Goya and Pablo Picasso*

### THEATRES

#### BOLSHOI THEATRE OF BELARUS

1 Parizskoy Kommuny Square  
 05.03. Eugene Onegin  
 06.03. The Fountain of Bakhchisaray  
 07.03. From Classics to Modern world ballet stars: gala-concert / 6th International Festival Vladimir Spivakov Invites...

#### MAKSIM GORKY THEATRE

5 Volodarsky Street  
 05.03. Ideal Husband  
 07.03. Russia-Style Cabbage  
 10.03. Bridal Shower  
 11.03. Edip  
 12.03. Hot Mother

#### BELARUSIAN DRAMA THEATRE

44 Kropotkin Street  
 05.03. Gender Tricks  
 06.03. Marriage with Wind  
 07.03. Mad Woman  
 10.03. Concrete  
 11.03. Wisdom Measurer  
 12.03. Granddad

#### THEATRE-STUDIO OF CINEMA ACTORS

33 Masharov Avenue  
 05.03. Mixed Feelings  
 07.03. Abduction of Yelena  
 09.03. The Same Place, Next Year  
 10 and 11.03. Wolves and Sheep  
 12.03. Pygmalion

#### MUSICAL THEATRE

44 Myasnikov Street  
 05.03. I Want Your Husband  
 06.03. Maimuna and Symphony Orchestra in a concert  
 07.03. Swan Lake  
 10.03. Women's Revolt  
 11.03. My Dear Friend!  
 12.03. A Thousand and One Night

#### YANKA KUPALA THEATRE

7 Engels Street  
 05.03. Shabany  
 12.03. ART

#### CHAMBER DRAMA THEATRE

5 Frunze Street  
 05.03. Featherhead  
 06 and 07.03. Corporate  
 11.03. Mothers

#### BELARUSIAN ARMY THEATRE

3 Krasnoarmeiskaya Street  
 05.03. The Last Ardent Lover  
 06.03. Star Hour  
 07.03. A Dog on Hay  
 12.03. Three Sisters

#### NEW DRAMA THEATRE

16 Liza Chaikina Street  
 06.03. A Bonus Session of Psychoanalysis  
 07.03. A Dog from Bely Island  
 10.03. I Will Live!  
 11.03. A Factory Girl